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Fiona Nicoll
Queensland
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EDITORIAL

FIONA NICOLL

The past decade has seen the emergence of an interdisciplinary field of research and commentary that can be broadly gathered under the umbrella of 'critical race and whiteness studies'. Common to the diverse perspectives and positions that constitute this field is the view that, far from having been 'resolved' through the anti-colonial movements and civil rights struggles of the latter part of the twentieth century, race and whiteness continue to shape local and global subjectivities and opportunities. In settler-colonial nations like Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada, we can observe the currency of whiteness as a concept and value in the very vehemence with which politicians and journalists proclaim and deploy their 'benevolent intentions' against the rights and sovereignty claims of Indigenous and other Australians racialised as non-white.

To appreciate the role of whiteness in shaping Australia's economic, military and political priorities today we need to register an important shift in the meanings attached to 'whiteness', 'race' and 'racism' under John Howard's prime ministership. Rather than being understood as a collective and active cultural inheritance, racism has been thoroughly reconstructed as an individual moral aberration. As a consequence, the claim that individuals or groups within the nation might be racist has become tantamount to slander. This discursive reconstruction of racism has forged a broad social consensus which is most frequently expressed in claims that our tolerant, multicultural nation has moved beyond whatever 'racial issues' it might have once had.

Part of Howard's appeal lies in his ability to embody this consensus which, after the spectacular (and internationally embarrassing) displays of white racism through the Hanson years, sees questions of whiteness and race as increasingly irrelevant for a nation whose urgent mission is to fix so-called 'failed states' and to spread democracy throughout 'our' region. With the growing force of the US-Australian alliance, the language of whiteness and race (and, post 9/11, increasingly also that of religion) has been euphemistically transposed into the language of sovereignty. The corollary of this shift is that an implicit distinction now operates dividing the world into those peoples and states seen as inherently 'worthy' of sovereignty – on one hand – and those regarded as 'undeserving', 'unprepared' or otherwise 'incapable' of assuming it – on the other.

Powerful nations dominated by white Christian men have authorised themselves to violate the sovereignty of others, not in the name of whiteness and Christianity, but, rather, in the name of 'freedom', 'civilisation' and 'democracy': values that would seem impossible to contest or refuse. To put questions of whiteness and race back into focus, then, it is necessary to ask: which categories of people and which nations are excluded from the key debates and decisions about sovereignty that are reconfiguring economic, military, political and cultural relations all over the globe? As this is a rhetorical question on my part, I will present a recent example by way of an answer.

After Defence Minister Danna Vale requested road works to be carried out preparatory to the annual Anzac Day pilgrimage to the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey, the Opposition environment spokesman, Anthony Albanese, criticised the government's failure to secure national heritage listing for the site in spite of promises made by John Howard in 2003. To this criticism, former Veteran Affairs minister Bruce Scott pointed out: "The call … for heritage listing is … nonsense. It is sovereign soil of the Turkish people, while it is a very important part of Australian history … we must accept that we have no sovereignty.' (*Australian,* March 11: 2) I see this statement, "…we must accept that we have no sovereignty", made with reference to the overseas battleground which is regarded as the birthplace of the Australian national spirit, as an encapsulation of the challenge which, after a decade of so-called "reconciliation" and innumerable calls for a treaty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, remains to be faced by the inheritors and defenders of a white nation.

Like many publications, the origins of the articles to follow are in spoken presentations delivered across a range of contexts over

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the past few years. While two of the contributors, Irene Watson and Suvendrini Perera make specific mention of their choice to retain something of the 'spoken' quality of the original presentations, all of the articles speak in some way to their context of production and delivery, notwithstanding their transformation over the past twelve months to engage with the comments of peer reviewers and to update the content where necessary.

The first two articles, by Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Alistair Bonnett, address historical and current intersections of whiteness and race in national and transnational contexts. Both focus primarily on Australia and Britain as sites of colonial expansion and invasion and diasporic settlement where whiteness not only occupies a central position of cultural value but also informs legal judgement and political decision-making.

Bonnett's article, 'From the Crises of Whiteness to Western Suprematism' had its origins in a keynote address to the *Placing Race/Locating Whiteness* conference held at Flinders University in Adelaide in 2003. It teases out the connections between the colonial subjectivities and interests respectively sheltered under the concepts and terms of 'whiteness' and 'the west' from the mid nineteenth century through to the present. Drawing on the work of Charles Pearson, an English historian who migrated to South Australia in the mid nineteenth century and Benjamin Kidd, a social Darwinist writing at the turn of the twentieth century, Bonnett examines the range of pressures that precipitated crises in 'whiteness' as a concept and a value and which led to its displacement with 'western', particularly in Europe after World War Two.

These pressures, including intensifying class conflict within 'white' nations and the discrediting of explicitly racial configurations of national identity in the wake of the atrocities of Nazi Germany, created the need for the de-corporealised rationale provided by 'the West' for the continuing domination of other peoples by Western Europeans both at home and in their settler-colonial diasporas. The genealogy Bonnett provides of the related but non-identical projects of white domination and western supremacism is particularly resonant at a moment which has seen military actions against sovereign nation-states justified in the name of a 'Western civilisation' of which the US presents itself as the supreme guarantor (See Huntington 1997 for example).

In connection with Bonnett's qualified historical account of the shift from white to western, it is interesting to read Aileen Moreton-Robinson's article, 'The House that Jack Built: Britishness and White Possession', which originated as a paper presented at the *British World Conference* hosted by the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne in 2004. Whereas Bonnett's focus is on the intellectual production of concepts of 'white' and 'western' that were subsequently applied within specific national contexts, Moreton-Robinson looks more closely at the racialised *interests* that these concepts assert and protect. And she finds evidence in contemporary Australia of a possessive investment in whiteness that is not so much euphemised as 'western' as it is couched in debates over the meaning of the nation's British heritage.

Shifting the gaze from the 'dysfunctional Aboriginality' on which politicians and the media are currently obsessively focused, Moreton-Robinson turns to examine the re-assertion of the centrality of Britishness within the Australian academy and popular culture. Her ideological analysis of the entangled relationships between British identity, whiteness and the prerogative of national possession encompasses a variety of examples, from the revival of an exclusive form of digger-nationalism to the recent explosion of publications on the relationship between Britishness and Australian identity. And she observes that expressions of mourning about the loss of British dominance and increasingly ethnicised celebrations of Anglo and Celtic identities are occurring in a national policy context where Indigenous rights are under sustained attack, evidenced by the High Court's Yorta Yorta decision which reinforced the legal privileges of white possession against native title claimants.

To understand this apparently paradoxical situation, Moreton-Robinson turns to recent narratives of the British in Australia, identifying the struggle against the landscape as a key theme and reframes a question originally posed by Toni Morrison to ask why this literature assumes that the form of Britishness and national identity that emerged in Australia is "free of, uniformed, and unshaped by" Indigenous sovereignty?' (20) In addressing this question, she shows

how the landscape is metonymically deployed to deny wars of invasion against Indigenous people, allowing the virtue of the British, and hence the nation, to be recuperated in the face of Indigenous counter narratives and sovereignty claims.

A recent illustration of the intimate connections Moreton-Robinson establishes between Britishness, the celebration of the digger in overseas military campaigns and the disavowed wars of colonial invasion can be seen in the choice of the Prince of Wales to officiate at Anzac Day ceremonies at Gallipoli this year where a classical soundtrack incorporating the didgeridoo will be broadcast.

Suvendrini Perera's article 'Who will I become? The Multiple Formations of Australian Whiteness' begins by returning to the context within which the ideas for her piece were originally generated: a forum in 2001 titled 'A Treaty for All of Us' hosted by the University of Technology in Sydney. This was prior to 9/11, prior to the Tampa election and prior to Keith Windschuttle's ascendancy in the national broadsheet media's theatrical production: 'the history wars'. Perera posed the question 'Who will I become?' during the Centenary of Federation as a means of tackling the 'sacred ignorance' (Baldwin, 1971) to which white Australian clings so tenaciously. And she explains that it was only after her own migration from Sri Lanka that her own sacred ignorance about the history of this place was challenged and she began to understand '…that as someone who migrated here what I was doing was consenting to, and literally *signing on* to [was] a system of colonisation. Not even my own experience of colonisation, on multiple levels, had alerted me to this.' (33)

This article arrives at a moment when, not content with attacking proponents of Indigenous sovereignty, Windschuttle's latest book suggests that perhaps the White Australia policy was not really so racist after all. (Windschuttle 2004) Perera not only confronts this perverse revisionism but also demonstrates that the '…definition and measure of Australian whiteness was, from the outset, derived and asserted in relation to its *multiple racial others,* rather than to a single reference point'. (31) This means that any attempt to re-write the nation's history must *necessarily* be undertaken on a variety of fronts that are irreducible to a moral schism between black/white, Indigenous/non-Indigenous or anti-racist/racist. Hence, the important '…role that nonwhite migrant stories and itineraries can play in reopening a seemingly known and familiar national history, denaturalizing its assumptions and disclosing its underlying formations.' (32)

The salience of Perera's attention to the 'ongoing hierarchical relations of whiteness' which differently position non-Anglo and Indigenous Australians can be appreciated with reference to a recent example from Queensland. The riots following the death in custody last year of Mulrunji Doomagee that culminated in the conflagration of the Palm Island[1]police station have elicited very public expressions of 'hard love' from Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie. [2]These include placing pressure on the Palm Island Council to accept an Alcohol Management Plan and to attend the opening of a multi-million dollar youth centre to be run by police in February this year. This pressure was exerted in spite of the Council's opposition to the public celebration of a new police-run facility while the community was still grieving a suspicious death in police hands that was subject to a formal Inquiry.

After at least one member of the Palm Island suggested that the Premier's offer to personally waive a $800,000 debt in return for their cooperation was blackmail, Beattie launched a pre-emptive attack in Parliament in which he described the Palm Island Council as 'dysfunctional', and attacked their lawyer, Burmese born solicitor, Andrew Boe, who is married to the State's first Aboriginal magistrate, Jacqui Payne, and receiving no payment for his work. To Beattie's abuse of him as a "leech" and "a typical illustration of white lawyers taking advantage of an Indigenous community" (*Courier Mail* 26-27/2/05:5) Boe responded: 'The biggest defamation of all so far is [Premier Beattie's] suggesting I'm white. There's a cause of action there.' (Ibid) The Premier's characterisation of an Asian-Australian as a "white leech" provides a stark illustration of Perera's point about the extent to which a black/white binary continues to organise public debate in Australia.

While Perera's title poses the question, 'Who will I become?' as a non-Indigenous, non-Anglo Australian, Irene Watson's article 'Settled and unsettled spaces' poses the following question from an Aboriginal standpoint: 'Are we free to roam?' Based on a keynote presentation at the Placing Race/Locating Whiteness conference at

Flinders University in 2003, this piece reflects on the situation of Indigenous rights after the Mabo decision's overturning of *terra nullius* and the establishment of a national native title regime as well as the recent abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). Addressing a situation in which the views of a handful of Indigenous people are solicited by governments as a substitute for a genuine negotiation of co-existence with the diversity of languages, country and ways of being that constitute Aboriginal Australia, Watson poses a number of questions to which she provides no answers, instead inviting readers to 'move into the uncomfortable conversations … into a meditation on discomfort …[to] places where the settler society is made to answer these questions…' (49)

In appraising the current position of Australia, she turns to Franz Fanon's analogy of colonialism's passing as the smoking ashes of a burned house that might yet burst back into flame as well as drawing on Ziauddin Sadar's argument that the postmodern feeds on the appropriated history and identity of non-western cultures by '…colonising their future and occupying their being' (1998:13) Posing the question, 'How is it that we are being eaten'?, Watson embarks on a critical discussion of Germaine Greer's recent essay 'Whitefella Jump Up', which advocates the Aboriginalisation of the nation. What are the implications, asks Watson, of this process of Aboriginalisation for Aboriginal Australians? 'To dissolve into whiteness?' (42)

She then moves on to examine the recent shift to 'practical reconciliation' and associated policies of 'mutual obligation' as a re-ignition of assimilation in the face of silenced Aboriginal sovereignty claims. Illustrating her argument with the story of the greedy frog, Watson explains that - in contrast to the exclusivity of white sovereignty's patriarchal model of state that has the assimilation of all others as its final solution - Aboriginal sovereignty embraces diversity and values inclusivity. Yet it is Aboriginal sovereignty and the very value of self-determination are currently under vigorous attack with academics and journalists drawing a spurious causal connection between rights to land, language and culture – on one hand - and dysfunction within Aboriginal communities – on the other. The dismantling of ATSIC was premised on a variant of this argument notwithstanding that, rather than reflecting values of Aboriginal sovereignty, it was 'based on hierarchy, patriarchy and entrenched colonialism'. (43)

Watson then asks 'How do we look?' This is a double-edged question asks not only about the possibilities of Aboriginal Australia being the subject rather than the object of a white gaze but which also investigates the way that Indigenous men and women are seen to be seeing one another and white men and women. In this context she analyses the outcry from sex discrimination commissioner, Pru Goward, and others following artist, Richard Bell's, decision to wear a self-designed T-Shirt with the slogan 'White Women Can't Hump' when accepting his Telstra art award. Watson notes that, in stark contrast to protests about a T-shirt casting aspersions on white women's humping ability, the process of appropriating of public and crown land to which Indigenous people have ancestral connections for development continues both unabated and un-remarked.

To illustrate the currency of Watson's argument that colonisation continues to smoulder in the ashes of Australian society, we need look no further than *Australian* columnist, Christopher Pearson's, uncritical promotion of a paper published by the Centre for Independent Studies by two non-Indigenous authors, economist Helen Hughes and health and education worker, Jenness Warin. (Pearson 2005:18) In their paper, blame for violence and poverty within remote Aboriginal communities is laid squarely and unequivocally at the feet of HC ("Nugget") Coombs whose socialist vision of Aboriginal sovereignty is condemned as romantic and naïve. Totally excised from this argument is the entire history of race relations prior to Coombs appearance on the stage of Aboriginal Affairs as well as past and present Indigenous activism for recognition and in some cases restitution for a history of stolen land, stolen children and stolen wages.

Instead, readers are presented with 'mutual obligation' and 'private ownership' as neat solutions to an array of issues facing remote communities. However, for such solutions to work requires amnesia on the part of colonialism's victims as well as its beneficiaries. Only then could one could proceed from the neo-liberal principle of 'all things being equal' when reference to Indigenous mortality rates, imprisonment and socio-economic status repeatedly

demonstrate that all things are about as far from being equal as one could imagine. It seems that critics of self-determination have a very simple answer to Watson's question 'Are we free to roam?' 'No. But your children may one day be free to own a stake in the national prosperity that was bought at the expense of you and your ancestors.'

The next two articles address a series of important questions. How do we register and even re-enact or re-live historical violence and traumas that we may not have personally experienced? How do these traumas erupt in our most intimate relationships, shaping our political activism as well as our every day practices of cultural consumption? How does the suffering of others register affectively as shame and pride in belonging to the nation? What motivations might there be for white people to forge bonds of solidarity with those victimised by whiteness other than feeling better about ourselves?

I first heard Jon Stratton present a version of what was to become this article at the Cultural Studies Association of Australia conference at the University of Melbourne in 2002. 'Before Holocaust Memory: Making Sense of Trauma Between Postmemory and Cultural Memory' begins by recounting the impact of the European Judeocide on the author's relationship with his assimilated Jewish mother who, in the grip of Alzheimer's, mistook the author for a Jewish child she sheltered as part of the *kindertransport* to England in 1939. He describes how growing up in England in the 1950s and 1960s with a Jewish mother and Gentile father meant registering the trauma of Judeocide in the absence of the totalising discourse of 'the Holocaust', which enabled the wider western world to incorporate it as part of popular cultural memory.

The later part of the article focuses on Stratton's journey through the 'post-traumatic' society of the 1970s through popular films and series that presented the Nazi concentration camp as a site of eroticised violence: 'The corollary is that descriptions of what took place in concentration and death camps and, indeed, the actual images photographed at the time, became pornographic opportunities for sexual arousal – even, perhaps especially, for Jews.'(66) He concludes that by the late 1970s and early 1980s

…my own knowledge of what had transpired coupled with my traumascape, my repeated actings out of my inherited fears and confusions related to the Judeocide, meshed with the new cultural memory of the Holocaust in what now could be identified as posttraumatic society. This was the time that I could begin my own journey to understand the impact on me of my mother's traumatic relation to the Judeocide and its haunting of my psyche. (67)

Whereas Stratton's article compares the individual and collective effects of a trauma of racialisation that shifted in his lifetime from being unspeakable and unrecognised to one that has become an object of mass cultural production and consumption, Sara Ahmed's article investigates the cultural politics of a trauma experienced by Indigenous Australians and which is recognised by one part of the dominant non-Indigenous group and unacknowledged by the other.

It was at a seminar hosted by the Australian Studies Centre at the University of Queensland that I was first exposed to some of the ideas expressed in Ahmed's article, 'The Politics of Bad Feeling'. In it she examines responses to the *Bringing Them Home* report into the removal of Aboriginal children and to Prime Minister, John Howard's, subsequent refusal to apologise to those harmed by practices and policies of assimilation. Her intimate investigation of the role of shame as an affect shaping individual and national subjects moved by dynamics of responsibility, guilt and absolution raises several key questions: [What] kind of recognition and reconciliation is offered by such expressions of national shame?...[In] allowing us to feel bad, does shame also allow the nation *to feel better?* What is the relation between the desire to feel better and the declaration of bad feeling?' (72)

Approaching shame as an affective expression of inadequacy before an idealised other, Ahmed demonstrates how letters in electronic Sorry Books, addressed to a non-apologetic (and by implication shameless) Prime Minister, seek to recover national pride to gain the approval of a wider international community lest Australia be seen as a pariah state like the former South Africa: 'By witnessing what is shameful about the past [that] the nation can "live up to" the ideals that secure its identity or being in the present. In other words, our shame *means that we mean well.'* (77) It is

this return to virtue, she argues, that enables extravagant displays of national shame to function as a re-covering of the past.

Having demonstrated the problems inherent in attempts to make individual and national subjects feel better about the past, Ahmed critically tackles a proposition that can be found circulating in whiteness studies: making white people feel bad about being white exacerbates racism. She suggests, on the contrary, that attempts to found a progressive white identity in anti-racist pride 'sustains the narcissism of whiteness and allows whiteness studies to make white subjects feel good about "their" anti-racism' which in, turn, leaves racialised others with the burden of pain caused by ongoing racism. And this leads to her final question 'Is there room for feeling better?' Only, she argues, if we don't mistake the desire to feel better for the accomplishment of justice. So, rather than the re-covering of pride that she has shown to be central to the politics of shame, the recognition of injury implicit in the act of *exposure* might leave room for feeling better 'even if it is not *about* feeling better.' (83)

In contrast to the expressions of shame in electronic Sorry Books that are the object of Ahmed's analysis, Clare Bradford examines a very different response to the exposure of the theft and/or abuse of Indigenous children in the service of white projects of assimilation. Her article, 'They Went Home': Racialised spaces in contemporary picture books', originated in a keynote presentation at the 2003 *Placing Race/Locating Whiteness* conference and it investigates the role of children's literature in socialising subjects in different white settler-colonies. She argues that the normative socialising function of illustrated children's books in these nations means that racial, ethnic and cultural differences are usually represented either as 'a boon to white children' or as obstacles that must be overcome by children racialised as non-white in order to gain acceptance into the dominant group. But what happens to illustrated children's literature when its authors and target audiences are members of those groups who have been subjected to colonial practices and policies of assimilation?

Drawing on Michel de Certeau's elaboration of the role of 'tactics' in resisting the 'strategies' of those who deploy power, Bradford examines scenarios from illustrated narratives which present innumerable ways of 'playing and foiling the coloniser's game'. She identifies several common features of these texts which distinguish them from their dominant counterparts: 1) a focus on inter-generational communication of specific historical events which incorporate the experiences of the individual authors of the texts; 2) a focus on successful everyday strategies for subverting institutionalised structures of domination embodied in residential schools and church and government settlements, for example; 3) the assertion of subjectivities and pleasures based on belonging to and possession of aspects of place that are inaccessible to colonial surveillance and control; and 4) their double address (to Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers) and the alternative visions of the future conveyed in these counter narratives of a white nation that constitute the implicit departure point for mainstream illustrated children's books. This last point made me wonder how these texts might be effectively deployed as tactics by school teachers and parents to challenge prevailing representations of exotic or assimilable others?

Bradford's article prompts some broader reflections engaging themes and issues addressed in many of the articles in this collection. For me, these crystallise in the question of how the European institution of monarchy is perpetuating relations based on white race privilege both in Australia and elsewhere? Whether it is in the generic register of the soap opera (Charles and Camilla) or the fairytale ('our' Princess Mary of Denmark) or of everyday celebrity (the latest romps of the Monaco royals), a new generation is presented with a paradox. On one hand, the self-regulatory disciplines of neo-liberalism promise equal opportunities for individuals willing to put in the hard yards, regardless of gender, colour or creed. On the other hand, there is a class of tax-payer funded individuals, all of whom are white, who seem to have won the lottery without even paying for a ticket. I want to conclude by invoking the image of (Australia's?) Prince Harry at a fancy dress party wearing the uniform of Hitler's Africa Corps (*Times Online* 14/1/05) as a disturbing but eloquent resolution of the paradoxical persistence of white supremacism in a world in which we are constantly being told that race doesn't matter.

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Notes

[1] Originally owned by the Manbarra people, Palm Island was made into a penal colony for dissident Indigenous people from all over the State in 1918 and has subsequently been afflicted by a homicidal white administrator, assimilation experiments and, in more recent years, benign neglect by State governments.See www.faira.org.au/lrq/archives/199901/stories/shameful-white-history.html.

[2] Queensland, the state where I now live in Australia. Queensland is generally regarded as having come a long way since the heyday of state sanctioned racism and organised police corruption associated with the reign of former Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen. However, as television news bulletins provide regular updates on the state of Joh's failing health, preparing viewers for a State funeral in the not-too-distant future, I am not the only person to have observed the usually sunny face of the 'new Queensland', Premier Peter Beattie, take on a decidedly sinister cast as he negotiates the challenging issue of race relations on Palm Island.

FROM THE CRISES OF WHITENESS TO WESTERN SUPREMACISM

ALASTAIR BONNETT

Introduction

This article explores the rise of the West in relation to the decline of whiteness. It does so by comparing two Victorian intellectuals who helped articulate this transition, the English Social Darwinist Benjamin Kidd (1858–1916) and the English-born Australian politician and social reformer Charles Pearson (1830–1894).

The decline of whiteness may seem a surprising theme. Whiteness is, after all, still very much with us. Indeed, the close relationship between the globalisation of neo-liberalism and the image of the ideal consumer appears to be producing a new symbolic economy of exchange with whiteness at or near its centre (Bonnett 2000). Whiteness is being reinvented, as well as sustained, as the cornerstone of 'global racism' well into the twenty-first century.

However, the story of whiteness is one of transitions and changes. Moreover, this story is also a geography. The development of white supremacism has been highly varied, both nationally and regionally. One of the most intriguing moments of transition that we can detect from this diverse scene concerns the impact of a 'crisis of whiteness' at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. It was an international and transnational crisis. In both Australia and Britain, it provoked the desire to 'protect' and 'insulate' whiteness against those forces that were imagined to be threatening it. However, for a variety of reasons, whilst both countries saw the introduction of racialised immigration laws, the language of race was challenged (though not, of course, entirely displaced) in Britain by the assertion of 'the West' and 'western' as more acceptable and significant categories. Even as early as the end of the First World War, the explicit affirmation of white supremacism had begun to assume the contours of an embarrassment for the political and intellectual elite. Indeed, Pannikar says of this time that: 'With the solitary exception of Churchill, there was not one major figure in any of the British parties who confessed to a faith in the white man's mission to rule' (1953: 201). In the short-term at least, the crisis of whiteness had different consequences in Australia, which had witnessed the production of a political class highly conscious of the spectre of 'Asianisation'. The policies and politics of 'White Australia' were the principle product of this sensibility. However, by the time 'White Australia' finally came to an end (it is conventional to cite the deracialisation of immigration law in 1973 and 1978 as an end point), the idea of 'the West', with its corollary of westernisation, had already been in circulation for over a century. Although John Howard can be seen to have re-asserted elements of a white Australia immigration policy, by the close of the last century the explicit assertion of whiteness had become dangerous territory for mainstream politicians. Indeed, today, in both Britain and Australia, the *overt celebration* of 'white identity' is widely construed as an anachronism; part of the 'cringe-making' repertoire of popularism associated with the politically unsophisticated.

This article is an attempt to explore some of the ingredients that went into the geographically complex shift from white to western. It argues that the 'crisis of whiteness' needs to be understood as a moment of disruption and challenge to white supremacism. Moreover, that within this crisis we can find some of the reasons why 'western' identity gained ground.

These arguments do not imply the 'death of whiteness'. They form a limited intervention in the development of the much wider debate on the relationship between whiteness and modernity that is finally beginning to emerge. It is significant that whiteness experienced crisis and that it was demoted within public discourse. At the start of the last century, 'white civilisation' had a clear and important place in the lexicon of many public figures in European-heritage dominated societies, and many others beside. To imagine that its removal from public rhetoric *merely* reflects a shift to euphemism by an

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unchanging, essential white racism is to dismiss the profound social and political shifts of the last century. This argument also implies that, whilst 'westerner' can and does operate as a substitute term for 'white', it may also reflect new landscapes of discrimination that have new and more fragile relationships to the increasingly widely repudiated language of race.

The twentieth century saw the rise of 'the West' as a political and social entity with what was claimed to be its own discrete history and traditions. It was employed to narrate the great political clash of the last century, that between communism and capitalism (and also, to a lesser extent, between Nazism and the capitalist democracies). In recent years it has been used to structure the conflict between the United States and its allies and 'Islamic fundamentalism'. Whiteness features relatively rarely in these debates. Of course we know that whiteness still matters, both within everyday culture and as a developing, structural aspect of the allocation of social roles and material rewards within 'post-Fordist', globalised capitalism. Yet any attempt to grasp the scope and nature of whiteness, either today or historically, cannot proceed on the assumption that it is comprehensible in isolation. It seems that, in reality, neither 'whiteness' nor 'the West ' are discrete identities with their own history and sociology: they must be engaged and examined in relation to each other and other supremacist ideologies.

Pearson and Kidd are emblematic figures in the transition from white to western. Both produced books that represent seminal statements in, respectively, the discourse of whiteness in crisis and the birth of the modern idea of the West.[1] The publication of Pearson's *National Life and Character* (first published 1893) and Kidd's *The Principles of Western Civilisation* (1901) was separated by a mere eight years. Yet they are strikingly different in tone and content. Whilst Pearson is resolutely pessimistic, repeatedly intoning that the days of white supremacy are at an end, Kidd is aggressively up-beat, repeatedly asserting that the West is destined to be utterly triumphant now and for all time. It may seem a flip observation, but another obvious contrast is that Kidd's book is dizzyingly pompous whilst Pearson's is lucid and pithy. It is a contrast that, perhaps, provides a clue to other distinctions between the two discourses. Later works on 'the West', from Spengler (1918; 1922; 1926; 1928) and Toynbee (1922; 1931; 1934; 1953) onwards, have revelled in the potential for social abstraction that the category seems to license. By contrast, the material and prosaic stuff of the body, which is the centre of Pearson's contribution, as of other treatise on race, seems to generate a 'common sense', 'no-nonsense' approach. By the same token, once the idea of 'race' is rendered as falsehood, this very earthiness instantly appears merely ignorant, clumsy and not a little ludicrous.

The Crises of Whiteness

Charles Pearson was an English historian who migrated to South Australia in 1864, and, after an unsuccessful stint at farming, achieved a name for himself as a social reformer in Victoria. Pearson occupied a series of public positions in Victoria, the first of which was as author of a report on the provision of free education in the State. From 1878 Pearson was the Liberal member for Castlemaine and, from 1883, the Liberal member for East Bourke Boroughs and Minister of Education. Pearson's political career was notable for his support of a series of liberal and progressive causes. I mention this fact because, for Pearson, his concerns to protect white dominion did not represent a departure from his generally 'protectionist' social agenda. The wide-ranging nature of Pearson's political values were apparent in the book published the year before his death, *National Life and Character*.

Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, called Charles Pearson 'the most intellectual statesman who ever lived in this country' (quoted by Lake 2004: 44). Marilyn Lake draws on Barton's assessment in her recent study of how Pearson's ideas were employed and deployed in the service of the legislative and ideological pursuit of 'White Australia' in the early twentieth century. Thus she quotes Barton, reciting from Pearson's *National Life and Character* to the federal parliament in 1901, during his contribution to the debate that led to the white Australia policy. The passage is particularly interesting for the stress it places on the end of white economic control over global markets.

> The day will come, and perhaps is not so far distant, when the European observer will look round to see the globe girdled with a continuous zone of the black and yellow races, no longer

> too weak for aggression or under tutelage, but independent, or practically so, in government, monopolising the trade of their own regions, and circumscribing the industry of the Europeans; when Chinamen and the native of Hindostan, the states of Central and South America, by that time predominately Indian … are represented by fleets in the European seas, invited to international conferences and welcomed as allies in quarrels of the civilised world. The citizens of these countries will then be taken up into the social relations of the white races, will throng the English turf or the salons of Paris, and will be admitted to inter-marriage. It is idle to say that if all this should come to pass our pride of place will not be humiliated … We shall awake to find ourselves elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside by peoples whom we looked down upon as servile and thought of as bound always to minister to our needs. The solitary consolation will be that the changes have been inevitable (Pearson cited by Barton cited by Lake: 43–4).

Pearson had a reflexive sensibility and guessed that his own feelings of disgust at the 'inevitable' end of white supremacy were historically contingent and, perhaps, insignificant; providing just another indication of the doomed nature of his generation of whites. The next two sentences after the passage Barton cites, read as follows:

> It has been our work to organise and create, to carry peace and law and order over the world, that others may enter in and enjoy. Yet in some of us the feeling of caste is so strong that we are not sorry to think we shall have passed away before that day arrives (Pearson 1894: 90).

Lake usefully sets Pearson's ideas within a wider climate of opinion at the end of the nineteenth century concerning the impossibility of multiracial democracy. She also accords him an original role in formulating a transnational white racial subject 'under siege', a figure that was felt by Pearson to be obliged to pursue liberal and socialist policies of racial solidarity.

This last argument overlaps with Hyslop's (1999) and my own (Bonnett 1998) examination of the interconnections between the politics of white racial solidarity and class consciousness. This comparison also indicates the wide spectrum of historical data that can be used to explore the politics of white crisis. Hyslop's focus is on the formation of a transnational white labour movement that drew together workers in Britain, South Africa and Australia. My own emphasis has been on how working-class white identity was bound up with a sense of racial ownership of an emergent 'welfare state'. Such studies are useful to mention here because they make it clear that this debate can be moved well beyond the relatively conventional confines of the 'influence' and 'impact' of elite intellectuals. Such figures can be claimed to provide a convenient vantage point from which to observe unfolding attitudes to whiteness. They are less useful when we want to think through the social and political bases upon which such attitudes rested.

In fact, Pearson's importance at the time of his death appeared to contemporary observers to rely less on the uniquely transnational nature of his racial imagination but, rather, on his position as elder statesman and harbinger of an emerging genre of 'white crisis' literature. Giddings noted in his 1898 review of *National Life and Character* that Pearson's renown was as 'Chief among [the] prophets' of racial pessimism (Giddings 1898: 570; see also Giddings 1895). Pearson's principle explanation of why white expansion is at an end and white supremacy in retreat rests on demographics (notably Chinese and African fertility), geographical determinism (the unsuitability of the 'wet tropics' for white settlement) and the deleterious consequences of urbanisation on human 'character'. Pearson looked forward, albeit with reservations, to a form of 'State Socialism' which, through government intervention and social engineering, would ameliorate some the worst consequences of these processes.

State planning was being developed 'most fully' in Australia, Pearson noted; a country which now had 'a very extensive system of State Socialism' (1894: 102). This raft of state welfare and interventionist policies 'entirely recommend themselves to public sentiment' (103), he declared. These measures were considered vital by Pearson to prevent whiteness being economically undermined and, hence, overwhelmed. The economic ascendancy of those who Inge, following Pearson, was later to term 'the cheaper races' (Inge 1922: 227), meant that the white 'will be driven from every neutral market and forced to confine

himself within his own' (Pearson 1894: 137).

These themes had not been synthesised in such pessimistic fashion before *National Life and Character*. However, they need to be understood as part of an intellectually omnivorous debate on the causes of white decline. It is precisely because white supremacism was at its zenith in this period that such symptoms of decline were found to be so worrying and diverse. The bizarre heights of racial arrogance to which the jumble of incoherent and contradictory conceits that formed 'white supremacism' had risen led to a sense of racial vulnerability. Although more and more of the world was passing into white control, by the last years of the nineteenth century, there had emerged a ready market for those who were feeling fretful about the quality of military recruits, the poisonous influence of city life, the rise of feminism, the spectre of intra-European rivalries, the falling birth rate of the middle classes and many other things beside. These manifold worries were grouped together as a white racial crisis. Whiteness was opened out and made an object of middle- and upper-class 'worry' by these discourses.

The Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, William Inge, argued that by 1901 'the tide had really begun to turn' against the white world. The significance of this year is not explained by Dean Inge, although he does alight upon the 1897 Diamond Jubilee celebrations as the 'culmination of white ascendancy'. For Inge, the 'magnificent pageant' of the Jubilee also sounded a death-knell for white power, for

> the spectators … could observe the contrast between the splendid physique of the coloured troops and the stunted and unhealthy appearance of the crowds who lined the streets. (1922: 214)

White self-doubt appeared to be substantiated by a stunning military defeat. The rout of Italian forces by the Ethiopians at Adowa in 1896 had been greeted with consternation in some quarters (Lyall 1910). However, across much of 'the white world' it was the outcome of the Russo-Japanese war that produced the real shock. In 1904 it was generally expected that the Russo-Japanese war, begun that year, would be speedily settled once the Russian Baltic fleet arrived in East Asia. In fact, the Japanese fleet, under Admiral Togo, destroyed all but three of Russia's ships in the Straits of Tsushima in May 1905. With the defeat of Russia, a novel phase in international relations began. The 'victory of little Japan over great Russia' explained Basil Matthews in 1924, 'challenged and ended the white man's expansion'. For Matthews it signified 'the end of an age and the beginning of new era' (1925: 28); whilst for Inge (1933: 156) it marked 'one of the turning points of history'. In *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, the American Lothrop Stoddard (1925, first published 1920) phrased the matter in even more cataclysmic terms. With 'that yellow triumph over one of the great white powers' (21), he wrote, 'the legend of white invincibility was shattered, the veil of prestige that draped white civilisation was torn aside' (154) .

The significance of Russia's loss also turned on another matter: the formal alliance of Britain with Japan. In *The Conflict of Colour* (1910) Bertram Putnam Weale offered a stinging critique of the British government's 'sensational step of allying herself with Japan' (113). For Putnam Weale, the Anglo-Japanese alliance (1902) amounted to a self-defeating form of racial treason:

> The secrets of supremacy have been revealed; and other countries, led by what England has done, are beginning to accept in their extra European affairs what may be called the same clumsy doctrine of *pis-aller* (117).

An ideal of international white solidarity was a logical outcome of the emergence of whiteness as a social and political force. Yet it remained a doomed and crisis-prone ideal, continuously vulnerable to the manifold difficulties inherent in employing a vaguely defined, highly idealised, yet utterly material, category as a significant geo-political identity. These difficulties are clearly illustrated by the attempt to employ the notion of 'white community' during and in response to the 'Great War'.

Within the literature of white crisis, the First World War was routinely termed a 'fratricidal war'. The danger the poet Sir Leo Chizza Money (1925) wrote about in *The Peril of the White* 'is not Yellow Peril, or a Black Peril, but a peril of self-extermination' (148) for 'whites in Europe and elsewhere are set upon race suicide and internecine war' (xx). Money's concern with white solidarity led him to attack both Stoddard and Inge for their attention to

intra-white racial differences (what Money calls 'Nordiculous theory'). '[I]t is suicidal', he told them, 'to encourage racial scorns, racial suspicions, racial hatreds amongst the small minority that stands for White civilisation' (149). However, both Stoddard and Money were in agreement on the political implications of the war: that the only way white solidarity could be secured was by creating a European political union. 'Europeans must end their differences' argued Money. It is time, he proposed, to 'federate all the States of Europe' (x).

Yet, such a clear solution to the crises of whiteness was immediately undermined by these authors' ruminations on the traitorous nature of huge swaths of white people, most notably Russians and the working classes. Other authors added women and effeminate men to this list of suspects (Whetham & Whetham 1911; Curle 1926; Champly 1936; Rentoul 1906). Even the physical environment could not be relied upon to support white ambitions. During the same period academic geographers had become preoccupied with the 'limits of white settlement' across the 'hot tropics' and other climatically unsuitable parts of the colonial world (Trewarthara 1926; Woodruff 1905).

The grand aspirations of white dominion and solidarity, and the consequent scale of white vulnerability, made any specific attempt to see a solution to the crises of whiteness appear inadequate. It was within the arena of class conflict, though, that the literature of white crisis exposed the limits of white community most thoroughly.

The literature of white crisis is a literature of white supremacism. Yet it is also a literature in which the mass of white people are treated with suspicion. Despite Pearson's assertion of whiteness as the key to national identity, it is clear from *National Life and Character* that not all whites are equally-prized racial subjects. In particular 'the city type' (1894: 165) is painted by Pearson in fearful colours. This paradox provides the clearest evidence that this is not merely a literature about crisis, but in crisis: its central myth is constantly found to be failing, to be unworthy. Whiteness is, unintentionally, exposed as an inadequate category of social solidarity. For, if the white nation is split between the 'British sub-man' (Freeman 1921) and Stoddard's 'neo-aristocrats', then the idea of white community necessarily appears, at best, a memory of a bond now passed into history.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the suspect nature of most white people is not a minor chord within any of the texts under discussion. It is usually the key site of argument and evidence. For Inge (1922) civilisation is always the property of a small elite: it is 'the culture of a limited class, which has given its character to the national life, but has not attempted to raise the whole people to the same level' (228). Without this cultured few, whiteness is an empty vessel, deprived of intelligence and direction. The 'brainy and the balanced have always controlled our world', agreed Curle; 'when they cease to do so, our White Race must pass into its decline' (1926: 213).

The elite are represented as an inter-breeding group possessing different values to the masses; almost a race within a race. Thus the most profound challenge for whiteness located by these authors concerns the weakening of this group's grasp on power. Indeed, the imminent possibility of being swamped by inferior whites is identified time and again. Money (1925), echoing a concern made familiar by the eugenics movement (Pearson 1897) and sustained across the political spectrum, noted that: 'In Europe and America alike, the White races appear to be dying off from the top downwards', adding: 'In Britain, in especial, the most intelligent people are refraining from rearing families'.

Freeman's (1921; also 1923) 'sub-man', is the same person as Stoddard's (1922) 'Under-Man' and Curle's (1926) 'C3' type. He is white yet the enemy of whiteness; an enemy who is both a racial throw-back and harbinger of an anarchic future. In *The Revolt Against Civilisation*, Stoddard (1922) offers a detailed depiction of the 'Under-Man' as a discrete group, with his own traditions, interests and agenda. '[T]he basic attitude of the Under-Man', says Stoddard, 'is an instinctive and natural revolt against civilisation' (22). The Under-Man 'multiples; he bides his times' (23), waiting for his opportunity. This time, Stoddard concludes, has now come: the 'philosophy of the Under-Man is to-day called Bolshevism' (151), which is 'at bottom a mere "rationalising" of the emotions of the unacceptable, inferior and degenerate elements' (203; see also Armstrong 1927). For Curle 'the masses', or 'the Unfit', although less prey to communism than Stoddard suggests, are equally as primitive. A new class and racial

war is in the offing he tells us, between the masses who will 'soon ... be in control of legislation' (215) and who, out of a sense of self-preservation, seek to thwart eugenic legislation, and 'the one man or woman in twenty-five' who possess 'what is good in the British' (62).

The difficulty of asserting both white solidarity and class elitism was resolved, in part, by asserting that the 'best stock' of the working class had long since climbed upward. Thus the white elite's racial connection to the white masses could be claimed to be real but atrophied. For Ireland:

> over a period of several centuries there has occurred a striking and progressive decline in the cultural contribution from the 'lower' classes in the United Kingdom, and, of course, a corresponding relative increase in the contribution from the 'upper' and 'middle' classes (Ireland 1921: 139).

Two origin myths of the white bourgeoisie were employed by Pearson to secure this argument. One identifies their geographical and social roots in the hardy and muscular country life of pre-industrial rural England. The other locates them as the progeny of natural winners, that is, as being the inheritors of a fighting stock that was able to demonstrate superiority before the struggle for existence was compromised by state welfare and interference. The former position is commonly encountered through depictions of the degenerative nature of the city, a position expressed concisely by Galton in 1883: [T]he towns sterilise rural vigour' (14; see also Masterman 1901; White 1901; Haggard 1905; Cantlie 1906). Pearson explained that the towns 'have been draining the life-blood of the country districts', the 'vigorous countryman' becoming absorbed into 'the weaker and more stunted specimens of humanity' who fill the towns (1894: 164-5). Thus the 'racial gift' that rural migrants bring to the town is soon squandered. It is an analysis that both roots the elite firmly within a white, rural past and condemns urbanisation and industrialisation as enemies of the race.

Once the bulk of whites had been dismissed as, in some way, inadequate, the problem of how to construct a positive program to save white society became acute. Indicative of the seriousness of the problem is the fact that many of the texts under discussion conclude with utopian flourishes; far-fetched proclamations of racial re-birth (Pearson was far too gloomy for such flights of fancy). Freeman's (1921) and Inge's (1922) plans for 'experimental communities' of superior whites are illustrative. Freeman envisaged such settlements in Britain, whilst Inge warned that they would need to be established in remote colonies (he suggests, Western Canada, Southern Chile or Rhodesia) in order to avoid cross-class contamination. In either location, the settlements would consist of non-degraded whites who could live, work and reproduce in isolation. Such plans clearly suggest that the only way of saving 'the race' is to escape white society. In so doing they condemn whiteness as inadequate to the task of defining a meaningful identity for the elite.

Marilyn Lake draws a straight line between *National Life and Character* and 'White Australia' policies:

> Australia's federal fathers drew on these new histories and were constituted by their transnational identification as white men under siege. In drawing up a constitution for White Australia, they considered they were at the cutting edge of world-historic thinking (2004: 58).

It is clear that the literature of white crisis was available to be interpreted as a racial call to arms. However, this is not the only way this discourse can be seen to unfold. In Australia, it may be seen to have reinforced and, by legislative means, ossified, the place of whiteness within 'national life and character'. However, this is unlikely to have been the only consequence of white crisis, either in Australia or elsewhere. In other parts of the 'white world', such as Britain and France, we see, from the 1930s, whiteness demoted within public life (relative to its position pre-1930s). The spectre of Nazi racism contributed to an *existing* disposition to wonder about the public value of racial discourse.

At root, the literature of white crisis showed the limits of white supremacism. It illustrated the difficulty of sustaining commitments to racial solidarity, racial supremacism and social anti-egalitarianism as a coherent and stable belief-system. Such a world view is not merely prone to crisis but manacled to it. As such, the potential and the need to signal that whiteness needed to be 'moved beyond' was created wherever this crisis was

experienced. The geographical contortions required to claim Australia as western proved an insignificant barrier. The twentieth century saw a capitalist 'free world' form and come together, under United States leadership, as a political entity that contained 'westerners' who espoused 'western values'.

> This shift was also enabled by a developing association between racial identification and social conflict. In *The Crisis of Liberalism* Hobson had warned that: Deliberately to set out upon a new career as a civilised nation with a definition of civilisation which takes as the criterion race and colour, not individual character and attainments is nothing less than to sow a crop of dark and dangerous problems for the future (Hobson 1972: 244; first published 1910).

The theme that Hobson stresses—that racial ideology breeds contempt and conflict—provided one of the most potent challenges to the explicit assertion of the white ideal. Summarising his research on British scholarly and popular attitudes to colonialism in the 1930s, Frank Füredi notes that 'a clear correlation was drawn between those who were racially conscious and those who were anti-white' (1998: 121). What Füredi is highlighting is an increasing tendency to associate 'racial consciousness' with a consciousness of racial oppression. Thus it became the task of British colonial policy, not merely to rhetorically 'deracialise' colonial encounters but, at least to appear, to oppose the meaningfulness of the very idea of racial hierarchy. This process was considerably encouraged by a desire to challenge the global influence of the Soviet Union, whose anti-racist credentials were taken seriously, even by ardent anti-communists. Thus, later attacks on racism—more specifically, on Nazi racism—were able to draw on an existing desire to 'move on' from race as a centre-piece of public discourse. As this implies, opposition to Nazi racism did not create the official acceptance of anti-racism. But it did help secure it. 'There is', noted one senior British official in the wake of the clear opposition to race discrimination offered in the United Nations Charter (1945), 'something like official unanimity of opposition to this species of primitive prejudice' (Corbett 1945: 27).

The Birth of the West

Hegel gave an influential fillip to the ancient notion that ideas and events travel westwards when, in the early nineteenth century, he outlined his occidentalist vision of Enlightenment. In a famous passage from *The Philosophy of History* (1991, first delivered as lectures in 1822) Hegel explained that '[t]he History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History' (103). The notion that human freedom cannot exceed its modern, western incarnation emerged from Hegel's association of Protestantism with rationalism. The Reformation was 'the all-enlightening *Sun*' (412), ensuring that '[t]he German Spirit is the Spirit of the new World' (341). When Hegel talked about 'History' travelling to the West, it was towards a Protestant horizon that he saw it going.

However, despite elaborating at length on the Oriental world, Hegel had little to say about the West as a unity. When he turned to the Occident in *The Philosophy of History* he promptly fragmented it into three distinct civilisations: Greek, Roman and German. Hegel had little use for any explicit or overarching sense of western identity. The ease with which Hegel dispenses with the West is indicative of its continuing marginality as an idea. In Britain, throughout the early- to mid-nineteenth century there appears to have been little serious interest in elaborating the idea of the West or imagining something called 'western civilisation'. Nevertheless, the association between the West and social dynamism and progress can be witnessed developing into a stereotype. The phrase 'the Western world' is used by Marx (1992: 319) in 1853 when commenting upon British colonial policy in Asia. The same context, if different political conclusions, occasioned the use of the term by Macaulay 18 years earlier, in 1835 (Macaulay 1970). These were not merely descriptive usages. Clichés of eastern social rigidity and conservatism and western dynamism had already become firmly entrenched. It is a stereotype to the fore in Marx's depiction, in *Capital*, of Asiatic 'unchangeableness'. The radical British member of parliament, Joseph Cowen, summed up these stereotypes pithily in a speech to the House of Commons (4 September 1880) when he depicted 'the conflicting civilisations of East and the West—the one iconoclastic and

progressive, the other traditional and conservative' (Cowen 1909: 87).

What we have by the mid-nineteenth century is a word and an idea of growing but still unclear power and potential. It carries traditional religious and political connotations and these were, fitfully, being put to use to interpret Europe's rise to global power. What we do not have is an explanation of why, from the late nineteenth century, and particularly from the first two decades of the twentieth, the West, became a *central* idea, a ubiquitous category in the articulation of the modern world.

The notion that 'Western society is a unity' (Toynbee 1923: 4), that the West has its own discrete history, that it is 'an intelligible field of study' (Toynbee 1934: 36); that it is, moreover, a 'perspective', an ethno-cultural repertoire, is a creation of little more than the last 100 years. It is a relatively recent invention that exceeds the term's older meanings. The development of this contemporary West can be explained in terms of the impact of specific events. The Bolshevik revolution, the rise of United States hegemony, and the loss of colonial power are the most important of these; each acting to make the idea of the West seem more important, more necessary. An emphasis on these three events is favoured by Christopher GoGwilt (1995) in his valuable genealogy of the idea of the West. However, what such an approach tends to miss is that new identities emerge in the context of existing ones. Neither people nor nations are blank slates upon which 'events' are written. Rather it is through and in the context of existing identities that new ones develop. Such a *relational* approach to the topic of the West produces different points of focus depending upon where in the world one is looking. But one of the clearest paths is through whiteness.

Western Supremacism

It cannot be claimed that the contemporary notion of the West emerged out of the literature of white crisis, certainly not in any direct or simple fashion. However, this old word for a new idea did represent a partial resolution of this literature's failed attempts to marry social elitism with racial solidarity. The idea of the West had clear advantages. Usually defined as a civilisation, rather than a race, the West could connote a socially-exclusive cultural heritage as well as a broad territorial community. This function is apparent both within the literature of white crisis and from the emerging literature about the West that also developed from the 1890s.

The idea of the West that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a varied concoction. It has the bubbling energy of something new and urgent, the miscellaneous character of an idea not yet refined by years of use. The West at this time could be made to mean many things. Before the Bolshevik revolution, its political character was highly mobile: the acme of Western civilisation was imagined to be, amongst other things communism, lassiez-faire capitalism, anarchism, authoritarian statism and many other positions besides. However, within English-speaking countries, Benjamin Kidd has a special place in this tumult. GoGwilt claims Benjamin Kidd to be the first English-language author to employ a recognisably contemporary idea of the West. Kidd's reference in *Social Evolution* (1894) to 'our Western civilisation' is the 'first clear instance' of the use of the term 'Western' as a discrete society with its own history, notes GoGwilt (1995: 54) and, as such, 'an idiosyncratic formulation'. Moreover, Kidd's *Principles of Western Civilisation* appears to be the first serious attempt to define this new entity and, whatever one may think of its leaden prose, it is no less intellectually ambitious that Spengler's later, far more famous and more pessimistic, contribution.

The British civil servant and, in the words of his biographer, 'spiky individualist' (Crook 1984: 3), Benjamin Kidd, made a name for himself with what is, perhaps, the most famous tract of Social Darwinism, *Social Evolution* (1894). Kidd's aloof disdain for the survival of anything and anybody he considered 'unfit' renders *Social Evolution* one of the most pungently racist books of its time. He carried this high-brow strain of viciousness over into *Principles of Western Civilisation*. Yet shorn of the racial rhetoric of *Social Evolution* and employing the full sonorous lexicon of 'Western culture', 'the Western mind' 'Western technology' and so on, Kidd's later book appears almost contemporary in its concerns. Samuel Huntingdon's (1997) *The Clash of Civilizations* makes no mention of Kidd, yet he is essentially working through and with some of Kidd's principal intellectual building blocks.

It is immediately apparent from *The Principles of Western Civilisation*, that the 'principles' to which Kidd refers are as hostile and damaging as anything concocted by the white supremacists of the era. The West is defined as a form of spirit or consciousness that is intellectually far-seeing and militarily enforced. Kidd regards the true promise of the West to lie in its potential to subjugate the present in the service of the future. '[T]he significance of Western civilisation' he argues,

> has been related to a single cause; namely, the potentiality of a principle inherent in it to project the controlling principles of its consciousness beyond the present (289).
>
> It is to the principle of Projected Efficiency of the social process that every other principle whatever must ultimately stand in subordinate relationship (396).

Like Pearson, Kidd was inclined towards socialism. Laissez-faire, for Kidd, was 'a surviving form of barbarism' (455) because it was unable to look beyond present needs. Kidd predicted the

> gradual organisation and direction of the State … towards an era of such free and efficient conflict of all natural forces as has never been in the world before (469).

Kidd's 'western principles', then, are those that ensure the West's total victory in a world of ceaseless struggle and domination: 'We are par excellence the military peoples, not only of the entire world, but of the evolutionary process itself (458).

Kidd's racial vocabulary is vague. It can be inferred that he sees a racial content to being western and that western civilisation for Kidd is, for some unstated reason, white. However, Kidd's West is a decidedly non-corporeal, non-material entity. The 'Western mind', he writes

> is destined, sooner or later, to rise to a conception of the nature of truth itself different from any that has hitherto prevailed in the world (309).

Kidd's propensity for such cloudy abstractions led to his contribution appearing marginal to what was, at the time, the more mainstream debate on whiteness. Inge (1922) accused him of being an 'irrationalist' and *The Principles of Western Civilisation* bewildered and annoyed many of its reviewers (see Crook 1984). Yet Kidd's aversion to empirical detail and fondness for sweeping theorisations enabled him to render irrelevant the contradictions that were causing such anguish within the white crisis literature. By bypassing direct engagement with race, Kidd was able to ignore issues of racial purity, solidarity and sustainability and, hence, questions of class character and quality. For Kidd, 'Western principles' and 'our western civilisation' were transcendental forces whose inherent superiority lies in their orientation to the future, as well as in their, literally, merciless enforcement. The success of the West in 'the modern world-conflict' was thus certain: '[I]t is the principles of our Western civilisation … and no others, that we feel are destined to hold the future of the world' (340).

It is the *confidence* of Kidd's vision that is so striking. He looks at 'the West', not as something limited by such things as human fertility and social conflict, but as a 'big idea' that is turning history into a mirror of itself. 'The West' appears to Kidd to have escaped the bounds of nature: it is not something prosaic but something that has shot out of the earth-bound orbit of traditional culture and become god-like in its destiny and judgement.

> We appear, in short, in Western history to have reached the stage when the intellectual process is about to overtake the meaning of the evolutionary process which has pursued a course hitherto in advance of it; a stage at which all the stress and strenuousness of the modern world-conflict, instead of being considered as something external to that system of belief which is associated with our civilisation, will be regarded by science as a natural phenomenon inherent in it from the beginning, and coming at last actually and visibly within the sphere of its highest meaning.
>
> The historical process in our civilisation has reached the brink of consciousness. This is the pregnant fact which it is necessary to take into consideration in endeavouring to estimate the character of the impetus likely to be behind it in the stage in which it moves towards the great struggle of the modern era; the struggle inherent in, and proceeding from the development described in the preceding chapters; namely, that in which there is ultimately involved the challenge of the ascendancy of the

> present in the economic process throughout the world. That the result is destined to be enlarging and reconstructive beyond that associated with any previous period of transition in our history, no mind which has grasped the principles of the situation can ultimately doubt (401-2).

The idea of the West helped resolve some of the problematic and unsustainable characteristics of white supremacism. Yet it carried its own burden of tensions. One of the most fundamental of these exposes a similarity of outlook between the proponents of whiteness and the West. For these are both projects with an in-built tendency to crisis. From the early years of the last century (Little 1907; Spengler 1926), through the mid-century (Warburg 1959; Beus 1953; Burnham 1964) and into the present day (Buchanan 2003; Coker 1998; Barzun 2001), we have been told that the West is doomed (see also Herman 1997). Although specific causes for this fate are usually at hand, a more general reason may also be adduced. For like whiteness, the idea of the West has been conflated with modernity and global mastery. These vast ambitions create a state of vulnerability. When western colonialism was at its height, it was said that the West was in its death-throws. When communism spread in East Asia, and as Asian and African countries achieved independence, it was said, perhaps with more justification, that the West was in retreat. Yet even minor phenomenon, like the rise of youth culture or the decline of classical music, have been interpreted as signalling the end of western civilisation. As with the white crisis literature, almost everything and anything, big or small, has been fed into the omnivorous pessimism of the West's doom-mongers.

The dread of decay that arises from the West's global claim closely echoes the panicky sensitivities of the white crisis literature. However, this similarity should not be pushed too far. The literature of white peril was not mirrored by a contemporaneous white triumphalist literature. But this is exactly what we see in the case of the West. For every book announcing its death, another is published claiming its ascendancy. In its own prolix way, Kidd's *The Principles of Western Civilisation*, was the first British example. Later, more hesitant fanfares from the height of the Cold War, such as *Must the West Decline?* (Ormsby-Gore 1966) and *Is the Liberal West in Decline?* (Kohn 1957), were contemporaneous with more vigorous statements on *The Rise of the West* (McNeill 1963). However, even McNeill's portrait of the West's flexibility and receptivity to cultural influences is tame compared with the triumphalism of end of century announcements, such as *The Triumph of the West* (Roberts 1985) and *Why the West has Won* (Hanson 2000; see also 'The West has won', Fukuyama 2001). The mood of strutting confidence is elaborated in other recent titles, such as *The Ideas that Conquered the World* (Mandelbaum 2002) and *The End of History* (Fukuyama 1992). The contrast with whiteness is stark: only military effort and direct domination would allow the white supremacists a sense of conquest and finality. For the majority of western triumphalists, though, all that needs to happen is that world 'opens up', begins to see things 'our way' and acts accordingly.

Conclusions

Interrupting the polite hum of dinner party conversation, Tom Buchanan, the wealthy cad at the heart of *The Great Gatsby*, is moved to exclaim that: 'Civilization's going to pieces'. The startled guests are treated to Buchanan's particular view of world events: 'If we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved'. F Scott Fitzgerald has his character cite as evidence a book called '"The Rise of the Colored Empires" by this man Goddard'.

On one level this incident is evidence merely of Fitzgerald's familiarity with one of the many incendiary racial tracts of the early 1920s (namely, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy* by Lothrop Stoddard) However, Buchanan's opinions are clearly designed to evoke something bigger. They are employed by Fitzgerald to create a tone of moral panic, a pessimistic atmosphere sustained by the existence of a far-reaching debate on the collapse of white prestige.

One of the distinctive attributes of this debate, in the United States as in Britain, was that it signalled both a crisis for, and the zenith of, white identity as a public ideal. Whiteness was celebrated before 1890 but rarely with such concerted fervour and never with such an elaborate repertoire of scientific and social justifications. Whiteness was celebrated after 1930 but, increasingly, those who did the celebrating were not drawn from the leading social and political commentators

of the day. That white identity's moment of triumph should also be its moment of peril is no coincidence. Having become established as the symbol of extraordinary achievement and superiority, as the talisman of world-wide social authority, whiteness was vulnerable to any sign of challenge or social disturbance. The fact that white supremacism relied on the authority of the natural, of biological 'fact', compounded its unsustainability. For once the white race is accepted as an objective reality its attributes must be represented objectively, without the interference of social factors, such as class prejudice. In other words, all white people have to have the characteristics of whiteness: they must all be superior, they must all be fit to rule. Yet there was no subject that the white supremacists discussed in this article felt more strongly about than the inadequacy of the masses. Their racism demanded social egalitarianism; their social elitism demanded something quite different. Something like the idea of the West perhaps?

There is some truth in the latter contention but it is also too neat, too glib. We cannot assume that, because it was in the context of the crisis of white identity that the idea of the West began to become attractive, that this crisis therefore 'produced' or 'led to' the idea of the West. This point needs to be insisted upon, whilst at the same time the contemporaneous and novel character of the concept of the West that was emerging is recognised. Something new was being born. The literature of white crisis illuminates some of the reasons why, as well as nearly all the reasons why whiteness was inadequate to the challenges, not merely that lay ahead, but of the moment.

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Notes

[1] Stuart's comparison of the two men looks at both men's racial theories, a focus which reflects the fact that Kidd is most well-known as the author of *Social Evolution* (1894); see Stuart 1996.

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT: BRITISHNESS AND WHITE POSSESSION

AILEEN MORETON-ROBINSON

> The formation of specifically white subject positions has in fact been [the] key, at times as cause and at times as effect, to the socio-political processes inherent in taking land and making nations (Frankenberg 1997: 2).

> 'I do not believe that the real life of this nation is to be found either in the great luxury hotels and the petty gossip of so called fashionable suburbs, or in the officialdom of organised masses. It is to be found in the homes of people who are nameless and unadvertised and who, whatever their individual religious conviction or dogma, see in their children their greatest contribution to the immortality of their race.' Those words are in substance as true today as they were then (John Howard quoting Robert Menzies, 3 September 1997).

> The Prime Minister is touring the battlefields of France where his father and grandfather fought, carrying with him one of their wartime diaries. Is such wallowing in the past healthy? Sounds like black armband travel to me (Melissa Lucashenko, in *The Australian*, 29 April 2000).

The British imperial project was predicated on taking possession of other peoples' lands and resources for the benefit of Empire. Britain took possession in a number of ways: in Canada, the United States and New Zealand it was through negotiated settlements and treaties with Indigenous peoples that lands became appropriated by the Crown. The right to take possession was embedded in British and international common law and rationalised through a discourse of civilisation that supported war, physical occupation and the will and desire to possess. Underpinning property rights, possession entails values, beliefs, norms and social conventions, as well as legal protection, as it operates ideologically, discursively and materially. Property rights are derived from the Crown which in the form of the nation-state holds possession. Possession and nationhood are thus constituted symbiotically. This leads me to ask whether the form of Britishness and national identity that developed in Australia is 'free of, uninformed, and unshaped by' Indigenous sovereignty (Morrison 2002: 266). In this article I explore how the core values of Australian national identity are located within the house that Jack built; a nation that in its denial of Indigenous sovereignty is perceived to be a white possession.

The Perceived Loss of Dominance

Despite the dominance of whiteness culturally, politically and economically, since Australia's bicentenary there has been a concerted effort to write about and reiterate the relationship between Britishness and Australian national identity through a discourse of loss and recuperation. The emergence of this literature coincided with Australia's bicentenary, evoking a new sense of nationalism, which celebrated and promoted the idea of a unified nation, born in part as a response to more than a decade of multiculturalism. Keating's policies in particular were thought to undermine the idea that the nation was a unified white possession. The push to see Australia as part of Asia did not sit well with members of a growing conservative electorate who perceived themselves as a country with more in common with Britain, Europe and America than our neighbours to the north. A discourse of loss emerged, tied to the ideas that there were too many non-British migrants, mainly Asian, entering Australia and the granting of native title to Indigenous people after the *Mabo* decision. Both, the fear of Asian 'invasion' and of 'dispossession' by Indigenous people, were orchestrated to recentre white possession of the nation. The conservative reaction to the Keating government resulted in the election of John Howard and the emergence of Pauline Hanson, representing the One Nation party, onto the political scene. Both Howard and Hanson espoused a return to 'core values' of the mainstream and the reduction of fiscal and policy support for multiculturalism and Indigenous affairs. The Office of Multicultural Affairs closed and Howard appointed a National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC) in 1997 to provide policy direction and strategies for implementation over the next ten years. The NMAC's report *Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness*, was launched on 5 May 1999.

In response, the government presented its multicultural policy in parliament in December of the same year 'highlighting the need for Australian multicultural policy to be a unifying force and relevant to *all*

Australians' (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, *Fact Sheet 6*: 1). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's budget was decreased and its policy direction changed from one of rights-based advocacy to practical reconciliation. The native title legislation was amended to reduce the degree and amount of rights enshrined in the original Act. By selectively demonising migrants, Indigenous people and later refugees, Howard effectively recuperated national identity and white possession, which he constructed as threatened by the 'political correctness' of the Hawke and Keating governments.

Another way that Howard strategically deployed the discourse of loss and recuperation was by reifying the digger whose embodiment in Weary Dunlop, a white heterosexual male, represents the core national values of mateship, egalitarianism and a fair go (Howard 1997). Such an embodiment implicitly excludes non-white migrants and Indigenous people from holding such core values. As Ghassan Hage argues 'it means making the ludicrous claim that other people in the world are less committed to them or actually committed to opposing values' (2003: 73). Howard's assertion of such nationally-held core values paradoxically excludes the power relations which support and nurture white dominance while simultaneously exalting its seemingly invisible existence. The core values which were displayed by diggers on the battle fields are never linked to their colonial origins and the part they played in claiming the nation as a white possession.

Like Howard, Paul Keating also deployed the digger in nationalist rhetoric but he did so in a different way. As Fiona Nicoll argues in her book *From Diggers to Drag Queens*, Keating's eulogy to the unknown soldier 'presented … a figure capable of drawing the diverse threads comprising contemporary Australian society together in tolerance' (2001: 29). In his attempt to reorient Australia's core values towards a postcolonial future, Keating walked the Kokoda trail in the ex-colony of Papua New Guinea, relocating the digger in the Pacific and away from Europe, also signifying Australia's role as a colonising nation. Though Keating was willing to acknowledge past injustices and presented an Australian national identity that did not privilege Britishness, he did not alter the perception that the nation is a white possession (Johnson 2002).

Prime Minister Howard has visited the majority of overseas Australian war memorials where his attendance and conveyance of respect were televised to the nation. In particular, his visit to French battlefields signified to the nation that he had been touched by war through carrying to the site a diary belonging to a member of his family. Promoting his family's wartime contribution assists in legitimating his authority as an Australian leader of the nation and vicariously links him to the digger tradition. Howard strategically deploys the digger, connecting the First World War to East Timor and then Iraq to substantiate our involvement in war; it is no coincidence that all our soldiers are now referred to as diggers. He will be at ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli, when Australia's latest contingent of armed forces, who will be under the command of the British, arrives in Muthanna province, Southern Iraq on the 25th April (*The Weekend Australian,* 26–7 February 2005: 19). The icon of the digger defending all that his country represents, in the guise of protecting other people's land and sovereignty, reaffirms in the national imaginary that the nation is a white possession. Similarly, the link between the digger and his British roots will be performed through Prince Charles presiding over the Gallipoli ceremonies this year.

Ghassan Hage argues that this apparent sense of loss and affirmation of white Australian heritage is tied to the perception that there was an assault on Australo-Britishness and its importance to the way in which people perceive their sense of belonging. He argues that white Australia's sense of loss is directly connected to what he terms '*governmental belonging'*. This involves

> the belief that one has a right over the nation, … the belief in one's *possession* of the right to contribute (even if only by having a legitimate opinion with regards to the internal and external politics of the nation) to its management such that it remains 'one's home' (Hage 1998: 46 my emphasis).

The right to possess is inextricably tied to perceiving the nation as a white possession. As Hage illustrates, during the years when multiculturalism was policy-driven, a white middle-class exerted their governmental belonging to give voice to their aspirations and ideals on being cosmo-multicultural. The 'cosmo-multiculturalist' could be distant from the material reality of multiculturalism but appreciate and enjoy the aesthetic interaction

and food (1997:118-146). Extending Hage's argument, the cosmo-multiculturalist could support the granting of native title because the law and government limited the material reality for Indigenous people and Indigenous sovereignty rights were not granted. White possession was understood as not being threatened by these concessions. The discourse of loss and recuperation was in response to a split and crisis within whiteness producing a sense of declension and melancholy that gave impetus to recentring white possession.

That such a sense of loss of governmental belonging is underpinned by the belief that the nation is a white possession is evident in the recent High Court decision in the native title claim of the Yorta Yorta people (Moreton-Robinson 2005). The High Court consolidated its legal and political resistance to native title by creating judicial and legal impediments that were presented as though they were race blind. Yet, the origin and assertion of property law in Australia continues to be based on racial domination and white possession. The denial of the Yorta Yorta's native title was based on a regime of statutory interpretation that usurped the common law property rights of Indigenous people. Pearson argues that 'it is the fact of occupation that excites recognition and protection by the common law. Possession is the conclusion of law that follows from the fact of occupation…it is the occupation of land that the common law recognises and protects in the first instance' not traditional laws and customs (2003: 22). Traditional laws and customs identify entitlement and territory, allocate rights, interests and responsibilities within communal possession and regulate their exercise by community members. According to Pearson

> When you approach the question of what continues after annexation by answering the rights and interests established by traditional law and custom – rather than by answering that it is the right to occupy land by authority of, and in accordance with, one's traditional laws and customs – this has profound implications for the way in which one conceptualises native title and ultimately, how one deals with proof (2003: 25).

According to Pearson on the basis of the fact of occupation, under Australian common law, the Yorta Yorta proved their native title. In effect, the High Court's decision assumed 'only white possession and occupation of land was validated and therefore privileged as a basis for property rights' (Harris 1995: 277–8). The High Court refuses the continuity of Indigenous sovereignty as the precondition and genesis of all concomitant rights, interests, entitlements, responsibilities, obligations, customs and law. In doing so, the High Court imputed reified white social standards to the Yorta Yorta which 'not only denied their right to historical change but also the reality of their paradoxical continued existence' in white Australia (Torres & Mulin 1995: 186). The perception that the nation is a white possession was visible in this decision.

The Return to Britishness

Since assuming power in 1996, Howard has given numerous speeches outlining the Australian core values of 'fairness', 'tolerance', 'equality', 'mateship', 'down-to-earth common-sense', 'decency' and 'a commitment to democracy' (Hage 2003: 70–3). These values in one form or another are echoed in the literature on Britishness and Australian national identity. There is consensus that they are the core white values of the nation. For Howard, and writers such as Miriam Dixson, these values 'hold' the nation and they need to be reaffirmed and their social capital enhanced.

A common thread woven through the literature is that Australian national identity has been shaped by British values shared by convicts, explorers and pioneers, the nation's founding ancestors. Their ethnic origins are acknowledged as being English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh, but collectively they constitute the British. It is often argued that the form of Britishness that developed in Australia was homogenous due to the lack of overt class barriers, the shared experience of immigration or transportation and the struggle to survive in a harsh and difficult landscape. This distinctly Australian and homogeneous form of Britishness is racialised as being Anglo-Saxon (English), Anglo-Celtic (English and Irish) or the British patriotic race (English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh). Deploying these racial categories in this way suggests that there were a number of different races operating in Australia which in effect conflates ethnicity with race and masks the homogeneity of whiteness that developed through the spread of Empire (Allen 1994). So while whiteness masked the ethnic heterogeneity of British immigrants in the service of the egalitarian myth up to the latter years of the twentieth century, today the egalitarian myth that Australia is a 'tolerant society' is deployed to mask the persistently privileged position of whiteness

and its possession of the nation which simultaneously disavows Indigenous sovereignty.

Representations of Britishness take a number of forms in historical narratives written since the late 1990s. In their respective articles in an issue of the *Journal of Historical Studies*, Neville Meaney and Stuart Ward illustrate that Australia has a British inheritance consisting of economic, cultural and political affiliation with Britain until the late 1960s. Australians share with the British kinship and familial ties and this is why they supported Britain in the two world wars, why they continued to trade with the motherland even when it was not in their best interests and why they thought Britain's protection would continue. It was only after Britain decided to invest its trading future in Europe that Australia sought trade and security in the arms of the United States (Ward 2001: 104; Meaney 2001: 89). Meaney and Ward both fail to acknowledge Australia's British inheritance resulting from the spoils of colonialism and British law which provided the context for the assumption of white possession of the nation and the denial of Indigenous sovereignty. The separation of Australia's institutional affiliations with Britain may have been born of necessity in the 1960s, but that did not result in the same affiliations being established with Asia; instead they were forged with another imperialist white nation.

According to Tara Brabazon in *Tracking the Jack*, threads of British culture have woven the fabric of the Australian nation. Australia's British inheritance manifested in our form of government, education, legal and industrial systems and is signified through the incorporation of the Union Jack in both the flags of New Zealand and Australia. Brabazon's excellent book traces the various forms Britishness took in its colonies, acknowledging the role of colonisation in shaping their content. However, she does not extend the implications to engage with white possession and Indigenous sovereignty. In *Scatterlings of Empire*, an issue of the *Journal of Australian Studies*, Amanda Nettelbeck illustrates how British migrants who came to Australia in the 1880s envisaged their task as being the establishment of a new colony for Britain. She presents them as 'pioneers' who, through hard work and determination, contributed to the development of the nation, making it their own. (A similar portrayal is being represented in the current series *The Colony* on SBS television.) What is clear in Nettelbeck's work, though not argued, is how these attributes instilled a sense of possession that was connected to, but separated from Indigenous dispossession.

In his recent essay *Made in England: Australia's British Inheritance*, David Malouf argues that, essentially, the values Australians inherited from Britain involve

> [a] low church puritanism and fear of the body and its pleasures, British drunkenness; British pragmatism and distrust of theory; British philistinism and dislike of anything showy, theatrical, arty or 'too serious'; British good sense and the British sense of humour (Malouf 2003: 39).

According to Malouf, these attributes are tied to a habit of mind that is essentially Anglo-Saxon.

> One that prefers to argue from example and practice rather than principle; that is happy, in a pragmatic way, to be in doubt as to why something works so long as it does work; is flexible, experimental, adaptive, and scornful of all those traps it sees in habit and rule (2003: 43).

Malouf simultaneously disaggregates Anglo-Saxons into being British but does not explain why this conceptual shift is made. A racialised category (Anglo-Saxon) is constituted as a nationalist category (British). So Malouf understands that there is a relationship between race and nation but does not extend his analysis to engage with how Australia's inherited values were racialised, that is whitened, in the process of becoming a nation. Instead he argues that a racialised habit of mind informed these values, one which is tolerant and finds expression in the form of English used by Australians. Malouf argues further that Australian English is derived from late-Enlightenment English and as such it is 'purged of all those forms of violent expression that had led men to violent action' (Malouf 2003: 47–8). It is moderate language grounded in reason, negotiation and compromise that created a form of social interaction in Australia, which tempered extremism and kept 'the worst sorts of violence at bay'. It is the language of Australian literature, courts and the education system. What Malouf does not acknowledge is that this language is also tied epistemologically to a possessive investment in whiteness. Binary oppositions and metaphors had, by the eighteenth century, represented blackness within the structure of the English language as a symbol of negation and lack. Indigenous people were categorised

as nomads as opposed to owners of land, uncivilised as opposed to being civilised, relegated to nature as opposed to culture. In Australian history books, the violence continued in written expression by denying Indigenous sovereignty through portrayals of peaceful settlement, not invasion and war. Yet Australian nationalism is now heavily invested in the tradition and memories of war and the defending and taking of possession, albeit in other countries (Nicoll 2001).

Miriam Dixson, in *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity—1788 to the Present*, argues that Australia's British inheritance manifested in a core Anglo-Celtic culture primarily derived from the English and Irish free immigrants and convicts. This core culture was 'shaped to a disproportionate extent not just by the politics but by the entire folkways of founding generations' (Dixson 1999: 24). She notes that it was the ideas and practices associated with authority, work, freedom, liberty, individualism, community, equality and gender that formed this core identity. She argues that whether the narrative is about bush pioneers, battlers and farmers or the 'noble' proletariats, they share common values. They involve 'decency, a dedicated practicability and sense of finitude and a commitment to fairness which, as in all cultures where it appears, is a commitment within limits' (Dixson 1999: 30). Dixon's preoccupation with core Anglo-Celtic values that 'hold' and affirm the nation has the effect of reducing Indigenous dispossession to a mere blemish on the historical record. For Dixson, whiteness does not appear to be one of the limits to making commitments which are fair and equitable through its possession of the nation.

Dixson and Malouf, among others, espouse it was the founding ancestors' conquering of the landscape that shaped these values, for they had to battle flood, fire, disease, famine and drought in contributing to the spread of Empire. There is also agreement among scholars of Britishness that the Australian nation in the latter part of the twentieth century was changed by the introduction of multiculturalism. Some perceive this as a positive thing, though they give little explanation as to why this is so. Others perceive it in terms of loss associated with the core values of the nation but the specificities of what has been lost is not addressed—leaving the sense that white people feel this way because there are too many racialised 'others' here who are 'taking over'. Regardless of whether multiculturalism is perceived as a threat or promise, however, the nation must first be believed to be a white possession.

The discourse of loss and recuperation implicitly underpins studies of Britishness in contemporary Australia derived from the testimonials of British migrants who arrived after the 1940s. These studies identify similar values to those contained in historical narratives. Perseverance, struggle, self-reliance and adaptability are encapsulated in the icon of the battler and echoed in the respective work of A James Hammerton, Catherine Coleborne and Alastair Thomson. Hammerton and Coleborne reveal British migrants have a sense of being 'left out' of the migration experience of multicultural Australia. Alastair Thomson concurs that 'though the British continued to be the most numerically significant migrant group, the British migrant experience was not central' to Australia's migration story (2001: 106). They agree that the apparent cultural and political similarity of British migrants to the mainstream has worked against their inclusiveness in the story of migration. Hammerton and Coleborne argue that while the testimonies disclosed that there were two competing narratives: one of 'misery and failure', the other of 'vindicated struggle and success', on the whole the dominant tale is one of 'successful struggle'. Similarly, Thomson's work illustrates how British migrants were successful in coming to terms with 'a new physical and cultural environment' (2001: 114).

Jon Stratton (2000: 47) argues that British migrants' sense of being overlooked in the migration story is directly linked to feelings of loss and a perceived decline in their ideological status as non-migrants and thus more authentically Australian. These feelings are connected to the Hawke and Keating governments' attempt to shift

> the thinking about Australia itself from the idea that it is some sort of offshoot of British society in the southern Pacific to seeing Australia as being, and always having been, engaged in, and to some extent moulded by, the South Asian region (2000: 23).

Stratton argues that British migrants' response to being overlooked is tied to the new self-ethnicisation being expressed in the form of associations, festivals and pubs. Sara Wills and Kate Darian-Smith take issue with Stratton arguing that these performative and symbolic displays of Britishness are not so much a form of empowerment through ethnicisation but

> [r]ather they can be seen as the attempted remobilisation by an uneasy but socially empowered group of a heightened public presence for their conception of history, culture and nationhood … in this process, British ethnicity is positioned as 'other' — although certainly not as 'alien'—to the mainstream (Wills & Darian-Smith 2003: 67).

Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis's study of British migrants in South Australia extend the findings of Wills and Darian-Smith. They agree that British migrants do not perceive themselves as 'foreign or strange' but argue that they perceive migrants and Indigenous people as continuing foreigners or strangers who do not belong to the nation. It is British migrants' whiteness that enables a sense of being part of the core of the nation. Schech and Haggis further argue that

> [t]he British migrant's expectation of fitting in was predicated on their knowledge of Australia as an extension of British whiteness. The presence of family members already in Australia tended to reinforce the idea of Australia as a member of the white Commonwealth family. Despite the long journey, moving to Australia felt to many like moving next door. None of our respondents who were adults at the time of migration recall fear or trepidation commonly associated with migration to an unknown place, even though few had detailed information on Australian life and environment. They just knew it was a place they could go (2004: 6).

The discourse of loss and recuperation is expressed in contemporary British migrants' narratives as an exclusion from the migration story, a change in their dominant ideological status as non-migrants and a remobilisation around their ethnicity as a recuperative strategy to claim a unique space within Australia's migration history. Simultaneously they understand that they are part of the core or mainstream because of their race. However, the mobilisation around British ethnicity signifies a split within Australian whiteness because British migrants' inclusion in the narrative of Australian migration history works to separate them from the history of Indigenous dispossession. This is in spite of the fact that their migration is one of the benefits they accrue from that history. They feel included in the nation because prepossession has been claimed on their behalf, hence their implicit understanding that the nation is a white possession.

Whiteness and Indigenous Dispossession: Beyond Britain

Anne Curthoys argues that 'Australian popular historical mythology stresses struggle, courage and survival, amidst pain, tragedy and loss'. It is 'a history of suffering, sacrifice and defiance in defeat' which unfolds as narratives of victimisation (1999: 2–3). Similarly, the literature on colonial Britishness expressed through the bush battler, the pioneer, the explorer and the convict place these founding ancestors as struggling against the landscape. Thus, the landscape stands in as the oppressor in these narratives of victimisation and a displacement occurs; the violence committed against Indigenous people is disavowed. It is the landscape which must be conquered, claimed and named not Indigenous people, who, at the level of the subconscious are perceived to be part of the landscape and thus not human. By creating the landscape as oppressor, the values and virtues of achieving white possession can be valorised and Indigenous dispossession can be erased; the mythology of peaceful settlement perpetuated and sustained. As Ken Inglis illustrates in his book *Sacred Places*, despite the landscape holding memories of colonial land wars, conflicts between black and white are seldom commemorated (1998: 21). The values and virtues associated with overcoming an oppressive landscape are not easily recuperated when there is evidence of white inhumanity. As they became part of Australian national identity these values and virtues are underpinned by the denial of violent invasion. Therefore the shaping of national identity cannot be detached from white possession of the nation and the denial of Indigenous sovereignty wars. This is why in the 'history wars' the virtue of white possession and denial of Indigenous sovereignty are inextricably woven into these debates about the nation's history.

As I have argued elsewhere, during the years of frontier wars and subsequent occupation, it was the intersection between race and property that played a definitive role in constructing and affirming white domination and economic success at the cost of Indigenous racial and economic oppression (Moreton-Robinson 2005). The incarceration, removal and extermination of Indigenous people were validated by regimes of common law based on the assumption that terra nullius gave rise to white sovereignty. 'Only white possession and occupation of land was validated and therefore privileged as a basis for property rights' and national identity

(Harris 1995: 277–8). The white nation cannot exist as such without land and clearly defined borders; it is the legally defined and asserted territorial sovereignty that provides the context for national identifications. In this way *terra nullius* indelibly marks configurations of national identity. This is evident in Australian films ranging from *The Sentimental Bloke* through to *Walkabout*, and including *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *The Last Wave*, *Crocodile Dundee*, *The Man from Snowy River*, '*Mad Max 2* , *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and *The Castle,* where myths of national belonging and identity are clearly tied to land, disconnected from the continuity of Indigenous sovereignty. Representations of Indigenous people in these films are through ghostly images or nomadic props appearing and then disappearing within the landscape. Although *The Castle* purported to offer something else, it lampooned the *Mabo* decision in the common law, and proceeded to reinscribe white possession. Refracted in this fantasy of film are representations of whiteness taking centre stage in the narrative of adversity, through virtue, intelligence, resilience, loss and hard work, effectively disavowing Indigenous sovereignty.

The assumption that the nation is a white possession is evident in the relationship between whiteness, property and the law which manifested itself in the latter part of the nineteenth century in the form of comprehensive discriminatory legislation tied to national citizenship (Markus 1995: 238). Colonial and subsequent governments legitimated the appropriation of Indigenous lands, racialised incarceration and enslavement and limited naturalised citizenship to white immigrants (Lipsitz 1998). While blackness was congruent with Indigenous subjugation and subordination, whiteness was perceived as being synonymous with freedom and citizenship. The right to determine who was allowed into the country and therefore who could belong was exercised by a white male British constituency at the heart of the nation. It was whiteness, not Anglo-Celticity or Anglo-Saxoness, that served to unify the nation.

The social reproduction of whiteness was legalised through the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* and the white Australia policy, which, until the 1940s, gave preference to white British, Canadian, American or New Zealand migrants (Markus 1995). In this way the law accorded 'whiteness actual legal status converted an aspect of identity into an external object of property, moving whiteness from privileged identity to a vested interest.' (Harris 1998: 104). The Australian definition of 'white' was expanded to include a variety of Eastern and Central European refugee groups by 1949. Stratton argues that the Australian usage of white covered all the people in Europe who 'were technically thought of as white … the geographical definition of European had come … to equate with the racial classification of white' (1999: 177). The integration of various Europeans into a white Australian identity, coalesced around Anglo norms, was enabled by a worldview that defined Indigenous people up until the 1960s as non-citizens. Despite being revoked in 1973, the white Australia policy continued in immigration practice for many years. 'The courts played an active role in enforcing this right to exclude … in that sense the courts protected whiteness as they did any other form of property' (Harris 1995: 283).

Conclusion

Contemporary and historical narratives of Britishness and Australian national identity reveal that the values required to establish the nation as a white possession are those that were also required to dispossess Indigenous people of their lands. That these values can be linked across generations of those who trace their ancestry through Britishness is evidence of the perseverance of a white national identity and its possessiveness. Through the law, politics and culture the nation has been created as a white possession. 'White [Australians] are encouraged to invest in whiteness, to remain true to an identity that provides them with resources, power and opportunity' and to adhere to narratives that valorise their past and their present (Lipsitz 1998: vii). Not all white Australians benefit from whiteness in the same way and some resist profiteering, but Australian national identity is predicated on retaining the benefits of colonial theft on the one hand, while exalting a sense of tolerance and fair play on the other. Britishness has metamorphosed into Australian national identity and culture but Indigenous sovereignty continues, through the presence of Indigenous people and their land, haunting the house that Jack built, shaking its foundations and rattling the picket fence.

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WHO WILL I BECOME? THE MULTIPLE FORMATIONS OF AUSTRALIAN WHITENESS

SUVENDRINI PERERA

Freemantle, 2005

The body of this essay reproduces a talk presented at a forum, 'A Treaty for All of Us',[1] held in mid-2001, before the conflagrations of September 11 and related events shifted, perhaps permanently, the terms of domestic political debate. It was a time of some optimism: in 1998 Senator Brian Harradine had 'blinked' on amendments to native title legislation in response to the *Wik* decision, hoping to avert a 'race election'.[2] Few would have credited that Australia's most obvious race election since 1901 was yet to come, or that, like the election of a hundred years earlier, and almost as openly, it would centre on barring entry to a group of non-white people. A seemingly marginal event, the arrival of a few hundred asylum seekers, served as an occasion to powerfully concentrate the sovereign authority of the state and consolidate a national identity reaffirmed as Anglo-Australian, thus completing a shift in the landscape of race relations that had been signalled since 1996 (Perera & Pugliese 1997).

As I revisit my talk four years later, the sovereignty of Anglo-Australia has been reaffirmed and reinforced not only domestically, through the effective overturning of the *Wik* judgment and other related moves against Indigenous sovereignty, but also by new forms of self-assertion throughout the region. These developments bear out Aileen Moreton-Robinson critical insight about how the Australian state's appropriation of Aboriginal sovereignty grounds and enables its hegemonic moves in the surrounding region (Moreton-Robinson 2004). This process also works reciprocally: the triumphant performance of Australian sovereignty abroad through set pieces such as the boarding of the Tampa (Rajaram 2003; Perera forthcoming) and the heightened emphasis on national security in turn license and reinforce an uncompromising stance on internal issues of Indigenous self-determination, now cast as divisive and a potential threat to the security and stability of the state.

In 2005 talk of a treaty has all but disappeared from mainstream public debate. Reconciliation as a guiding principle for relations between coloniser and colonised has been replaced by the doctrine of mutual obligation, and some Indigenous communities must contract how often children wash their faces before having access to basic services. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) has been summarily abolished and an unelected and largely impotent advisory body put in its place. The violence of colonisation—either on the frontier or in missions where the ways of whiteness were inculcated into the children of the Stolen Generations—has been denied and discredited in the minds of many because of an intensive campaign by the whitewashing school of history. Buoyed by some successes in the first bout of 'the history wars', the purveyors of whitewash now turn their attention to the white Australia policy. The quaint proposition being put forward is that the white Australia policy was really a form of 'civic patriotism' in defence of an independent egalitarian democracy and that 'Australia is not, and never has been, a racist country' (Windschuttle 2004: 5).

As federation emerges as a new site for the whitewashing of Australian history, Shankaran Krishna's discussion of the drive for racial purity in newly independent South Asian states offers some insight into the moment of federated Australia's separation from the mother country:

> The story of what once happened in Europe constitutes the knowledge that empowers state elites as they attempt to fashion their nations in the image of what

> are considered successful nation states … Both the past and the future become an imitative and thankless quest to prove that supremely unworthy maxim: 'We are as good as …' Premised on this narrative of what once happened 'out there,' post colonial elites attempt to remake the recalcitrant clay of plural civilizations into lean, hypermasculine, and disciplined nation-states. I consider postcolonial anxiety to be this attempt at replicating historical originals that are ersatz to begin with (2000: xix).

The newly independent Australian state not only attempted to replicate the ersatz racial purity of Europe through its policies for elimination, by a barrage of means, of the Indigenous population, its first pieces of legislation in the new federal parliament were the Immigration Restriction Act, targeting non-white migration, and the Pacific Islands Laborers Act, designed to end the presence of Melanesian labour in the cane fields. Further Acts prevented non-European residents functioning as citizens (Reynolds 2003: xi). In *North of Capricorn*, Henry Reynolds argues that these Acts of parliament were intended not only to keep out further non-white arrivals but to 'legislatively choke … to death' an 'existing, dynamic and successful multi-racial society in the northern towns' (xi).

In the terms of David Goldberg's distinction between racial states and racist states (2002: 2), the constitution of the racially exclusionary state, 'White Australia,' was an occasion where whiteness was manifested as a palpable, material and eminently quantifiable category against which those to be excluded were measured, rather than one that functioned as an implicit structuring presence. The state and the bodies of its citizens were explicitly constructed in and through their relation to whiteness, establishing a hierarchy of belonging and entitlement. It is important to note that the definition and measure of Australian whiteness was, from the outset, derived and asserted in relation to its *multiple racial others*, rather than to a single reference point. Spatial as well as racial hierarchies came into play in positioning the subjects of the nation against its asymmetrical non-white others, indigenes and aliens.

Australian whiteness in its constitutive as well as its ongoing formations then is established by complex maneuvers and machinations that do not operate in a binary register of black and white, but through defining a range of categories of difference and otherness against the yardstick of whiteness. This is evidenced, for example, in the debates relating to the presence of different groups of non-white labour in Australia at the time of federation. Tracking the arrival of the earliest group of indentured labourers from what is now Sri Lanka in Bundaberg and Mackay in 1882 reveals a cluster of interactions in a deeply racialised, polychromatic landscape marked by the dispossession of Aboriginal people from the land, the increasing opposition to the use of 'blackbirded' Melanesian labour on the cane plantations and hostility towards Chinese miners on the gold fields (Weerasooriya 1988). The following comment by the member for Mackay indicates the way in which existing racial and class categories were reworked in attempts to position the new arrivals:

> The Cingalese who recently arrived do not appear charmed with the vastness of the prospect set before them. ... They do not consider that 20 pounds a year affords much margin for profit. The extravagance of some of these Asiatics is positively appalling … The question ... is whether or not the importation of Coolies will injure the white inhabitants. The cry of Queensland for the white men does not seem unreasonable when read by the light of recent events. The Coolie, it would seem, is not a simple child of nature. He has received an education. The few that have come in contact with the tradesmen of Mackay have rather astonished these worthies. There is great fluency in English and a competent knowledge of mental arithmetic. This is dangerous. They will not and cannot be circumscribed in the nature of their employment. The class of Cingalese who have honoured us with their presence have souls above Chinese labour. In fact they appear to be intelligent, well trained artisans. ... We cannot have that class of men (Weerasooria: 144).

The passage suggests the anxious and intricate calibrations at work on the precise degrees of 'danger' and 'injury' posed by specific raced and classed groups to 'the white inhabitants'. The 'Cingalese' (in fact an ethnically mixed groups of workers from the then Crown Colony of Ceylon) are inserted into a racialised scale of desirability for non-white labour that includes Aboriginal and Islander peoples

as well as Chinese, Kanak and Indian workers. The scale works downwards from the so-called 'simple child of nature' as a series of racial types—the *noble savage,* the *lazy native,* the *wily Asiatic, the luxurious oriental*—jostle and collide, and are worked and reworked in exchange with the specific fears and desires of white Australian nationalism in the years leading up to federation.

Australian whiteness studies as it has been constituted to date has little to say about these complex histories of racial formation. A recent issue of the journal *Borderlands*, dedicated to the topic of whiteness studies, for example, focused exclusively on relationships between Indigenous and Anglo-Australians, passing over the interlocking racial and ethnic hierarchies and multiple spatialities that structure and produce Australian whiteness (Riggs 2004). While the issue contained many fine essays, its omissions indicate the extent of the conceptualising, theorising and historicising work that remains to be done in the unpacking of Australian whiteness.

The paper below, which retains its spoken tone, was an attempt to articulate the role that non-white migrant stories and itineraries can play in reopening a seemingly known and familiar national history, denaturalising its assumptions and disclosing its underlying formations. I contribute the paper to this inaugural issue of the journal of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association in the spirit of David Goldberg's reminder of the role of whiteness studies:

> The salient point … is not the self-absorption of whiteness in its own demise, as is so much the case with whiteness studies, but the undoing of states of racial being and forms of governmentality in their global profusion. The aim is to deroutinize and desystematize interlocking worlds of race historically produced and the racially figured exclusions and derogations they entail (Goldberg 2002: 264).

Who Will I Become?
Sydney, May 2001

James Baldwin, a writer whose profound understanding of whiteness I don't think we have yet learned fully to appreciate, once said that when it comes to matters of race and power, our ignorance is 'not merely phenomenal, but sacred, and sacredly maintained' (Baldwin 1971). In the sense in which Baldwin uses it here I take sacred ignorance to mean an ignorance that is enshrined, sanctioned, blessed, endorsed, affirmed, even required, by the institutions of a society—institutions like schools, media, government, the church and, of course, the constitution.

In this federation centenary year we might remember the role of the 1901 parliament and constitution in consolidating sacred ignorance. Whereas some, including Prime Minister Howard, have argued that the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples was transferred to the Australian state at federation, thus wiping out any legal and political claim by Indigenous peoples to a treaty, this strikes me as, to say the least, a bizarre argument. It is a strange act of conferring sovereignty and citizenship in a democratic nation that works to erase people's most basic rights, as happened to Indigenous people in the decades that followed 1901. As Geoff Clarke succinctly puts it: 'How can it ... be said that Aborigines gave up any sovereign rights we had to the parliaments and the courts through the formation of the Constitution in 1901' when Indigenous people 'were excluded from the discussions leading up to the establishment of the 1901 constitution?' And when indeed, 'the only reference to Aborigines in the 1901 constitution was to exclude them?' (Clarke 2000).

Some of you may remember the government sponsored TV commercials in the lead-up to the centenary of federation that celebrated the first Aboriginal cricket team to tour England in 1868. Tapping into popular mythologies of a nation of fun-loving good sports, the commercial asks: 'What kind of a country would have a national cricket team before it had a national parliament?' I want to ask in return: 'What kind of a country would represent as a "national team" people whose representatives played no role in the formation of that national parliament?' Certainly, a team of Indigenous cricketers from Victoria, captained by a white man, did tour England and play at Lords in 1868. But to represent the players of 1868 as a 'national team', and that team as the natural precursor to the achievement of self-government, is a wild travesty of the

power relations that characterised the formation of the Australian state.
None of the Indigenous team members, nor their descendants, would play any role as national subjects, *except by their exclusion*, in the process that culminated in the making of a federated state, 'Australia', in 1901. The year after the England tour the establishment of the 'Aborigines' Protection Board' marked a new era of systematised control over Indigenous peoples, and a series of legislative moves between 1877 and 1905 effectively excluded them from the rights and privileges of citizenship in the newly constituted state (Booth & Tatz 2000: 40–2). This kind of sacred ignorance of our institutions and history underpins and enables a wider ignorance in our society that is continually and actively reproduced. As in the example of these commercials, we are all implicated in the processes by which sacred ignorance is reproduced.

I do not exempt myself from this process. To tell you a little about my own sacred ignorance: I am a Tamil woman from Sri Lanka. Some of you may know about the ongoing civil war in that country for almost twenty years. Although I grew up in the hills, in the part of the country that is not being fought over, my family is from Jaffna in the north. When I listen to the radio or open the newspapers the place names that flash out at me are names from the stories told by my mother, those stories to grow up on, as Maxine Hong Kingston (1989: 5) describes them, that will shape everything we ever come to learn. I still find it very hard to comprehend that the places of my mother's stories are part of an actual war zone. It is difficult to describe the sense of dislocation experienced when a landscape that is an intimate part of your consciousness, your memory and being, is suddenly re-presented to you, in a largely indifferent public arena, as a war zone.

But this is something I didn't understand about Australia when I came here: that many of the places I have driven through, or casually hear about, are names in a war zone. And that they are places and names of a people's imagination and being from which they have been violently displaced. When I came here I knew that Australia, like Sri Lanka, had been part of the British Empire, and that it was trying to forge a new cultural identity. I was even, I confess, quite taken with films like *Breaker Morant* and *Gallipoli* that I had seen before I came here, films which seemed to examine the relationship of Anglo-Australians with British colonialism. But I don't think that before my migration I ever understood in anything other than a superficial sense, or that I once thought seriously about, the internal and ongoing colonisation of Indigenous Australians by the settlers and migrants to this country. And I didn't understand that as someone who migrated here what I was doing was consenting to, and literally *signing on* to, a system of colonisation. Not even my own experience of colonisation, on multiple levels, had alerted me to this.

I had to educate myself, and allow myself to be educated (or perhaps edu-ma-cated, as Ruby Langford Ginibi says, 1994: 52–3), to the responsibilities I had taken on by applying for a migrant visa to Australia. I can date the moment when my passage from sacred ignorance first began. It was in the mid-1980s, soon after I started working, at what was then called the Ethnic Affairs Commission in Sydney (before the present blissful dispensation when, presumably, the problem of ethnicity has been relegated to history, and we're all happy communities together).

Roberta Sykes had recently returned to Australia after completing her PhD at Harvard. She came to the Commission one day and talked about the need for non-Anglo migrants and Indigenous people to reach a treaty of understanding with one another. In this treaty, she suggested, non-Anglo migrants needed to acknowledge the racist arrangements they had entered into with the Australian state. Hearing Roberta Sykes speak about a treaty was the first time I consciously understood what I had consented to by the act of migration; and I also realised the need to act on the responsibilities laid on me by this understanding.

I'd like to introduce two questions I'll keep coming back to, questions posed in the United States by Julie Quiroz-Martínez: *Who will I become when I am naturalized? And how does what I become feed racism in the country I have come to?*

Here are some meanings for *naturalize* from the *Doubleday Dictionary:*

> Naturalize:
> 1. to confer the rights and privileges of citizenship upon, as an alien;
> 2. to adopt ... into the common use of a country or area;
> 4. to make natural;
> 5. to become as if native; adapt.

For us in Australia there is an enormous, irreconcilable, slippage between the first meaning, *to confer the rights and privileges of citizenship upon, as an alien*, and the final meaning, *to become as if native*. In Australia for the first sixty years of the hundred years of federation that some of us are celebrating this year, the citizen usurped the place of the native, and the native, by definition, could not be a citizen.

*Who will I become, **when** I become naturalised?* On one level this question recognises the exclusions and obstacles that operate for non-Anglo migrants and refugees around the process of gaining access to citizenship and its privileges. Before and since federation, through the various stages of the white Australia policy and through to the present, for many non-Anglo migrants and refugees the issues around which politicisation first occurs in Australia are immigration policy and access. In practice, and in the experience of many of us, the white Australia policy is not a bogey of the past. Since 1996 a series of measures have come into play to curtail the access of non-white arrivals, and most recently of asylum seekers, to Australia (Perera & Pugliese 1997). The policy of mandatory detention of certain categories of arrivals and asylum seekers is predicated on racist assumptions that resonate deeply with the history of white Australia. The racialised genealogy of the Australian prison, to employ a term used by Angela Davis, includes a number of forms of immigration control, quarantine and confinement for non-Anglo migrants (Davis 1998). The mandatory detention of asylum seekers belongs on this continuum of racialised punishment, which also includes the different forms of racialised incarceration of Indigenous people (Perera 2001).

Who do I become when I become naturalised? For non-Anglo migrants and refugees, however, our struggles around access to citizenship and residency rights cannot obscure the central question that inheres in the problematic term 'naturalised'. It seems to me that in our struggles for access to the institutions of citizenship non-Anglo Australians have a clear choice about the *forms* of citizenship we assume, in the sense both of something taken on and of something taken for granted, within the narrative of Australian nationhood.

At one of the recent Deakin lectures to celebrate the centenary of federation I heard Robert Manne, a child of World War II Jewish refugees, chart, as I have just done, a non-Anglo Australian's itinerary, or what he called a personal journey, of his slow emergence from this country's sacred ignorance about Indigenous peoples. In many ways it was a moving and illuminating account. But much as I respect the recent work Professor Manne has produced in this area, I must differ from the final position he reaches in his argument: that whereas the Australian state's history of dispossession of Indigenous peoples is a stark story of injustice and dispossession, for migrants and refugees it is a different story:

> Concerning the country which had offered my parents refuge and where I was born and which I loved, I had now two main thoughts, not one. For the immigrants to this country—from Britain and Ireland, from Europe, the Middle East and Asia—Australia had always been and still remained, despite the problems at the age of globalisation, one of the most attractive societies in human history—well-governed, liberal, law-drenched, tolerant, civil, democratic, spacious, prosperous, egalitarian in its ethos and so on. However for its Indigenous inhabitants, from the arrival of the British until the 1960s or beyond—it has been a site of real tragedy—of dispossession, loss of land, culture and language; of murder, disease and demoralization; of incarceration on missions and reserves, of racial condescension and contempt (Manne 2001).

'Neither column in this moral ledger', Manne concludes, 'will cancel the other out' (Manne 2001).

There are a number of points on which I want to complicate this account. Unlike Manne, I would argue that the experience of 'immigrants to this country' cannot be collectivised into a category that includes 'Britain and Ireland ... Europe, the Middle East and Asia' because the positioning of

these groups is constitutively and continuingly unequal, and provides asymmetrical access to the institutions of citizenship and civility. All non-Indigenous people in Australia, I have already said, are implicated in the dispossession of its original inhabitants, and bear the responsibility of working to end that dispossession. The binary categorisation of 'migrants' and 'indigenes', however, is inadequate because it ignores both the foundational violence of colonisation and federation and the complex ways in which processes of racialisation have constituted categories such as 'whites', 'blacks', 'natives', 'aliens' and 'citizens' ever since. Rather than conceptualising national history as a ledger book with entries on the debit and credit side for 'indigenes' and 'migrants', I suggest that a more complicated form of accounting needs to be made. I propose a somewhat different form of reckoning to Manne's: one in which our national history cannot be entered in symmetrical columns of good and bad, but where both perceived successes and failures are interdependent, and indeed inconceivable, without one another. In this reckoning the foundational moment of the Australian state, like some of its formative legislative acts, is conceptualised around a series of interlocking exclusions and restrictions directed against the racial others of the nation. These exclusions and restrictions put in place certain ongoing hierarchical relations of whiteness and Australian-ness. It is crucial to acknowledge these processes of racialisation and understand how they operate if we are serious about rethinking race relations in this country.

In her own Deakin lecture on federation, Marcia Langton noted that in 1901 'the background to the apparently parliamentary manner of the conventions was a world of violence, racist violence' (Langton 2001). This climate, which excluded Indigenous people from the conventions, was simultaneously one in which 'Alfred Deakin judged that the strongest motive for Federation was the desire that 'we should be one people and remain one people, without the admixture of other races' (Langton 2001). One of the foundational pieces of legislation of the new Australian parliament was the Immigration Restriction Act, the so-called white Australia policy. This legislation was a response to the perceived threat of Asian hordes from without, but what is perhaps less well understood is that it also was a response to the strong Asian presence *already* in the northern states.

This presence testifies to well established histories of prior contact between Indigenous peoples and their neighbours in Asian and Pacific societies. Learning more about these histories is one way of decentring the foundational claims of Anglo-Australia and complicating the binary black/white view of Australian history. Histories of contact between Indigenous and Asian peoples often long predated British arrival. As the historian Regina Ganter has described: 'The centuries-old contact of the northern coast, from Western Australia across Arnhem Land and into the Gulf of Carpenteria, with the trepang fishers of Sulawesi ... contests the way in which the time frame of Australian history takes the British presence as its cornerstone' (1999: i–ii). These forms of contact continued into the early years of colonisation, even as new forms of relations came into being.

The first arrivals from what is now Sri Lanka took place in 1882, when an ethnically mixed group of men (a few accompanied by their wives) were recruited to work as labourers in Bundaberg, Thursday Island, and later in Broome. White Australia's moves to contain and manage interactions between Indigenous peoples and other non-white populations within its racialised framework can be tracked through a series of legislative moves at state and Commonwealth levels—for example, in the debates accompanying the attempts to remove non-white labour from the sugar cane industry in Queensland and the pearling industry in Western Australia (the latter attempt was unsuccessful and pearling remained at least partially exempt from the white Australia policy). Similarly, a key piece of legislation, the Queensland *Aboriginal Protection Act and Restriction of Sale of Opium Act of 1897* carries inscribed even within its title, as Ganter has noted, 'a concern over Chinese–Aboriginal contact' (i). In a fascinating account of the attempt to implement the white Australia policy in the pearling industry in Broome, John Bayley describes the category crisis created for the racial bureaucracy in the years after federation by the presence of Asians in Australia: 'Most of the crew working on the luggers were coloured, but were they

aliens? Some had been in Australia prior to Federation, a few had been born in Australia, some were the offspring of the oldest inhabitants of all, the Australian Aborigines' (119).

The official ''concern' to prevent interconnection and 'contact' between Indigenous peoples and Asians in Australia needs to be understood as anything other than a set of bloodless debates around trade and economic issues from the distant past. I would like to read you an extract from the narrative of Ollie Smith who as a young woman growing up in the John of God Orphanage in Broome believed she had been abandoned by her father, a pearl diver from Kupang. Smith uncovered her story only when she gained access to her welfare files that 'held more secrets than I could have imagined' (Yu 1999: 66).

Sarah Yu describes how Ollie Smith's father, Wella Kalle 'was arrested and fined twenty pounds for cohabiting with Rita Smith, Ollie's "half-caste" mother.' Ollie's mother Rita was herself the daughter of an Aboriginal mother, Dora, whose husband was also deported for 'cohabiting', while Dora and their three children were institutionalised at Beagle Bay Mission. Following the same process for Rita's husband as for her father,

> the Native Affairs Department chose to make an example of Kalle to the Broome community, particularly to the "half-caste" women of Broome. ... Despite professing departmental duty of care for the Broome native population, little concern was shown for the fate of Rita and her child, whom Kalle had accommodated and had been fully supporting. Kalle was deported to Kupang in December 1951. After Ollie was born in 1951, Rita was left "high and dry" as a local Welfare district officer had predicted, and eventually, Ollie, at the age of three, was placed in a Broome orphanage. At six Ollie became a ward of the State under the Child Welfare Act 1947-1956 because she was not a "native-in-law."
>
> In 1995, after many inquiries, Ollie received a letter from her father and met him in Kupang. He told Ollie how he used to meet Rita in the back lane of her granny's house. ... He had loved her mother, and would have had more children if he had been able to stay (66–7).

The repeated institutionalisation of three generations of women, Dora, Rita and Ollie, and the repeated deportations of Ollie's father and grandfather, demonstrate the systemic connections and intersections between immigration policies and the racialised control and surveillance of the Indigenous population. Such a series of interconnected moves and policies was central to the production of the racialised subjects of the Australian state. This is not to suggest interchangeable processes of racialisation for Indigenous and other non-white peoples; on the contrary. But what is indicated here is the *interlocking* nature of the processes by which Australia's racialised others were constituted. The *different* ways in which these groups are racialised interlock to reinforce the power relations of white Australia, and the hierarchies of whiteness by which those relations were and are maintained.

Non-Anglo migrant histories that fail to recognise and unpack these hierarchies and their interdependence are in danger of simply reinscribing them. If non-Anglo and Asian-Australian histories have remained, as I suggested earlier, largely invisible in the master narrative of Australian history, a number of attempts have been made in recent years to uncover narratives of Asians in Australia. These histories are valuable in combating conventional histories of multiculturalism which place 'Asian migration' as a phenomenon of the 1970s, wiping out a range of older connections. But for non-Anglo and Asian-Australians, accessing these largely unfamiliar histories also raises a number of questions about *how* we chose to re-member our place against and in relation to other narratives of the nation. Can our re-membering or piecing together of histories sometimes serve the creation of a new national history, in which racist exclusion finally gives way to acceptance, a triumphalist narrative of progress in which non-Anglo histories are *naturalised* into some shiny mosaic of multiculturalism? In such a narrative the processes of racialisation and the racialised hierarchies that sustained and sustain dominant relations of power can only remain largely untouched.

Who will I become when I become naturalised? And how does what I become feed racism in the country I have come to? Instead of serving a triumphalist vision

of Australian history, in which multicultural stories become ultimately self-annihilating narratives of assimilation, I'd like to end by asking about the possibilities of cross-cultural histories of Indigenous and non-Anglo Australians and their ability to complicate, undermine and decentre the dominant narratives and authority of whiteness in Anglo-Australia. Such histories, especially between Asian-Australians and Indigenous peoples can both predate and overlap those of Anglo-Australia, providing different webs of connection and cross-cultural interaction, as well as different models of contracts, treaties and agreements between variously positioned groups.

One such attempt I have discussed elsewhere (Perera 2000) is Bruce Pascoe's novel *Ruby-eyed Coucal* (1996) where a legal challenge is mounted to the principle of *terra nullius* based on ancient trade and cultural links between China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the peoples of Arnhem Land. By writing a counter-history of international and regional relations prior to the imposition of *terra nullius*, Pascoe challenges the foundational authority of 'Australia' and its erasure of Aboriginal ownership of the land. Instead, he posits a pre-existing mesh of complex and sophisticated kinship, cultural and trade exchanges and treaties between the places we now know as West Papua, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the northern coast of Arnhem Land. Pascoe's novel thereby produces different models of how the sovereignty of the original inhabitants was recognised and treated with by regional states prior to 1788. It also reconfigures the space of Australia, not as an island entire of itself, but as made up of different cultural and national spaces which share histories and borders with other regional peoples and societies. In this way the text remakes time-lines, reshapes boundaries and redraws maps of affiliation and exchange. Such narratives think Australian history through other spatio-temporalities and, to draw on a term used by Marcia Langton (1995), suggest less 'toxic' possibilities for new forms of cultural relations in Australia, forms that complicate the dominant black-and-white view of history (Perera & Pugliese 1998).

Narratives like Pascoe's novel or the historical research of Ganter and Reynolds are important because they suggest some different directions and models for discussions of both Indigenous sovereignty and multiracial histories. If these sound like far-fetched or utopian contributions to the treaty debate, we might remind ourselves of the long years spent by Eddie Mabo in what many would have seen at the time as research highly unlikely to challenge the foundational principle of *terra nullius*.

In the space this forum has allowed me I have tried to reflect on some directions for non-Anglo-, and in particular Asian-Australian migrants and refugees, to think through processes of citizenship and naturalisation in Australia, and to ask how the narratives we produce can acknowledge the responsibilities we bear in the process of colonisation. Such narratives, it seems to me, are indispensable in any genuine discussion of a treaty for all of us: that is, a discussion that enables different voices and multiple positionalities to be articulated as part of the process leading to the acknowledgment of Indigenous sovereignty.

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Notes

[1] The Centenary Forum, 'A Treaty for All of Us' was held at the University of Technology, Sydney, on 31 May 2001. The other two forum speakers were Professor Marcia Langton and Justice Elizabeth Evatt. The forum chair was Professor Larissa Behrendt.

[2] On the threat of a 'race election' in 1998 see Pearson (2003) and *ATSIC News* (1998).

SETTLED AND UNSETTLED SPACES: ARE WE FREE TO ROAM?

IRENE WATSON

I want the reader to engage with a number of questions. They are questions to which I provide no answers. For I see that it is not up to me to provide the answers—the responses and the resolutions should come from the community. But how problematic is that? What and where is the community, and which community? The Aboriginal[1] community. But we are diverse, with many languages, different country and ways of being. When Aboriginal peoples' lives are destroyed, uprooted, and displaced, the call to community is to the gathering of broken and shattered pieces. So what Aboriginal community can be pieced together in this colonising space?[2] To take the point further, what kind of Australian community do we have in this same colonised space and to what extent does the force of homogeneity determine the evenness of the cultured landscape?

When we are speaking into a colonised space how are Aboriginal voices captured, echoed, ricocheted, distilled? Where does that voice of our old people go?

In looking at the question of settled and unsettled spaces: who is it that is free to roam? What is the continuing Aboriginal connection over roamed spaces and what space do Aboriginal peoples occupy in this one nation-Australia? To what extent is our sovereign Aboriginal being accommodated by the nation state's sanctioned native titled spaces? (see Watson 2002: 253).[3] Who am I when I stand outside native title recognition, who am I—the untitled native? Do I remain the unsettled native, left to unsettle the settled spaces of empire?[4]
When thinking of Aboriginal community, who are we? Or in the suggestion of Indigenous to Australia, what thought predominates? Am I Aboriginal to myself; are we Aboriginal to ourselves? Or do we become part of the 'collective spirit' of the nation state, to become 'our' Australian Aborigine, then free to roam within the colonial spaces and identities as 'Australia's Aborigines'? But in that collection process, how much do I retain and 'own' of my sovereign Aboriginal self outside the body of my being? Am I free to roam across my country and to sing and to live with the land of my ancestors outside the body of my Aboriginal being/community? Or will I live the life of the sovereign self only within the mind, body and spirit, and in isolation from country and community? Left to the illusionary spaces of recognition within the settled colony. The sovereignty of the Aboriginal being forever a challenge to the settled spaces of the colony.

In returning to the opening questions I have posed: that is, in thinking of Aboriginal community who are we? What and where is the community, and which community? Community as constructed by native title processes or in what way? Are those questions now settled and layered by conquest and colonisation?

Does Truth Have a Colour?

Speaking or telling the black 'truth' of Australia's colonial history is to challenge white supremacist 'truths' of history. When Aboriginal people speak in opposition to white truths, we are accused of having a blinkered or 'black armband' view of history. Accusations of telling 'black lies' flared up when Aboriginal women spoke of the need to protect Aboriginal women's culture, law and country. Instead of the State of South Australia entering into negotiations towards a peaceful settlement, the Aboriginal women who were involved in the struggle to protect an important Aboriginal cultural site were accused of fabrication for the purpose of preventing development. The development in question was to build a bridge from the mainland at Goolwa to Hindmarsh Island. The State of South Australia held a Royal Commission inquiry into the truth or otherwise of Aboriginal women's business and the inquiry concluded there was no evidence to support the claim made (Watson 1998 & 1997). When another way

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of knowing the world (here black Aboriginal women's knowing) threatened white privilege and its intention to go forth and build its bridge, the white 'truth' prevailed. In some small way I make an offering of the truths as known to myself. It is an individual attempt to provide some of the pieces and to also untangle some of the knots, in the hope of providing some further openings or ways of looking beyond the limited horizon many believe is all there is. Other horizons exist.

Legitimizing White Supremacy

The belief in European supremacy legitimised the violent theft of all things Aboriginal—our lands, our lives, our laws and our culture —it was a way of knowing the world, a way which continues to underpin the continuing displacement of Aboriginal peoples.

The legal foundation of the Australian state was based on the white supremacist doctrine of *terra nullius*,[5] and the idea of backward black savages roaming over vast tracts of open wastelands. Until the High Court decision in *Mabo*,[6] *terra nullius* applied in Australian law. The doctrine applied even though Aboriginal people had been here for many thousands of years; our histories were long. *Terra nullius* made black invisible, the question of 'Aborigines' being free to roam was irrelevant, for we were in law non-existent.

Now that *terra nullius* is rejected in law and no longer applies as the legal foundation for Australia's settlement, how visible is the Aborigine and what is our capacity to roam the lands of our ancestors? In the aftermath of *terra nullius* what changed and what continues to go on as before? Speaking of colonialism and the possibility of its passing, Franz Fanon saw 'the smoking ashes of a burnt-down house after the fire has been put out, [but] which still threaten to burst into flames again' (Fanon 1971: 59). I ask the reader: in relation to Australia, has there even been an attempt to put the fire out? Or have we witnessed merely the illusion of change?

Is the land post-*Mabo* peacefully settled, allowing the freedom for all to roam? The answer depends on what space one situates, and we know or should know where those unsettled spaces were for Aboriginal peoples, and where they remain today. Look into prisons, and juvenile detention centres—what are the Aboriginal statistics? What capacity do Aboriginal peoples in custody even have to posit the question or speak of the answers?

Ziauddin Sadar writes:

> Colonialism was about the physical occupation of non-western cultures. Modernity was about displacing the present and occupying the minds of non-western cultures. Postmodernism is about appropriating the history and identity of non-western cultures as an integral facet of itself, colonising their future and occupying their being (Sadar 1998: 13).

How is the Australian 'native' placed in Sadar's analysis? We can trace a history from the appropriation of our Aboriginal lands, our displacement and movement onto reserve mission stations, and into prisons, to a displaced Aboriginal identity resisting absorption. In the process of absorption we are to be consumed by the state and its citizens and in their consumption of us, they are to become us. They anticipate coming into their own state of lawfulness through the consuming of our sovereign Aboriginality. In this colonising process of us becoming white and white becoming Indigenous, white settlement deems itself as coming into its own legitimacy, as whites come into the space of our freedom to roam as Aboriginal peoples over our Aboriginal places and spaces. We become cannibalised. But can we enter into a conversation on the cannibalism of our self, with the cannibal being, the cannibal who is yet to see and know itself in its eating of us? How does the cannibal recognise itself? Is there a safe conversational space where we can have a close encounter, without our own appropriation?[7]

How is it that we are Being Eaten?

There are many examples of appropriation, since the advent of colonialism in 1492. The most recent appropriation is in the form of biopiracy. Aboriginal knowledge is stolen and Aboriginal resources and knowledge marketed and profited upon.

Sadar makes reference to the occupation of our being. This can be seen along with the absorption of our Aboriginal being, and raises the question: how white are we, the Aborigine, becoming? And, or, what is the potential for the indigenisation of a white settled Australia? Germaine Greer, in her essay 'Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood' (Greer 2003), invites a rethinking of Aboriginality and the repositioning of the Australian state as an Aboriginal one. I don't disagree, it is a thought Aboriginal peoples have held for some time. Greer invokes the idea of Aboriginality coming into being through the sharing of traditions; this is a philosophical tradition that Aboriginal peoples have always lived by. It is a good suggestion for moving forward, but in this process of hybridisation what happens to the Aboriginal? Do we become cannibalised, digested and absorbed by a white settled Australia that is to become embodied in our black Aboriginal being?

Is there a need first to dissolve the borders between white and black? What happens to the overwhelming whiteness of this country and its freedom to roam? How do we, the minority, ensure Aboriginality? If we are cannibalised and utilised to Aboriginalise the majority, how do we as individuals and communities sustain our own vulnerable Aboriginality?

So how white is Australia, and is there any possibility of the blackening of Australia's soul, as Greer argues must occur? I wouldn't disagree that there must be an admission that whitefellers live in an Aboriginal country, and for the need to recognise Australia's 'inherent and ineradicable Aboriginality' (Greer 2003: 72). But what are its possibilities? The history of colonialism illustrates not only a denial of Aboriginal existence but also a refusal to embrace Aboriginal society; instead, in the past it has rejected it in all of its forms. So what is Greer suggesting? Is she appropriating Aboriginal history and identity as a site of white occupation? Who is Greer to speak and who can speak of such things? What is the role of the white 'commentator-expert', in the context of the silenced spaces of Aboriginal voice?

In speaking of the possibility of coming together, what may be required of us (the Aborigine)? To dissolve into whiteness? For that is what is currently required. Has anything altered that position? Have universal human rights found their way into our recognition? Has the purported recognition given by native title rights advanced our struggle to walk the land? How am I, the Aborigine, situated? What spaces do I, the unsettled native, have to roam? In settled native titled spaces? (Watson 2002: 253) Or, do we continue as we have since the time of Cook to dodge from the belly of genocide, resisting digestion and dilution?

Reconciling the Burning Fires and the Ghosts of Assimilation[8]

In the Australian government's current policy shift to the idea of 'mutual obligation', that is, the idea of Aboriginal communities and government becoming mutually responsible for the future development of communities, I see more a concern with returning to assimilation practices of the past. At the dawning of this new century, the Australian government parades its return to assimilation under the illusionary name of 'practical reconciliation'. But is it new or more of the same? Have the ghosts of assimilation returned? Did they ever leave us?

The Howard federal government has cunningly used the Australian reconciliation movement to subvert and contaminate its own popular force. The return to a more open approach to assimilation was dramatically revealed by Australia's Governor-General during a speech made whilst serving as the Governor of Western Australia, where he called for a greater distinction between 'full-blooded' and 'part-blooded' Aboriginal peoples (Price 2003: 26).

While many Aboriginal people have embraced and supported the reconciliation movement, there have been as many Aboriginal people again who did not, and many who asked critical questions, like what does reconciliation really mean? Will it provide homes for the homeless, food for the hungry, land for the dispossessed,

language and culture for those hungry to revive from stolen dispossessed spaces? How can you become reconciled with a state and its citizens who have not yet acknowledged your humanity, let alone your status as the first peoples of this conquered land? In considering moving forward, what lies before us? In looking ahead, Fanon wrote:

> The final settling of accounts will not be today nor yet tomorrow, for the truth is that the settlement was begun on the very first day of the war, and it will be ended not because there are no more enemies left to kill, but quite simply because the enemy, for various reasons, will come to realize that his interest lies in ending the struggle and in recognizing the sovereignty of the colonized people (1971: 113).

It is to the question of Aboriginal sovereignty that we are returned, to the question of an imposed and displaced Aboriginal sovereignty. Whiteness, white supremacy and Eurocentricity fuelled, and continues to fuel, the displacement of Aboriginal sovereignty. The end of this displacement is, as Fanon suggests, in its recognition or its reinstatement.

However, in moving the Aboriginality of Australia forward, white Australia has never in its colonial history embraced this idea. Today the words 'Aboriginal sovereignty' have become the unspeakable. Aboriginal sovereignty is feared as posing a threat to the security of Australians and their assumed 'territorial integrity'. Instead, we become again the internal enemy. Is Aboriginal sovereignty to be feared by Australia in the same way as Aboriginal people fear white sovereignty and its patriarchal model of state, one which is backed by the power of force? Or is Aboriginal sovereignty different, as I have argued in other writings, for there is not just one sovereign state body but hundreds of different sovereign Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal sovereignty is different from state sovereignty because it embraces diversity, and inclusivity rather than exclusivity. Aboriginal sovereignty poses a solution to white supremacy in its deflation of power, and here, as I repeatedly do, I refer to the story of the frog.

In the beginning there lived a giant frog, who drank up all the water until there was no water left in the creeks lagoons rivers lakes and even the oceans. All the animals became thirsty and came together to find a solution that would satisfy their growing thirst. The animals decided the way to do this was to get the frog to release the water back to the land, and that the 'proper' way to do this was to make the frog laugh. After much performing one of the animals found a way to humour the frog, until it released a great peal of laughter. When the frog laughed it released all the water, it came gushing back to the land filling creeks, riverbeds, lakes and even the oceans. As the community of animals once again turned their gaze to the frog they realised they had to make the large frog transform into a smaller one, so that it could no longer dominate the community. They decided to reduce the one large frog to many much smaller frogs, so that the frog would be brought to share equally with all other living beings (Watson 2002a).[9]

The frog celebrates diversity of community and is different from the idea of the homogenous state, with its trend for fast tracking the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into a white racist capitalist culture. Aboriginal sovereignty is also different from Greer's vision of a national process of Aboriginalisation, one which is capable of being led by expatriate white intellectuals.

What Will we Look Like in the Future?

What should we be prepared for? With the continued policies of assimilation, will we return to policies of protection of those Nungas not yet deemed 'white', or sufficiently civil, in their interactions with white Australia? How did we get here? The war on terrorism escalates, coinciding with a return to assimilation, a denial of a black history, a denial of the impact of colonialism, and a denial of self-determination. We stand in a time where the Australian public believes justice has been delivered, and that Aborigines have received sufficient handouts, in the form of native title and 'self-governance' in the form of the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Commission, (ATSIC).[10] As a

corollary, the public now supports the winding back and demise of ATSIC, and further limits to native title.

Currently the call to right past wrongs is losing volume in a climate where to speak of Aboriginal rights is to be switched off from, yawned at, to have the subject changed to that of a more 'deserving victims' agenda. Refugees for example. Here I am not reducing the refugee position but merely illustrating the position we have come to in our struggle for recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty. I see the state as playing one crisis situation off against another, so as to displace the position of Aboriginal peoples to that of the lesser deserving victim,[11] so that we are now characterised by the state and the media as the ungrateful native,[12] or so inherently violent and dysfunctional that we are in need of supervision and protection from ourselves. Self-determination is demonised as being the cause of the Aboriginal problem. Support for these views is found in the work of white anthropologist, Peter Sutton, who has advised government in the area of Aboriginal land claims for more than 20 years. According to Sutton:

> some behaviour, such as high levels of violence involving both men and women, existed well before the impact of colonisation, both in sanctioned collective forms (as in formal dispute resolution through duelling and warfare) and in forms less subject to such control (as in the beating by their husbands) (2001: 134).

Sutton supports his argument that violence against women occurred prior to colonisation, referring to the work of archaeologist Stephen Webb, who when speaking of 'samples' taken from prehistoric remains *concludes* from the evidence that the frequency for fractures in the women indicated that they were caused by attacks, and that cranial injuries were also a result of deliberate aggression (2001: 152). Sutton seems to infer from these 'samples' that violence is inherent in 'traditional' Aboriginal communities. What further inferences can be drawn? Can Sutton then go onto argue that there is 'evidence' of the incapacity of Aboriginal peoples to manage their own lives? Sutton considers racism as no longer being the central issue:

> Racism, while in serious decline in Australia as against 30 years ago, is something about which people need to be ever vigilant. Yet to represent it as the main issue of indigenous affairs in our time is to misread completely the extent of profound suffering on so many other fronts and from so many other causes. The balance of the political situation has moved on (2001: 140).

The political situation has certainly moved on, but to the exclusion of racism? The idea of mutual obligation, currently popular with the Howard government, lends itself to Sutton's notion of an inherent violence in Aboriginal communities that exists outside of the impact of colonialism. White Australia shouldn't be made to feel guilty about its complicity in the colonial project because the dysfunction in Aboriginal communities has always existed. Sutton then speaks of the remote community where he

> almost drove into a young woman who staggered across the road, clearly in advanced pregnancy, and clutching a can of petrol to her face. It was one of those communities in a desperate condition, and where observations of this kind are not rare. Officially, it was a community enjoying 'self determination'. What 'self-determination' was being enjoyed by this unborn child? (2001: 141)

Here the possibility of empowerment through the principle of self-determination is demonised as the cause for petrol sniffing in Aboriginal communities. Similarly journalist Janet Albrechtsen, writing for *The Australian* newspaper, suggests that we would be hard-pressed to find an Aboriginal girl who hasn't been sexually abused. Her focus on race, sex and violence is then positioned to justify the following statement: 'that in the ninth year in the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples focus on the rights of Indigenous peoples is to the detriment of what goes on domestically'[13] (Albrechtsen 2003: 11) She goes on to add: 'the policies of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, based on self-rule with little accountability, have done more damage to indigenous Australians than the white missions of the

1930s did' (11). Should we be fearful of gaining recognition of the right to self-determination? Is the assimilation of the Aborigine saving? Were we, as Albrechtsen appears to believe, better off living under the white missions of the 1930s, and have we, as Sutton seems to argue, declined into petrol sniffing communities as a result of self determination?

Over recent years we have been deemed culturally deficient and poor managers of our own affairs; this has been 'proven' and is illustrated in our alleged maladministration of ATSIC. The federal government has been largely successful in its discrediting of the ATSIC structure, through a public media campaign waged against ATSIC, and also the appropriation of an Aboriginal critique of ATSIC. The blame for the failings of ATSIC was laid at the feet of Aboriginal peoples. The gaze was not once turned upon the state, the state which in any event held power to determine a different course for ATSIC, in terms of it being a failure or a success. Aboriginal peoples are not in a position of power to question the state's motive in initially implementing ATSIC, or of its de-funding, and erosion of the power and duties of ATSIC. How could a structure like ATSIC, based as it was upon hierarchy, patriarchy, and entrenched colonialism, serve the Aboriginal community? Consider the story of the frog and the obligation of community to share all of the water resources, and to not let one big frog grow even bigger. That's what we got with ATSIC, a white patriarchal model of political representation that served the role of enlarging the frog. We never got to a place of empowering community to share equally. ATSIC was not an Aboriginal model; it was a colonialist model that served to entrench white values and ways of being. Aboriginal ways of sharing never surfaced, and Aboriginal poverty and disadvantage remained the dominant discourse. Aboriginal peoples were given an under-resourced white model to perform the impossible task of caring for Aboriginal Australia. From the beginning, the ATSIC project was doomed and set up to fail, and when it did, white racism laid the blame in black hands.

The discourse on Aboriginal rights has been marginalised by the Australian state in its preference for a 'pragmatic' response to the 'Aboriginal problem', an ideology which underlies the term 'practical reconciliation'. Yet for millions of Indigenous peoples globally, the struggle for recognition of minimum human rights standards and the recognition of self-determination has been hailed as being fundamental to the survival of Indigenous peoples. Without recognition, Indigenous peoples will continue to be vulnerable to the genocidal policies of the various states in which they live. I say this even though on the face of it, state policies regarding Indigenous peoples have not been judged to reveal clear genocidal intentions. Yet for centuries, different states and their Indigenous policies have been genocidal in their impact. Australia presents an extreme example of genocide, where the Aboriginal population has been reduced to less that 2% of the general Australian population. What is behind this marginalisation of a population which just over 200 years ago was 100% of the population, if not genocide?

Dismissing the question of rights and recognition, and removing the discussion of Aboriginal sovereignty and self-determination from any state political agenda wherever the question of Aboriginality emerges is to bring a silence. That is a silence on the question of how whiteness holds power and how blackness, Aboriginality, is denied the right to be. Discussion of Aboriginal sovereignty and the resistance to the homogenising policies of the state should be central to any conversation about whiteness.

The Coming of Great Beauty

The creation of a healthy society**,** one that heals the sickness of colonialism**,** is the work ahead, for if it is not done we will continue to exist in an Australian ugliness, in a journey coming to an ugly ending. Fanon expresses some cautions regarding that journey:

> If care is not taken, the people may begin to question the prolongation of the war at any moment that the enemy grants some concession. They are so used to the settler's scorn and to his declared intention to maintain his oppression at

> whatever cost that the slightest suggestion of any generous gesture or of any goodwill is hailed with astonishment and delight, and the native bursts into a hymn of praise … It must be clearly explained to the rebel that he must on no account be blindfolded by the enemy's concessions. These concessions are no more than sops; they have no bearing on the essential question; and from the native's point of view, we may lay down that a concession has nothing to do with the essentials if it does not affect the real nature of the colonial regime (1971: 113).

To avoid the colonial ugliness, is it necessary, as Fanon suggests, for us to go further than take the offerings of a concession, or the crumbs which fall from the table? Is it necessary to transform the 'real nature of the colonial regime'?

I have written previously on how ATSIC and native title are essential to the colonial regime (Watson 1996: 1). They pose no challenge to Australian real property law, nor the governance of the state. They provide no direction in the 'road-map' or journey of de-colonisation. They simply reinforce the colonial order and world view. However, at the advent of ATSIC and native title, the 'natives burst into a hymn of praise' (Fanon 1971: 113). For there was praise by the 'natives' for these bodies which did not and do not bring change, but rather entrench our lives further in the melding pot of absorption into one Australian, white, homogenous nation.

Where did these songs of praise emanate from? Was it from a place of absolute despair? Is there an alternative? Can we make good from the poison chalice we were handed in the form of ATSIC and native title? Can we reduce their poisonous impact upon Aboriginal lives? Or is the condition of the colonised such that any offer that is made will be gratefully received, whilst it will change nothing of the despair that is lived by Aboriginal peoples across Australia? We are positioned to fetch the crumbs which were never intended to feed all of the people, so while those who are fed are singing, life remains the same for those unfed. For all to eat requires, as Fanon suggests, the transformation of the colonial regime, or, as the frog story tells us, the deflation of the frog's power and control.

Can We See the Aboriginal World?

What is the Aboriginal struggle today? Can we even name it? What is it that we can expect from the other side, from those who have stolen the country from us? Many Nungas have grown to expect nothing but more of the same. Has there been an abandonment of the struggle? Fanon argued that the settler's work is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the native. Have we abandoned the dream of liberty? Do we have a concept of what liberty and freedom are? Is the only possibility of liberty and freedom to become assimilated into the dominant culture? If we have no real choice but to assimilate, what hope is there for the survival of our Aboriginal way of knowing our country?

I understand that which brings us together in these settled and unsettled places and that which binds us is the land. It is the land that the white man came for, but we the Aborigines are in relationship with the land in different ways. The white way of knowing country is forged by ownership, possession and control. The Aboriginal way of knowing comes through spirituality, identity and traditions of historical connectedness. Which way holds power? Indigenous people are in occupation of many different spaces: that of extinguished and non-extinguished native title, curfews, mandatory sentencing, poverty, prisons, poor health—you know the statistics—they have been named so often before that we are becoming desensitized to their significance. What spaces are we left with? Where are we free to roam? Are the 'natives' finally settled under native title law? What remains of unsettled spaces? The use of curfews across Australia target Aboriginal children in the same way as mandatory sentencing laws. Has the apartheid system we knew under the Aborigines Acts ever ceased? Or does it continue in different forms, and do these new forms continue to maintain white privilege?

These questions lead to 'white discomfort and unsettling conversations'; they create

a desire for the appeasement of white guilt in high places within the nation state. Why have those conversations? Can we hear them? What drowns them out, and can they be washed away? What is left to discuss, post-*Mabo*, Pauline Hanson, native title, and the dismantling of a 'road map' to self-determination? Are we moving into settled territory? Are there still unsettled spaces? What is this time which Indigenous peoples occupy? Is there an Aboriginal voice, or are there voices of Aboriginal diversity and community that can express and also transcend this time? Can we speak of justice that is justice from a black, or Aboriginal perspective, one that lives beyond the assimilation of the native?

How do I Look?

Colonisation brought its own way of looking at us and in turn this construction affected how we also looked at ourselves. Anthropologists working in Australia also constructed their identities of Indigenous peoples, identities constructed from a place beyond our power. Fanon wrote: 'for the native, objectivity is always directed against him' (1971: 61). The objective view, is 'known' to be more reliable than our own oral stories about ourselves, which are too much 'inside the story', and not sufficiently distant from the subject. The state, in engaging the 'expert', imposes its way of knowing us, and deploys colonial institutions to name us, and we are left to work with this, sifting the sand to find the kernel of our lives. Each one of us studied by anthropologists is the carrier of the seed that they seek to study: to absorb, understand, compare, analyse, and measure for authenticity (Watson 2002b). Our identities have always been under the microscope, or on the slab for dissection at the same time as we Aboriginal women are framed as the victim of violent black-bashing males, waiting to be rescued by the next crusade.

A recent media article reported an outburst from Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward (Jackman 2003: 3) angrily demanding an apology from artist Richard Bell. Bell was wearing a self designed T-shirt with the slogan 'White girls can't hump', at the time of accepting the Telstra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Art Prize of 2003. Goward was reported as stating Bell's behaviour would not have been tolerated if he had been a white artist making offensive jokes about the sexual behaviour of Aboriginal women, and was further quoted as follows: 'It's got to be understood that the law and cultural standards have to be upheld by everyone in Australia, regardless of colour and creed'(Goward in Jackman 2003: 3).

Goward subsequently called upon Indigenous leaders to pressure Richard Bell to apologise. But who is Richard Bell's leader? An ATSIC Commissioner? At the time the Chairman of ATSIC was being primed for dismissal by the Prime Minister John Howard. As to Goward's suggestion, an Indigenous leader from whose perspective? From the perspective of Richard Bell? Who did Goward have in her mind as being able to pull Bell into line and what line would that be? In her attack on Bell**,** Goward compared his act to that of former test cricketer, David Hookes, stating that he had been widely condemned for recently calling a South African woman a 'dopey, hairy-backed sheila'. According to Goward, 'David Hookes made comments, and was roundly ticked off, and the same must apply … It's particularly important for leaders, black or white, to make it clear he's got to apologise, just as David Hookes recognised that he'd offended community standards' (2003: 3). Goward dismissed Bell's media reported argument in his defence—that the T-shirt would make Aboriginal women feel good. Goward responded: 'I don't think black women feel better about themselves when you speculate about their sexual prowess or availability' (2003: 3).

It is interesting to compare what, if any, controversy arose over the film title 'White Men Can't Jump'; I don't recall any. So what is it about sex and the suggestion of competing sexual prowess between black and white women that raises a howl, one that seems distinguishable from the competition between white and black men jumping to net the ball? What 'black truths' might we lay bare at the colonial frontier of sexual encounters?

Growing up the Settlement

The Aboriginal voice of opposition to the theft of Aboriginal land is now quiet, as though the matter was settled by the High Court decision in *Mabo* and the subsequent native title legislation. There is no longer broad public support for land rights, as if the public think that Aborigines have enough land already. However there is also no public outcry as 'public lands', crown lands, are appropriated for development purposes; there is no question that these lands should be returned to the Aboriginal people from whom they were stolen. We do not expect the same public outcry that goes with the theft of Palestinian lands, or the invasion of Iraq. Aboriginal sacred lands are appropriated for mining development or suburban sprawl as a matter of course; it is business as usual. And when the land of my grandmother at Cape Jaffa is excavated for a marina development to house the yachts of those who have stolen everything from my past, present and future, there will be likewise little that will be heard; my voice of opposition has as much likelihood of being heard as if I were speaking during the final quarter of an AFL grand final.

For we are deemed settled peoples, our claims put right by white Australians and their *Mabo* native title deal. The deal of the century, the deal which will carry us into this new millennium, a deal which guarantees the continuing theft of our lands while at the same time muffling our voices of trauma when we scream for the protection of our sacred places. Would the scale of this theft be got away with elsewhere? Where else has there been such wide scale appropriation of the lands of any peoples?

The Colour of Genocide

Is genocide a crime determined by colour? Even commentators such as Raymond Gaita would theorise that it wasn't, while they would also conclude that the reduction of the Aboriginal population to just under 2% within 200 years of colonial settlement does not constitute the crime of genocide (see Gaita 2003: 9). In addition, the law's failure to recognise the crime of genocide is illustrated in the decision in *Nulyarrima*.[14] Our removal from our country and our history of genocide is carefully spoken of by the High Court as a matter of being simply 'washed away by a tide of history'.[15] The courts have refused to characterise the historical and current acts of violence and dispossession against Aboriginal peoples as constituting the crime of genocide.

The ground for supporting the Aboriginal struggle is shifting. Genocide is officially denied, and the illusion of recognition prevails through ATSIC and native title. We are attacked and accused of over-dramatising the history of invasion, and demeaning the meaning of the word genocide.[16] It is considered that what the Nazis did was truly genocide, but what was done to Aboriginal peoples was not. However we know there were acts of theft of the entire continent of Australia, the destruction of hundreds of languages, laws and cultures, and thousands of murders. Our children were stolen and now we experience the theft of Aboriginal knowledges. We have no remembrance shrine in this country that recognises the demise of Aboriginal peoples in our own territory. Instead we have a mass denial that it even happened.

Where to From Here?

We need to go beyond a mere theoretical rejection of *terra nullius*, and beyond positions of victim, perpetrators and enemies, to a place in Aboriginal 'black' truth, where we can share our common humanity as equals. We need to move beyond the conversation of the Aboriginal problem to a discourse on the problem of colonialism. The opportunity for these conversations have never been created; the conversations have been mostly about us—the 'other'—we are framed as the subject of the conversation, not ever sitting as equals in and a part of the conversation. For we have no power to determine otherwise in any event. Our Australian colonial legal history illustrates this point well.

Often only those who make the Prime Minister feel safe in their whiteness are allowed into the conversation. In fairness to them, I concede that their position is

determined not by themselves entirely, but by a hopelessness, a powerlessness, and the thought that the Aboriginal world is a disappearing one, and the thought that there is no other choice but to negotiate the best deal for now. I, however, dispute these thoughts, and have argued in previous writings that another way of knowing the world is not dead to us but alive in the minds of those who continue to see through other horizons (Watson 1998). So can we move into the uncomfortable conversations? For that is what is needed. Can we move from places where whitefellers feel comfortable, to what I call 'into a meditation on discomfort'? To places where the settler society is made to answer these questions: what brings them to a place of lawfulness? Or, how lawful is their sovereign status?

Aborigines like myself continue to struggle with great hope to survive the worst aspect of colonialism—that of the colonised devouring each other—for that is what happens when the power to determine one's existence is denied, a problem which is compounded by the intergenerational impact of colonialism. This brings us to the critical point of Aboriginal peoples turning upon each other. We become the victims of each other as well as the perpetrators. And as we struggle with these tensions we are still under examination, as our own processes of surviving colonialism are studied. In spite of the studies and the research about us, the colonial context and causes are still frequently denied; and instead white experts give to it their own meaning. Although the lack of critical analysis in the work of such experts is quite apparent, the damage of their ideas is already released. They are seized upon to characterise us as people too 'primitive' to entrust with the power of becoming truly self-determining.

In this global climate of fear we are set up, all of us are, to consider and question whether Aborigines should be fearful of gaining the right to self-determination? We have seen this phenomenon before and are still seeing it occur in other regions of the world. It is the classic so-called 'de-colonisation' scenario, where conditions become so oppressive that the people are calling for protection. This is the state we are in—the call should be answered, but protected how and by whom? Howard declares that the state is not acting like a coloniser, but is instead responding to the call for aid, a call which is then appropriated to disguise any appearance of an ongoing colonialism. It is now more comfortably referred to as humanitarian intervention. Calls for intervention are going on in territories where the natural resources of the people have been stripped for centuries by colonialist states and their corporate affiliates, leaving the people impoverished and plundered of their resources. Now we observe the returning of more of the same. The Europeans reappear as the crusaders, the rescuers of the recontextualised, primitive, violent, maladministrators—the hungry and backward black-savages.

What context is given to these conversations about us? Who even understands this process of colonialism, who wants to speak its truth, and who wants to own it? The line, the continuing song line of colonialism is now sung up and enlarged as the song for globalisation. Yet the minority position in the world of Indigenous peoples and an Aboriginal critique of colonialism can only become in this space a set of abstract ideas that are released, hopefully embraced, digested, and activated for the bringing of change. To enhance and grow a deeper understanding that all humanity is diminished while we sit aside, failing to act, watching, and blaming the 'other', instead of seeing and interrogating the role of the white privileged self in this 'other' Aboriginal story. This seeing, this interrogation will remain the unfinished business, the business we will continue to return to in the life we each have within us and future life times. For we will return to these unresolved questions. They are questions of humanity, and to not be touched by these questions, requires of us all to ask, how could you not be? Can you believe that you will escape having to answer this? Whether you do or not depends upon what you believe in, and what you understand we have left to return to in terms of settling down the future.

To come to understandings that are different we need to create more open

spaces for those conversations not simply about the 'other' but led by the 'other'. We need to hear more Aboriginal voices, particularly those Aboriginal voices that go beyond the representations of the popularly perceived 'leaders'. Aboriginal peoples are diverse, and so are our situations, interests, desires and dreams. To create the space that will hear that diversity will require patience and the making of time to listen beyond the one minute grab.

Can we come to a reconciled place?[17] Not unless we engage in talks of co-existence. The road was spoken of, the talk was talked, thousands of people crossed bridges, but where were they led, and what deterred their further walking the talk? Was it a fear of the other? Are we stuck there? Meanwhile, we, the other, have feared for our lives. It is a strange irony. The fear of thousands of blacks 'out there' persists at a time when we have been comprehensively reduced to being just 2% of the population. What is it that is feared of the Aborigines? That we will take over Australia? That if we are given too many handouts white Australia may become just like us also? That they will also become as impoverished, traumatised, unemployed, and dispossessed? Or come into the status of black like us?

I want to hold the same privilege that is held by the loud and the heard voices so that we (Aborigines) can speak about our own things for ourselves. I want to occupy spaces of governance where I would have the capacity to protect my country against the state that eats it and pours its pollution back onto the lands of my ancestors while it starves our future into assimilated submission. I want to unsettle spaces held by the powerful so as to re-settle the future of millions of peoples globally in their access to good food and clean drinking water and to continue the sustainable lifestyles of our ancient ones. I want to see us turn the monster of greed around, as the wisdom of our ancient stories tell us we must do if we are to have any future.

I want to make white into the many colours of humanity just as the frog was deflated into many more frogs beyond the largesse of its own oneness. I want to 'liberate' white from its hold over power—to enable all colours to roam freely. I want to see a return of the Aboriginal horizon and its ways of knowing the world, from a place where I believe we have all begun.

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Notes

[1] I use the term 'Aboriginal' to bring focus to my own Aboriginal connection to country, whilst also acknowledging that this article is addressing broader universal concerns for Indigenous peoples in general.

[2] The context I reflect upon is of the current position in Australia, but the questions raised also have application to many other colonised spaces.

[3] I argue in other places that 'recognition' is an illusion, that native title is 'recognised' in the common law decision of *Mabo v Queensland (1992) 175 CLR* 1, and the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth); in my article 'Buried Alive' (2002a) I discuss the critical limits to the recognition of Aboriginal title.

[4] Long conversations were held at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, Canberra during 1997–8. Ray Swan-Bird, is remembered here for his discussion of the settled/unsettled Aborigine.

[5] *Terra nullius* justified acquisition of lands the coloniser deemed were unsettled, the presence of Aboriginal peoples in Australia, was not sufficient to displace *terra nullius* as we were viewed to not exist in law.

[6] *Mabo v The State of Queensland (No 2)* (1992) 175 CLR 1.

[7] For further discussion on the appropriation of Aboriginal identity by colonising socieities, see in general the work of W Churchill (1994), *Indians Are Us? Culture and Genocide in Native North America*, Between the Lines, Ontario..

[8] I develop the ideas here more in a lecture 'From a Hard Place—to a softer terrain' (Watson 2004).

[9] This story is known throughout Aboriginal Australia, and is discussed further in my article 'Buried Alive' (Watson 2002a).

[10] The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, is a statutory body that was established by the Commonwealth government to administer Aboriginal services to communities across Australia.

[11] For further discussion on the use of crisis against minority groups see Watson (2004).

[12] A study of the Australian media reporting from 2002–4 on the ATSIC body, and the state of crisis regarding violence in Aboriginal communities across Australia produces a picture of dysfunctional Aboriginal communities. For further painting of the picture of Aboriginal dysfunction see also the work of anthropologists Peter Sutton and Maggie Brady and social and political commentator Tim Rowse for their critique on the failings of Aboriginal self-determination.

[14] *Nulyarrima* (1999) 165 ALR 621.

[15] Justice Brennan in *Mabo (No2)* (1992) 175 CLR 1at 69. Further refusal to confront genocide is noted by Valerie Kerruish, (1998) and the High Court application on appeal from the Federal Court decision, *Nulyarimma v Thompson* (4 August 2000) High Court of Australia, Transcripts, Registry No 18 of 1999.

[16] See for example the history wars surrounding the publication of Keith Windshuttle's book, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (2002).

[17] In 1991 the Australian federal government established the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the activities of the Council culminated in the mass support of hundreds of thousands of Australians who participated in a walk for Aboriginal reconciliation.

BEFORE HOLOCAUST MEMORY: MAKING SENSE OF TRAUMA BETWEEN POSTMEMORY AND CULTURAL MEMORY

JON STRATTON

My mother has Alzheimer's. She was diagnosed in the early 1990s. Over the years her ability to remember recent events has got steadily worse. In time my phone calls with her—she in Bexhill-on-sea on the south coast of England and I in Perth, Australia—got circular; and the circle became steadily smaller. She had a routine of questions she would ask. As the disease progressed the time it took my mother to forget the answers that I had given to her questions, and then to forget that she had asked the questions, got shorter. She would ask the question again, and again.

Through this period, until his death in February 2002, my father, her husband, remained her principal carer. In 1998 I visited them, a trip I made every three years or so. My father opened the door of their flat and we went into the lounge room where my mother was sitting. After a few moments of small talk my father went to the kitchen to make us all a cup of tea. A very English ritual! As my mother started to ask me questions about my trip and my presence in the flat, a feeling of uneasiness and disorientation crept over me. She began by asking me how the journey had been. Then she started suggesting that I must have had considerable difficulties. She said how pleased she was that I was staying—speaking as if I was a visitor rather than her son. And then she started referring to Germany. I started feeling uncanny. I hadn't been to Germany on this trip. In fact I have only been there twice. By this point I was thoroughly confused. Luckily my father came back into the room. My parents married in October 1940, a year after the outbreak of war. My father recognised the memory my mother was calling up.

As I have discussed elsewhere, my mother is Jewish, a Jew who married out and has spent her life determinedly assimilating; wanting to be a middle-class English woman.[1] Such an ambition was understandable in the context of the time. Ari Sherman reminds us that:

> The [pre-war] refugee crisis brought painfully into consciousness the ambiguities of assimilation, especially in a country as relatively insular and monochromatic culturally as Great Britain in the pre-war period; and the anxiety over the numbers and conspicuousness of the refugees, their sheer foreignness, the likelihood that they would stir not only anti-Semitism but anti-German feeling still latent from the First World War, was shared by government officials as well as Jewish communal leaders (1994: 4).

Louise London has commented on the pressures in England to assimilate which 'made [Anglo-Jewish leaders] distinguish between different groups of refugees' (1990: 184). Victor Jeleniewski Seidler was born in England in 1945, the child of a Polish-Jewish refugee family which, as he puts it, 'had escaped from continental Europe just before the war' (2000: 3). Seidler writes how 'becoming English' was important because:

> to be English was to be 'safe'. It was this safety that parents were ready to sacrifice for, and it was part of their deep and unquestioned gratitude to England that they also tried to pass on to their children (2000: 4).

He adds that: 'Our [refugee] parents, scarred by the horrors of Nazi rule looked forward to their children "becoming English"' (2000: 4). My mother was not a refugee but she understood the importance of assimilation as a means to at least provisional safety in England, and wanted it both for herself and her children.

Through the 1930s some German-Jewish refugees managed to leave Germany and made their way to England. London writes that: 'The bulk of the emigration occurred in the nine months preceding World War II, when over 40,000 Jewish refugees entered Britain, only 11,000 or so came before November 1938' (1990: 165).[2] In 1933, Anglo-Jewish leaders 'promised the government that the community would shoulder the burden of this new influx' (London 1990: 170). London writes about the pleas for financial help that appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle*. After *Kristellnacht*, in November 1938, a high ranking deputation from the Council for German Jewry made

representations to the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, to facilitate the temporary admission of young people under seventeen for training and education (London 1990: 180–1). The result has become known as the *Kindertransport*, an operation which brought around 10,000 unaccompanied children, almost all Jewish, from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland to Britain. Walter was one of these children. He arrived in England in March 1939, aged eleven and was picked up from the train station by my mother and one of her sisters. Walter came from Berlin. He was seven when the Nazis passed the Nuremberg anti-Jewish racial purity laws and lived through *Kristallnacht*. Up until I came to write this article I knew only that he was a refugee who had stayed with my mother's family.[3] Walter was one of the 'perhaps 40,000 Jewish refugees' that the Home Office grudgingly accepted into the British population after the war (London 1990: 190). Subsequently, he went to the United States. What happened to Walter, though, is not the point of my story.

As the effect of the Alzheimer's deepened, my mother had started mapping events from her past onto the present as a way of making sense of her here and now. For her, this man who had come to visit, this unrecognised stranger, was the Holocaust survivor whom her family had taken in. But it is much more complicated than this. In the late 1930s there was no Holocaust—the Holocaust, as we shall see, was a discursive construction of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, in the late 1930s the crucial, exterminating events of the Judeocide were still yet to happen. For my mother and her family, as for other English Jews, Walter and the rest of the German-Jewish refugees were escapees from the largest pogrom ever conducted against European Jews.

In my mother's mind Walter and I doubled. I, her son born in 1950, became the young refugee who had brought home to her, literally, the horror of what was unfolding across the English Channel. In conversations with my sister, the early child of the marriage, it seems she was treated with similar emotional brutality to me. It was as if our mother was constantly trying to distance herself, as if she was frightened of us, or as if we brought up for her a nameless terror that she could not face—that respectable, middle-class English women did not have—as if, perhaps, in the end, she was frightened for us.

Growing up in a Jewish refugee family, Seidler writes, 'was to grow up in the shadows of the Holocaust—the Shoah' (2000: 3). Seidler tells us that:

> in our families we were to be protected from the cruelties of the past. As children we were to represent hope and the future and we were to live without the stains and injuries of the past. This was to protect us as children, but this was also to make things easier for our parents who often found it difficult to speak about what had happened to them (2000: 5–6).

I have already remarked that my mother was not a refugee, nor was her family. However, turning twenty in 1935, she learnt to fear the Nazis as her ancestors in the Pale had feared the Cossacks and, later, the Polish and Russian pogroms. She lived in the certain knowledge that, were circumstances in England to change, she would not be able to protect her children; she would not be able to protect herself. At the same time, after 1945 this was the past, unless, indeed, circumstances changed radically.

My mother's reaction to the Judeocide, as she came to understand what was happening, and what had happened, was her determined, perhaps pathological assimilation. For her, assimilation seems also to have been the best way she could protect her children. She gradually lost touch with her family. I went to my last Jewish familial gathering when I was about eleven. Seidler remarks that: 'As children we learnt about the war and we were told about the Nazis but often this was in generalized terms, sometimes as an early warning against thinking we could marry anyone who was not Jewish' (2000: 10). Implicit here is the demand that Jewish tradition be preserved. My mother would have been pleased for me to marry out, it would increase my assimilation. It would, she would have thought, increase my safety in this threatening world. Similarly, there was no talk in my family about the Nazis, or about the war. For my father, Gentile that he was, there was little to discuss about the war by the 1950s and 1960s. This helped my mother to keep silent about the Judeocide and, indeed, helped to produce an environment inimical to its discussion. Such silence may well have been a part of my mother's protection, keeping her children safe from the knowledge of such awfulness. In the non-logic of everyday life she may well have had some thought that if my sister and I did not know about the Judeocide—and, as I will go on to discuss, in the 1950s

and 1960s this was not accepted public knowledge—then we could more easily assimilate into that dominant culture where it was also not generally known about.

In my mother's mind, Walter and I, two strangers who had come to stay in the family, had merged, conjoined across approximately sixty years by her anxieties in relation to the Judeocide. Sigmund Freud comments on the double that: 'From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death' (1955: 235). In this case the relationship between those doubled was articulated by the death of six million of my mother's, and my people. My unease at being misrecognised as a German-Jewish refugee was compounded by my greater unease founded in my mother's bequeathal to me of her unimaginable terror in the face of the Nazi Judeocide.

In this article I will explore the relationship between personal knowledge and public knowledge, between the constructions of personal knowledge, as mediated by narrative memory and postmemory, and collective memory, which is now usually thought about by way of a distinction between social memory and cultural memory. I want to discuss these intersections with reference to the Holocaust. More specifically, I want to discuss the complexities of growing personal awareness as this took place in conjunction with the historical formation and public acceptance of the discourse of the Holocaust, a discourse the establishment of which coincided with what Saul Friedlander described in his 1982 book *Reflets du Nazisme* (translated as *Reflections of Nazism)* as a 'new discourse' of Nazism. This involved the return of Nazism by way of films, novels and even popular music—before Sid Vicious' 1976 punk song recorded by the Sex Pistols, 'Belsen Was a Gas', Serge Gainsbourg, the notorious French-Jewish *chanteur* released an album in 1975 entitled *Rock Around the Bunker* which included tracks called 'Nazi Rock', 'Yellow Star and 'S.S. in Uruguay'. Freidlander identifies this upsurge, in the words of his book's subtitle, as a preoccupation with 'kitsch and death'. It also involved a more or less pornographic working over of the mechanics of the Judeocide.

My coming to terms with my relation to the Judeocide coincided with, and was inevitably influenced by, these two developments in cultural memory. Indeed, as a secular Jew with no formal Jewish cultural capital my growing awareness of what it means to be Jewish was inevitably tracked on my increasing understanding of what happened to European Jewry, and this as the Judeocide was getting constructed as genocide, itself a new term, and as the Holocaust. In this article, then, I shall also write about what I shall call, coining a neologism, the traumascape of my life. Writing about my own traumascape places it within the context of personal myth which Kali Tal defines as 'the particular set of explanations and expectations generated by an individual to account for his or her circumstances and actions' (1996: 116). Here, traumascape refers to those events which, in retrospect, I can construct into a personal narrative influenced by transgenerational haunting and postmemory, a narrative about coming to terms with trauma—trauma in this case handed on from my mother as affect.

Cultural Memory and the Discourse of the Holocaust

In his discussion of the generic technique he calls traumatic realism, Michael Rothberg remarks that, 'traumatic realism is an attempt to produce the traumatic event as an object of knowledge and to program and thus transform its readers so that they are forced to acknowledge their relationship to posttraumatic culture' (2000: 103). The traumatic event to which Rothberg is referring is the Holocaust. But when and how did the Judeocide become culturally traumatic, and for whom? Writing about individual experiences, Ernst van Alphen argues that:

> experience of an event or history is dependent on the terms the symbolic order offers. It needs these terms to transform living through the event into an experience of the event (1999: 27).

His point is that sometimes, as with Holocaust survivors, it is not necessarily the horror of what has happened which makes it impossible to talk about, to narrativise, but rather that there is no appropriate discourse to transform what has occurred into experience. '[T]he problem for Holocaust survivors', he writes, 'is precisely that the lived events could not be experienced because language did not provide the terms and positions in which to experience them, thus they are defined as *traumatic*' (1999: 27). The sense might be clearer here if we substitute 'traumatising' for 'traumatic'. The

events were not in themselves traumatic but they were traumatising.

When applying the model of trauma to the western experience of the Judeocide it is usual to anthropomorphise and think of the period between the end of the Second World War and the 1970s in terms of Freud's idea of *Nachträglichkeit*, delayed action, the time between the traumatising event and the person's ability to narrativise that event as experience. The first problem here is whether culture as such can be traumatised. If trauma can be defined as referring to the effect of a shock that breaks through a person's narrativised identity, can this process be applied to a culture, indeed to western culture? If it can, then this would suggest that western culture after the Judeocide could be posttraumatic. However, while those caught up in the Judeocide found the events traumatising, to suggest that western culture was itself traumatised implies a degree of self-consciousness not applicable to culture. Thus, it is not until the Judeocide gets constructed as the Holocaust, with all the absolutist moral freight attached to that term, and with the discursive understanding that the Holocaust was culturally traumatic, that we can think of western culture as posttraumatic. More, it is only when the Judeocide becomes discursively constructed as the Holocaust, and as traumatic, that there is a public space in which the traumas of Holocaust survivors make sense, not just as individual trauma but as experiences within a greater, cultural trauma.[4] Only at this time can the individual narratives of survivors become valued as testimonies in the witnessing to a cultural experience of trauma. One of the implications of this argument is that, for around thirty years, there was no fit between individual trauma related to the Judeocide and cultural understanding. Moreover, thirty years is roughly a generation. It is worth considering whether what we are actually identifying is a generational trauma—that of the first European post-Holocaust generation.

At this point it is useful to begin to think about the concept of cultural memory. The idea derives from Maurice Halbwachs' work on collective memory. In 'The social frameworks of memory', Halbwachs commented that: 'One is rather astonished when reading psychological treatises that deal with memory to find that people are considered there as isolated beings' (1992: 38). He argues that, to the contrary'it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories' (1992: 38).

Individual memory is constructed in a dynamic relation with society. More specifically, individual memory is formed in relation to the society's collective memory. For Halbwachs: 'It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection' (1992: 38). Memory might appear to be a personal matter, born out of one's own individual experience but it is located in the ways the society as a whole remembers, and makes sense of things. This, of course, changes over time and, with it, not only how we, as individuals, make sense of the world but also how we remember our experiences in the world.

Halbwachs had a Catholic background. However, his main influences, first Henri Bergson and then Emile Durkheim, were both Jewish, the one concerned with memory and time, the other with collective representations. This at a time when Jewish identity was under threat from the disintegration of Jewish communal memory—or, as Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi puts it, using Halbwachs' own concept:

> The collective memories of the Jewish people were a function of the shared faith, cohesiveness, and the will of the group itself, transmitting and recreating its past through an entire complex of interlocking social and religious institutions that functioned organically to achieve this. The decline of Jewish collective memory in modern times is only a symptom of the unravelling of that common network of belief and praxis through whose mechanisms … the past was once made present (1982: 94).

Omer Bartov argues that Halbwachs' interest in collective memory was not surprising. It grew out of 'a France haunted by the proximity of total war and devastation, and by the abyss that 1914–18 had torn between the present and the pre-war past, transformed in a series of brutal, bloody battles into a dim, far-off, sentimental memory of a lost world' (2000: 76). Bartov goes on: 'Nor is it mere coincidence that both the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who had coined and analysed this concept, and the historian Marc Bloch, who had pioneered the study of collective

mentalities and the role of fraud and error in history, became victims of a historical moment in which a regime determined to "correct" the memory of the past had occupied a nation unable to be reconciled with its own memories of that same event' (2000: 76). Halbwachs was born in Reims, whence his parents had moved six years before, having left Alsace when it became German after the Franco-Prussian war. That is to say, Halbwachs' background was a geographical area which had competing national memories attempting to legitimate ownership. Both national and communal memory anxieties, exacerbated by the effects of the devastation of the First World War, influenced Halbwachs. Bloch, a Jew, joined the Resistance and was tortured and shot by the Nazis in 1944. Halbwachs, married to a Jew, was sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp where he died, after he travelled to Lyons to complain about the murder of his eighty-year-old in-laws, both killed by either the Vichy militia or the Gestapo.[5]

Where Halbwachs wrote about social memory, emphasising the extent to which individual memory was imbricated with, for example, family memory, since the 1980s there has been a conceptual shift to the idea of cultural memory. In the important *Acts of Memory* collection, Mieke Bal writes on behalf of the contributors that: 'We … view cultural memorization as an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and re-described even as it continues to shape the future' (1999: vii). Using the notion of cultural memory is a way of thinking outside of the roles played by particular social institutions in the formation of memory. Cultural memory recognises that cultures reproduce and reform themselves and that, in this process, understandings of the past are transformed. Furthermore, as Bal goes on to write: 'The interaction between present and past that is the stuff of cultural memory is … the product of collective agency rather than the result of psychic and historical accident' (1999: vii). The past makes sense on the terms of the present and, moreover, individual understanding of the present is mediated by cultural memory. The discourse of the Holocaust not only gives us a way of understanding certain past events, it is a means of remembering those events and, more, a way of understanding individual trauma that is removed from those events—trauma, we might say, as transgenerational haunting.

However, before we go there, we must first briefly examine the historicity of the discourse of the Holocaust. In his overview of the evolution of the discourse, Tim Cole asserts that: 'While the Holocaust was perpetrated in Europe during 1941–45, it was not really until the early 1960s that anything like widespread awareness of the 'Holocaust' began to emerge' (1999: 7). At this time, as Cole indicates, the Judeocide was not yet known as the Holocaust. What is often argued, and Cole repeats the claim, is that it was the Israeli trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, in 1961, which brought widespread public knowledge of the Judeocide. As Cole writes: 'It was a trial concerned with the *Shoah*, and was a self-conscious attempt to bring awareness of the massacre of six million European Jews to both native-born Israeli youth and the wider world' (1999: 7). Within Israel a divide had evolved between the survivors of the Judeocide and the Israeli-born young people. The survivors were silenced and looked down on by an Israeli generation which had been brought up to fight for its land.

Ben-Gurion's intention was to use the trial as a way of uniting Israel. For the first time the survivors were able to tell their stories in a public forum. Cole writes:

> The speaking out of these survivors in the Jerusalem courthouse became the signal for a more general speaking out of survivors across the country. The silence was broken both within and outside of the courthouse (1999: 64).

Nevertheless, at this time there was still no possibility of understanding what had happened in a unifying form, and understanding it as something either unique or new, or both.

Throughout this period the Judeocide was still thought of within a continuity with previous events. Gerd Korman notes the great Jewish historian Salo Baron talking in 1950 of the need to examine the 'dissimilarities as well as the similarities between the great tragedy and the many lesser tragedies which preceded it' (Korman 1972: 255). Korman writes that:

> in 1949, there was no 'Holocaust' in the English language in the way that the term is used today [1972]. Scholars and writers had used 'permanent pogrom'. . .or the 'recent catastrophe', or 'disaster', or 'the disaster' (1972: 259).

At the Nuremberg trial of Nazis accused of war crimes, which ran from November 1945 to October 1946: 'On numerous occasions, [Robert H. Jackson, the chief counsel for the United States] and other prosecutors used the term *pogrom* to describe Nazi persecutions [of the Jews]' (Douglas 2001: 286). Generally speaking, the rhetoric of 'concentration camps' was used as the key figure for the events of the Judeocide.

Hannah Arendt, Korman tells us, looked for what was new and unprecedented in the concentration camps in their connection to totalitarianism (Korman 1972: 258). Arendt was certainly arguing strongly for the novelty of what had taken place. In her book on the Eichmann trial published in 1963, but a compilation of reports she had written at the trial itself which had been published in *The New Yorker*, she wrote about:

> how little Israel, like the Jewish people in general, was prepared to recognize, in the crimes that Eichmann was accused of, an unprecedented crime, and precisely how difficult such a recognition must have been for the Jewish people. In the eyes of the Jews, thinking exclusively in terms of their own history, the catastrophe that had befallen them under Hitler, in which a third of the people perished, appeared not as the most recent of crimes, the unprecedented crime of genocide, but, on the contrary, as the oldest crime they knew and remembered. … None of the participants ever arrived at a clear understanding of the actual horror of Auschwitz, which is of a different nature from all the atrocities of the past, because it appeared to prosecution and judges alike as not much more than the most horrible pogrom in Jewish history (1994: 267).

While the Eichmann trial increased awareness of the Judeocide, it did not do so in terms that would make it culturally understandable as a traumatic episode. Rather, what had happened was placed within a normalising historical narrative, and this in both Jewish and dominant western perspectives.

In the United States, Paul Breines argues that it was the 1967 Six Day Arab-Israeli War which marked the turning point in Jewish public awareness of the Judeocide. Breines writes:

> It is really only *after* the June 1967 war that we see the proliferation of scholarly studies, films, courses, lectures, conferences, tough Jewish fiction, and intense popular discussion. Among American Jews, Israel's victory in June 1967 expanded and escalated what had previously been a limited relationship to the Holocaust (1992: 72).

Breines' argument, in his words, is that: 'The Israeli triumph in the Six Day War provided American Jews with the imagery of Jewish toughness and politico-military self-assertion which enabled them to rethink the Holocaust as something more than simply Jewish passivity and victimization' (1992: 72–3).

It needs to be remembered that Breines is writing about Jews, and specifically American Jews. In general, there was an increased awareness among Jews of the circumstances of the Judeocide during the decade of the 1960s. For Jews as a community, there began to be established a cultural memory of the Judeocide which understood it in terms of disaster or catastrophe and placed it within a narrative of such events. The Yiddish term *khurban* carries this kind of understanding. For Jews outside of the community, I think for example of myself here, and for the general population, there was still little cultural knowledge of the Judeocide. It was an event in the Second World War, and a minor one in the context of a narrative about Allied victory over the Axis forces.

When the Judeocide was thought about it was in the particularised, piecemeal terms of concentration camps, and the treatment of inmates within these camps. This was in part a consequence of the screenings of film footage taken by the Allied forces when they liberated the concentration camps. Bergen-Belsen was the first camp entered by British troops and, as Cole writes: 'The harrowing film footage of piles of corpses was shown in British cinemas shortly after liberation on 15 April 1945, and ensured that 'Belsen' became a synonym for Hitlerian atrocities' (1999: 98). By the 1960s this footage was rarely shown. In my own experience, at the age of twelve or thirteen I had much greater access to literature, mostly war novels, about Japanese atrocities on Allied servicemen in prisoner of war camps. At that time I had no clear understanding of the difference between POW camps and concentration camps so it was easy to imagine what I read happening in these POW camps as the horror of concentration camps. This Japanese POW camp literature worked within the dominant narrative of the Second World War. It functioned by way of a

binary of British/European civilisation and Asian savagery. In the process it served to occlude the Judeocide and reinstate the values of colonial modernity.

What transformed knowledge of the Judeocide and established it in cultural memory as a defining moment in modern, western history was the discourse of the Holocaust. It seems that there are rare cases of the use of 'holocaust' to describe the destruction of European Jewry during the Second World War. However, the Israeli memorial of remembrance, Yad Vashem, founded in 1953, was still translating *shoah* as 'Disaster' in 1955 (Korman 1972: 260). Korman dates the new usage of Holocaust to between 1957 and 1959. It was used at the Second World Congress of Jewish Studies held in Jerusalem in 1957. After 1959 Yad Vashem gave 'Holocaust' its official imprimatur, switching from translating Shoah as Disaster to Holocaust. We find here also the origin of the capitalisation of Holocaust. This practice, following the capitalisation of Disaster, suggests the special, transcendent, quality of the events being named. Raul Hilberg's magisterial *The Destruction of the European Jews*, published in 1961, still did not use Holocaust. Peter Novick writes that, at the time that Hilberg was writing his doctoral thesis at Columbia:

> The Holocaust had not, at this point, become as sacralized as it was subsequently to become. But there was already a great deal of visceral resistance to its being discussed in terms other than the confrontation of pure evil and pure virtue (1999: 141).

The word, and the discourse associated with it, was not yet fully established. However, Breines tells us that: 'By 1967 *Holocaust*, with its immense and eventually mind-numbing resonance, was becoming the central term of Jewish American discussion and identity' (1992: 71). Korman notes that by 1968 there were so many books making use of the term that in that year the Library of Congress' Catalogue Division established a new category for 'Holocaust—Jewish, 1939–1945' (1972: 261).

However, Holocaust was still used more in the United States and still predominantly within the Jewish community. It was, without a doubt, the NBC mini-series *Holocaust*, shown in the United States in 1978 and subsequently around Europe to massive television audiences, that got the word Holocaust general acceptance (Shandler 1999). The point here, though, is not just about the take up of a word, it is about the discourse expressed through that word. The immense popularity of the mini-series suggests that the Judeocide was already becoming a part of a general, non-Jewish cultural memory. The utility of the discourse of the Holocaust has been that it not only unified the disparate events of the Judeocide such as *Kristellnacht*, the race laws, the concentration camps, the ghettos, and so on, it has also provided the site of meaning for the Judeocide. Lawrence Langer has argued that: 'In one sense, all writing about the Holocaust represents a retrospective effort to give meaningless history a context of meaning' (1982: 185). Identifying the Judeocide as the Holocaust has the same result.

The mini-series helped to establish the Holocaust as having a western universal, that is no longer specifically Jewish, theme. The western world could now think of the events of the Judeocide as the Holocaust, as a morality story about Good and Evil. At the same time, in its new discursive form the Judeocide could be thought of as a total entity rather than in terms of concentration camps, massacres, ghettos and so on. More, the discourse satisfied Arendt's concerns—the Holocaust was thought of as unique and unprecedented—at least in part no doubt a consequence of the championing of the term in the 1960s by writers such as Elie Weisel. The Holocaust also embraced another of Arendt's preoccupations, that the Judeocide be thought of as genocide. Genocide, a neologism coined by Raphael Lemkin in his 1944 book, now became the key for understanding the horror of the Holocaust—that the Nazis had aimed for the destruction of an entire people. However, as I have remarked, the general construction of cultural memory in terms of Holocaust discourse did not take place until the time of the television mini-series. In England in the 1970s people could still remark that an exceptionally thin person 'looked like something out of Belsen' (note the distantiating objectification here), and, as I have mentioned, Sid Vicious could write 'Belsen Was a Gas' for his band Flowers of Romance in 1976, a song subsequently recorded by the archetypal punk band the Sex Pistols with Ronnie Biggs, the Great Train Robber, in 1977.[6]

Trauma and Postmemory

What was it like to grow up in this environment in England in the 1950s and 1960s, the son of a fearful assimilating Jew

who had no way of talking about her own fears brought about by what the Nazis had done and, indeed, no discourse in which to conceptualise what had happened? Most importantly, I think, my mother, like many thousands, possibly tens of thousands, of others, had no way of understanding her relationship to what had taken place as traumatising. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was formally accepted as a medical diagnosis in 1980 in the wake of the Vietnam War when it was included in the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Leys 2000: 231–2). Trauma only became a publicly recognised way of thinking about the effects of certain events on individuals in the 1980s. Even then it has only been applied to those directly affected by events happening to them personally, such as sexual abuse, or caught up in events such as the Vietnam War and, retrospectively, the Holocaust. Given her situation in post-Second World War England, my mother's, most probably unconsidered, solution was silence. How could my mother even consider it worth contemplating to talk about, for example, how she felt when Walter came into her apparently safe, middle-class Anglo-Jewish family life with his tales of the persecution of people just like her in Germany? How could she think it important to work through—to use a Freudian term now much in vogue with therapists, but a term, and a way of thinking that would have been completely unknown to her—her reactions to her growing knowledge that the Jews who had at first been persecuted and ill-treated across that short distance of the English Channel were later actually being rounded up for extermination? And this when the Nazis had occupied the Channel Islands in 1940 and looked set to invade England. After the war my mother would have had no language to discuss her reactions to the film footage from the concentration camps and her anxieties for the future that her children were being born into, and in any case, nobody with whom she could talk about these things who could understand what they meant to her. Certainly not my father, the man she had married for, among other things, his Englishness, his situatedness as English within England; his certainty of his place.

Elsewhere I have recounted the only two times during my childhood that I remember my mother acknowledging the events that had not yet come to be thought of as the Holocaust. Once was a disconcertingly light-hearted reference to 'the Germans killing all our relatives over there'—as close a paraphrase as I can recall. The other was her rage when she discovered that the birthday present I had given her had been made in Germany.[7] I knew, even then, that her anger was disproportionate, indeed inappropriate, to what she saw as the offence I had committed. Looking back I can suggest the connection between her anger and her fear, emotions born of her reactions to events that she had no way of expressing and no context for understanding.

How has all this, my mother's unrecognised trauma, manifested in my life? In 'Notes on the Phantom', Nicolas Abraham writes about transgenerational haunting in terms of a phantom. He argues that 'what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others' (1994: 171). Abraham describes the phantom as:

> a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious—for good reason. It passes—in a way yet to be determined—from the parent's unconscious into the child's. Clearly, the phantom has a function different from dynamic repression. The phantom's periodic and compulsive return lies beyond the scope of symptom-formation in the sense of a return of the repressed; it works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject's own mental topography (173).

Abraham's phantom originates in the parent's unconscious and is handed on to the unconscious of the next generation where it acts as the return of the parent's repression.

We can compliment this idea with Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory which she explicitly ties to trauma. She writes:

> I use the term *postmemory* to describe the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they 'remember' only as stories and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right. The term is meant to convey its temporal and qualitative difference from survivor memory, its secondary or second-generation memory quality, its basis in displacement, its belatedness. Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through projection, investment and creation (1999: 8).

My mother is not a survivor in the conventional sense, a sense by the way which has only become conventional since the establishment of the discourse of the Holocaust. My mother, like so very many others, has no stories and images of rapid evacuations or atrocities that she has handed on. Rather, my mother's trauma was a secondary effect, a trauma brought on by witnessing what others went through, albeit at a mediated remove, and the fear that their fate could become her own, or her children's. What was passed on was a vague focus—beware of Germans, they do awful things; they murdered Jews during the Second World War. This was not a phantom, it was evident in the two stories which I have told and it was a constant presence in my mother's attitude to German people and to, for example, news stories in the paper or on television concerning Germany or Germans; if a German had been killed in an accident she might remark: 'Good riddance'. It is also not strictly postmemory in that it was a *reaction* that was passed on, a reaction expressing an emotional complex made up of fear, anger, perhaps sadness and other emotions. All these passed on without realisation, a legacy composed of affect.

Hirsch identifies well the expression of postmemory. The manifestation of the next generation's inheritance of the trauma in displacement, its belated repetition acted out, as she writes, in projection, investment and creation. It is these phantasmatic repetitions, retrospectively identified and narrativised, that I am describing as a traumascape. For large numbers of the second generation after the Judeocide, this postmemorial acting out coincided with attempts to find out, and understand, what had happened—and in my case, and doubtless that of many others, to situate myself somehow in relation to this knowledge. In 'Projected Memory' Hirsch retells my friend Mitzi Goldman's story, 'her strange memories of the Jewish school she attended, where, on rainy days when they could not go outside at lunchtime, the children were shown films about the Holocaust' (1999: 13). I did not go to a Jewish school and I did not have such questionable assistance in finding out what had taken place. Furthermore, finding out was, in itself, complicated, as I now realise, by the changing cultural memory of the Judeocide.

Let me begin to describe some of my own traumascape with a school story of my own. To the best of my knowledge I was the only Jew, certainly in my year—there may have been others in the school but I was so totally, if uncomfortably, assimilated that I didn't seek them out—and, with my very English family name, they didn't come looking for me. I do remember a rather overweight younger boy called Schlomo but I never even thought of him as Jewish. My English teacher was a young, Christian, Cambridge-educated man. Thoughtful and kind, he had an ability to enthuse us, me anyway, with the literature he had us read. During a number of classes when I was, I think, fifteen, he worked through an anthology of modern English verse. Two of the poems in that collection were by Sylvia Plath, 'Daddy' and 'Lady Lazarus'. Plath wrote both these poems in 1962. My memory is that our teacher said little or nothing about the Jewish references in the poems. Rather, he concentrated on the suicide theme in 'Lady Lazarus'. What is it, the class wanted to know, that the narrator—and is the narrator here indeed the author?—has done again, and does, it seems every ten years? Even then, before the rise in teenage suicides, discussing this with sixteen-year-olds was not easy. Much of the class time was taken up with teasing out the narrator's emotional state. In 'Daddy' the discussion, in my recall, centred on the female narrator's relationship with her father. My school was single-sex and most of us were boarders. A poem which explored the relationship between father and daughter from the daughter's point of view was fascinating for boys of our age. It seems extraordinary today to think that these poems could have been talked about in a school class without referring to their take-up of the Judeocide but, again, we must remember that this was a class of non-Jews—how could what happened to the Jews be relevant—and, besides, what had taken place in the concentration camps was surely too awful for the impressionable minds of fifteen-year-olds.

I was left to ponder these poems on my own. What had they to do with me, to do with me being a Jew? What is the anguish in 'Lady Lazarus', I wondered. What has suicide got to do with Jews? I understood Plath to be describing the horror of the concentration camps, a term I knew:

> 'Ash, ash—
>
> You poke and stir.
>
> Flesh, bone, there is nothing there—

A cake of soap.

A wedding ring.

A gold filling.

I connected with the affect though I did not know why. I had heard stories of the skin of victims being turned into lampshades, something to which Plath refers in the poem's second stanza. I knew, what I now understand to have been British propaganda, that Nazis had made soap from the Jewish bodies.[8] I did not know that the Nazis had taken the wedding rings and the gold fillings and made piles of these. The poem wove in and out of my little knowledge. It conjured feelings I had that I could not explain, and that I had no space to talk about and no way to talk about in that classroom with those boys.

'Daddy' was not quite as powerful for me. I related to it more incoherently. The speaker appeared to be the Jewish daughter of a German and a Jew; I was the Jewish son of an Englishman and a Jew. At the same time the poem's attitude to the German father resonated for me with my mother's attitude towards Germans. In particular there was this stanza:

An engine, an engine

Chuffing me off like a Jew.

A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.

I think I may well be a Jew.

I knew Belsen had been a concentration camp. I had never heard of Dachau.[9] I identified with the speaker's uncertainty about her Jewishness and empathised with the inevitability, in spite of her uncertainty, of her being sent to a camp. Importantly, the poems spoke to me about this Jewish experience. They broke my mother's silence and I realised that there were people out there who knew and thought and wrote about these things.

What I didn't know then was that Plath was not Jewish, was not herself the daughter of a mixed marriage. I accepted relatively unproblematically that the speaker of 'Daddy' was the speaker of 'Lady Lazarus' and that she was Plath, the author. James Young has written about Plath's use of the image of the 'Holocaust Jew', the victim. He explains that: 'The Holocaust exists for her not as an experience to be retold or described but as an event available to her (as it was to all who came after) only as a figure, an idea, in whose image she has expressed another brutal reality: that of her own internal pain' (1990: 118).[10] For me at fifteen, the emotional pain in the poems connected with the pain that I had inherited and, expressed through the imagery of Jewish suffering in the camps, and at the hands of the Germans, offered me a way of beginning to think about these things and myself as a Jew. My emotional investment in these poems can, I think, be understood as an example of the work of postmemory. In this sense they mediated for me a knowledge, and an affect, which has been handed on to me in the silence of repression.

For a different purpose I have briefly written about the relationship I had with a Jewish woman while in my twenties.[11] In terms of my traumascape this needs to be set in a context. During my final year as an undergraduate, a couple of years before I met this woman, I had a shortish relationship with a German exchange student who had come to Bradford University where I was studying. How to make sense of these two relationships symptomatically, closely juxtaposed as they were? My relationships with a German and then a Jewish woman can be read as an acting out of my fraught relationship with my mother and, simultaneously, an attempt to come to terms with my own Jewishness. There was, I think, a certain frisson of transgression for me with my German friend. This was not a relationship I ever told my mother about. There was a sense in which it was a rebellious act, as indeed was my later relationship, for my mother had not formed my identity as an Englishman to have me go out with a Jew. However, while this was also a rebellious act, and one linked by the same context, it was of a different order. What could be constructed as evidence of my failure to assimilate was different from my sleeping with the enemy.

At the time I met my German friend, in the very early 1970s, I still had not thought through what for me was not to become the Holocaust until the late 1970s—though I must say that I felt very relieved when she mentioned (though was this by chance?) that her parents had been in Africa during the war. I had been to Germany once, for a couple of days on a camping holiday with friends when we had driven across Europe

to Italy and back. Being in Germany had disturbed me. Today I would say that I felt uncanny. Seidler tells a story about visiting Poland with his partner. On Warsaw station she left him to go and report a robbery. He writes: 'Waiting in the station for Anna felt fine at the beginning but then I felt uneasy and nervous' (2000: ix). He goes on:

> when Anna returned from a different direction about forty minutes later I knew that I just needed to leave. I could not deal with the insecurities that were emerging and I felt terribly unsafe (2000: ix).

I was much younger than Seidler on my first visit to Germany and much less in touch with my feelings. All I knew was that for some reason I was on edge, that being there made me feel uncomfortable. I didn't connect the feelings with my mother's hatred of all things German or with her silenced fears over the Judeocide. There was, it seems, a two-fold process at work here: my feeling of uncanniness which was the result of my transgenerational haunting and my feeling of unease, my anxiety at being in Germany, which was the affect of the phantom that I had inherited.

My German friend went to university in Saarbrücken. I visited her there once. By this time her English had somewhat declined and my German, which I had learnt as a special subject at school—and done worse in than any other subject I had taken—was negligible. My friend took me to meet some friends of hers. This I could understand. Then she took me to meet some more, and more wanted to meet me. I began to think something strange was happening. I tackled my friend about it. She told me that word had got round that I was Jewish. These young people in their early twenties knew that the previous generation, maybe their parents or relatives, had destroyed the Jewish population of Saarbrücken, and of Europe. They themselves had never met a Jew.

I was aghast, not so much at being an exhibit (for me now it has disturbing colonial connotations of being a specimen) as being exhibited as a Jew. Me, totally assimilated, with no knowledge of Judaism, no Jewish cultural knowledge, whatever that might be, was being taken by these people as an example of those no longer present in Germany.[12] The complex, unconscious intertwinings of desire and death which drove my friend's and my relationship—what, after all, was her stake in this?—had been transformed, for me, into a very confrontational moment. While I had felt safe with my friend, helped no doubt by knowing that the French border was so very close, I was now led in a most confrontational way to the knowledge that my mother had repressed and, seemingly, had wanted me not to know.

Twenty years later Saarbrücken got its own anti-memorial to what, by 1990, was generally known as the Holocaust. Jochen Getz made his first anti-memorial in 1972, the year of my visit. As James Young writes: 'Between 1972 and 1998 [Gerz] has…opened a new generation's eyes to the essential incapacity in conventional public institutions like the museum or the monument to serve as wholly adequate sites for Germany's tortured memory of the Holocaust' (2000:121–2). At Saarbrücken, Gerz's students secretly removed cobblestones from the square leading to the Saarbrücken Schloss, engraved their undersides with the names of disused Jewish cemeteries in Germany and replaced them. The Gestapo had occupied the Schloss during Hitler's Reich. The town's Jews had been brought to the square on *Kristallnacht* in 1938 to be publicly humiliated. The remnants of Saarbrücken's Jewish population had been assembled in the square to be deported to Gurs in southern France on 22 October 1940 (Young 2000: 140). At the time of my visit this kind of information was not public, general knowledge, not a part of local cultural memory.

The autobiographical narrative that I am constructing leads towards a consciousness of the Judeocide, understood in the late 1970s in the terms of the discourse of the Holocaust, and a gradual awareness of my situatedness as a Jew in relation to the Judeocide. Another important moment in this trajectory came around the time I met my Jewish friend, shortly after I had gone to the University of Essex to study for my Masters. Sometime in 1973 or 1974 somebody at the university showed a print of Vittorio De Sica's 1971 film, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. De Sica's reputation was made in the Italian neo-realist movement of the late 1940s and 1950s. After a long, relatively fallow period *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* was highly acclaimed and won De Sica an Oscar for best foreign language film. These were the things I knew about the film when I went to watch it in one of the university's larger

lecture theatres. What I did not know, or chose to ignore, was that this is a film about anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. I had never given much thought to what had happened to the Jews in Mussolini's fascist Italy.

The film asks to be read as an elegiac evocation of a lost era of harmonious community relations before fascism transformed Italy.[13] The Finzi-Continis are a very wealthy and assimilated Jewish family who live in palatial circumstances with a large, wonderful, peaceful garden protected from the world outside by a high wall. As fascism takes hold the family retreat behind their wall. The film begins in 1938. Much of its narrative concerns Giorgio's doomed love for his childhood friend, Micòl of the Finzi-Continis. Giorgio comes from a middle-class Jewish family which, in spite of the father's attempts to put a positive light on Italian fascism, is increasingly affected by the new laws restricting the lives of Jews. Micòl retreats into her family's private world. Finally, one day in 1943, the fascist police come to the Finzi-Continis' home, identify them in a roll-call and take them to an assembly point with the other Jews of Ferrara, prefatory to deportation to a concentration camp.

In the film's narrative the menace increases slowly and subtlely. As a viewer I became totally involved. When the police came to take the Finzi-Continis away I found myself on my feet shouting at the screen. What was it that I was feeling—anger at the fascist destruction of these Jews; anger at the Finzi-Continis for their passive acceptance of their fate? I don't know. I think probably both. The Finzi-Continis' behaviour must have reminded me of my mother's determined assimilation, and maybe even her apparent refusal to confront what had happened in the Judeocide. Equally, I had, I think, found my anger at what the Nazis had done—an anger which was also my mother's anger transgenerationally haunting me but, as well, a postmemory acted out in a projection onto De Sica's film. I sat down embarrassed and confused. My friends, none of whom was Jewish, didn't mention the incident.

Living In Posttraumatic Society

One marker, at least for me, for the spread of what Friedlander calls the new discourse of Nazism was Liliana Cavani's 1974 film, *The Night Porter*. This film stars Dirk Bogarde as Max, an ex-Nazi officer who now, in 1957, works as a night porter in a hotel in Vienna. To this hotel comes Lucia, played by Charlotte Rampling, and her husband. It turns out that Lucia was a young prisoner in the concentration camp where Max was stationed. In the camp Max had forced Lucia into a sexual relationship with him. Now, many years on, the two return to that sado-masochistic relationship within the claustrophobic confines of Max's apartment room. Analytically, we could read this as traumatic repetition. I went to see this film with my Jewish friend when it was released in England and found myself speechless and riven with anxiety. I remember us leaving the cinema, silent and awkward with each other.

As Friedlander documents, through the latter part of the 1970s there was an outpouring of literature and film, fiction and non-fiction, about Hitler and Nazism (1993, passim). Much of it was taken with the erotic qualities of the Nazis. Cavani's film, with its portrayal of tortured sex intermingling with violence, was the respectable tip of a pornographic iceberg the most notorious filmic example being *Ilsa, She-Wolf of the S.S.*, also released in 1974. *Ilsa* was set in a Nazi slave labour camp—actually the set of the television series *Hogan's Heroes*—in which Ilsa, played by Dyanne Thorne, is the camp commandant. She has two preoccupations, having sex with the male prisoners, castrating those who fail to satisfy her, and experimenting to find out if women can stand more pain than men. A large number of these films are set in concentration camps. These include the Italian-made *Last Orgy of the Third Reich* (1976) and the American *Prisoners of Paradise* (1980). In some, but by no means all of these films, such as *Last Orgy* and *Nazi Love Camp 27* (1977), the women are supposed to be Jewish. My point here is that the concentration camp films were a sub-genre within this new representational concern with Nazism, and that these are not, in the first instance, Holocaust pornography. Lucia, in *The Night Porter*, is described as the daughter of a socialist, she is not identified as Jewish although in the flashback to her round-up there are many in the group wearing yellow stars. These films come out of the post-Second World War narrative in which what happened to the Jews was simply one aspect of the war.

Friedlander argues that the preoccupation with Nazism offers a way of expressing opposing needs to be found in modern civilisation:

> *Modern society and the bourgeois order are perceived both as an accomplishment and as an unbearable yoke. Hence this constant coming and going between the need for submission and the reveries of total destruction, between love of harmony and the phantasms of apocalypse, between the enchantment of Good Friday and the twilight of the Gods* (1993: 135, Friedlander's italics).

Embedded in this dichotomy is modernity's preoccupation with sex and male violence as an imbricated unity for which the concentration camp topos became the perfect vehicle. We cannot discuss this in detail here but we can note Slavoj Zizek's comment that concentration camps are 'the "perverse" obverse of twentieth-century civilization' (1989: 50). As I have argued elsewhere, concentration camps can be traced back to the eighteenth century and the rise of the modern state (Stratton 2003). In Freud's modern story of the origin of society he describes the primal horde and tells how the sons banded together to kill the Father so that they could gain access to the women of the horde whom the Father had kept for himself. Here, we find male desire and male violence intimately linked. This fantastic story is recapitulated in the familial Oedipus complex where the young son's desire for the mother, to be satisfied by killing the father and taking his place, is thwarted by the son's fear of castration. Freud comments that: 'A considerable amount of aggressiveness must be developed in the child against the authority which prevents him from having his first, but none the less his most important, satisfactions' (1961: 129). This characterisation of the male child's sexual life in the modern, nuclear, privatised family, with its freight of aggression, returns us to the idea of concentration camps by way of the German author Dieter Duhm who, in *Angst im Kapitalismus* (*Fear in Capitalism*), published in 1972, described families as 'this massive number of private concentration camps' (cited in Herzog 2000: 130). However, this is a recapitulation of a more profound modern structure. Concentration camps provide a patrolled space for the extreme violence that had been acted out previously—and continued to be acted out—by the Europeans on the Others identified on the colonial periphery. What the Nazis imported into the concentration and death camps, and into the space of Europe, was the modern, historical production of Same and Other, a production expressed in the distinction between 'European' and 'non-European' and, by the nineteenth century, 'white' and 'coloured'.[14] This historical construction of Difference was a founding moment of narcissistic trauma which gets acted out as excessive, sexualised violence on those constructed as Other.

Andrea Dworkin, in her account of pornography as the expression of male sexual violence against women, *Pornography*, argues that the Nazis:

> created a kind of sexual degradation that was—and remains—unspeakable. Even Sade did not dare to imagine what the Nazis created and neither did the Cossacks. And so the sexualization of the Jewish woman took on a new dimension. She became the carrier of a new sexual memory, one so brutal and sadistic that its very existence changed the character of the mainstream sexual imagination. The concentration camp woman, a Jew—emaciated with bulging eyes and sagging breasts and bones sticking out all over and shaved head and covered in her own filth and cut up and whipped and stomped on and punched out and starved—became the hidden sexual secret of our time. The barely faded, easily accessible memory of her sexual degradation is at the heart of sadism against all women that is now promoted in mainstream sexual propaganda (1981: 144–5).

I am arguing that, rather than being a new figure, the Jewish concentration camp woman is the expression of what has always been repressed and marginalized—literally, to the colonial periphery—in modernity. From this point of view, the Sadean expression of power through sexual violence is normative rather than deviant. She is, then, not a new sexual memory but an unrepressed one. One element of our posttraumatic society is that the image of the Jewish concentration camp woman has become normalized. Joan Smith has written about William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* (published in 1979) that 'the secret of the novel's popularity [is that] the juxtaposition of sex and the Holocaust has been dressed up as art, thus sanctioning its passage from the back rooms to the shelves reserved for the literary' (1993: 127).[15] In this book the concentration camp survivor is not Jewish, allowing for a more general identification. Given the normalisation of the concentration camp woman as the legitimised expression of male sexual violence against women, it is not surprising that motifs that appear in the concentration camp film genre, such as women being fed to dogs in *Last Orgy*, repeat documented actions carried out with regularity on the colonial frontier.

The corollary is that descriptions of what took place in concentration and death camps and, indeed, the actual images photographed at the time, became pornographic opportunities for sexual arousal—even, perhaps especially, for Jews. Thus, for example, in his autobiography, Alan Kaufman, born in the Bronx to a French survivor and an American-Jewish father, tells how, one day going through the books in the children's section of the public library on Grand Concourse, he found a misshelved book with photos taken in the camps:

> There followed photograph after photograph of naked corpses piled up in pits and on wagons and arranged on the ground.
>
> In one such picture I caught the curve of a beautiful breast, looked more closely. There was a matching breast visible, equally voluptuous, the pair belonging to a shapely body spread pinwheeled on the ground, head flung back and mouth agape. The soft, pretty face was not skeletal like the others. I could imagine the woman alive, developed an erection. Eyes closed, envisioned my fingers cupping her breasts, penis grazing her lips … When I opened my eyes, saw that she was dead among others, anonymously, her teeth jutting from her limp jaw, her legs twisted unbecomingly in the open pit, my erection shriveled instantly (Kaufman 2000: 49).

Kaufman associates the dead woman with his mother, whose behaviour betrays her traumatised connection with her past and with whom he has a relationship of intermingled love and fear. This gives a reason for his particular reading of these images. However, Kaufman's interaction with these images is much more common.[16] As is indicated in the quotation from Dworkin, these images of naked women, and men, and the narratives about what was done to them, can all too easily be appropriated as pornography—which I am defining very briefly here as culturally transgressive images that a reader appropriates voyeuristically as sexualised. With these images and descriptions the modern discourses of history and pornography commingle.

This commingling is even more fraught when it comes to reenactments. Discussing *Schindler's List*, Alan Mintz writes that:

> Among the Hollywood conventions that Spielberg is least willing to part with, according to his detractors, is the intimate connection between violence and sexuality. Despite the high calling and supreme sensitivity supposedly embodied in the making of the film, *Schindler's List* carries over the same eroticization of female victimhood found in many lesser, exploitative films on the Holocaust and in the general run of Hollywood entertainment (2001: 143).

The most egregious example is usually taken to be the Auschwitz shower scene where the naked women wait fearfully, to be relieved to discover that that the jets deliver water not gas. Placing the scene within what I have called the concentration camp genre, Omer Bartov comments that it 'would be more appropriate to a soft-porn sadomasochistic film than to its context (and here Spielberg comes dangerously close to such films as Cavani's *The Night Porter* and Wertmuller's *Seven Beauties*)' (Bartov 1997: 49; see also Horowitz 1997). The debate over whether there is gratuitous nudity in the shower scene—which has a history in a Hollywood soft-porn genre, that of male coming-of-age films such as *Porky's* (1982)—or a legitimate portrayal of what went on in the camps is, ultimately, impossible to resolve because what happened in the camps was, itself, an expression of the extreme sexual violence that haunts modernity.

Bartov writes about a form of literature available to adolescents in pre-1967 Israel. This was:

> passed secretly from one youth to another, read at night under a street lamp far from the eyes of adults, hidden under stones in the backyards of tenements, never brought home, hardly ever discussed, a source of illicit excitement and shameful pleasure. These were the so-called Stalags, a type of pornographic literature that circulated in Israel of the time, written by anonymous (but most probably Israeli) writers, replete with perverse sex and sadistic violence. The excitement evoked in young readers by such pulp fiction stemmed both from the encounter with forms of human activity kept tightly sealed from them by the puritanical nature of pre-1967 Israeli society and from the fact that the central sites for these actions were the concentration camps. Nothing could be a greater taboo than deriving sexual pleasure from pornography in the context of the Holocaust; hence nothing could be as exciting (2000: 192–3).

Whilst the specificity is particularly worrying here, that young Israeli Jews—

predominantly male, one would think—should learn about sex and sexual relationships by way of Holocaust pornography, such pornography utilising concentration camps became relatively common in the west, as the concentration camp film genre makes clear. What the topos of the camp has offered has been the opportunity to portray the most extreme forms of sexual violence available to the modern imagination within a historically validated legitimating context.

Where Zizek implies that the concentration camp remains distinct from post-Holocaust society, Ka-Tzetnik, the concentration camp survivor and author of the Salamandra sextet about life in Auschwitz in which he novelised the fate of his family and himself, argues that, 'if Auschwitz is another planet, then we are still living on that planet today' (Bartov 2000: 207).[17] In this post-Holocaust society, the excessive aggression and sexual violence that underlies modern society, and which was brought home to Europe and played out in the concentration and death camps, has been accepted into the everyday where it is traumatically repeated in representations and acted out in everyday life.

The new discourse of Nazism, really a newly overt preoccupation, coming in the 1970s, roughly thirty years after the end of the Second World War, was a product, more or less, of that generation that came of age after the war, the post-war generations. This discourse was an appropriation and working over in many forms of the Nazi legacy. When English punks used the swastika as a part of their fashion bricolage, it was from within this new awareness of, and coming-to-terms with, Nazism by the following generations.[18] In 1978, when the punk band Joy Division named themselves after slang for a concentration camp barracks where forced prostitutes were kept—taken, indeed, from the second of Ka-Tzetnik's sextet, *The House of Dolls*, the fictionalised account published in 1956 of what had happened to his sister, and a book that Bartov describes as sharing some of the characteristics of Stalag pulp fiction (Bartov 2000: 194)—the transgression was in response to the terms of the discourse of Nazism not of the Holocaust.[19]

However, the discourse of the Holocaust was becoming established and the two discourses were beginning to overlap, especially after the watershed of the British showing of *Holocaust* in 1978. These two discourses, individually and in complex combination, reconstituted cultural memory in Britain and in the west generally. The discourse of Nazism opened a space in which the war and the Nazi Reich could be discussed and worked over in popular culture. The discourse of the Holocaust, as I have already explained, enabled the various events of the Judeocide to be understood as a totality and for there to be debates about its unprecedentedness, its uniqueness, and its unrepresentability. The discourse also enabled the Judeocide to be understood as a cultural trauma.

Hirsh writes that:

> postmemory is not an identity position, but a space of remembrance, more broadly available through cultural and public, and not merely individual and personal, acts of remembrance, identification, and projection. It is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences—and thus also the memories—of others as one's own, or, more precisely, as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life-story (1999: 8–9).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s there developed a space in which the inherited trauma of the Holocaust could be publicly understood and legitimised, where personal trauma could be made sense of in relation to a cultural memory of the Judeocide as the culturally traumatising event of the Holocaust. At this point my own knowledge of what had transpired coupled with my traumascape, my repeated actings out of my inherited fears and confusions related to the Judeocide, meshed with the new cultural memory of the Holocaust in what now could be identified as posttraumatic society. This was the time that I could begin my own journey to understand the impact on me of my mother's traumatic relation to the Judeocide and its haunting of my psyche.

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Notes

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[1] See the Introduction to Jon Stratton (2000) *Coming Out Jewish*.

[2] For a more political history see Sherman (1994) passim.

[3] Since my father's death and my mother's institutionalisation it has become easier for my sister and I to reconnect with our Jewish relatives. As a part of this process I am now in email contact with Walter who has kindly provided me with details about his life.

[4] In *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, Ron Eyerman has defined cultural trauma as 'a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all' (2001: 2). In the collection *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004) edited by Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil Smelser and Piotr Sztompka, Alexander has a chapter on the Holocaust as a cultural trauma entitled 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The "Holocaust" from War Crime to Trauma Drama'.

[5] This biographical information on Halbwachs comes from Lewis Coser's Introduction to Maurice Halbwachs *On Collective Memory* (1992).

[6] On the history of 'Belsen Was a Gas' see Jon Savage (1992).

[7] I discuss these stories in 'Ghetto Thinking and Everyday Life' in *Coming Out Jewish* (2000).

[8] For a discussion of this myth see Douglas (2001: 289–91).

[9] Twenty or so years later a friend and colleague at an Australian university, forgetting I was Jewish as she later told me apologetically, sent me a postcard from Dachau showing the camp gates with 'Arbeit Macht Frei' over them. Quite something to find unexpectedly in one's letterbox.

[10] For a more positive view of Plath's Holocaust poetry see Susan Gubar 'Prosopopoeia and Holocaust poetry in English: the case of Sylvia Plath' (2002).

[11] See 'Ghetto Thinking and Everyday Life' in Stratton (2000).

[12] History is more complex. In *The Imaginary Jew* Alain Finkielkraut tells how, in May 1968, when news got out that the German-Jewish activist Daniel Cohn-Bendit had been refused permission to re-enter France: 'Thousands of people gathered spontaneously in the streets, and began to chant: "We are all German Jews!"' (1994: 17–8) Finkielkraut recounts his mixed emotions at this appropriation of his heritage.

[13] For a discussion of the film, and the novel on which it is based, see Millicent Marcus, 'De Sica's *Garden of the Finzi-Continis*: An Escapist Paradise Lost' (2000).

[14] On the historical production of European dichotomous thinking in relation to the 'discovery' of the New World see most relevantly Enrique Dussel *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the "Other" and the Myth of Modernity* (1995). I would argue that the evolution of this binary thinking in what was becoming known as Europe began before the Columbus' voyages and, indeed, one place it can be identified is in the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, also in 1492.

[15] As its title suggests, the entirety of Smith's essay 'Holocaust Girls' is relevant to my argument. Smith also writes about D. M. Thomas' *The White Hotel* and argues that, in these portrayals, 'sex-as-death [is] the one thing that women really desire, and Lisa [in *The White Hotel*], like Sophie [in *Sophie's Choice*], is fortunate enough to have men on hand who are ready to give it to her' (1993: 137).

[16] What I am describing is the 'unacceptable,' taboo encounter with Holocaust imagery. This is not a reading mentioned, for example, by Marianne Hirsch in her very fine 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory' in Barbie Zelizer ed. *Visual Culture and the Holocaust* (2001). Hirsch begins her piece with

two quotations that narrate Susan Sontag's and Alice Kaplan's first encounters with images taken in the camps. Sontag offers the conventional reaction: 'One's first encounter with the photographic inventory of ultimate horror is a kind of revelation, the prototypically modern revelation: a negative epiphany' (cited in Hirsch 2001: 215). Sontag writes that she came across the images in a Santa Monica bookstore when she was twelve. That Hirsch, Sontag and Kaplan are all women may be a clue to the lack of attention Hirsch pays to the pornographic possibilities of these images. Similarly, Barbie Zelizer in 'Gender and Atrocity: Women in Holocaust Photographs,' also in Zelizer ed. *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, does not write about the pornographic possibilities of these images.

[17] Bartov discusses Ka-Tzetnik, his life and work, in detail in his chapter entitled 'Apocalyptic Visions.' Ka-Tzetnik moved to Tel Aviv after the war and was called to give evidence about life in Auschwitz at the Eichmann trial.

[18] On English punk style see Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979).

[19] This can be seen in the name of the band formed out of Joy Division after the death of Ian Curtis. New Order was taken from Hitler's description of the new racial order in Europe that the Nazis were trying to create.

THE POLITICS OF BAD FEELING

SARA AHMED

> It should, I think, be apparent to all well-meaning people that true reconciliation between the Australian nation and its indigenous peoples is not achievable in the absence of acknowledgement by the nation of the wrongfulness of the past dispossession, oppression and degradation of the Aboriginal peoples. That is not to say that individual Australians who had no part in what was done in the past should feel or acknowledge personal guilt. It is simply to assert our identity as a nation and the basic fact that national shame, as well as national pride, can and should exist in relation to past acts and omissions, at least when done or made in the name of the community or with the authority of government. (Governor-General of Australia, cited in Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1996: 3)

What does it mean to claim an identity through shame? How does national shame work to acknowledge past wrongdoings, whilst absolving individuals of guilt? In this article, I want to explore expressions of 'feeling bad' or 'bad feeling' within national culture. It is not so much that such feelings are 'felt' by nations, but that declarations of shame can work to bring 'the nation' into existence as a felt community. In the quotation above, the nation is represented as having a relation of shame to the 'wrongfulness' of the past, although this shame exists alongside, rather than undoing, national pride. Shame becomes crucial to the process of reconciliation or the healing of past wounds. To acknowledge wrongdoing means to enter into shame; the 'we' is shamed by its recognition that it has committed 'acts and omissions', which have caused pain, hurt and loss for Indigenous others. The presumption of an essential relation between recognition and shame is shared by Raimond Gaita, who argues that: '[S]hame is as necessary for the lucid acknowledgement by Australians of the wrongs the Aborigines suffered at the hands of their political ancestors, and to the wrongs they continue to suffer, as pain is to mourning' (2000a: 278, see also Gaita 2000b: 87–93). Our shame is as necessary as their suffering in response to the wrongs of this history. This proximity of national shame to Indigenous pain may be what offers the promise of reconciliation, a future of 'living together', in which the rifts of the past have been healed.

But what kind of recognition and reconciliation is offered by such expressions of national shame? In the preface to *Bringing Them Home*, shame involves movement: the 'nation', in recognising the wrongfulness of the past, is moved by the injustices of the past. In the context of Australian politics, the process of being moved by the past seems better than the process of remaining detached from the past, or assuming that the past has 'nothing to do with us'. To put this point simply, feeling bad about the past seems better than feeling good. In this context, shame is certainly better than pride. But the recognition of shame—or shame as a form of recognition—comes with conditions and limits. In this first instance, it is unclear who feels shame. The quote explicitly replaces 'personal guilt' with 'national shame' and hence detaches the recognition of wrongdoing from individuals, 'who had no part in what was done'. This history is not personal, it suggests. Of course, for the Indigenous testifiers, the stories are personal. We must remember here that the personal is unequally distributed, falling as a requirement, or even as a burden, on some and not others. Some individuals tell their stories—indeed they have to do so—again and again, *given* this failure to hear (see Nicoll, 2004: 25-26), whilst others disappear under the cloak of national shame.

What is striking is how shame becomes not only a mode of recognition of injustices committed against others, but also a form of nation building. It is shame that allows us 'to assert our identity as a nation'. Recognition works to restore the nation or reconcile the nation to itself by 'coming to terms with' its own past in the expression of 'bad feeling'. But in allowing us to feel bad, does shame also allow the nation *to feel better*? What is the relation between the desire to feel better and the declaration of bad feeling?

In this article, I want to consider what I am calling the 'politics of bad feeling'.[1] That

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politics works in complex ways to align individuals with and against others, a process of alignment that shapes the very surface of collectives. Now, we can have a bad feeling in the sense that we feel something bad might happen. This would involve the logic of premonition, which anticipates that something bad might happen in the future. Or a bad feeling might be a feeling that feels bad in the present. Pain can be described as a bad feeling, which surfaces on the skin. Pain is often thought of as a sensation rather than emotion; whilst sensations have been understood as being 'too' immediate to require much thought (see Massumi 2002). But pain often slides into other negative feelings, or to other kinds of social as well as psychic negativity (sadness, shame, anger, fear, despair, grief, and so on). Pain is clearly affected by memory, and may even involve a 'retrospective intentionality', that tendency to attribute pain to something or another, often after the pain recedes (Bending 2000: 86). In attributing pain to something, we generate that very thing as an object of thought as well as feeling. So I might feel bad about something and the feeling reads that something (as being this or that kind of thing). Insofar as the feeling is a bad feeling, then it involves an orientation towards that thing *as* a bad thing. So we might experience pain (it hurts!), which attributes something as the cause of injury (it is bad!), or even identifies someone as causing the pain (you are bad!), which might involve action (go away!). Emotions are powerful as we experience the 'truth' of their judgements in the sensations of bodies: for example, in reading the other as being bad, I might then be filled up with a bad feeling, which becomes a sign of the truth of the reading.

In considering the politics of bad feeling, I am concerned not only with how emotions shape bodies, as sensation felt by the skin, but also with how feelings are declared or named within public culture. Naming emotions involves differentiating between the subject and object of feeling. When we name an emotion we are not simply naming something that exists 'in here' (what I call the 'inside out' model of emotions). So a text may claim that 'the nation mourns'. Here, the nation becomes like the individual, a feeling subject, or a subject that has feelings. We would need to ask: *what does it do to say the nation 'mourns'?* This is a claim both that the nation has feelings (the nation is the subject of feeling), but also that generates the nation as the object of 'our feelings' (we might mourn on behalf of the nation). The feeling does simply exist before the utterance, but becomes 'real' as an effect, shaping different kinds of actions and orientations. To say, 'the nation mourns' is to generate the nation, *as if it was* a mourning subject. The 'nation' becomes a shared 'object of feeling' through the orientation that is taken towards it. Now words cannot be separated from bodies, or other signs of life. So the word 'mourns' might get attached to some subjects (some more than others represent the nation in mourning), and it might get attached to some objects (some losses more than other may count as losses for this nation).
So the politics of bad feeling is not simply about how we might feel bad in the present, or as an anticipation of the future; it is also about who is attributed as the object and subject of that feeling *in the moment of its declaration*. At one level, we can examine how others are attributed as the cause of bad feeling: for example, the global politics of hate and fear since September 11 attributes others, those who 'could be terrorists', who are also those who 'look Muslim', as the origin of death insofar as they threaten our love, reified as the very form of civilisation (see Ahmed 2004). We also need to examine how 'bad feelings' circulate when they are precisely *not* attributed to others. We might, for instance, feel for the other's suffering (compassion), or we might feel bad about causing another's suffering (shame). When we feel bad about others what happens? What does 'feeling bad' about such 'bad feeling' do?

Charity, Pain and Compassion

We have been asked to care and feel compassion for others by public intellectuals such as Ghassan Hage (2003) as a form of resistance to the 'care-less-ness' of Australian politics. A caring nation would resist the paranoid nationalism of the worrying nation, which represents the proximity of racial others, such as asylum seekers, as an injury to the national body. Indeed, the discourse of asylum as injury works powerfully: the pain of asylum seekers, 'stitched' into the national imaginary through the 'stitching up' of their bodies, is already heard as damage to the nation. The asylum seekers in such an affective economy are the origin of bad feeling: the nation is represented as 'hurt' by the display of pain which is seen as a

refusal of the conditions of Australian hospitality, for which only 'gratitude' is expected in return. Surely, to express care for others, rather than seeing their presence as injurious, would be a more ethical response to the pleas of asylum seekers? Surely to feel compassion would be to offer hospitality to those whose injuries are effects of histories of violence that are not necessarily legible on the surface of bodies, but which are faced when we get close enough to face those bodies in the present?

In this section, I want to explore how compassion towards the other's suffering might sustain the violence of appropriation, even when it seems to enable a different kind of proximity to others. In order to reflect on the politics of compassion as care, we can explore how the pain of others is evoked in discourses of charity. Take the following paragraph:

> *Landmines*. What does this word mean to you? Darkened by the horrific injuries and countless fatalities associated with it, it probably makes you feel angry or saddened. *I'm sure you will be interested in the success stories that your regular support has helped to bring about: Landmines.* Landmines are causing pain and suffering all around the world, and that is why Christian Aid is working with partners across the globe to remove them. … *Landmines.* What does this word mean to you now? I hope you feel a sense of empowerment. (Christian Aid, letter, 9 June 2003)

In the quote above from a Christian Aid letter, the pain of others is first evoked through the use of the word 'landmines'. The word is not accompanied by a description or history; it is assumed that the word itself is enough to evoke images of pain and suffering for the reader. Indeed, the word is repeated in the letter, and is transformed from 'sign' to the 'agent' behind the injuries: 'Landmines are causing pain and suffering all around the world.' Of course, this utterance speaks a certain truth. And yet, to make landmines the 'cause' of pain and suffering is to stop too soon in a chain of events: landmines are themselves effects of histories of war; they were placed by humans to injure and maim other humans. The word evokes that history, but it also stands in for it, as a history of war, suffering and injustice. Such a letter shows us how the language of pain operates through signs, which convey histories that involve injuries to bodies, at the same time as they conceal the presence or 'work' of other bodies.

The letter is addressed to 'friends' of Christian Aid, those who have already made donations to the charity. It focuses on the emotions of the reader who is interpellated as 'you', as the one who 'probably' has certain feelings about the suffering and pain of others. So 'you' probably feel 'angry' or 'saddened'. The reader is presumed to be moved by the injuries of others, and it is this movement that enables them to give. To this extent, the letter is not about the other, but about the reader: the reader's feelings are the one's that are addressed; they are the 'subject' of the letter. The 'anger' and 'sadness' the reader should feel when faced with the other's pain is what allows the reader to enter into a relationship with the other, premised on generosity rather than indifference. The negative emotions of anger and sadness are evoked as the reader's: the pain of others becomes 'ours', an appropriation that transforms and perhaps even neutralises their pain into our sadness. It is not so much that we are 'with them' by feeling sad; the apparently shared negative feelings do not position the reader and victim in a relation of equivalence, or what Robert C Solomon has called 'fellow-feeling' (1995, see also Denzin 1984: 148).There are different forms of 'fellow-feeling' or 'feeling-in-common': they include compassion, as well as empathy, sympathy and pity. These different forms cannot be equated. For example, Elizabeth Spelman differentiates between compassion, as suffering *with* others, from pity, as sorrow *for* others (1997: 65). All of these forms of fellow-feeling involve fantasy: one can 'feel for' or 'feel with' others, but this depends on how I 'imagine' the other already feels. So 'feeling with' or 'feeling for' does not mean a suspension of 'feeling about': *one feels with or for others only insofar as one feels 'about' their feelings in the first place.* To return to the letter, we can consider how the reader, in accepting the imperative to feel sad about the other's pain, seems aligned with the other. But the alignment works by differentiating between the reader and the others: their feelings remain the object of 'my feelings', while my feelings only ever approximate the form of theirs.

It is instructive that the narrative of the letter is hopeful. The letter certainly

promises a lot. What is promised is not so much the overcoming of the pain of others, but the empowerment of the reader: 'I hope you feel a sense of empowerment.' The pain of the other is overcome, but it is not the object of hope in the narrative: rather, the overcoming of the pain is instead a means by which the reader is empowered. So the reader, whom we can name inadequately as the western subject, feels better after hearing about individual stories of success, narrated as the overcoming of pain as well as the healing of community. These stories are about the lives of individuals that have been saved: 'Chamreun is a survivor of a landmine explosion and, having lost his leg, is all the more determined to make his community a safer place in which to live.' These stories of bravery, of the overcoming of pain, are indeed moving. But interestingly the agent in the stories is not the other, but the charity, aligned here with the reader: through 'your regular support', you have 'helped to bring about' these success stories. Hence the narrative of the letter ends with the reader's 'empowerment'. The word 'landmines', it is suggested, now makes 'you' feel a sense of empowerment, rather than anger or sadness. In other words, feeling bad about the other's suffering allows the subject to feel good, where 'good feelings' (empowerment) form the 'hope' of the letter. What are erased in such a conversion are the very social relations that give some the capacity to feel good. In this case, the West is the one that gives to others only insofar as it is forgotten what the West has already taken in its very *capacity* to give in the first place. In the Christian Aid letter, feelings of pain and suffering, which are in part effects of socio-economic relations of violence and poverty, are assumed to be alleviated by the very generosity that is enabled by such socio-economic relations. So the West takes, then gives, *and in the moment of giving repeats as well as conceals the taking*. The 'we' emerges as 'feeling good' by 'feeling bad' about others, bad feeling that is converted into good feeling only by forgetting that the capacity to give depends on past and present appropriations. And indeed, such forgetting makes the other the 'object' of our feeling: they are indebted to us, and must return what we extend to them, through gratitude. To be indebted is after all to be positioned as both beneath and dependent.

Sorry Books

Sympathy in response to pain can work to position others as the object of feeling, and as indebted by the extension of feelings towards them. What then about shame as a response to pain? Shame isn't after all just about feeling bad *for* others, as it is about feeling bad *about* oneself *before* others. When shamed, one's body seems to burn up with the negation that is perceived (self-negation); shame impresses upon the skin, as an intense feeling of the subject 'being against itself'. Such a feeling of negation, which is taken on by the subject as a sign of its own failure, is usually experienced before another. As Charles Darwin suggests: 'Under a keen sense of shame there is a strong desire for concealment. We turn away the whole body, more especially the shame**,** which we endeavour in some manner to hide. An ashamed person can hardly endure to meet the gaze of those present' (cited in Epstein 1984: 37). The subject may seek to hide from that other; she or he may turn away from the other's gaze, or drop the head in a sensation more acute and intense than embarrassment. In other words, shame feels like an exposure—another sees what I have done that is bad and hence shameful—but it also involves an attempt to hide, a hiding that requires the subject turn away from the other and towards itself. Or, as Erik H Erikson describes, in shame, 'one is visible and not ready to be visible' (1965: 244). To be witnessed in one's failure is to be ashamed: to have one's shame witnessed is even more shaming. The bind of shame is that it is intensified by being seen by others *as* shame.

The very physicality of shame—how it works on and through bodies—means that shame also involves the de-forming and re-forming of bodily and social spaces, as bodies 'turn away' from the others who witness the shame. The 'turning' of shame is painful, but it involves a specific kind of pain. Pain can involve the reading of the other as bad ('They hurt me', 'They are hurtful', 'They are bad'). In experiences of shame, the 'bad feeling' is attributed to oneself, rather than to an object or other (although the other who witnesses my shame may anger or hurt me, I cannot attribute the other as the cause of bad feeling). The subject, in turning away from another and back into itself, is consumed by a feeling of badness that cannot simply be given away or attributed to another.

Shame also involves a different kind of orientation from disgust towards the subject and others. In disgust, the subject might be temporarily 'filled up' by something bad, but the 'badness' gets expelled and pushed out onto the bodies of others (unless we are talking about self-disgust, which is closer to shame). In shame, I feel myself to be bad, and hence to expel the badness, I would have to expel myself from myself (unsurprisingly, prolonged experiences of shame can hence bring subjects perilously close to suicide). In shame, the subject's movement back into itself is simultaneously a turning away from itself. In shame, the subject may have nowhere to turn.

This double play of concealment and exposure is crucial to the work of shame. The word shame comes from the Indo-European verb 'to cover', which associates shame with other words such as hide, custody, hut and house (Schneider 1987:194-213). Shame certainly involves an impulse to 'take cover' and 'to cover oneself'. But the desire to take cover and to be covered presupposes the failure of cover; in shame, one desires cover precisely because one has already been exposed to others. Hence the word shame is associated both with cover and concealment, as it is with exposure, vulnerability and wounding (Lynd 1958; Wurmser 1981).

Shame is a very bodily feeling of badness, in which one is witnessed or caught out by others. As Jean-Paul Sartre argues in his existential phenomenology of shame: 'I am ashamed of what I *am*. Shame therefore realises an intimate relation of myself to myself' (1969: 221). But, at the same time, Sartre suggests that: 'I am ashamed of myself *as I appear* to the Other' (1969: 222). Shame becomes felt as a matter of being —of the relation of self to itself— insofar as shame is about appearance, about how the subject appears before and to others. Crucially, the individuation of shame—the way it turns the self against and towards the self—can be linked precisely to the inter-corporeality and sociality of shame experiences. The 'apartness' of the subject is intensified in the return of the gaze; apartness is felt in the moment of exposure to others, an exposure that is wounding.

And yet, as Silvian Tomkins (1963) and Elspeth Probyn (forthcoming) emphasise, we can only be shamed by somebody whose 'look' matters to me, in whom I am interested, or even whom I love. If we feel shame, *we feel shame because we have failed to approximate 'an ideal' that has been given to us through the very practices of love*. What is exposed in shame is the failure of love, as a failure that in turn exposes or shows our love. The very physicality of shame—how it works on and through bodies—means that shame involves the bodies 'turning away' from the others who witness my shame, but a 'turning away' that simultaneously 'turns towards' others in an expression of love. Shame is the loss of indifference. My shame in the face of the exposure of my failure to embody an ideal shows my love, *and my desire to embody that ideal in the very moment of experiencing its loss as failure*. The intimacy of love and shame is indeed powerful. In showing my shame in my failure to live up to a social ideal, I come closer to that which I have been exposed as failing. This proximity of shame can, of course, repeat the injury (the shamed other may return love through identification with an ideal that it cannot be, such that the return confirms the inhabitance of the 'non'). Shame may be restorative *only when the shamed other can 'show' that its failure to measure up to a social ideal is temporary*.

Given the intimacy of love and shame, we can ask: What does it mean for the nation to 'admit to' feeling shame? What does it mean to declare one's own shame, that is, to bear witness to it, or to expose it to others? At one level, the national subject is being shamed here by itself; it attributes the bad feeling to itself rather than to others. In the preface of *Bringing Them Home*, the nation is described as shameful *because of* the past treatment of Indigenous Australians; their wounds (narrated in testimonies of loss, violence and pain) become the 'reason for' our shame, and the reason why national identity must be redefined as shameful. In some sense, the readers of the document, which is implicitly addressed to non-Indigenous Australians ('our shame' is about 'their pain') are called upon to bear witness to the testimonies of Indigenous Australians. These testimonies are made up of another kind of witnessing—a witnessing of trauma, of a past that lives in the present, on the land, on the skin. But the readers, who are called upon to witness these other acts of witnessing are in a double, if not paradoxical, position. They are asked to witness their shame as

'our shame', that is, to be first *and* third party, to be 'caught out' *and* 'catching out'. The implications of such a double position—that white Australians catch out white Australia—is that the national subject, by witnessing its own history of injustice towards others—can, in its shame, be reconciled to itself. As Fiona Nicoll (1993:706) has shown us, reconciliation can also mean to pacify, and to bring others in. Reconciliation becomes here a process whereby white Australia is reconciled to itself through witnessing the pain of others. We might also question here 'what' or even 'who' is the object of feeling in public shame: even if non-Indigenous Australians appear to be the subjects as well as the objects of shame (being shamed by oneself), it is clear that shame *might be expressed about some things and not others*. For instance, shame about the theft of children might be more easily expressed, than shame about the theft of land, as such shame would 'un-settle' or 'un-house' non-Indigenous Australians.[2] Such shame about the Stolen Generations could even take the place of shame about the theft of land, and in doing so, may actually be a mechanism for the disavowal of the 'grounds' of national shame.

National shame can be a mechanism for reconciliation as self-reconciliation, in which the 'wrong' that is committed provides the grounds for claiming a national identity. Those who witness the past injustice through feeling 'national shame' are aligned with each other as 'well-meaning individuals'; if you feel shame, then you mean well. Shame 'makes' the nation in the very witnessing of past injustice, a witnessing that involves feeling shame, as it exposes the failure of the nation to live up to its ideals. But this exposure is temporary, and becomes the ground for a narrative of national recovery. *By witnessing what is shameful about the past, the nation can 'live up to' the ideals that secure its identity or being in the present.* In other words, our shame *means that we mean well*, and can work to reproduce the nation as an ideal. The transference of bad feeling to the subject in shame is only temporary, as the 'transference' itself becomes evidence of the restoration of an identity of which we can be proud.

In order to address the complexity of the affective alignments possible in expressions of shame I want to examine the performance of shame in Sorry Books in Australia. Sorry Books are one activity in the process of reconciliation, which has also included Sorry Days.[3] Sorry Books involve individual Australians (mostly non-Indigenous, but also some Indigenous Australians) writing messages of condolence and support; they are compilations of statements and signatures, which create the effect of a shared narrative of sorrow as well as an account of national shame. Sorry Books have also been created through internet sites, which allow web users to post messages anonymously. They hence exist in paper and electronic forms. The Sorry Books generate a 'we' that is virtual, fantastic and real through the identification of past injustices and the way they have structured the present for different individuals, who are aligned by the very process of posting messages, even as they tell very different stories and make different claims. The messages become 'I's, while the 'we' becomes the 'Sorry Book' itself, the mediation of a collective story of sorrow and shame. Such affective and textual alignments do not simply create a 'we'; they also testify to its impossibility. I want to reflect on the role of shame in the de-forming and re-forming of the national 'we' through the articulation of the relation between the national subjects and the national ideal. To do this, I will offer a reading of some messages posted on an electronic Sorry Book.

It is important to note that this Sorry Book functions as a petition to the government, therefore many of the messages are addressed to the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, who has refused to offer an official apology to the Stolen Generations. By addressing the Prime Minister in this way, the messages work to identify the refusal to express shame as the source of national shame, as the grounds for an intensification of the shame about the past: 'If you don't, I'll do it for you, and then you'll look a lot worse than what you think you would.'[4] In this way, the Sorry Book functions as a demand to and for the nation to appear ashamed, and to speak the shame on behalf of Australians. The lack of shame becomes another form of national shame witnessed by subjects: 'Disgrace our country no longer Mr Howard. Recognise past injustice so we can move forward together. Your arrogance on this issue is a national shame!'[5]

Shamed by the shameless, this demand is also a plea that the nation move beyond the past, and enter into a future where pride can itself be 're-covered': 'The failure of our representatives in Government to recognise the brutal nature of Australian history compromises the ability of non indigenous Australians to be truly proud of our identity.'[6] Here, witnessing the government's lack of shame is in itself shaming. The shame at the lack of shame is linked to the desire 'to be truly proud of our country', that is, the desire to be able to identify with a national ideal. The recognition of a brutal history is implicitly constructed as the condition for national pride: if we recognise the brutality of that history through shame, then we can be proud. As a result, shame is posited as an overcoming of the brutal history, a moving beyond that history through showing that one is 'moved by it' or even 'hurt by it'. The desire that is expressed is the desire to move on, where what is shameful is either identified as past (the 'brutal history') or located in the present only as an absence ('the shame of the absence of shame'). Such a narrative allows the national subject to identify with others, such that pride becomes the emotion that sticks the nation together, an ideal that requires the nation to pass through shame. What is witnessed is not the brutality of this history, but the brutality of the passing over of that history. Ironically, witnessing such a passing over might even repeat the passing over, in the very desire to move beyond shame and into pride.

The complexity of witnessing and its relation to shame structures the genre of Sorry Books. On the one hand, the messages themselves bear witness to the shame of the nation's shame. On the other, they demand that the nation itself becomes a witness to its shame. At the same time, messages evoke other witnesses, those who are witnesses to the shame of the individual subject and the shame of the nation. One message states: 'I think that it is time that we say sorry. People all over the world are comparing us to south African apartheid.'[7] There is a slide from 'I' to 'we' that involves both adherence (sticking to the nation) as well as coherence (sticking together). That 'we' is not idealised in the present: rather the statement asks the 'we' to say sorry, so that it can be appear as ideal in the future. Hence the statement evokes others ('people all over the world') as witnesses to Australia's shame; it is the look of the world that makes the subject ashamed, as it 'catches out' the nation by seeing the nation as like other shameful nations ('South African apartheid'). What is shameful about Australia's past is not named; what is shameful is only negatively indicated, in the comparison made to another shameful nation, a comparison that 'shows' Australia to have failed, by making Australia appear *like* other failed nations. Being like the nation that has failed to live up to the ideal hence confirms the ideal as the proper desire of the nation. The fear of being seen as bad, or 'like them', structures this shame narrative, as well as the desire to be seen as 'good', defined in terms of civility. Is declaring shame here about looking good?

Histories of violence, of course, remain concealed under the very ideal of civility, which in Australia typically takes the form of the utterance 'fair go'. If we show our shame, then we can be proud of our character, our tendency to say 'fair go', and indeed our shame *becomes an expression of that character.* What this reminds us is that the national ideal takes the shape of white bodies. Of course, not all non-Indigenous Australians are white. I myself am a non-white and non-Indigenous Australian. One must note here that the non-white and non-Indigenous Australian can still participate in the idealisation of the nation; they can still claim to inhabit that ideal through repeating the utterance 'fair go', as if this utterance marked social civility of the nation, even when they fail its form. One suspects this would be a melancholic identification with the nation—it would be an identification with an ideal that one has already failed (see Crimp 2002). But such identifications remain possible. At the same time, non-white non-Indigenous Australians are also more likely to have experienced the violence that is concealed by the ideal of civility, as the violence that upholds the ideal, and which is of course directed to some bodies rather than others. It is the shared experience of violence, which we can re-describe as the ongoing force of racism, which might point to solidarity between non-white non-Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Australians. At the same time, such solidarity can only be possible with full recognition that being non-white and non-Indigenous does mean inhabiting a place outside the unfinished history of colonisation: non-white non-Indigenous Australians also walk on stolen ground.

Gestures of solidarity between those who have suffered racism are only possible if the refusal of the promise implicit in the use of the utterance 'fair go' is followed by an active support for Indigenous sovereignty.

Let us return to the Sorry Books. What is also crucial in the messages is how declarations of bad feeling also evoke a witness. They create a sense of exposure before others. The witness to the shame of the nation—and the shame of its refusal of shame—is implicitly 'international civil society' which exposes the shame of the nation. Messages evoke this imagined witness: 'The eyes of the world are upon you. One hundred years from now, how do you want to be remembered?' Being seen as an ideal nation is here defined as that which will pass down in time, not in our memories, but in how we are remembered by others. The desire for shame is here the desire to be seen as fulfilling an ideal, the desire to be 'judged by history' as an ideal nation. The imagined witness to the nation, the one who will record the nation's achievements, is not always presented as exterior to the nation, but as a reflection of its better self: 'How can we point the finger at other countries' abuses and not put a mirror up to our own.'[8] The mirror that allows the national subject to see its reflection shows the nation its shame, a 'showing' that would allow the national gaze to be directed towards others who have failed the national ideal, to be a witness rather than witnessed. Only when we have seen our own shame in our reflection, the message suggests, can we then 'point the finger' at others. Another message makes a similar declaration: 'Stop telling us to be proud of our country until you take positive steps to remove the source of our great national shame'. Here, pride would be shameful until shame has been expressed, while the expression of shame would justify pride. The politics of shame is contradictory: it exposes the nation, and what it has covered over and covered up in its pride in itself, but at the same time *it involves a narrative of recovery as the re-covering of the nation*.

Such a narrative of recovery, expressed as the demand for government to make shame 'official', becomes an act of identification with the nation through a feeling of injustice. This involves not only a sense that 'past actions and omissions' have been unjust, but also that what makes the injustice unjust is that it has taken our pride away; *it has deprived white Australia of its ability to declare its pride in itself to others*. In this way, some of the messages in the Sorry Books seem to mourn the very necessity of witnessing shame, as they call for shame to be witnessed such that pride can be returned, and the nation can stick together through a shared embodiment of the national ideal. It is in the name of future generations that shame becomes a way of sticking together, by exposing the failure of the nation to live up to its ideal, described in one message as 'love, generosity, honor and respect for our children'. As one message puts it:

> I am an Australian citizen who is ashamed and saddened by the treatment of the indigenous peoples of this country. This is an issue that cannot be hidden any longer, and will not be healed through tokenism. It is also an issue that will damage future generations of Australians if not openly discussed, admitted, apologised for and grieved. It is time to say sorry. Unless this is supported by the Australian government and the Australian people as a whole I cannot be proud to be an Australian.[9]

The utterance, whilst calling for recognition of the 'treatment of the indigenous peoples' does not recognise that subjects *have unequal claims 'to be an Australian' in the first place*. If saying sorry leads to pride, who gets to be proud? In other words, the ideal image of the nation, which is based on the image of some and not others, as I have suggested, is sustained through the conversion of shame into pride.

The desire for pride—for the nation to embody its ideal—is crucial to these expressions of shame. What is in question here is not the allegiance of the national subject, but whether or not the nation is seen to be living up to its ideals. Exposing the failure of that ideal is politically important—and part of what shame can do and has done—but it can also become the grounds for patriotic declarations of love. In such declarations of love, shame becomes a 'passing phase' in the passage towards being-as-nation, where the ideals that the nation 'has' are transformed into what it 'is'. Nowhere is this clearer than in the message: 'I am an Australian Citizen who wishes to voice my strong belief in the need to recognise the shameful aspects of Australia's past—without that how can we celebrate present glories'.[10] Here, the recognition of what is shameful in the

past—what has failed the national ideal—is what would allow the nation to be idealised and even celebrated in the present. In other words, the desire to feel good or better can involve the erasure of relations of violence; expressions of shame about histories of violence work not only as a narrative of 'recovery', but also as a form of 'covering over'. Furthermore, shame involves a narrative of conversion: non-Indigenous Australians express sorrow, sympathy and shame in order that they can 'return' to their pride in the nation, as an affective relation to nationhood, which was the proper scene of the violence.

However, this is not to say that the experience of being shamed necessarily returns us to pride. (It is, after all, a question of return.) But saying sorry does not necessarily mean being sorry. Let us consider the apology as a speech act. J L Austin considers the apology as a performative utterance, as an act that 'in saying something does something'. Like all performative utterances, certain conditions have to be met, or they are unhappy; they do not perform. The conditions that have to be met for an apology to be happy relate mainly to the emotions of the speaker. The speaker must feel sorry, if the apology is to work; insincerity would be condition enough for an unhappy apology (Austin 1975: 40, 47). Such a model, however, assumes that emotions are inner states, which are then either expressed or not expressed through words. One can equally imagine that an apology can do something without necessarily being a measure of true feeling: for example, to apologise for one's role in hurting another might 'do something' even if I do not feel sorry. Or the apology could become the basis of an appeal for compensation: it could be 'taken up' as evidence of responsibility rather than feeling. The difficulty is that whilst apologies are doing something, it is not clear what they are doing. If the apology is an action, then it is unfinished, as its action depends upon how it is taken up.

When thinking about speech acts that apologise in the case of Australian reconciliation, we can see that these do not 'originate' in bad feeling. The speech act *is the request for an apology*, so the apology is the return address. This means that it is necessary to start recognising that the political action begins not with national sorrow or national shame, but with Indigenous Australians as those who are acting, who are making the speech act. As we know only too well, the Prime Minister, John Howard, has refused to apologise, preferring the word 'regret'. It is not that he has returned the demand for an apology without an action; he has acted, for sure. The return address is a refusal, and takes the form of 'I/We do not apologise.' As Elizabeth Spelman suggests, regret admits no responsibility; it does little work (1997: 104). This speech act also works as a political action: it 'makes' the nation, by declaring that the nation is not responsible: 'We did not do this', 'We were not there.' The foreclosure of responsibility certainly does something: it cuts the speaker and the nation off from the histories that shape the present.

If we consider shame as a return address, rather than as a bad feeling that is about our relation to ourselves, then perhaps something else might occur. When others, who have been wronged, ask for signs of shame, then the expression of shame does not return ourselves to ourselves, but responds to demands that come from a place other than where we are. The apology in this instance would be a return address, an address to another, whose place is not inhabited, and which cannot allow the overcoming of bad feeling. Saying sorry, if it is to be a gesture of return address, cannot be a moment in the passage to pride: to return such a speech act, one cannot turn back towards oneself. We can stay open to hearing the claims of others, only if we assume that the act of speaking one's shame does not undo the shame of what we speak. The expressions of national shame in the preface to *Bringing Them Home* and the Sorry Books are problematic, *as they sought within the utterance to finish the action, by claiming the expression of shame as sufficient for the return to national pride*. As such, they do not function as a return address: they block the hearing of the other's testimony in turning back towards the 'ideality' of the nation. It remains possible to express shame before others without finishing the act, which refuses this conversion of shame to pride, in an act of shame that is not only before others, but for others.

I will return to this more hopeful thought in my conclusion. Suffice to say here that to critique this mode of politics, which I have described as a politics of bad feeling, is not to deny the possibility of gestures of solidarity. However, such gestures can only count as gestures of solidarity insofar as

they do not block the hearing of others. My critique suggests that to claim solidarity through declarations of bad feeling is problematic insofar as it takes the declaration as 'sufficient grounds' for solidarity. Solidarity, I would argue, requires much harder work. It is interesting that one meaning of the word solidarity evokes sentiment: solidarity is often described as a feeling of fellowship, or even as 'fellow feeling'. Perhaps we need to turn to the etymology of the term, which is after all derived from 'solid'. Perhaps solidarity only works when sentiments solidify into actions. Indeed, it is the premature claim to solidarity, as if it is something we already have, that can block the recognition that there is much harder work left to do.

What Happens to Bad Feeling?

I have talked so far about shame declared by non-Indigenous Australians. I want to turn now to think about the role of bad feelings and racism. My reading of the Sorry Books noted a paradox. Let me reformulate the paradox in the following way: The shameful white subject expresses shame about its racism. In expressing its shame, it 'shows' that it is not racist; if we are shamed, then we mean well. The white subject that is shamed by its racism is hence also a white subject that is proud *about* its shame. The very claim to feel bad (about this or that) also involves a self-perception of 'being good'.

There is a widely articulated anxiety that if a subject feels 'too bad', then he or she will become even worse. This idea is crucial to the idea of reintegrative shaming in restorative justice. A reintegrative shame is a good shame insofar as it does not make subjects 'feel too bad', in John Braithwaite's terms, it 'shames while maintaining bonds of respect or love, that sharply terminates disapproval with forgiveness, instead of amplifying deviance by progressively casting the deviant out' (1989: 12–13). Shame would not be about making the offender feel bad (this would install a pattern of deviance), so 'expressions of community disapproval' are followed by 'gestures of reacceptance' (Braithwaite 1989: 55). Note that this model presumes the agents of shaming are not the victims (who might make the offender feel bad), but the family and friends of the offender. It is the love that offenders have for those who shame them which allows shame to integrate rather than alienate. As such, Braithwaite concludes that: 'The best place to see reintegrative shaming at work is in loving families' (1989: 56).

This idealisation of the family is not incidental. According to this model, too much shame would be too bad as it would make relationships and social bonds impossible. Shame is only 'good' if it can be quickly converted into good feeling. What is presumed in the literature on restorative justice is that injustice is caused by the failure of the social bond. The restoration of the social bond (the family, the community, the nation) is hence read as a sign of justice. Justice is also assumed to be about 'having' good relationships. I would argue that the struggle against injustice cannot be transformed into a manual for good relationships. Justice might not simply be about 'getting along', but may preserve the right of others not to enter into relationships, 'not to be with me', in the first place. The other, for example, might not want my grief, let alone my sympathy, or love. If we must feel good (about each other) according to the restorative justice model, then what happens to bad feeling?

It is hence no accident then that racism has been seen as caused by bad feelings. For example, the reading of white people as injured and suffering from depression is crucial to neo-fascism: white fascist groups speak precisely of white people as injured and even hurt by the presence of racial as well as sexual others (see Ahmed 2004). But this claim has also been made by scholars such as Julia Kristeva, who suggests that depression in the face of cultural difference provides the conditions for fascism (1993: 37). She hence suggests we should eliminate the Muslim scarf in order to avoid national depression. For Kristeva, fascism is a politics of depression: so we should remove the signs of difference that challenge the ego ideal of the nation. There is more sophisticated version of this argument in Ghassan Hage's *Against Paranoid Nationalism* (2003), which suggests that continued xenophobia has something to do with the fact that there is not enough hope to go around, although, of course, he does not attribute the lack of hope to cultural difference. Despite their obvious differences, the implication of such arguments is that anti-

racism is about making people feel better: safer, happier, more hopeful, and so on.

It might seem that happy, hopeful and secure non-racist whites hardly populate our landscape, so we really should not bother too much about them. But I think we should. For this very promise—this hope that anti-racism resides in making whites happy or at least feel positive about being white—has also been crucial to the emergence of pedagogy within whiteness studies.

Work conducted in whiteness studies expresses a strong anxiety about the place of 'bad feeling' and 'feeling bad'. Even within the most 'critical' literature, there is an implicit argument that whiteness studies should not make white people feel too bad about being white because bad feeling causes racism. Partly, such positions respond to the work of bell hooks (1989) and Audre Lorde (1984), who emphasise how feeling bad about racism or white privilege can function as a form of self-centeredness, which returns the white subject 'back into' itself, as the one whose feelings matter. hooks in particular has considered guilt as the performance rather than undoing of whiteness. Guilt certainly works as a 'block' to hearing the claims of others as it 're-turns' to the white self. But does the refusal to make whiteness studies about bad feeling allow the white subject to 'turn towards' something else? What is the something else? Does this refusal to experience shame and guilt work to turn whiteness studies away from the white subject?

Ruth Frankenburg has argued that if whiteness is emptied out of any content other than that which is associated with racism or capitalism 'this leaves progressive whites apparently without any genealogy' (1993: 232). The implication of her argument is, in my view, unfortunate. It assumes the subjects of whiteness studies are 'progressive whites', and that the task of whiteness studies is to provide such subjects with a genealogy. Kincheloe and Steinberg make this point directly when they comment on 'the necessity of creating a positive, proud, attractive antiracist white identity' (2000: 3-30). The shift from the critique of white guilt to this claim to a proud anti-racism is not a necessary one, but it is a telling shift. The white response to the Black critique of shame and guilt has enabled here a 'turn' towards pride, which is not then a turn away from the white subject and towards something else, but another way of 're-turning to' the white subject. Indeed, the most astonishing aspect of this list of adjectives (positive, proud, attractive, antiracist) is that 'antiracism' becomes a white attribute: indeed, *anti-racism may even provide the conditions for a new discourse of white pride.*

Here, antiracism becomes a matter of generating a positive white identity, an identity that makes the white subject feel good. The declaration of such an identity sustains the narcissism of whiteness and allows whiteness studies to make white subjects feel good by feeling good about 'their' antiracism. One wonders what happens to bad feeling in this performance of good, happy whiteness. If bad feeling is partly an effect of racism (rather than its origin) and racism is accepted as ongoing in the present (rather than what happened in the past), then who gets to feel bad about racism? One suspects that happy whiteness, even when this happiness is *about* anti-racism, is what allows racism to remain the burden of racialised others. Indeed, I suspect that bad feelings of racism (hatred, fear and so on) are projected onto the bodies of unhappy racist whites, which allows progressive whites to be happy with themselves in the face of continued racism towards racialised others.

Conclusion: Is There Room for Feeling Better?

My argument suggests that justice and injustice cannot be 'read' as signs of good and bad feeling: to transform bad feeling into good feeling (hatred into love, indifference into sympathy, shame into pride, despair into hope and so on) is not necessarily to repair the costs of injustice. Indeed, this conversion can repeat the forms of violence it seeks to redress, as it can sustain the very distinction between the subject and object of feeling, repeated by the extension of feelings towards others. But what about the feelings of others? Isn't the very reality of suffering a sign of injustice?

The relation between injustice and feeling bad is complicated. Lauren Berlant has argued that injustice cannot be reduced to pain (2000: 34-47). Although pain and injustice cannot be reduced to each other, they also cannot be separated: the fact of suffering, for example, has *something to*

do with what is 'wrong' about systematic forms of violence, as relations of force and harm. The effects of violence have something to do with why violence can be judged as 'bad'. Now, this is not to say that what makes violence bad *is* the other's suffering. To make such a claim is dangerous: it makes the judgement of right and wrong dependent upon the existence of emotions. The reduction of judgements about what is bad or wrong to experiences of hurt, pain or suffering would be deeply problematic. The claim would allow violence to be sustained in the event that the other claimed not to suffer, or that I claimed the other did not suffer. We must remember that some forms of violence remain concealed *as* violence, as effects of social norms that are hidden from view. Given this, violence itself could be justified on the grounds of the absence of consciously felt suffering. The reduction of injustice to emotions also 'justifies' claims of access to the interiority of the feelings of others. We have probably all heard arguments that justify power relations through the claim that this other is in fact 'not hurting', or might even be 'contented', or 'happy'. Indeed, I could make this claim about myself: 'I do not hurt, I am happy, therefore it is not wrong.' But injustice still has something to do with feeling bad in the sense that what make injustice so unjust is 'felt', injustice hurts.

If injustice is not simply *about* feeling bad, even if it affects bad feelings, then justice is not simply a matter of feeling 'good' or even feeling 'better'. As I have shown, the desire to feel good or better can involve the erasure of relations of violence. I have examined how expressions of shame about histories of violence work not only as a narrative of 'recovery', but also as a form of 'covering over'. Shame becomes an expressions of 'bad feeling', *which is even 'about' feeling better in the present.*

Is there a way of considering feeling better as a form of exposure rather than recovery? Do testimonies of suffering work as they expose bad feelings without assuming that the act of putting feelings into speech is an overcoming of the social relations that shaped such feelings? Within the politics of reconciliation, and in the truth commissions that have been set up in response to trauma and historical injustice, telling the story of injury is crucial. This is not to say that 'telling' a story of pain and injury is necessarily therapeutic. Indeed, what is clear in *Bringing Them Home*, is that the 'telling' is also about a witnessing, which does not always get a just hearing. Whilst the white response to this document can 'cover over' the injury, by claiming the pain as 'the pain of the nation', we should not then surmise that the work of the testimony is over; far from it. The recognition of injury re-writes history, and it re-shapes the very ground on which we live. If the violence of what happened is recognised as a violence that shapes the present, that shapes the skin of bodies that shudder and breathe in the present, then the 'truths' of history are called into question. Recognition of injury is not simply about others becoming visible (although this can be important). Recognition is also about saying that injustices did happen; this re-telling of history offers new insights into the present and how lives in the present have been shaped not only by past injustices, but by the forgetting of those injustices. Healing does not cover over, but exposes the wound to others: *the recovery is a form of exposure*.

Doing the work of exposure is both political and emotional work, and is not over in the moment of hearing. Political struggle is a struggle because what we struggle against can diminish our resources, our capacities for action, our energy; it can even take lives. This is why justice has to leave room for feeling better, even if it is not *about* feeling better. For those whose lives have been torn apart by violence, or those for whom the tiredness of repetition in everyday life becomes too much to bear, feeling better does and should matter. Feeling better is not a sign that justice has been done, nor should it be reified as the goal of political struggle. But feeling better does still matter because it is about learning to live with the injuries that threaten to make life impossible. The projects of reconciliation and reparation are not about the 'nation' recovering: they are about whether those who have been affected by injustice can find a way of living in the nation that feels better through the process of speaking about the past, or through exposing the wounds that get concealed by the 'truths' of a certain history. Feeling better might be an effect of telling one's story, of finding a more liveable way of sustaining silence, of having those who committed the crime

apologise, or of receiving material forms of compensation or other modes of recognition of injury. Feeling better might be about having the room left to think and feel, or to dance on the ground; it might be about having space and time apart from others. Feeling better might be about having sufficient materials to sustain life in one's body; it might be about having energy, shelter, warmth, light, or air to breath. Feeling better, whatever form it might take, is not about the overcoming of bad feeling, which are effects of histories of violence, but of finding a different relationship to them. It is in the face of all that endures of the past in the present, the pain, the suffering and the rage, that we can open ourselves up, and keep alive the hope that things can be different.

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Notes

[1] This argument draws on and extends the model of emotions developed in my book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004). Thanks to Fiona Nicoll, Aileen Moreton-Robinson and staff and students at the Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland for the opportunity to present this as a paper and for the wonderful feedback they gave me. Thanks also to Elspeth Probyn who hosted my visit to Sydney University, from November 2003 to July 2004, and whose work on the politics of shame, which offers a very different model, has nevertheless provided an inspiration for me.
[2] Thanks to Aileen Moreton-Robinson for this point.
[3] Since May 1998, and on the recommendation of *Bringing Them Home*, annual Sorry Days have certainly brought some Australians together through the shared expressions of sorrow as well as shame about the violence towards Indigenous Australians that 'blackens' the past; the history and present of the Stolen Generations. Sorry Days have involved Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians marching together in gestures of solidarity, a 'walking with' that promises to open up a different future for Australia, in the very recognition that the violence of the past has affected Australia in the present. A question remains as to whether Sorry Days can live up to this promise, or whether they embody *the sentimentalisation of loss*, which can easily coincide or even support the continued refusal to accept the grounds of Indigenous sovereignty. See Chapter 5 of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) for a longer critique of the politics of Sorry Days, which also reflects on wider issues around apology, guilt and the politics of reparation.
[4] See <http://users.skynet.be/kola/sorry5.htm> (accessed 13/12/2002).
[5] See <http://users.skynet.be/kola/sorry2.htm> (accessed 13/12/2002).
[6] See <http://users.skynet.be/kola/sorry5.htm> (accessed 13/12/2002).
[7] See <http://users.skynet.be/kola/sorry5.htm> (accessed 13/12/2002).
[8] See <http://users.skynet.be/kola/sorry5.htm> (accessed 13/12/2002).
[9] See <http://users.skynet.be/kola/sorry2.htm> (accessed 13/12/2002).
[10] See <http://users.skynet.be/kola/sorry2.htm> (accessed 13/12/2002).

'THEY WENT HOME': RACIALISED SPACES IN CONTEMPORARY PICTURE BOOKS

CLARE BRADFORD

This paper discusses Michel de Certeau's theories of spatialised power and of resistance, especially his characterisation of what he describes as 'tactics' by which marginalised groups resist the strategies by which those in power gain and maintain control, in relation to a group of settler society picture books: Edna Tantjingu Williams, Eileen Wani Wingfield and Kunyi June-Anne McInerney's *Down the hole* (2000); the *Papunya School Book of Country and History* (2001); Chiori Santiago and Judith Lowry's *Home to Medicine Mountain* (1998); George Littlechild's *This Land Is My Land* (1993); and Allen Say's *Home of the Brave* (2002). These texts thematise colonial and assimilationist policies in Australia, Canada and the United States which required that racialised groups of children should be removed from their homes and families and placed in institutions. I argue that the first four of these texts position child readers both to understand the dislocation and pain caused by government policies such as those which enforced the removal of the Stolen Generation in Australia, and to appreciate the tactics of resistance by which children evaded or subverted institutional power. *Home of the Brave* deploys the symbolism of an adult's journey into the past to show how strategies of repression serve to protect individuals and nations from shame and guilt, and demonstrates the transformative effects which result when the past is scrutinized.

What sets children's literature apart from other fields of textuality is that it is implicated in socialising practices, so that all the way along the chain of production and mediation—from authors and illustrators through publishers, editors, librarians, teachers and parents—adults seek to intervene through textuality in the lives of children. And as children are self-evidently future adults, the texts produced for them propose ways of being in the world, promote ideologies, model modes of behaviour. Texts for children are centrally preoccupied with 'the nature of selfhood and its relationship to place' (Stephens 1999: 56), and my focus in this discussion is on the nexus between selfhood and place in a group of picture books from Australia, Canada and the United States. I have chosen these books not because they are representative of picture books for children, but because they are not; rather, they contest and undermine the unexamined assumptions about race which inform children's literature.

It is certainly the case that mainstream producers of children's texts in western democracies now commonly advert to what might look like progressive principles around, for example, gender; sexuality and race. But most authors and illustrators, publishers and editors come from the white, middle-class populations which constitute the majority of young readers; and most children's texts still treat as normative the experience of white, middle-class children. What this means in practice is that when children's books thematise ethnic and cultural difference, the two most common narrative schemata are: first, that alterity is represented as a boon to white children; and secondly, that the ideal outcome is one in which difference is assimilated into whiteness. Narratives in the first category typically track the progress of a white child whose encounter with ethnic and cultural difference teaches the child empathy and understanding, so that alterity functions as a catalyst for individual growth; the second category includes the many texts in which a character who is different finds acceptance by learning to assume a subject position consonant with the ideologies and aspirations of the dominant culture, which are represented as normative. Both schemata enforce cultural givens about hierarchies between racialised groups, since non-white characters and cultural practices are valued insofar as they contribute to or tend toward whiteness.

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The picture books on which I focus feature children who experience displacement and separation from homes and families: the forced removal of the Stolen Generations in Australia, in *Down the hole* (2000), by Edna Tantjingu Williams, Eileen Wani Wingfield and Kunyi June-Anne McInerney; the imposition of western-style education at Papunya in the *Papunya School Book of Country and History* (2001); the institutionalisation of children in Residential Schools in the United States and Canada, in *Home to Medicine Mountain* (1998), by Chiori Santiago and Judith Lowry, and in George Littlechild's *This Land Is My Land* (1993); and in Allen Say's *Home of the Brave* (2002), the incarceration of Japanese-American children during the Second World War. The first four of these texts are written and illustrated by Indigenous authors and illustrators; Allen Say, the author-illustrator of *Home of the Brave,* is Japanese-American. All incorporate intergenerational narratives and references which place individual children within families and clans.

These books do not simply tell sad stories about stolen children; rather, they foreground cultural survival and continuity, and they imply readers who align themselves with displaced (and sometimes resistant) child characters. They incorporate intergenerational narratives in two ways. First, their production involves collaboration across generations; for instance, *Down the hole* tells the story of Wingfield and Williams as children in the 1930s, and the book's illustrator, Kunyi June-Anne McInerney, was herself removed from her family in the 1950s. Similarly, *Home to Medicine Mountain* tells the story of Benny Len and Stanley, Native American brothers who as young boys rode the railways home to escape from an Indian boarding school in the 1930s, and Judith Lowry, the illustrator, is the daughter of Benny Len and the niece of Stanley; again, *Home of the Brave* incorporates the memories of three generations of Japanese-American characters. The narratives of these picture books are inter-generational too in that they position contemporary children as the audience for stories about children of the past, insisting on the significance of communal memory and conveying the urgency of the transmission of stories (such as those told in *Down the hole* and *Home to Medicine Mountain*), which rely on elderly storytellers.

The individuals described in these texts identify with kinship communities and with places, and their experiences of displacement and of resistance relate to the spatialisation of power under colonial and assimilationist régimes. Michel de Certeau identifies three strategies through which power is spatialised: he says that those who exercise political control establish 'a place of power', a territory marked by differentiation between inside and outside spaces and achieving a 'triumph of place over time' (1984: 36) where the constraints placed on inhabitants are such that individual and communal experience is subsumed into the regulatory practices of the 'place of power'. Secondly, he says that power is institutionalised through surveillance which ensures that boundaries are observed (in both senses of this word); and thirdly, that powerful groups 'transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces' (1984: 36), readable that is in relation to the discourses of knowledge and power which determine 'what counts as true', to use Foucault's expression (1980: 131). Against these 'strategies of power', de Certeau proposes that subjected peoples deploy 'tactics', the 'innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game' which 'characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations' (1984: 18). In *Geographies of Resistance,* Steve Pile comments:

> It may, at first glance, appear that de Certeau is suggesting that the powerful control space and that resistance can do no more than act out of place, but it can also be argued that tactics of resistance have at least two 'surfaces': one facing towards the map of power, the other facing in another direction, towards intangible, invisible, unconscious desires, pleasures, enjoyments, fears, angers and hopes—the very stuff of politics…Spaces of resistance can, therefore, be seen as dis-located from those of the powerful. (1997: 16)

The opening doublespread of the *Papunya School Book,* which presents a map of the central desert region combined with a representation of a group of Aboriginal children, dramatises the interplay between the strategies of the powerful and the tactics of those who resist them. The red earth of the central desert region is subjected to the conventions of cartography, surveyed, set to scale and its sites and features named. But the children depicted in this doublespread, who are the pupils of Papunya School in contemporary times, face toward their various *ngurra,* the country to which they are connected by kinship and communal histories. For Papunya, as the *Papunya Book* explains, is where many Anangu (people of the central desert region) 'ended up living' (2001: 3) because of the reach and influence of colonial power, exercised through the appropriation of land, processes of evangelisation and the impact of settler transport and communication systems. What this doublespread suggests is that while bureaucrats and politicians determined that Papunya should serve as the population centre for Anangu, it is not the centre of individual and group identities. Rather, the bodies of the children, inclining toward their homelands, locate subjectivities in the known and experienced places of their country. My discussion traces how the texts I have chosen represent spatialised power, and how they both demonstrate tactics of resistance to child readers and also promote these tactics as normal, reasonable and ethical responses to unjust régimes of power.

Spatial strategies of assimilation

A key spatial strategy exercised by colonial and assimilationist regimes was to quarantine education within spaces coded as white, and in the *Papunya Book, Home to Medicine Mountain* and *This Land is My Land*, the tactic of defamiliarisation is deployed to make strange the principles on which assimilationist regimes in Australia, Canada and the United States institutionalised Indigenous children: namely, that Indigenous peoples did not educate their young; and that Indigenous children could therefore be educated only if they were removed from homes, families, languages and cultural practices. In the *Papunya Book,* a collage of oral histories, historical narratives, photographs, artwork and maps dialogically produce an account of the history of Papunya and Papunya School. On the page featuring the heading 'Papunya School Starts', the words of Smithy Zimran Tjampitjinpa represent the perspective of the children shown standing in line before the school building: 'I shifted to Papunya, where I began my schooling. It was there I began to understand the way things were. I realised we were living in a different world. It was someone else's world (2001: 30).

In *Home to Medicine Mountain*, Stanley and Benny Len, of the Mountain Maidu and Hamawi Pit-River people in northern California are sent by train to a residential school in the south of the state, where like the children of Papunya they are obliged to discard their Indigenous identities and merge into an assimilated body: 'Before, they were Indian children from everywhere, speaking their own languages, wearing clothes their grandmothers made. Now, in their uniforms, they looked all the same, like a row of birds on a fence' (Santiago and Lowry1998: 7). The 'hard, stiff leather shoes' which the children wear activate Benny Len's memory of how the earth feels back home, 'comforting beneath his feet'. The regulations of the school require the children to wear shoes, and when Benny Len puts on shoes for the first time he experiences a shock of dislocation caused by the fact that shoes separate the self from the earth. Similarly, the children are taught to march in lines and perform sharp turns, actions contrasted with the home setting where 'people danced in circles to honor the earth' (1998: 7).

George Littlechild's *This Land is My Land* tracks the story of the artist and his ancestors by way of mixed-media artworks accompanied by commentaries. The painting 'Red Horse Boarding School' has at its centre the looming presence of a school, before which appears a dismembered red horse emblematic of the Plains Indian children who were torn in half, ripped away from homes, families and significant places. The gold stars on the roof of the school and in the sky signify the adhesive stars by which students were

graded. Littlechild's explanation reads, 'The gold stars were for the best students. The lowest stars were red, which meant failure. Those are the stars I remember getting most.' (1993: 18).

The effects of spatial strategies as they are represented in these three illustrations accord with de Certeau's description of the 'break between a place appropriated as one's own and its other' (1984: 36). In the institutional settings which the texts feature, child subjects are detached from the time-space relations of their homes and placed in a bureaucratic space where they are the objects of styles of surveillance represented by depictions of adults watching children, and by the physical layout of buildings where children can be observed from windows and doors. The school settings of these illustrations constitute white epistemologies as normative, so that Indigenous children are assumed to know nothing worth knowing, a principle exemplified by the red stars of failure which George Littlechild recalls receiving.

Tactics of Resistance

Whereas the vast majority of children's texts are centred in white culture, the three texts with which I have begun my discussion situate their narratives within Indigenous cultures by way of focalisation—through first person focalised narration in *This Land Is My Land,* through oral history in the *Papunya Book,* and through character-focalised narration in *Home to Medicine Mountain,* where most events are filtered through Benny Len's eyes. In children's literature, focalisation is a crucial narrative strategy because of its capacity to shape reading positions. In reclaiming stories enunciated from within cultures other than white, texts such as those I discuss offer readers from minority groups the kind of narrative subjectivity taken for granted by the white children who are the implied readers of most children's literature.

These picture books incorporate what de Certeau calls 'delinquent stories' (1984: 129-30), in that they 'organise the play of changing relationships between places and spaces' (1984: 118); and they model tactics of spatial resistance in their representations of the past. The tactics they deploy are inflected by particular, concrete, lived experiences of place, and take forms shaped by cultural practices and representational modes. In *Home to Medicine Mountain*, Benny Len falls into a troubled sleep and returns home in dream, where he is 'snug in one bed' with his grandmother who tells him stories: 'We are the people of the bear,' she said. 'If you really need help, the bear will protect you' (Santiago and Lowry 1998: 12-13). The dream is not merely an escape from the alien space of the dormitory, but it locates Benny Len within the narrative and ritual practices of his community. When Stanley and Benny Len run away from the school and stow away on top of the train which travels to their home near Medicine Mountain, the dream endows their journey with a mythic significance, since the illustrations depict ritual practices (such as the bear dance) which honour the bear as well as moments when the bear appears to Benny Len in dreams and waking visions.

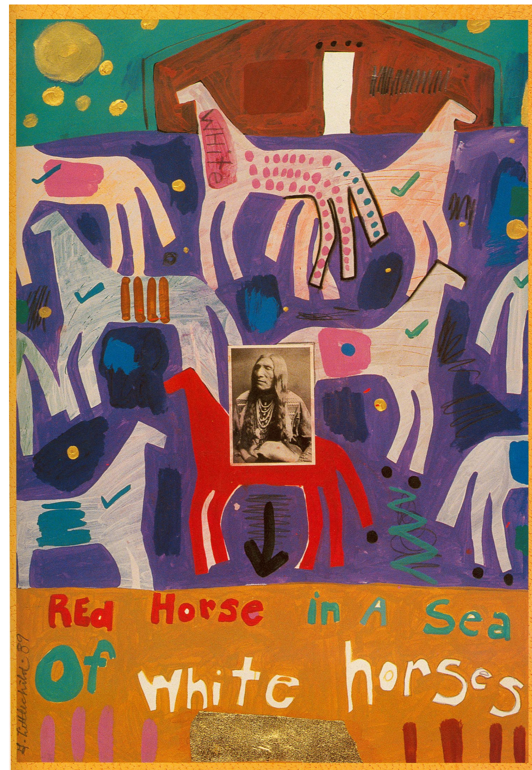
A striking feature of *Home to Medicine Mountain* is that a sign of colonial power is resignified and takes on positive meanings associated with the recuperation of Indigenous identities. Thus, while the train is a sign of industrialisation and the reach of capitalism, it is also the means by which Stanley and Benny Len return to Medicine Mountain; indeed, to Benny Len it seems that the train wheels sing his name: 'Benny Len, Benny Len, Benny Len. He felt so free that he raised his arms to the sky. He felt as if he were flying' (Santiago and Lowry 1998: 25). The narrative of *Home to Medicine Mountain* is framed by two peritextual references. In the book's introduction, Judith Lowry describes the residential school system as follows: 'These schools were created…with the idea that [Indian children] needed to unlearn their Indian ways and live as the settlers did' (Santiago and Lowry 1998: 3). The material on the final page of the book includes a photograph of Stanley and Leonard (Benny Len) as elderly men, standing between railroad tracks at Susanville, their childhood home and the place where they now live. Taken together, these pages insist not merely on the historicity of the events of the narrative

but on the capacity of Indian people, metonymised by the figures of Stanley and Leonard, to resist incorporation into the settler discourses represented by the boarding school. *Home to Medicine Mountain* is thus as much about the present as about the 1930s, and it claims a place for stories of resistance which model tactics for maintaining cultural and family connections. The counter-discursive force of the story of the boys' escape is qualified by a reminder that 'the dominant dominates' (Terdiman 1985: 57), as Richard Terdiman puts it:

> For the rest of the summer, and for many years after, Benny Len and Stanley told the story of their adventure on the train. They told it to their children and their grandchildren. Always, one of the children would ask: 'Did you have to go back to the boarding school?' 'Yes,' Benny Len or Stanley would answer, remembering. They didn't mind the long journey so much after that. They were sure they would be back for the bear dance every year, because now they knew the way home. (Santiago and Lowry 1998: 30)

The space between home and away, having once been crossed, is now assailable. What is implied by the peritextual information of the book's final page is that the boundaries between cultures are also assailable, as Benny Len and Stanley are described as having had 'distinguished careers in the U.S. armed forces' (Santiago and Lowry 1998: 32). This information implies the capacity of Indigenous people to negotiate between concepts and institutions in a mixture and fusion of influences where subjectivities are formed both within and between cultures. Yet the closure of the text traces a fine line between celebration of the boys' resistance, and acknowledgement of the pain and suffering caused by policies which required that Native American children should leave their homes and families to be trained in white practices.

Just as the verbal narratives of these texts are focalised through Indigenous perspectives, so their visual texts disrupt the idea that the act of seeing is also an act of imperial power. In the painting 'Red Horse in a Sea of White Horses' in *This Land is My Land,* the artist George Littlechild places one of Edward Curtis's photographs of 'an Indian warrior' astride a red horse, emblematic of Plains Indians. The building at the back of the picture signifies the school to which Littlechild was sent after his parents died; the white horses represent the dominant culture and its purchase on what is normal and correct, suggested by the check marks which appear on each of the white horses—but not on the red horse, which is 'always wrong' (Littlechild 1993: 20).



(*fig* 1. Reproduced with permission of the publisher, Children's Book Press, San Francisco, www.childrensbookpress.org. "Red horse in a sea of white horses" copyright © 1993 by George Littlechild)

Curtis's portraits, like other colonial representations of Indigenous peoples, function as memorialisations of 'primitive' cultures on the point of extinction, reified as decorative objects and disassociated from the material experience of Indigenous peoples, from places and from colonial histories. Curtis identifies the warrior as 'Double Runner' and describes him as 'an excellent type of the Piegan physiognomy'. By locating the warrior on the red horse

and surrounding this image with signs of whiteness, Littlechild constructs a causal relationship between the warrior's expression of melancholic regret and his state of being 'not at home in his own territory', thus resisting Curtis's strategy of treating him merely as a type. Littlechild's commentary on this painting concludes with the words 'The red horse represents me' (1993: 20), and through his bold subversion of colonial discourses he reclaims the Piegan warrior as an ancestor. In De Certeau's terms, 'the space of a tactic is the space of the other' (1984: 37), and in placing the Curtis photograph on the red horse which represents his selfhood, he inverts those colonial meanings which strip the warrior of place and identity.

In Littlechild's painting 'Indian Artist Visits New York, New York', a photograph of the artist is placed near the towers of the city, ironically echoing his earlier use of Curtis's photograph of the Piegan warrior and showing the red horse lying on his back and exclaiming 'Wow!' The commentary says:

> And the art! It was amazing. There were paintings that had photographs in them. Others had fabric and buttons. There were paintings on canvas with wood and straw. When I returned home I began to experiment with mixed media. My paintings became multi-layered, with beads, feathers, and photographs. In ten days my world had changed. (Littlechild 1993: 26)

The city is far from the constricting space of the boarding school, with its binary system of right and wrong, good and bad. Rather, it opens up the transformative possibilities of cross-cultural artistic practice, where the multi-layered effects of mixed-media production incorporate 'beads, feathers, and photographs', itself a mixture of elements from Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures.

As I have suggested, the tactics of spatial resistance that these picture books deploy include re-valuations of historical events and re-inscriptions of identities. *Home to Medicine Mountain* lays claim to the spiritual beliefs which shape the actions of Stanley and Benny Len. In *This Land Is My Land,* the artist honours his ancestors and re-places them in the contemporary setting. The *Papunya School Book* models direct political action in its account of the events of the early 1990s, when 'the community was not happy with the teaching at the school, so parents kept their children at home' (2001: 40), and the narrative describes the process by which the school community established its vision of two-way learning, articulated in the School Vision Painting and instantiated in the *Papunya Book*, which is itself the result of collaboration between the Papunya School community, the school's white Principal Diane de Vere, and Nadia Wheatley and Ken Searle, who assisted respectively with the written text and the book design.

In *Down the hole***,** the narrative deals not so much with children's escape from an institutional site, or from the negative effects of loss and pain, but rather with their escape *into* country, a trajectory which accords with Aboriginal traditions which treat human bodies as intimately related to their country. In her Author's Note at the end of the book, Eileen Wani Wingfield describes as follows her life as an elder: 'I'm…travelling, keeping the culture going and looking after the country' (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 46), where the bodily practices of 'looking after the country' effect cultural maintenance.

The title of *Down the hole* continues on the title page as: *up the tree, across the sandhills…running from the State and Daisy Bates,* in an evocation of movement through and into country and beyond the reach of bureaucratic control. The cover illustration shows a group of five children clinging together, placed within a circle of light as if discovered by the beam of a torch. The three older children in the illustration enfold the two younger in their arms, but this signifier of connectedness and support is disrupted by the searching eyes of one of the children, who looks anxiously toward the source of light. Like the train of *Home to Medicine Mountain,* the shaft is a sign of capitalism, but it is also capable of being suborned into tactics of resistance.

(*fig* 2. Reproduced with the permission of the publisher, IAD Press, Edna Tantjingu Williams, Eileen Wani Wingfield and Kunyi June-Anne McInerney, *Down the hole,* copyright © 2000 by Kunyi June-Anne McInerney)

The hole of the book's title, used by the children's parents to conceal them from the authorities, is one of many shafts and tunnels created by opal-miners. In these holes light-skinned children passed entire days, while their parents kept watch for 'the State people' (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 20) and lowered food by ropes when it was safe to do so. The communal and kinship associations which construct particular tracts of land as home are signaled in a crucial illustration which shows Daisy Bates alighting from the train at Ooldea Siding. Here tactics of spatiality are inscribed in bodies as 'our old mothers and fathers' (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 26) call out 'Run away, run right away, you fair kids and keep running!', at the same time gesturing toward country. The figure of Daisy Bates represents the incursion of colonial discourses into country, but the escaping children undercut the power of the State by appropriating the opal mines created by those who sought ways of accessing the earth's riches. De Certeau's description of tactics is apposite to these events:

> [The tactic] must seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. (1984: 37)

In *Down the hole* what is foregrounded is not the children's experience of displacement but their steadfast attachment to place and their reliance on country for subject-formation. The very off-handedness of the narrative's reference to institutionalisation is metonymic of the narrators' refusal to enter the discursive domain of colonialism: 'Yes, if they catch us fair kids, they put us in a home then—in Ooldea. I never lasted a month or two months in there. I was only in that home there for two weeks. And then I was **gone!**' (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 38).

The book's final illustration incorporates a reflexive moment as an adult shows a group of children the picture, from *Down the hole,* of adults lowering food to their children. Here, memory of the children's escape into country and of the resistance of their parents is woven into a triumphant assertion of communal survival and continuity; the text opposite reads 'I been still hiding away—and here I am today' (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 42). The peritextual material at the end of the book describes the lives of Edna Tantjingu Williams and Eileen Wani Wingfield, the two women whose story is told in *Down the hole,* and explains their motivations; this is what it says about Williams:
'Edna…saw this book as a legacy to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And also, her way of setting the record straight about what really happened to Aboriginal people with the 'people-that-come-lately': that is, the rest of us' (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 45).

The double-facing orientation of this text is clear in these words: its primary audience comprises Indigenous children ('grandchildren and great-grandchildren'), to whom it offers an unusually powerful

subject position because its narrative deploys Aboriginal English and is informed by the values and world view of its narrators. As I noted earlier, the books on which I focus are intergenerational in their scope, and here *Down the hole* quite specifically addresses the community's children. The book's other audiences, numerically greater but differently positioned, comprise readers for whom setting, events and language represent difference from white culture, and who are positioned as outsiders to the conceptual and material world of the book.

I will conclude with Allen Say's *Home of the Brave,* a text in which the retrieval of memory exposes spaces racialised in regard to two populations of children: the Native American children removed from their homes and families from 1879 when the Carlisle Indian School was established and through to the 1960s; and the children who constituted around half of the 120,000 Japanese Americans, most of them American citizens, rounded up and relocated in concentration camps in remote sites across the United States from 1941 until 1944. In her essay 'Resisting Reconciliation', Jane Jacobs suggests that while resistance is generally understood in terms of an oppositional politics, there is another way of thinking of resistance:

> the psychoanalytic…understanding of resistance as a patient's refusal to move to a point which will enable healing to occur. Resistance, in this context, is a form of defence against the anxiety which might be produced by recognising some repressed 'truth' or confronting the repressed emotional traces of a past trauma. (1997: 208)

Jacobs refers here to the processes by which powerful groups within nation states manage and ameliorate the anxiety which derives from acknowledging the traumas and injuries which colonisers inflicted on indigenous people, or on groups marginalized as the nation's others. The repression of trauma can be read in *Home of the Brave* as personified by an unnamed man of Japanese appearance who undertakes a dangerous journey into the murky spaces of the nation's past: his kayak is swept through a gorge, down a waterfall and into an underground river. He climbs up a shaft and finds himself in a desert where he sees two children, with luggage labels around their necks. He cannot make out the writing on these labels, or to read his actions psychoanalytically, he resists knowing what is painful to know. With the two children he struggles through a dust-storm and at length the three come to 'a row of buildings made of wood and tarpaper' (Say 2002: 18). When he enters one of these houses the man sees on the floor a luggage label like those around the children's necks, and he finds that it bears his own name; later, he finds another label carrying his mother's name.

These moments of self-recognition constitute the turning-point of the narrative, because they represent a shift from the forgetting effected by the nation's repression of its past, to an acknowledgement of the past as present in the lived experience of the children and their descendants. When the man in *Home of the Brave* turns from the house he finds himself facing 'a group of children…like one large body with many eyes', who cry 'Take us home!' (Say 2002: 22). Following an exhausted sleep, he wakes to see that he is lying by the side of a river, and that a group of children are standing by his kayak. But these children are not the same as the Japanese-American children of the earlier scene; these are Native American children who tell him, 'You're in our camp' (Say 2002: 28). Here Say connects the two groups of objectified child Others—the interned Japanese American children; and the many thousands of Native American children institutionalised in the name of assimilation. Resisting the quarantining of Japanese and Indigenous people as occupying different notional spaces, Say draws attention to how repression defends the nation against its past by refusing to acknowledge past traumas.

The luggage labels which the children wear, and which fix them as objects of the State's strategies of naming and of surveillance, are reconfigured in a transformative moment at the end of the narrative when the man flings them into the air:

> Suddenly the cloud of nametags seemed to turn into a great flock of birds. The

> man and the children watched until they disappeared over the mountains. 'They went home,' said a child. 'Yes, they went home,' the man said. And the children nodded. (Say 2002: 30)

The statement 'They went home' is culturally dense and loaded with emotion. As it is used here it is also imbued with doubt and uncertainty because Say's allegory of repression suggests that the nation is not and cannot be 'home' until its dis-placed children are at home. The book's title, *Home of the Brave,* conjures up the words 'home of the free' with which they are linked in 'The Star-Spangled Banner', itself an expression of patriotism which represses all but the most positive and celebratory formulations of nationhood.

(*fig* 3. Illustration from *Home of the Brave* by Allen Say. Copyright © 2002 by Allen Say. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.)

The narratives of displaced children which I have discussed have all been published during the last decade, four of them in the last five years. All draw on communal and individual memory; all have been produced following large-scale investigations into the assimilationist practices to which they refer: in Australia the Stolen Generations inquiry; in Canada the Native Residential School Task Force; in the United States the investigation into the incarceration of Japanese American people which resulted in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. These picture books belong to the substantial body of work—books, artworks, installations, films and documentaries—which thematise histories of racialised displacement in Australia, Canada and the United States. What is particular to them as a group of texts is that they model to child readers ways not merely of surviving experiences of individual and collective displacement, but of engaging actively in tactics of resistance.

While these books describe what de Certeau describes as the 'subtle, stubborn, resistant activity' (1984: 18) of children removed from their families and homes in the past, their modes of expression as they address contemporary child readers are politicised and forthright. Consider Allen Say's ironic quotation from 'The Star-Spangled Banner'; Littlechild's allusion to Woody Guthrie's song 'This Land is Your Land'; the final words of *Down the hole,* which are 'and here I am today'; (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 42), the last sentence of the *Papunya Book*: 'Maybe Papunya might become famous for making books, just like it is famous for music and art!' (2001: 45) and the final words of *Home to Medicine Mountain:* 'now they knew the way home' (Santiago and Lowry 1998: 30). What is suggested by these assertive and confident narratives is that they not only reclaim physical space as practiced places, but that they also 'engage the colonised spaces of people's inner worlds' (Pile 1997: 17).

I began this essay by observing that the books I have selected for discussion are not representative of picture books for children. Indeed, compared with the globalised reach of the mass markets which multinational publishers attract, the influence of these texts is minor and local. Nevertheless, to study children's texts, to grasp what they propose about values, politics and social practices is to see what they envisage as desirable possibilities for imagined futures. What these books propose, individually and as a group of settler society texts, is that the representation and interrogation of the past contribute to the development of new

kinds of subjects capable of moving beyond the strategies of labeling and hierarchisation through which dominant groups in nation states have defined their Others.

Whereas most books for children treat the assumptions and ideologies of white culture as normative, the *Papunya School Book, Down the hole*, *Home to Medicine Mountain*, *This Land Is My Land* and *Home of the Brave* do not merely celebrate the tactics by which minority groups undermine the strategies of the powerful, but these texts themselves embody tactics of resistance. As I have said, they look in two directions at once, since on the one hand they are directed toward communities and individuals whose histories of resistance they celebrate; and on the other hand they invite white children to read differently—to imagine a world where whiteness does not afford a position of privilege and superiority. I began this discussion by situating children's literature within cultural production, as a domain of textuality preoccupied with socialising its target audience. Texts such as the ones I discuss position children as intelligent and perceptive readers capable not merely of reading differently, but of translating what they read into enhanced ways of being in the world.

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BOOK REVIEW: URGENT INTERVENTIONS

ANNA SZÖRÉNYI

Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence, Verso 2004.

> If we are interested in arresting cycles of violence to produce less violent outcomes, it is no doubt important to ask what, politically, might be made of grief besides a cry for war.

This statement from the back cover of Butler's book *Precarious Life* aptly describes her project. What she makes of her own grief is a series of meditations on human vulnerability to others, meditations which seek to imagine a 'global political community' (xiii) in which vulnerability and dependence are causes for acknowledging shared interdependency, rather than for engaging in a violent and totalitarian defence of sovereignty and the suppression of dissent. In producing these thoughtful and eloquent essays, Butler is her own best example of what such considerations might achieve.

The five essays collected in *Precarious Life* pursue themes of the restriction of public debate and the dehumanisation of certain sections of the population in the name of 'national security', in the context of the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Centre and the subsequent development of the 'war on terror'. Butler responds critically to the labelling as 'excuseniks' of those who sought to ask about the reasons for the September 11 attacks, and the use of accusations of 'anti-Semitism' to suppress criticism of Israel. In addition she considers the refusal to publically mourn the victims of the Gulf War, the war in Afghanistan, and the victims of Israeli violence, as well as the implications of the indefinite detention of terrorism suspects in Guantanamo Bay, and the demonisation of the Middle East in the media.

Many of the points Butler offers on these issues have been well rehearsed within the anti-war movement, such as the observation that the war on terror is indefinitely extendable and unwinnable. It is disturbing that one of America's most sophisticated theorists must devote her time to such projects as explaining in step by step detail that '[a] criticism of Israel is not the same as a challenge to Israel's existence, and neither is it the same as an anti-Semitic act, though each could work in tandem with each of the other claims.' Other points, such as the observation that Israelis seem to qualify as victims of slaughter in the media in ways that Palestinians do not, are equally familiar. That Butler makes these points so carefully and clearly suggests two things: firstly that even relatively basic critical perspectives are becoming increasingly unspeakable within the US scene, and secondly that perhaps Butler is seeking a wider audience here, one less exposed to such critiques. Indeed at times one gets the sense that Butler is speaking urgently to *anyone* who might be listening, perhaps most importantly those whose statements she criticises, such as Lawrence Summers, the President of Harvard whose labelling of criticisms of Israel as 'effective anti-Semitism' is the catalyst for Chapter Four.

The written style of *Precarious Life* supports the latter interpretation. Like her recent *Undoing Gender* (2004), it does not read like the work of a writer with the reputation for sheer inaccessibility that Butler commands among some audiences. Here she demonstrates that her undeniable skills as a writer lend themselves not only to detailed theoretical exposition, but to concise, engaged, passionate and clear writing. Scholarly references are kept to a minimum, and with the possible exception of the discussion of Foucault's concept of governmentality in Chapter Four, no extensive theoretical knowledge is assumed. This is not, however, to say that the ideas presented in Precarious Life are all one-dimensional or obvious. It is a tribute to Butler's skills that her arguments remain sophisticated and always careful to avert simplistic readings. The result is a passionate and eloquent style of writing which conveys not only Butler's critical concerns but her emotional involvement. At times, especially in Chapters Two and Five, the writing becomes almost poetic in its directness, for example, discussing the impossibility of narrating our relationship with others, she concludes:

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> Let's face it, we're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something. (23).

Between and through its political interventions, the most interesting contribution of *Precarious Life* is its attempt to develop an ethics which encourages non-violence and respect for the other without resorting to Eurocentric notions of universal rights. The arguments made on this point are subtle, refreshing and productive. Butler suggests that meditation upon human vulnerability might become the basis for a tentative 'we' which acknowledges our mutual dependence on others, a condition which might be considered as universal, but which falls outside the regime of 'rights' as they are usually articulated, since it takes place prior to and outside the control of the individual subject. Recognition of the way in which 'we are, from the start and by virtue of being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own', Butler argues, might form the basis of a consideration of the ways in which such vulnerability is inequitably distributed across the globe. The experience of vulnerability, therefore, might offer an opportunity to acknowledge our responsibility towards each other, rather than a rationale for closing down all borders and all exchange in an impossible attempt to achieve absolute control and security.

Butler acknowledges that her concept of shared vulnerability may border on resurrecting a kind of universal humanism. She prefers, however, to locate it on a strategic register. The fact that only some people's vulnerability is honoured, she argues, demonstrates that recognition is crucial for sustaining it. Vulnerability is thus not foundational, but constituted, precisely through the act of recognition which the positing of a shared vulnerability performs. She is also careful to point out that the experience of vulnerability is variable, and that it is inequitably distributed across the globe. In the somewhat meandering argument of Chapter Two, 'Violence, Mourning, Politics', Butler explicitly addresses the concept of the human, not to argue for its universality but to point out that it is a status granted to some and denied to others: 'The question that preoccupies me in the light of recent global violence is, Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, What *makes for a grievable life*?' (20).Sections of this chapter literally reprint parts of *Undoing Gender*. Here, however, the analysis refers not only to those who live outside normative heterosexual gender relations, but to those relegated to the status of non-subject by increasing racial, ethnic and religious paranoia in the United States. Such dehumanisation takes place, Butler emphasises, not simply through 'dehumanising' statements, but through an absence of discourse which relegates certain lives to the status of unmournability. A life which is not publicly grievable is in some sense not a life at all, and its death therefore not quite a death. The effect is thus an erasure from public relevance.

In the final chapter, itself titled 'Precarious Life', Butler elaborates on this ethical relationship prior to subjectivity and its relation to humanisation and dehumanisation through a careful reading of certain moments in Levinas. In an evocative discussion, she reminds us that 'the face' which calls forth our responsibility to others is not to be confused with any literally visible face. Contrary to popular belief, then, the mere depiction of another's face is no guarantee of 'humanisation'. Indeed as Butler points out in relation to images of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, faces can be utilised by the media precisely to foreclose the ethical relationship, by being used to represent a pre-defined 'evil' already excluded from humanity. Although Butler's focus is primarily on the United States, this discussion offers useful starting points for thinking through issues currently being debated in Australia, for instance the frequent calls to 'humanise' refugees through depicting their faces. Butler acknowledges that it is necessary to make the demand for 'truer' images, but she concludes that the Levinasian 'face' is not representable, and that an image which seeks to invoke an ethical response needs to be an image which, in showing its own failure as accurate representation, evokes the precariousness and unknowability of the other. 'One would need to hear the face as it speaks in something other than language to know the precariousness of life that is at stake. But what media will let us know and feel that frailty, know and feel at the limits of representation as

it is currently cultivated and maintained?' (151).

The discussion on 'indefinite detention' in Chapter Four, in which Butler considers Foucault's concept of governmentality in relation to the indefinite and arbitrary imprisonment of terrorism suspects at Guantanamo Bay, also seems highly applicable to the issue of mandatory detention of refugees in Australia. Pointing out that such detention takes place outside of legal jurisdiction and at the whim of unelected officials, Butler argues that a modified form of sovereignty is at work within governmentality, a sovereignty which gives administrative officials power over life and death and which serves as a justification for the use of law as a mere 'tactics' or 'instrument' in the service of sovereignty's pursuit of its own preservation. Butler's argument that something unprecedented and dangerous is taking place here, which urgently needs to be theorised, is timely and convincing. One interesting juncture is the way in which she takes up Agamben's concept of the 'state of exception' according to which states legitimise their suspension of the rule of law. Butler finds this argument useful, but points out that 'general claims' that 'we are all potentially exposed to [the] condition' of bare life do not attend to the ways in the power legitimised by the state of exception 'functions differentially, to target and manage certain populations, to derealize the humanity of subjects who might potentially belong to a community bound by commonly recognized laws; and they do not tell how sovereignty, understood as state sovereignty in this instance, works by differentiating populations on the basis of ethnicity and race' (67-8).

Throughout *Precarious Life*, Butler links her two themes of desubjectification and the restriction of public debate by emphasising that that to position certain statements as unsayable, or certain subjects as unmournable, is not only to limit the sphere of public debate, but to do so in such a way that the concept of the 'public sphere' comes to be *defined* precisely by the exclusion of certain topics and certain people. Butler's two central objects of criticism are thus inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. By the final chapter, this concern has become a call for the necessity of cultural criticism and a project for the humanities which Butler sees as crucial for the development of a society in which 'oppositional voices are not feared, degraded or dismissed, but valued for the instigation to a sensate democracy they occasionally perform'. (151).

Precarious Life reads as a book inspired by necessity and fed by political urgency, a missive sent out in the hope of averting still more violence before the suppression of debate becomes complete. This does not mean it is a manifesto. Butler 'confess[es] to not knowing how to theorize' the interdependency which she hopes might become the basis for political community. But her sense that such theorising is urgent and necessary is clearly evident. In the end, I cannot read this book without mixed feelings. That one of the English-speaking-world's foremost theorists has provided us with such a passionate and eloquent call for the value of thinking about our responsibility towards others, rather than resorting to panicked tactics of revenge and aggression, is a cause for appreciation. That such a book should have been necessary, however, is an occasion for mourning. Mourning both for those victims of imperialism who have, as Butler points out, thus far remained publically unmournable, and for the missed opportunities to acknowledge our shared vulnerability and responsibility that might have made aggression less inevitable.

Anna Szorenyi teaches at the Centre for Women's Studies & Gender Research at Monash University

BOOK REVIEW

MARIAN REDMOND

Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, Australian Cinema after Mabo, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

The book deals with the way cinema speaks to and interacts with cultural changes in Australia after the 1992 Mabo judgment. This decision overthrew the concept of *terra nullius*–that Australia, at its settlement, belonged to no-one. According to Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, it initiated a "backtracking" over familiar icons in films, which have come to be seen in a new light, which recognises prior indigenous presence in Australian history, memory and belonging. Their film readings acknowledge the effects of trauma for Indigenous people and contemplate grief-work for white Australians as we come to recognise a shameful past.

Collins and Davis have an established presence in cinema studies. Collins is known for her book on *The Films of Gillian Armstrong,* as well as film reviews and articles on grief-work in autobiography that have informed *Australian Cinema after Mabo*. Davis is familiar from her book, *The Face on the Screen: Death, Recognition and Spectatorship* and work on questions of recognition and Mabo, evident in the chapter on this theme in the book. It is amongst the first wide-ranging analyses to consider Australian films of the 1990s and covers an area in cinema studies that I, for one, have been waiting for. The history wars of the 1990s impacted powerfully on the public. This book extends these concerns into how Australians conceive of ourselves in cinematic terms, a topic which is of relevance to cinema goers, filmmakers, and film studies specialists.

Each chapter examines a varying number of films. These readings paint a discerning picture of contemporary films, in their responses to three main themes that correspond to the sections into which the book is divided: the history wars, landscape and belonging, and trauma, grief and coming of age. During the period from 2000–3, notably 2002, there was a plethora of films specifically dealing with indigenous-white relations. However, while Collins and Davis deal with many of these, they do not limit themselves to films specifically on this topic and range widely over films in the 1990s, including films on landscape that revisit iconic landscapes; desert, country and urban as well as other themes relevant in the cultural context after Mabo.

The first chapter establishes the theme of "backtracking" after Mabo and discusses the theoretical grounding for the book in its linking of film, historical and cultural theory. The book revisits these terms and theories throughout the film readings, as well as setting up relevant conceptual foundations for each chapter. This theoretical discussion is fairly clear and convincing in its treatment of trauma, but the description of other elements, notably Walter Benjamin's model of "shock" as both an element of the form of film montage and a way of conceptualising history, are somewhat convoluted and at times confused. I confess to not being familiar with Benjamin's work in this area, but nor was I enlightened. Benjamin is represented as linking montage in film with the shock and discontinuity of the rapid transformations of modernity. Parallel to this runs a theory of history as perceived in flashes which occur in dialectical moments when past and present collide. This is mediated by discontinuity and is contrasted with the perception of continuity between past and present. An outline of memory in association with history and trauma follows. The authors also refer to Miriam Hansen's historically-grounded theoretical work which sees cinema as an informal public space of understanding.

The reference to Benjamin's theories appears to be an attempt to marry film and historical theory in a way that takes account of what has been a long period of historical amnesia about the effects of and responsibility for indigenous dispossession. But whether this phenomenon can be slotted into the theory of history described and explained by shock and discontinuity requires more evidence and argument. White Australians' historical amnesia is certainly

not the only case of this kind of strategic forgetting. The example of the Holocaust and war-time experiences in Germany provide an interesting comparison. It took until the 1970s for Germans to begin to review and engage in discussion about the past. Indeed Collins and Davis place this cultural change in connection with the Mabo decision firmly within the international phenomena of memory, history and identity, where many countries are reviewing their shameful or contested histories.

Yet there are many questions that remain unanswered in the placing a shock motif at the centre of historical conjecture. On the face of it, the overriding sense I have is of disbelief that the tragic results of dispossession occurred, seemingly without comment, so I suppose there is some shock in that. But since people did know what occurred and have discussed it in a public sense in the early years of the colonies, in parliamentary discussions of laws relating to the gathering of indigenous people onto reserves or more recently, at least since W.E.H. Stanner's 1968 Boyer Lectures, in what sense can it be said that there was historical amnesia? Paul Gilroy provides a comment relevant to this case, referring to Jean Amery's reflections on racial science and exclusionary practices. "These were not to be transcended by dialectical or any other means. They were to be passionately preserved, worked upon, and actively remembered so that they could guard against the inevitable future perils that simplistic innocent notions of progress just simply cannot entertain" (91).

This is not to imply that Collins and Davis are advocates of progress, but explaining this seeming historical amnesia in terms of a theory of shock seems reductionist, and appears to fall into the very trap of obscuring rather than revealing and consciously remembering this colonialist dynamic. At times the way the theoretical material is applied also seems forced; for example Collins and Davis refer often to the present in the past which is represented in the films they examine although this, presumably does not accord with the theory of shock and discontinuity they espouse. Nor do they define the distinction between history and memory, and this leads to a blurring between history and one of the forms of memory they use – historical memory.

Collins and Davis refer to Thomas Elsaesser's concept of "erfahrung"– embodying cinema as a space for personal experience that may be used as the starting point for public political discussion. This is derived from the space of viewing for German films which spoke to their audiences in new ways about topics on which public discussion had been silenced. But it occurred in the 1970s, whose milieu was completely different to the present. A precisely similar process cannot occur in the present Australian context. This leaves open the question of what defines the ways films which address cultural changes after Mabo are constructed and situate themselves in terms of public spaces. Collins and Davis answer this productively in terms of individual analyses, but less systematically in a general sense. Yet by associating the materials they do and reviewing a large body of films, they open out this area for discussion. One site where they address this question to some degree is in the second chapter, where they discuss the ways in which Australian films construct and project themselves both nationally and internationally in terms of industrial and institutional contexts.

The authors usefully link many fields, including present day filmmaking and its antecedents in 1970s filmmaking about the nation. An extremely useful link is that made in the second chapter between a cinema, seen in terms of a national social imaginary and the international or global perspective within which Australian cinema may be perceived as a genre. There is a useful analysis of three films, *Moulin Rouge, The Dish* and *Lantana,* describing how each of these films place themselves strategically as a part of this genre in both the local and the international sphere and their relative success in doing so.

The film readings are fresh and perceptive. The discussion of Phil Noyce's *Rabbit-proof Fence,* Ivan Sen's *Beneath Clouds* and Sue Brookes' *Japanese Story* are cases in point. A wide range of sources are brought into play, for example, literary analyses of lost children narratives for *Rabbit-Proof Fence,* and this demonstrates the scope of the work. However I whilst I enjoyed the generous

tone of the film analyses, at times I would have preferred a more critical approach; for example *Rabbit-proof Fence* is presented largely in the light of disagreements between neo-conservatives and left-liberals. It fails to take account of some quite stringent criticism of the narrative and the Hollywood techniques of emotional identification used by Noyce[1]. Although Collins and Davis discuss *Japanese Story* cogently in their consideration of its depiction of grief, it leaves open the question of how the representation of a mature grief and reparation in this film can be linked with a national sense of failure that recognises indigenous trauma, when the film overtly concerns the relationship between an Australian woman and a Japanese man. And this brings to mind the criterion of how conscious this work of reviewing history is in contemporary Australian film. The readings this study works with refer to films that do not always directly take up the theme of cultural change after Mabo, but function to rework icons of Australian film such as the desert and the laconic outback hero, as well as those that do. Given that historical amnesia and silencing have been features of Australian history and belonging, and their depiction in cinema, this invites a discussion of why such topics are often treated so tangentially.

The value of the book lies in the film readings and the way in which the book gathers these together. The backtracking over icons this entails, leads in the final section to an exploration of trauma, grief-work and coming of age. This provides a powerful representation of the work these films undertake in renewing the past and a potential way forward to a maturing national identity through both acknowledging indigenous trauma and its expression and undertaking the work of feeling a way through the sense of shame and grief invoked for whites.

Collins' and Davis' book is an important work that draws together a body of films and a diverse body of theory to deal with them. The elements that are not always successful are the links between film, historical and cultural theories. The concept of shock is an attempt to mediate these fields, but, in my view is more like wishful thinking. However in making the numerous links between disparate fields in the way that it does to form a broad picture of a cultural phenomenon and its cinematic expression, the book breaks new scholarly ground and provides a foundation for further work in this important area, both in filmmaking and film studies.

Marian Redmond is a postgraduate researcher at the University of Queensland.

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Notes

[1] See Tony Hughes D'aeth "Which Rabbit-Proof Fence? Empathy, Assimilation, Hollywood". *Australian Humanities Review,* 15 December 2003. <http:www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-September-2002/hughesdaeth.html>

BOOK REVIEW: POSITIONING AND DISRUPTING WHITENESS IN AUSTRALIAN RACE RELATIONS

MARYROSE CASEY

Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Ed), Essays in social and cultural criticism: Whitening Race, Aboriginal Studies Press 2004.

This book is an important and inspirational addition to the critical writings on race. Each chapter in the collection of critical essays examines an aspect of the racialised conditions that operate within the Australian context and their role in reproducing colonizing relations and practices through the theoretical framework of critical race and whiteness studies. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson points out in the preface, historically in Australian scholarship on race, the object for study has been the other, in particular the non-white other. The privileged subject position of the white Australian and the structural location and cultural practices of whiteness are rarely examined. The essays in this book address this imbalance by revealing and interrogating ways in which whiteness is socially and discursively constructed.

One of the stated aims of the collection is to disrupt the ways in which race is framed in Australia and extend the understanding of the variety of meanings that constitute whiteness. This disruption effectively creates a new intellectual space for understanding how whiteness operates in Australian society. The essays critically engage with the meanings of whiteness and the location of its social and discursive construction from a variety of disciplines such as philosophy, cultural studies, gender studies, education, social work, sociology and literary studies. Through different theoretical positions and research agendas these essays examine a broad range of different ways in which whiteness is a foundational construction within Australian cultural practices and knowledges.

The task of creating a new intellectual space is challenging. This challenge is one that is answered strongly by this collection in both the depth of intellectual inquiry within each essay and the breadth of fields covered by the collection as a whole. Individually and cumulatively the essays reveal the inherent active role whiteness continues to perform within the frame of discussion and written record for Australia. The essays are written in an accessible style that is reinforced by the structure of the collection that divides the essays into two parts, each defined by the overriding areas of concern. The first part, Whiteness and Knowing, includes essays focused on the idea of knowing, subjectivity and knowledge production. The second part, Whiteness and Nation, interrogates whiteness as identity, institutional practices and discursive power that function to reproduce and reinforce the dominant notions of national belonging and nationhood. The strength of the structure is reinforced by the introductory framing material by Moreton-Robinson. The text is positioned as offering a different approach through its focus on Australia because it engages with relations between migration, Indigenous dispossession and whiteness. Moreton-Robinson argues that this focus on the Australian context and practices opens up the international approach to whiteness studies by revealing that 'historically, whiteness erupts and transforms itself depending on the colonising nature of its arrival and relationship to the British empire' (viii).

The first three essays in Part 1 focus on the ways whiteness dominates in the psychosocial and ontological realms of subjectivity to reproduce colonial paradigms in different contexts. Alison Ravenscroft raises questions about the ways in which race underpinned Australian rhetoric in relation to the war in Viet Nam. Her exploration demonstrates how denial of Indigenous dispossession is a critical component within anxieties about dispossession. In the process she reveals a different frame of reference for Australia's participation in the war in Viet Nam and potentially reveals a different frame for examination of Australia's commitment to many earlier wars.

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Fiona Nicoll's essay aims at shifting the debate on race relations from the pros or cons of 'black armband perspectives' on race relations to an examination of the trope and practice of 'perspective' and its power to make Indigenous sovereignty invisible and unknowable (17). She grounds her discussion in her reflections on her experiences curating an exhibition based on the life of Nancy de Vries, a prominent Indigenous community figure and a member of the stolen generations. Nicoll reveals her experience of developing increasing awareness of her own expectations as a 'white know-all' and her discovery of aspects of Indigenous resistance and sovereignty that had previously been invisible. These aspects of both resistance and sovereignty are the power of reiteration of Indigenous stories and life histories and the physical existence presence of Indigenous Australians. Nicoll describes her journey as a shift from trying to find the correct perspective on Reconciliation to a process she calls '"falling out of perspective" into an embodied awareness of "being in Indigenous sovereignty"' (25). Nicoll argues that an abstract relationship with Indigenous people allows white Australians to deny Indigenous sovereignty but the embodied experience of negotiating concrete relationships provides the potential to 'fall' out of the known racialised perspective.

Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos explore the Australian subjectivity from the Hegelian concept of 'will to be' through ownership. From this frame of analysis these writers examine the ontological conditions that make possible distinctly white Australian constructions of whiteness. The exploration interrogates the use of migrants as foreigners within as part of the continuous negotiation between denial of Indigenous possession/dispossession and sovereignty and white Australia's claim to ownership of the land.

The next set of essays focus on subjectivity in terms of how it is constituted by knowing, what we know and how we know it. A notable feature of many of the essays in the book is the generosity of the writers' revelations about their own thoughts, reservations and personal discoveries. Nicoll's essay, extending on her previous work engaging with expressing and owning the personal presence of the critical writer, is a model for engaging personal experience with critical inquiry. On a different level, Jane Haggis' essay reflects on her engagement with whiteness studies and politics in terms of the racialised nature of power and privilege. Under headings such as 'The Dis-comforts of whiteness', Haggis presents a preliminary attempt to think through her reservations about a politics of whiteness in Australia. Her conclusion is to support Nicoll's path of 'owning whiteness and, as a consequence, falling out of perspective into the space of Indigenous sovereignty' (58). Gillian Cowlishaw also draws on personal experience and observation to explore the complexities of engaging with race relations in an intellectually and emotionally meaningful way. She argues that in order to be engaged in a meaningful way in race debates we must begin by understanding that racial positioning and intersubjectivity are ambiguous, complex and contextual (61).

Moreton-Robinson's essay is the pivotal theoretical examination that explicates the focus and shape of the collection. At the same time this essay propounds an important basis for future examinations in Australian critical race studies. Moreton Robinson examines the relationship between knowledge, representation and whiteness. She cogently argues that whiteness as an epistemological *a priori* directly connects with colonisation in Australia and operates to shape knowledge production. Moreton-Robinson argues convincingly that this epistemological *a priori* is embedded in all representations of Aboriginal peoples and continues to inform racialised ways of knowing and colonising practices.

The last three essays in the first section take up issues of whiteness and subjectivity as constituted through various disciplinary knowledges. Sue Shore examines whiteness within Adult Education, Susan Young within social work practice and Bob Pease explores the relationship between masculinity studies and critical whiteness studies

The first three essays in Part II, Whiteness and Nation, interrogate discursive spaces in which identity positions reproduce narratives of white nationhood. These essays highlight the focus within these narratives on white men as the normative model. Kate Foord argues that Rod Jones' *Billy Sunday*, though supposedly a critique of the terms of Turner's frontier thesis concerning the narration of American nation building, functions as a recuperation of the frontier thesis within Australia's nation building. Belinda McKay demonstrates how whiteness informed the experience and writings of white women in Queensland 1859-1937. Maureen Perkins examines the narratives and associations linking blackness, theft of white children and social dislocation revealing how these discourses supported the removal of Indigenous children.

The next two essays examine some ways in which the unquestioned frame of whiteness operates to centre and authorise the white subject position and to marginalise others. Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis discuss the discoveries of their research with British migrants. The migrants perceive themselves as the norm and central in the white nation-space. This then reinforces their perceptions of Indigenous Australians and asylum seekers as out of place. Ben Wadham argues that the character of the Australian nation remains an area dominated by white and masculinist values and practices.

The last three essays focus on ways in which whiteness controls the borders of the nation through government policies, knowledges and practices. The contribution from Catriona Elder, Cath Ellis and Angela Pratt examines how white people maintain the centre of the white nation-space through discursive processes. Jon Stratton argues that the current government's response to asylum seekers is tied to the idea that Australia is part of the larger white border of the west, which serves to exclude the non-white other on both moral and racial grounds. Sonia Tascon examines how the exclusion and marginalisation of refugees is a product of the functions of a white border which was established as part of a colonial regime that served to contain Indigenous people.

As Moreton-Robinson points out in her Preface, this book is a timely intervention in the context of the current social and political climate in Australia (vii). Currently, the term 'mutual obligation' acts as a trope to deny race as a continuing issue and dominates debate and government policies. These essays engage directly with that denial, exposing the role of whiteness in the process. As well as an intervention in the current terms of political debate, this book is also an important contribution to the development of the field of critical whiteness studies. As Moreton-Robinson declares in the Preface, this collection offers new approaches to, and knowledges about, whiteness as central to the racial formation of Australian society (ix). The essays provide rigorous scholarly material that is accessible and useful for students coming freshly to whiteness studies and for researchers engaging with the fraught field of race relations. The collection extends existing material in the field and challenges and inspires everyone to rethink and reconsider.

Maryrose Casey is located in the Australian Studies Centre of University of Queensland

Author Notes

Sara Ahmed is a Reader in Race and Cultural Studies in Goldsmiths College. Her formative years were spent in Australia and her work considers the politics of race in both British and Australian contexts. Books include; *Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism* (1998); *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000) and *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004). She is currently working on two books: *Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenolo*gy (forthcoming 2006) and *Doing Diversity: Racism and Educated Subjects.*

Dr Aileen Moreton-Robinson is a Geonpul woman from Quandamooka (Moreton Bay). Previous to her appointment as Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow she taught Indigenous studies at Griffith University in Brisbane and Women's Studies at Flinders University in Adelaide. She is author of *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism,* University of Queensland Press and editor of *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* in Australia, Aboriginal Studies Press. Aileen has been involved in the struggle for Indigenous rights at local, state and national levels and has worked for a number of Indigenous organisations. Her writing in the area of native title, whiteness, race and feminism has been published in anthologies and journals here and abroad. Dr Moreton-Robinson is President of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association (www.acrawsa.org.au).

Irene Watson teaches law at Flinders University and also works as a lawyer with the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement in South Australia. She has published widely on indigenous legal issues. Irene will commence work on a post-doctoral research fellowship with the University of Sydney in July 2005.

Alastair Bonnett is professor of social geography at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. He is the author of *Radicalism, Anti-racism and Representation* (1993), *White Identities: International and Historical Perspectives* (2000), 'Anti-racism' (2000), *How to Argue* (2001) and *The Idea of the West'*(2004).

Suvendrini Perera (Curtin University of Technology) has published widely on topics relating to race, ethnicity, multiculturalism and refugee issues. She is a contributor to a number of major anthologies of cultural studies and is author of *Reaches of Empire* (Columbia UP) and editor of *Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities/ Ethnicities/ Nationalities* (Meridian). She is currently working on an ARC funded project on borders and junctions in the Asia-Pacific region. A companion essay to this piece appears in her co-edited issue of *Borderlands e-journal* 'Cultural Ambivalence, Cultural Politics: National Mythologies of Australia, Asia and the Past' 3:1, 2005. Email: S.Perera@curtin.edu.au

Jon Stratton is Professor of Cultural Studies at Curtin University of Technology in Perth. He has published widely in Cultural Studies. His most recent book was *Coming Out Jewish: Constructing Ambivalent Identities* (Routledge 2000). At present Jon is completing a book provisionally entitled *Disturbing Jews*. He is also engaged in a project examining the cultural specificity of Australian popular music since the 1960s.

Clare Bradford is Professor of Literary Studies at Deakin University, Melbourne, where she teaches literature and children's literature. Her book *Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children's Literature* (2001) won the two main international prizes for scholarly writing on children's literature, the International Research Society in Children's Literature Award, and the Children's Literature Association Book Award. She is now writing a comparative study of settler society children's literature.