GENERAL ISSUE

Culture as 'Ways of Life' or a Mask of Racism? Culturalisation and the Decline of Universalist Views

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I begin and conclude the article by arguing that culturalisation has contributed significantly to the decline of the Left and its universal ideals. In the current climate of public opinion, 'race' is no longer used, at least openly, as a scientific truth to justify racism. Instead, 'culture' has become the mysterious term that has made the perpetuation of racist discourse possible. 'Culture', in this new-racist worldview, is the unquestioned set of traits continually attributed to the non-White Other, essentially to de-world her Being and de-individualise her personhood. In other words, 'culture', as it is used in the old anthropological sense, is the magic incantation with which the Other is demonised, mystified, and/or ridiculously oversimplified. I focus on the phenomenon of 'culturalisation' as a common new-racist method of de-politicising the Other's affairs and surrounding socio-political phenomena. The article is an attempt to discredit the paradigm of 'culture' as a pseudo-concept used commonly in cultural racism. This cultural racism routinely assumes 'culture' to be a natural given almost exactly as the pseudo-scientific paradigm 'race' was (and is still) used in some discourses of biological racism. If mentality X attributes categorical differences to different groups of people based on A and A is assumed to be natural, ahistorical, and/or metaphysical, then X is a racist mentality. Obviously, A does not have to be skin-colour or 'blood' in order for X to be racist.

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With conservatism in its various forms (religious, political) on the rise in many parts of the world and Leftism increasingly withdrawing from political and social life over the last two decades, the prime questions for Leftists now should be concerned with the reasons that have led to the current public submissiveness, and, thus, the decline of the Left. While it is obviously by no means possible to easily list the reasons that led to the current Leftist apocalypse around the world, in my research I seek to identify some of the defused ideological paradigms and

mechanisms that sustain the contemporary climate of opinion, which is premised on the impossibility of the realisation of a non-capitalist world. The fallback we are witnessing is first and foremost represented in the lack of a popular utopia, which has its roots in indoctrinated assumptions about the world. For instance, the (politically) White Westerner's sense of self-differentiation from the Other is sustained by the belief that non-Whites, in their value systems (usually vaguely called 'culture'), prioritise things other than Enlightenment ideals. In other words, the anthropologisation of non-Whites is a major manifestation of the liquidation of the grand Leftist goal/utopia regarding the realisation of equality among human beings. I will use the term 'culturalisation' to indicate this phenomenon of anthropologising the Other.

As Slavoj Žižek frequently reminds us, the norm among Leftist intellectuals up until the 1990s was to question the economic, legal, and political roots of problems anywhere they appeared in the world. Now, however, mass mentality, fashioned largely by the culture industry (Adorno, 2006), has become obsessed with the over-simplification of the world, so mass individuals habitually avoid seeing the world in its complexity. And what better path to over-simplifying the world than claiming that it is composed entirely of different cultures and religions we cannot hope to understand, but can only 'respect' from afar, in the best cases? This new apolitical discourse wants us to believe that the reason 'they' have problems of poverty, violence, corruption, despotism, and fanaticism is that *they* have different values, culturally determined values. Hence, the common Western approach to the Other is very much dominated by the anthropological conception of 'culture' of the late 1800s to mid-1900s as a collectively applicable 'way of life', which functions in culturalisation as the ideal paradigm to substitute for any real theories of history, political thought, and sociology. It is as if 'culture' has become the magical, all-encompassing concept able to transmit understanding of the entire state of affairs in the non-European world to 'experts' and non-specialists alike.

Indeed, if 'race' had become the most poisonous pseudoscientific term before and during World War II, 'culture' is today's genealogical offspring and ideological equivalent of 'race'. Particularly since 2001, as a means of and due to the unprecedented Othering of Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11, culturalisation has saturated the discourse of policy makers, media and policing elites, academics, and, thus, ordinary people in the West. Through a series of examples, I will demonstrate the degree to which culturalisation has infected all veins of everydayness not only in openly racist discourse, but also (or perhaps especially) in the multicultural discourse of 'tolerance'. The underlying claim here is that racism has in fact blossomed post-World War II partly because of the Left's naïve optimism and their impartiality towards, if not adoption of, 'culture' as a neutral paradigm. Its instrumental use for Othering must be de-normalised through more critical research informed by what Alana Lentin refers to as "the story of how the potentially liberating, political tool of culture was harnessed in the aim of bypassing 'race'" and, thus, preserved the racist power structures of Western nation-states (2005, p. 381, 395). Likewise, projects such as multiculturalism that were essentially constructed upon the paradigm of culture must also be seen as the facade of the enduring relations of domination rooted in colonialism.[1]

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[1] See Lentin & Titley (2011) for more on multiculturalism as "racism in a neoliberal age".

'Culture' and Culturalisation of the Non-White as New Racism

In English, 'culture' is used in two main ways outside biology: first, to indicate sets of leisure, aesthetic canons, artistic taste, and simply methods of enjoying life, and second, to refer to a collective set of absolute norms and rules that are considered definitive and determining with regard to all social values, practices, and moral principles. From the historical work of Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) as well as Stocking (1974), we can see the evolving usage of 'culture' in anthropological studies beginning in the late nineteenth-century from the humanist or evolutionist 'culture as civilisation' (most closely aligned with the first definition above), to 'cultures' (that is, ways of life) of human groups. It is this second variation of 'culture', applied unreflectively, oversimplified, and homogeneously generalised, that is at the heart of culturalisation as new racism. All kinds of strange, irrational, oversimplified, contradictory, and mythical views are imagined about different peoples under the assumption that they are part of their 'culture', implying that culture is something the Other is born with, like skin colour. If mentality X attributes categorical differences to different groups of people based on A and A is assumed to be natural, ahistorical, and/or metaphysical, then X is a racist mentality. Obviously, A does not have to be skin-colour or 'blood' in order for X to be racist.

The shift away from the overtly biological racism of the past towards less tangible (often imagined) differences is well documented and was the subject of a good deal of research output particularly throughout the 1990s. With regard to the rise of cultural racism, Martin Barker (1981) is credited with first theorising the phenomenon, which he labelled "new racism", situated within the Thatcher administration's portrayal of immigrants and other 'undesirables'. Etienne Balibar (1991) also theorised "racism without races" in relation to decolonisation and immigration in "the absence of a new model of articulation between states, peoples and cultures on a world scale" (p. 21). Others have classified the shift away from biological racism as "symbolic racism" (see David O. Sears's work on the subject), "laissez-faire racism" (see Bobo & Smith, 1998), and "colorblind racism" (see Bonilla-Silva, 2010), among others. Often in reference to the contemporary situation of Blacks and Latinos in the United States, these contributing theories are essential to better understanding the nature of new forms of racism, and they also document the use of 'culture' (particularly the so-called 'culture of poverty') as a means of dismissing racial inequity. Nonetheless, more critical research on the pseudo-concept of culture as it functions in culturalisation is badly needed to account for the systemic and everyday Othering of non-Whites as an additional pillar of new racism. As Philomena Essed describes what she aptly calls the "culturalization of racism",

> To proceed from 'race' to 'culture' as the key organizing concept of oppression, the 'other' must be culturalized. In that process the concept of 'culture' is reduced to (perceptions of) tradition as cultural constraints. Cultural hierarchies are constructed and sustained, but the dominant culture is never made explicit. (1991, p. 171)

Thus, the culture that is assumed, that is attributed to the Other, by way of culturalising the Other (as a homogeneous group composed of similar units) has little to do with the Other's actual 'way of life' or the individuals' beliefs. It is rather an anthropologising stamp imprinted on the Other in the same way that

biological racism racialises the Other. Meanwhile, the culturaliser is situated within a *culture* that is deeply racist and imperial, a *culture* that proclaims itself not only superior, but also invisible by virtue of aculturalising itself. Very much like the liberal ideology that depicts itself as above ideologies, as objective truth, and accuses Leftist criticism of the existing order of being ideological, racist culturalisers who habitually commit culturalisation of the Other depict themselves as acultural, i.e. as rational and neutral.[2] Indeed, in dominant discourse, White/European 'culture' is normally assumed to be the assortment of values taken to represent the pinnacle of human civilisation: reason, freedom, equality, democracy, etc. In other words, the fundamental prerequisite and parameter of culturalisation is Eurocentrism, which, as Žižek would say, is based on the belief that the ideals of the Enlightenment, rather than being applicable to all human society, are uniquely European values.[3] By implicit comparison to the universal (White European) ideal, the non-White Other, who has a different culture, is depicted as irrational, weird, primitive, uncivilised, violent, fanatic, and/or both non- and anti-individualistic.

Denial of Personhood and Construction of the Other

To be clear, there are instances in which the notion of a shared or dominant culture among human beings can be helpful in referring to approximations of some collective behaviours, what Durkheim calls 'social facts', and/or attitudes that are by no means defining with regard to the individual values and/or political traits of the people in question. Culturalising uses of 'culture' can generally be distinguished by two primary factors: the social and political consequences of its use and the ideological motivation of applying the 'cultural' label. To begin with the former, whenever the 'cultural' label ultimately functions to homogenise individuals and attribute the actions or values of an entire group of people to a shared culture that is assumed to override each individual's political, economic, or social milieu, culturalisation will inevitably result. With regard to ideological motivation, culturalisation is, first and foremost, a means of Othering. Whether motivated by a desire to present Other groups as dangerous threats to White civilisation or by a less overtly racist need to comprehend seemingly incomprehensible Other groups in a politically correct fashion, culturalisation both presupposes and reinforces an atomistic view of the world. Culturalisers impose culture upon the non-White Other as an oblique means of discrimination, which necessarily re-enforces an 'us' versus 'them' social dynamic in a new, superficially less racist way.

Perhaps an overview of non-culturalising uses of 'culture' would be helpful. One might say, 'in this region, there is a culture of afternoon naps', 'in my university, there is a culture of easy-going interaction between faculty and students', or 'biking is not part of the culture around here'. In these examples, 'culture' is analogous to 'trend' or 'tendency' and is applied to specific behaviours and attitudes, as opposed to being used as a homogenising parameter to account for the aggregate of the individuals' values and beliefs. Of course, 'culture' can be invoked without making explicit reference to the term. In the case of

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[2] Hamid Dabashi (2013) similarly writes of what he terms European "ethnographic logic", which serves to ethnicise non-White individuals and enterprises.
[3] Žižek (2008, pp. 76-7) offers a similar analysis of the 2005 riots in the French suburbs.

culturalisation, examples would be 'Greeks are lazy' or 'Muslim women are not liberated', while non-culturalising uses would be 'Iranians unlike Iraqis like light tea' or 'political jokes are popular among Egyptians'. As an approximation of social behaviour that could hint at certain faith related practices, it could be said, 'for many people in Central Asia, drinking and dancing do not interfere with the practice of Islam'. Putting aside the problem of generalisation, the last statement could still be free of culturalisation if it is not contextualised in a discursive attempt to Other because the statement itself does not entail any claim about people's values nor does it seem to seek a justification for a 'them' (or bad Other) versus 'us' (or good Other) categorisation. As for questions regarding a group of people's moral values or their perception of certain social and political phenomena, ideology critique would prove more effective than trying to mystify such questions in the name of 'culture'. Needless to say, the complexities and nuances in Western societies that necessitate the rigorous production and interdisciplinary application of knowledge in all fields of the sciences and the humanities are present to the same degree in the rest of the world.

Yet, the common attribution of 'culture' as a sort of unifying umbrella to non-White societies and communities dismisses the necessity of studying and understanding the historical, sociological, economic, and political dimensions thereof. The existing order in which the Other is marginalised and oppressed on the basis of oversimplified and racist generalisations is thus sustained as well. On the individual level, attributing 'culture' to a non-White person amounts to defining her in terms of a set of imagined values and ahistorical traditions. Accordingly, the person is denied the minimal recognition of personhood or even the potentiality of personhood. The non-White Other is systematically denied individual agency (i.e. the will to think, choose, and act autonomously) on the ideological basis that her personality is determined by the 'whole'. Hence, the Other is never seen as a subject; she is rather a repetitive unit, an 'it', the abstract animal Derrida (2002) refutes as a category.

Just as a species of animals is usually defined by the animals' 'nature', the culturalised individual is defined by her 'culture'. Even when committed out of sheer ignorance, culturalisation is rooted in a larger ideological worldview sustaining White domination and pigeonholing Other peoples into biological classes with identifiable collective traits and predictable behaviour. This explains the tendency of culturalisers to equate familiarity with one non-White person to an insider's understanding of that person's entire 'culture'. For instance, if a culturaliser happens to know a Chinese person, she can speak in the comfort of having firsthand knowledge about Chinese people because she automatically considers one Chinese person representative of all Chinese. The same goes for virtually all acquaintances of non-European descent. The Other is seen as a flat being without history or complexities. Thus, she is often regarded as either purely evil or purely good, but nothing in-between. Again, has this not been the human conception of animals since mythological times? While some animals are simply evil and they have been so for thousands of years in the human imagination, other animals are inherently good, peaceful, cute, useful, and so on. Likewise, and as will be further discussed in relation to liberal culturalisation in the following section, culturalisation is not always intended to demonise the Other; again, the culturaliser's primary motivation is Othering.

Since 9/11, nowhere has this Othering tendency on the basis of culture been more visible than in the White Western depiction of what has been dubbed 'the Muslim world'. The magnitude of this form of culturalisation is unprecedented, amounting to the imposition of Islam as the definitive identity upon nearly 2 billion people, including the estimated 23 percent of the world's population the Pew Research Center (2012) reports practice Islam as well as those who are considered Muslims due to their skin colour, accent, name, or ethnic origin and are not. I will call this phenomenon Muslimisation—not to be confused with the term used to convey the belief grown out of Islamophobia that the West is becoming increasingly Islamic—and it is by no means new. Writing in the late 1980s, Balibar notes the "differentialist" traces of anti-Semitic discourse in what he termed "Arabophobia" "since it carries with it an image of Islam as a 'conception of the world' which is incompatible with Europeanness and an enterprise of universal ideological domination, and therefore a systematic confusion of 'Arabness' and 'Islamicism'" (1991, p. 24). Today's Islamophobia carries with it the same underlying presumptions that Islam is much more than merely a system of belief and that it is just as natural and irrefutable as one's 'race'.

Amidst the fear and paranoia that pervades White discourse about the Middle East and North Africa region, the homogenising, flattening effects of Muslimisation have become increasingly absolute both at the theoretical level and in everyday social interaction. On a number of occasions in Canada, complete strangers have asked me what religion I practice, not because there is anything about me that could remotely suggest I follow any religion, but I assume merely because of my Middle Eastern appearance. In one of these cases in Montreal in 2007, a White Canadian woman had already deduced I was 'Muslim', perhaps both because of my appearance and my two Iranian companions, who had already identified themselves as Muslims. When I replied, "I have no religion", she enthusiastically responded, "Don't be ashamed of your religion!" before proudly divulging her own (non-Muslim) religious affiliation. Her response speaks to the very heart of the matter: the Other cannot be an individual with an individual character. Therefore, if a 'Muslim man' says he is not Muslim that must only be because he is ashamed to admit his beliefs to a 'non Muslim'. A 'Muslim' cannot be, for instance, a non-believer because the freedom to choose to become an atheist or agnostic belongs solely to the White, who alone is an individual. It should not have to be said that just as Europeans cannot definitively be identified as Christians, Middle Eastern and North African peoples cannot automatically be identified as Muslims.

To make matters worse, because of the over-simplifying, flattening effects of culturalisation, Islam has come to be viewed as a unified worldview without regional, let alone individual, variations, in spite of the vast geographies encompassed by the so-called Muslim world. Thus, whatever stereotypes come to be associated with Islam as such are automatically applied to 'Muslims' at large. Edward Said, in a lecture entitled "The Myth of the 'Clash of Civilisations'", said:

> In today's Europe and the United States what is described as Islam … belongs to the discourse of Orientalism, a construction fabricated to whip up feelings of hostility and antipathy … Yet this is a very different thing, than what to Muslims who live within its domain, Islam really is. There's a world of difference between

> Islam in Indonesia and Islam in Egypt. By the same token, the volatility of today's struggle over the meaning and definition of Islam is evident, in Egypt, where the secular powers of society are in conflict with various Islamic protest movements and reformers over the nature of Islam and in such circumstances the easiest and least accurate thing is to say, 'That is the world of Islam, and see how it is all terrorists and fundamentalists and see also how different, how irrational they are, compared to us'. (1998)

In itself, and in a less culturalised world, this association of Islam with violence is not necessarily a racist problem, but the ensuing association of 'Muslims' with violence is. Therefore, counterclaims that Islam is a religion of peace fail to address the most dangerous aspect of Muslimisation, which is its denial of personhood to individuals perceived to be 'Muslim'. It is this same culturalising setup that explains why the wrongdoing of a Muslim individual is treated as the wrongdoing of the entire 'Muslim world', which is more or less the case for all non-White individuals and minority groups. Indeed, terrorism has become so exclusively linked to the Muslim world that 'Please don't let it [the perpetrator] be a Muslim' has become a recurring refrain among Muslimised individuals in the immediate aftermath of public shootings and other acts of violence in the West (Ali, 2013). The wrongdoing of any number of individuals from the majority, however, remains an exceptional wrongdoing of individuals. If the perpetrator of a public shooting happens to be from a non-White background (regardless of nationality), the immediate presumption is that we are facing a cultural conflict (for example, in the form of a religious fanatic/terrorist), whereas if the shooter happens to be White, the presumption is that she (as an individual) was somehow failed by society. That is to say, if the criminal is White, psychology is where people turn for an explanation of her criminal act. A non-White criminal, however, only further validates mainstream White fears of the alien Other who can never be assimilated into Western society.

Liberal Culturalisation and Multiculturalism

This uncritical process of culturalising the Other is undertaken by conservatives as well as many liberals. In both cases, what we end up with is an erroneous depiction of the world backed by knowledge authorities in academia (and thus various specialists who help shape public opinion) and manufacturers of mass belief in the media. The only noticeable difference between conservative as opposed to liberal culturalisation is that conservatives frequently seek to demonise the Other, while the liberal spectrum of culturalisation extends from tolerance to superficial romanticisation. In terms of policy approaches, conservative culturalisation is typically anti-immigration oriented due to a belief that the non-White Other cannot be assimilated, whereas liberal culturalisers often ascribe to the multiculturalist view that 'different' cultures ultimately enrich the host (White) society.[4] In either case, the unspoken motivation and result is Othering. Yet, because the racist motives of conservative culturalisation are

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[4] Not surprisingly, conservative and liberal versions of culturalisation often co-exist in practice, with 'multicultural' reforms—such as the superficial acknowledgement of Aboriginal populations in Canada's citizenship guide (Jafri, 2012) or Australia's National Curriculum (McAllan, 2011)—serving to offset the continuation or introduction of overtly racist policies.

typically more visible, I will focus on the liberal variety, which has been enshrined as the politically correct means of relating to the non-White Other.

What liberal proponents of multiculturalism fail or refuse to see is that in response to their desire not to speak about 'race' amidst the breakdown of geographical and linguistic boundaries that previously served to isolate Whites from non-Whites, they have merely erected new racist boundaries on cultural bases. Thus, the White community is able to continue to discursively segregate itself from the non-White Other while purporting to be living in a new age of harmony alongside each other. As Farid Farid writes, "orientalist multiculturalism", while appearing to give minorities voice and visibility, is in fact "built on orientalist stereotypes where the other's role easily becomes exhibitionist in performing exotic spectacles or being excluded on the basis of their otherness" (2006, p. 12). Conveniently, the belief that all people belong to unique cultures from which they draw their identity is the perfect preventive antidote to the cross-societal political alliances that could be fostered in this age of heightened connectivity. Regardless of the knowledge, beliefs and values, or citizenship of the non-White Other, her skin colour, name or ethnic ancestry will continue to be taken as an indication of her Otherness in the form of her (imagined) culture. The non-White Other can essentially never regain the personhood that culturalisation denies her. Moreover, because culturalisers simply fail to ascribe personhood to any non-White Other, even their 'love' for the Other is demeaning, and their 'respect' is intrinsically disrespectful.

This brings me to an example of this mentality that I witnessed during, of all things, the closing day of an academic conference on multiculturalism in Montreal in 2007. At that point, mostly the non-White presenters remained and in the context of praising the multicultural landscape of the conference, a White Francophone woman turned to the rest of us in the auditorium and exclaimed, "I love you all! I wish I had enough space to take you all home". Her proclamation of unconditional love for the different Others, no doubt born of strict adherence to multiculturalist doctrine, confers no more personhood upon the non-White Other than conservative (demonising) culturalisation. In either case, the culturalised Others are reduced to subject-less objects of the subject's simple emotion, as opposed to being recognised as equal subjects with agencies and complexities of their own. That is to say, the emphasis is not on the object of love ("you all" in this case), rather, it is on the loving subject. This is a merciful and kind subject who looks down upon the non-White and loves them all. I suspect the expression on the woman's face, the tone of her voice, and, more importantly, the omnibenevolent content of her self-assuring statement would have been the same had she been fussing over a bunch of vulnerable stray kittens.

The coming examples will illustrate the degree to which such patterns of liberal culturalisation and its essential generalising aspect have also become part of everyday discourse about the non-White world. Of course, this discourse has a long history as evidenced by Orientalism, but it was previously reserved mainly for elites such as colonial army officials, diplomats, missionaries, and writers and scholars (for example, historians and anthropologists). Now, however, in addition to being armed with the proper culturalising rhetoric to make sense of the non-White Other, ordinary people in the West have nearly unlimited access to the wonderlands of those strange, distant cultures not only via mass media, but also

through humanitarian and touristic travelling. The discourse of culturalisation thus no longer needs to be disseminated from above, it is perpetuated by humanitarianists and tourists just as the Orientalist research of scholars during colonialism greatly fed into racism. To begin with humanitarianism, it is becoming more and more common to hear White Westerners, ranging in background from devoted Christians to humanitarianists, or simply any college or even high-school student, speaking of their plan, or at least their desire, to go to Africa 'to help those in need!' This discourse is tragically rich for analysis. First of all, Africa (the world's second largest continent with nearly a billion inhabitants) is, as usual, reduced to one simple entity. To the culturaliser, this singular African identity is built upon images of villages of malnourished children who run after and adore the Whites that come to save them. Thanks to global injustices that privilege Whites, Africa offers the White humanist/tourist/student a chance to gain a sense of self-importance independent of their personal merit or lack thereof. Any utterly unskilled and untalented White person can go to the land of the sufferers and automatically perceive herself as a saint setting out to save the world. In addition to the inexpensive or even complimentary luxuries the colonialist heir will enjoy there, she will have a heroic story to regale herself and others with for the rest of her life. A round-trip ticket to Africa has become the vehicle for redemption, affordable heroism, and first hand knowledge of another culture.

The White culturalising humanitarianists, who usually fail even to recognise the historical and contemporary role of Western imperialism in creating and sustaining a lower standard of living in the third world, behave as though poverty, violence, and corruption are endemic to non-White cultures. In effect, humanitarianism and tourism have become major apparatuses of the Christian West's depoliticisation of the non-White world. The mentality behind the pseudo-compassionate culturalisation present in some forms of humanitarian and tourist discourses is that the Other, who is irrational, violent, primitive, helpless, or some combination thereof, deserves the compassion of the civilised Christian, just as the fallen human being deserves the compassion of Jesus Christ. This compassion, this Godly love, can easily extend itself to huge parts of the world as in the not-uncommon statement, 'I love India', made by some Western tourists India had been fortunate enough to have the chance to host. It is as if to the White tourist India is as simple to take in and comment on as an exquisite dessert or exotic species of cat. Do they really fail to grasp the fact that India is a world full of all kinds of issues including terrible things such as poverty, injustice, and so on, just like any other complex world? Do they love this India in all of its complexities, or do they just love the self-image they enjoy in India? Obviously, one must presume, they love that as they take in the exotic Indian culture, they are also the perpetual beneficiaries of the international division of labour and, of course, a long history of colonialism. Here too, the emphasis in the statement is on the loving subject. It is a self-proclamation of divinity in which India becomes the object of the semi-divine being's love. The White touristic context of the statement is what distinguishes it as subject-centred. Ironically, when the immigrant to the West is asked how she likes her new country of dwelling, she too is expected to say, 'I love it here', but the political context of such a statement, 'I love America', for example, orients it completely opposite of the White touristic one. In this case, the emphasis is placed entirely on benevolent America, the mighty nation that gave shelter to this helpless Other. An immigrant is expected to implicitly express gratitude to every White

citizen who asks her, 'How do you like it here?' by expressing her absolute and unconditional love for the country, thus sustaining the culturaliser's sense of generosity and superiority.

Whiteness is an unspoken and neutralised social rank with inherent 'cultural' privileges the rights to which are no longer questioned. Thus, even when 'loved', it is very important that the Other always sustains the relational order that preserves the racist White's myth of superiority and the image of the Other as a biological category. In other words, as long as the Other plays the predetermined role of a cultural bearer lacking personhood, and thereby feeds into the culturaliser's sense of self (and thus the privilege of the racist White), the culturaliser thinks of them fondly as a sort of obedient pet. On the other hand, if the Other were to show any sign of personhood, autonomy, or free individual will, this would be disturbing, and possibly threatening, to the culturaliser. Imagine the case of an immigrant who answers the question, 'How do you like Australia?' by stating something along the lines of, 'I don't like it very much. I am here because of the same reasons that drove you, your parents, or your grand or great grandparents here'.

Culturalisation and Politics

Žižek calls the phenomenon of culturalisation "the Huntington's disease of our time" (2008, p. 140), in reference to Huntington's thesis of "the clash of civilizations": "The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology" (Huntington, 2010, p. 10).[5] Describing the phenomenon of the "culturalisation of politics" in what he calls the "liberal multiculturalist's basic ideological operation", Žižek states, "Political differences—differences conditioned by political inequality or economic exploitation—are naturalised and neutralised into 'cultural' differences, that is, into different 'ways of life' which are something given, something that cannot be overcome" (2008, p. 140). This culturalisation of politics took currency among former Leftist Marxists when attacks against the orthodox, economist interpretation of Marxism became extremely popular after the fall of the communist states in Eastern Europe. The popular form of this critical attack, however, has now lapsed into the other dogmatic pole: dismissing the material conditions of life entirely in the 'new' worldview. Now, 'culture' is expected to be behind all social and political phenomena, especially when people from the third world are involved. Thus, in Žižek's words, the "liberal multiculturalist's basic ideological operation" has become dominant. Žižek continues,

> The basic opposition on which the entire liberal vision relies is that between those who are ruled by culture, totally determined by the lifeworld into which they are born, and those who merely 'enjoy' their culture, who are elevated above it, free to choose it. (2008, p. 141)

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[5] See Bonnett (2005) for a helpful discussion of the evolution of 'the West' as a "ubiquitous [supremacist] category in the articulation of the modern world" (2005, p. 15) with specific reference to the contributions of Huntington's unacknowledged ideological predecessor, Benjamin Kidd.

At the same time, it is important to reiterate here that although this culturalising view may have become more popular in the last two-three decades, its roots go back centuries, as Said's *Orientalism* (2003) illustrates.

The important point to be made is that 'culture' carries with it no substantial designation that could aid us in understanding the fundamental features of any human being anyway. In the best cases, this pseudo-concept, culture, would indicate a set of very general attitudes and superficial appearances, by way of loose approximations, that could give us a hint about a society's social manners and customs, which would be admired or despised to various degrees, or indifferently ignored, by the individuals. On any more serious level, culture is inevitably and deeply political. It is beyond thoughtless naivety not to see the politicality of, for example, the religious roots of casteism in India, or of Islamic laws under Islamist regimes. To pause on the latter example, the official charge against some political opponents of the Islamic Republic of Iran is *Moharebeh,* by which is meant "enmity towards God", but is of course merely a way of justifying the persecution of those individuals who oppose the state. Oddly, however, casteism and Islamism are often treated as pure cultural phenomena, meaning that culturalisers also ignore the tremendous degree of opposition to casteism and Islamism within the same societies, respectively, because these forms of opposition have no place in the homogeneous images culturalisers hold about those societies.

In addition to being too insensitive to account for popular acts of dissent and progressive politics of resistance in its view of the Other, the culturalising mentality also mistakes even what is openly political (such as the discourse of political Islam) as culture. Hence, it is even more improbable that this mentality could be sensitive to the more diffused levels of ideological arenas whereby political agendas are put forward most effectively precisely by masking them with non-political claims, such as moral, metaphysical, or spiritual justifications.[6] Even if we take 'culture' to mean a set of common beliefs, values, rituals, practices, and customs, even the most supposedly metaphysical or natural cultural component among them is still deeply political. This metaphysical or natural (ahistorical) facade is exactly where ideology lies because ideology functions qua ideology by disguising itself and, thus, presenting itself as neutral. In short, 'cultural interpretations' amount to the dehistoricisation and apoliticisation of socio-political phenomena.

Similarly, Said's work on Orientalism is particularly helpful in terms of better understanding the politicisation of culture. Although it has almost become a matter of political correctness to avoid the word 'Orient' in English due in large part to the impact Said's work has had, this style of thought based upon a clearly divided 'Orient' and 'Occident' is still extremely common, even among Eastern academics. Essentially, what Said claims about the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is that the forms of knowledge produced about the Oriental Other by European thinkers, writers, and scientists, who had conscious and distinct beliefs about 'race', was crucially imperial and served imperialism. Therefore, Orientalism was in fact a process of racialising knowledge that

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[6] For a critique of the failure of cultural anthropology to account for ideology see Talal Asad (1979).

functioned within a broader political project, the aims and methods of which have changed very little in the decades since *Orientalism* was first published in 1978. A contemporary example that clearly illustrates the phenomenon of the 'politicisation of culture' is the 'issue' of Muslim women's clothing in the West. Strangely, for the last decade or so in Europe especially, liberals and conservatives alike have become interested in liberating Muslim women from their ultimate 'symbol of oppression': their headscarf or burqa. Thus, women's bodies have become the territory for yet another battle originating in classic racism. Absurd though it may be, publicly taking a side with regard to headscarves and burqas has become almost fashionable. In fact, the question of Muslim women's attire has become a subject of political party platforms (for example, the Party for Freedom in Holland and Northern League in Italy) and state and provincial legislations (for example, in France and Germany respectively), as well as municipality by-laws (for example, Belgium). Of course, the politicisation of such an issue is inherently stupid and utterly sexist. You would not normally be asked, for instance, whether you are in support of or in opposition to Catholic or Orthodox nuns' habits, let alone White women's clothing at large, because, needless to say, these kinds of issues are considered to fall under individual freedom.[7] My question, then, is why has the headscarf and burqa so suddenly become one of *the* 'political' and legislative questions for Westerners and especially men? 'Who am I to tell women what to wear or what not to wear?' Is this not the only proper response to this kind of debate?

What exactly is it that prevents conservatives and liberals across the board from seeing Muslim women as individuals with personal freedoms? The obvious assumption here is that a Muslim woman cannot be seen as an autonomous and free subject, and that as such, she needs (White) men's aid to be liberated from the male-imposed oppression so dominant in her 'culture'. But this is not the actual motive behind these self-professed liberators. In reality, there are a number of political reasons why Muslim women, among all other non-White, and hence (to the Orientalist mind), un-free women, have been so consistently targeted to be 'freed'. Quite obviously, the battle has nothing to do with women's rights after all. Rather, it is a war against the culturalised Other by means of politics and legislations. And conveniently, the doctrine of human rights today not only allows racists to practice their discrimination under the celebrated discourse of liberalism, but it also gives them the privilege of moral superiority as the civilised ones who are on a sacred mission to liberate the primitive, irrational, and enslaved Other.

Ultimately, the matter here is not whether or not forms of Islamic clothing are oppressive. They can very well be oppressive in many contexts of Islamic societies, but wherever it is so, women have fought back with all available means of struggle, including militant methods. However, this long history of resistance is aggressively excluded from what the White liberal man educates himself about on the subject of women's rights because it does not fit his ideological image of the Oriental woman. This seems to particularly be the case in the third world, where the most radical feminist organisations exist. Indeed, I doubt these White 'liberators' could even imagine how women in certain militant movements are actively engaged in liberating men from traditional sexist and chauvinistic value

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[7] Of course, this does not include White Muslim women, who fall outside the acceptable range of Whiteness in the view of those who are politically White.

systems. For example, in the Kurdistan Workers' Party (commonly known as PKK), female guerrilla leaders teach feminist courses to re-educate their male comrades (Journeyman Pictures, 2005).

The irony, in fact, is that even if the leading White liberators learned of such progressive feminist movements, it is virtually certain that they would mercilessly debilitate them. One must bear in mind that the traditional liberal typically and historically supports power relations and ideologies that are by all means oppressive in many parts of the third world. In fact, it was this same liberal force that preferred and supported Islamist fundamentalism over popular communist and Marxist movements in the Middle East and other parts of Asia (including Afghanistan). Although Islamism and liberalism continue to present themselves as a dichotomy, it is certainly a false dichotomy. Whether a White man is targeting women's bodies as a setting for men's power relations in Europe, or Islamist leaders are politicising women's bodies in the Middle East, the enmity towards female autonomy is virtually indistinguishable.

From the example of the European politicisation of Muslim women's clothing in Europe in the name of women's liberation, we can see that the racist is wrong even when s/he may sound right. The most perfect forms of deception are often conducted not despite truth but via the use of truth. Truth is a currency that can be manipulated in all kinds of ways, and usually it is used most effectively by those who control the means of knowledge production, and that is precisely what makes "power and knowledge directly imply each other", as we have learned from Foucault (1984). Likewise, discourse is the locus of the ideological agenda, and as such, it emphasises a truth only to deliver an untruth obliquely. While the ideological purpose is concealed in the oblique part, the argument is structured around the obvious part, the truth. That is to say, the racist's aim is never to communicate facts, and the moment we begin to engage in a debate on the factuality of what the racist claims to report in her/his discourse, we immediately fall into the trap. New-racist arguments do not rely on what have now been proven to be false premises, such as the biological notion of race. Nonetheless, the arguments put forward by new-racism are unsound as a whole, and their persuasive power lies solely in diverting our attention to proving or disproving their premises. As Žižek concludes, the aim should instead be focused on falsifying the racist's motive (2008, p. 100). Hence, whether what the liberals and conservatives claim about the headscarf and burqa as symbols of oppression is true or not is irrelevant. The point to emphasise is that there is a racist aim concealed within this well-structured discourse that strategically relies on the politicisation of the cultural and culturalisation of the political.

Concluding Remarks

In sum, this common mystification, naturalisation, and racialisation of culture has contributed significantly to the global decline of a universalist vision of humanity. As universalist ideologies and philosophies began to lose ground in the social and political world in the late 1980s, religious and nationalist waves began to accumulate more populist force. Today, no world heroes exist, because the world lost its worldness qua one world. Nations have their own heroes whose visions are dreams for some and nightmares for others. Capital alone is fully

globalised, which embodies the objectification of human relations and the humanisation of relations among objects, as Marx predicted (1990, p. 166).

Of course this is not to say the world should be conceived in terms of atomic individualism without any plausible collective political will. The point here is to overcome the politics of Othering on the bases of differences that should not have any political significance, such as differences in skin colour, ethnicity, gender, and imagined social values. Instead, the Left should realise and capitalise on collective wills that would emerge as soon as pseudo-identities collapse into a more critical view of the question of human liberation. Though race and gender relations are political now, the subsequent response should not be internalisation of those constructed differences as natural and metaphysical. Rather, it should be a struggle against the conditions that sustain such inequalities. As for class relations, the old Marxist goal of abolishing class society is still as legitimate as it was in the 1950s and 1960s regardless of how unrealistic it may sound.

One of the most central conclusions of Marxist philosophy is that humans create their own history whether they are aware of it or not, and whether by activity or passivity. Enlightenment from the Marxist point of view, one could argue, is the awareness of the human potentiality to determine history, and to be enlightened would thus mean to work consciously towards the liberation of humanity by leaving behind the pre-human history in which humanity is the object, not the subject, of history. That is to say, universal equality and freedom will never be realistic as long as we fail to see history as the product of our own actions. By the same token, the more human societies and communities are perceived and treated as naturally and fundamentally different from each other, the more impossible the realisation of a freer humanity will become by virtue of people's own actions. The dominant belief in equivalents of 'human nature' (such as 'race' or racialised 'culture') amounts to the self-fulfilling prophesies of the Hobbesian war of all against all in the form of exploitive multi-sided (class, race, gender) domination. What differs is the amount and the forms of oppressions different groups of people have been subjected to throughout their histories, not their natural entitlement to or (cultural) appreciation of equality and freedom. A key point in undoing the history of oppression is to cease taking today's 'cultures' as natural and absolute determinates of individuals' identities. Even nature itself and all that is natural have histories, and humans alone are capable of living, thinking, and acting in accordance with that historical awareness. It is the belief that reality is above and beyond our will that sustains and prolongs the existing state of affairs.

If we continue to limit ourselves to what we are made to think are realistic options, the history we are creating will only grow bleaker. The alternative to the existing world and its relations of power is not even conceivable for a mindset that habitually perceives humanity in terms of intrinsic cultural identities. A mindset that is incapable of imagining an international Left sharing foundational concepts of human equality and freedom while grounding its struggles on local circumstances and histories cannot expand the limits of the possible. In a world where the most dominant, and thus the most neutralised, ideology is a masculine, White, and capitalist ideology, a true alternative cannot even theoretically be constructed if first the dominant ideology is not de-normalised. Accordingly, deconstructing the current paradigms of the dominant ideology is

the prerequisite for progressive movements both theoretically and on the level of day-to-day political struggle against exploitive multi-sided dominations. Moreover, the Left should not be afraid to, at the least, reject the de-politicisation of relations of domination that are defused and legitimised under the name of multiculturalism. Individuals and groups of people should be empowered to be able to cultivate forms of revolutionary communication capable of expressing the universal extensions of their identities. As long as oppressed groups are fitted with cultural lenses to view the collective self and the collective Other, the Left will continue to decline.

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BOOK REVIEW

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According to Hopgood, we are witnessing the last gasp of human rights as the "prospect of one world under secular human law is receding" and "the foundations of universal liberal norms and global governance are crumbling" (p. 1). It is from this vantage point that Stephen Hopgood launches into a nuanced and powerful demolition of the normalising metanarrative of the Human Rights agenda. But given the broad nature of such an agenda it is important to contextualise what he means by human rights. Hopgood takes great care to differentiate between *human rights*—"a nonhegemonic language of resistance allied to a variety of causes and motivations" (p. 178)—and *Human Rights*—an international discourse that "structures laws, courts, norms, and organisations … that claim to speak with a singular authority in the name of humanity as a whole" (p. ix). Regardless of their difference, Hopgood ultimately concludes there is no present future in either as our current epoch is one of imminent decay.

As a way of framing his argument, Hopgood begins this text by grappling with the often-contradictory nature of Western idealism then shifts to the rise of global power consortiums (particularly as the West developed rights and laws in response to conflicts and mass atrocities) and concludes with our present state of decay. However (or maybe more to the point), as the title's reference to 'endtimes' suggests, Hopgood has attempted to provide the reader with eschatological oration documenting the end of what he calls the secular 'church of human rights'. The anger in his voice is palpable as he stands in judgement to write about the end of an era of Western ideology, iconography, and power. The major impetus for this decline is, according to Hopgood, that "the vast superstructure of international human rights law and organisation [are] no longer 'fit for purpose'" (p. 2). Most notably, the text addresses the decline of European power within the global political sphere, North American ambivalence about global norms and regulations, and the rise of conservative and fundamentalist

religious forces. This tri-parte collapse has led to a rise in assertive nation states and a world willing to say no to the pressures of a weakened and fractured international community.

A concurrent symptom of this collapse is the increased influence of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and a growing intolerance from the global community toward the hegemonic agenda of Human Rights. This shift in the power structure of international rights is not marked by an explicit anti-human rights message but a vocalised disdain for the specific parameters of the rules of national conduct and the exclusionary conditions under which the rules are drafted. The increased power of the BRICS coupled with relative decline of the United States (situated by Hopgood as first among equals) has vanquished the notion of unilateral mandates across international borders. To this point, the recent events in Syria and Ukraine/Russia should be viewed as the reality of our present epoch and not an anomaly in the structure of human rights. This new multi-polar or 'neo-Westphalian' system will lead to the demise of human rights as we know it as sovereignty becomes more of a prerogative than a responsibility.

But when these shifts are considered within the context of Hopgood's historical/ideological framing of the Human Rights movement none of our present contexts should appear surprising. Rather, the current hegemonic quarrel is the creation of the bourgeois, European middle-class and (more recently) American power. The book decisively eviscerates the moral hypocrisy of these movements, documenting their penchant for authority and self-preservation over any form of egalitarianism or humanitarian mission. Through his historical deconstruction of Human Rights organisations and events, Hopgood contextualises the moral architecture of suffering and heroism where singular factions seek to impose their will in the name of good. To illustrate, he deconstructs the sacred metanarrative where the "passive and innocent victim" (p. 72) came to adorn the front covers of books and human rights reports as a "displacement of Christ's sacrifice in favour of human suffering" (p. 26). In this way, Hopgood argues that the Human Rights agenda uses "social magic" (p. 7) to "turn … ideology into facts" (p. 6) and "place 'why' questions out of bounds" (p. 8).

So where are we left at the end of Hopgood's critique? His text leaves us with little hope but to accept that the humanist space of impartiality is crumbling. His analogous references to the fall of the Roman Empire suggests it is only a matter of time before civilisation enters a humanitarian dark age. Instead of challenging the sacred metanarrative, individuals/organisations constructed an institutional "superior power" of Human Rights and now we all stand before our utopia to watch it crumble. While many of Hopgood's arguments prove compelling they feel, at times, unsubstantiated. However, given that this text was explicitly a polemic and not an historical account perhaps this is not as problematic as it might be in other contexts. Ultimately, as a reader you are left wondering if Hopgood wants the system to fail or if his point, as Žižek (1991) argues, is that it is precisely when we see through our precious fantasy that we can begin to escape the historical fallacy and deadlock of our present moment.

For readers of this journal, such as myself, who may not be au fait with Human Rights or international affairs, this is a compelling text as Hopgood grapples with

issues of 'who gets to decide global rules' and who gets to define "legitimate exceptions to them" (p. 2). Further, we see Human Rights are not, and never have been, above the fray of national sovereignty as organisations and states have always sought to set the parameters of the political sphere and define who would be excluded from the outset. And as Hopgood reminds us, at its most basic level the foundation of the Human Rights endeavour began in terms that will sound startlingly familiar to critical whiteness scholars:

> Bourgeois Europeans responded to the erosion of religious authority by creating authority of their own from the cultural resources that lay scattered around them. And then they globalized it via the infrastructure that the imperial civilizing project bequeathed to them. (p. x)

Thus, we see the movement toward human rights has been whitewashed from the beginning.

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GENERAL ISSUE

Australia's "Colombo Plan": the Beacon of Western Knowledge in the Asia-Pacific Region

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In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Australian government initiated the Overseas Student Plan as part of the humanitarian program known as the Colombo Plan. By allowing "Asian" students to enter the well-patrolled borders of white Australia to acquire skills and knowledge useful to the 'development' of their own countries, Australia symbolically positioned itself as benevolent educator to its multiple Asian neighbouring others. At the same time, the Overseas Student Plan was understood as crucial to endear the goodwill of recently independent Asian nations, promoting political and trade relations ultimately favourable to Australia in spite of its racially exclusionary migration and population policies. In light of this historical contextualisation, this article demonstrates the discursive complexities underpinning the successive positioning of Asian countries as equal partners of Australia in the process of internationalisation of higher education. Further, it shows the pernicious persistence of the Australian colonial imaginary in shaping the understanding of Asian students as subjects essentially lacking the characteristics marking the epistemological superiority of the West. In so doing, it argues that the representation of Asian students as irreducibly different to their domestic counterparts relies on the historical construction of the knowledges of Aboriginal people and non-English speaking migrants as cultural impediments to their full inclusion in Australian educational institutions.

Keywords: International students, white benevolence, racial desirability, Aboriginal dispossession

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Second World War, successive Australian governments had sought to acquire political and economic leadership in the Asia-Pacific area

by augmenting trade and diplomatic relations with their neighbouring countries (Burke, 2006, p. 338; Oakman, 2010, pp. 178-217). On a practical level, this effort took place within the Commonwealth humanitarian project known as the Colombo Plan and materialised in the form of financial aid and an Overseas Student Plan. By virtue of the Overseas Student Plan, thousands of South and Southeast Asian students were funded to come to Australia to accrue the knowledge necessary to induce economic development and political stability in their home countries (Oakman, 2010, pp. 178-217). On a discursive level, this effort was couched within the standing trope of the 'White Man's burden', which amounted to the self-positioning of white Australia as an "authoritative 'master' that has the resources and *innate benevolent* character" to assist its geographic neighbours (Laforteza, 2007, p. 4, original emphasis). As the Australian External Affairs Minister, Percy Spender, claimed at the Commonwealth conference on Foreign Affairs which led to the creation of the Colombo Plan: "Australia was ready to make her full contribution to those of her neighbours who were threatened with acute economic distress." On this claim, other ministers attending the conference commented: "[they] were obviously impressed at Australia's vigorous approach to the whole of the South-East Asian problem. It had not been forced; *it came voluntarily*" (*The Sydney Herald Morning*, 1950, p. 2, emphasis added).[1]

Additionally, as Elaine Laforteza argues, the rhetoric of the 'White Man's burden', understood as a duty to "'colonise' and 'civilise' non-white people" (2007, p. 3), has amounted in Australia to an "ongoing process of management that is aimed at constructing a foundational claim for white sovereignty" (Riggs, as cited in Laforteza, 2007, p. 3). From this perspective, Australia's involvement in the Colombo Plan can be considered as an attempt to secure for itself an "authoritative white ontology of being and belonging" in both the land it dispossessed and the geographic area where it lays (Riggs, as cited in Laforteza, 2007, p. 3). It is not by chance that, on the occasion of the conference mentioned above, Spender specified: the "East could be rescued" only by Australia liaising with the "other member-nations of the Commonwealth and with some form of aid from the United States" (*The Sydney Herald Morning*, 1950, p. 2). Spender's claims can be thus understood as a symbolic assertion of the legitimacy of Australia leadership and its will to compete on an equal footing with other Western nations who had, likewise, political and economic interests in the region, namely the United Kingdom and the United States. To prove so, white Australia had to demonstrate it possessed not only an inherent benevolence but also, the natural custodianship of Western knowledge. If, as the then British leader of the Opposition, Clement Attlee, once stated: "the West has the skills which can unlock the door to the wealth of the East" (*The Sydney Herald Morning*, 1953, p. 3), Australia had to prove first to have the "skills" to be counted as part of the "West". Thus, the necessity for Australia to project internationally a sense of intellectual confidence, which was, as Rachel Burke indicates, epitomised in its self-representation as an authoritative "educator" of Colombo Plan students, who were infantilised as white Australians' "surrogate children" (2006, pp. 333-337).

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[1] For further details on the contributions of Percy Spender at Commonwealth Conference on Foreign Affairs held in Colombo in January 1950, see: [Colombo Plan] Meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, January 1950—Conference Papers A10617, 1950/1, NAA.

The Overseas Student Plan predates the current system of international education in Australia and, as a form of aid, it had lasted until the Hawke-Keating Governments transformed it into an industry in the mid-1980s (Nesdale, Simkin, Sang, Burke, & Fraser, 1995, p. 7). Since then, international education has been conceived more as a form of trade and international cooperation than humanitarianism, and international students have advocated their rights more as consumers than students (Sebastian, 2009).[2] Yet, as this article will reveal, the self-representation of Australia as an authoritative "educator" has outlived the phasing out of the Colombo Plan and so has the concomitant representation of 'Asian' international students as "surrogate children".

By drawing on several conceptualisations of whiteness in Australia (Stratton, 1998: 1999; Hage, 1998; Perera, 2005, Nicolacopoulos & Vassilacopoulos, 2004), this article will argue that throughout the history of Australian international education, orientalist representations of international students have been employed to mark the epistemic inferiority of Asian culture and elicit cultural assimilation for non-white migrants. Moreover, I will illustrate how these representations have rested upon and thus reproduce, the ranking of non Anglo-Celtic migrants into a hierarchy of racial desirability based on their potential to assimilate culturally to white norms. In conclusion, it will demonstrates how this work of ranking is not new but symptomatic of the continued denial of the collective subjectivity of Aboriginal populations and their sovereignty.

Australia at the End of the Twentieth Century: "Asianise or Perish"[3]

On the occasion of the Tiananmen Square uprising in May 1989, 26,000 applications of Chinese nationals to come to study in Australia were put on hold for the fear that they could use their student visa as a means to obtain political asylum in Australia (Industry Commissions, 1991, p. 51).[4] This decision led to the financial collapse of many schools and colleges offering courses such as English as a second language and business alongside diplomatic tensions between the Australian government and the Government of Popular Republic of China. This crisis also severely damaged the reputation of the newborn export industry of international education of Australia. To rescue this reputation, the then Minister of Education launched a new educational policy in 1992. Popularly

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[2] In his unpublished thesis, Eugene Sebastian argues that international students had succeeded in obtaining educational policy concessions by adopting and reinterpreting government language of liberalisation. After a few years of modestly successful mobilisation and campaigning, international students' collective actions began to be grounded on their increased economic importance to Australia rather than on the political and universal rights to education. For further details see: Sebastian (2009).

[3] Quote borrowed from Ang (1999).

[4] At the time, international students had to leave Australia to apply for permanent residency but they could request a *change of status*. Change of status meant the possibility for them, like any other holders of temporary visas, to obtain permanent residency without leaving the country if they satisfied the requirement of exceptional circumstances, e.g. marriage to an Australian citizen or relevance of their professional skills to the labour needs of Australia. For further information on this practice in the 1980s, see: Secretariat to the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies (1987).

known as the policy of internationalisation, this new policy aimed to counter the "overseas criticism that Australia's approach was too narrowly commercial with insufficient recognition of student needs and of the benefit of international education" (Beazley, 1992, p. 5).

International reputation aside, the new educational policy was also part and parcel of the Hawke-Keating Governments' agenda to reshape "social identities and categories" of Australia in line with the economic objective of strengthening, once again, its position in Asia (Johnson, 1996, pp. 9-15; Stratton, 1998, pp. 200-201). On a discursive level, this agenda was inducted by articulating the value of cultural pluralism, then characterising the policy of multiculturalism, within the new neoliberal state priority of pursuing economic efficiency and global competitiveness. On a practical level, it led to the enactment of the 1992 policy of productive diversity, which sought to encourage Australian firms to capitalise on the cultural and linguistic diversity of their workforce to secure "increased innovation and creativity, employee retention, increased understanding of diverse consumer markets and an enhanced community profile" (Pyke, 2005, p. 2).[5]

Cultural and linguistic diversity were therefore represented more as an economic strength of the nation than as a threat to its social unity. In line with this representation, the policy of internationalisation constituted an attempt to acknowledge the cultural differences of international students. It prompted educational institutions to enlarge their programs of student and staff exchange (from Australia to other countries) and introduce "courses and teaching methods [that are] more internationally competitive through links with business and through agreements with overseas governments and educational institutions" (Beazley, 1992, p. 1). Yet, as Fazal Rizvi and Lucas Walsh argue, this attempt was destined to be ineffective in that it held cultural differences as monolithic and fixed cultural formations addable to pre-existing educational and organisational programs rather than as the results of ordinary pedagogical and administrative discursive practices which systematically privilege certain values, competencies and traditions of knowledge while marginalising others (1998, p. 9).[6] By refusing to acknowledge that cultural differences and identities are the historical product of "educational discourse structures" which seek to "normalise and legitimate certain existing patterns of power relations" (p. 9), the new educational policy merely contributed to the reproduction rather than reformation of the conditions of academic exclusion and failure of international students in Australia. As Rizvi and Walsh point out,

> Favoured ways of representing, speaking and acting, as well as favoured conceptions of knowledge and skills, are the cultural capital of such educational discourse structures which govern and control students' engagement with the curriculum. Indeed *the success of students often depends on the extent to which they can orient themselves to the dominant group's educational discourse*. Those

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[5] For further details on the concept of productive diversity and its employment in Australia see: Migliorino, Miltenyi & Robertson (1994) and Cope & Kalantzis (1997).
[6] In the context of their article "Difference, globalisation and the internationalisation of curriculum", the authors refer to the conceptual distinction between diversity and difference by citing Homi Bhabha's position with regard to the limits of the liberal concept of diversity. For further details on the critique of the concept of cultural diversity, see: Bhabha (2006).

who either do not understand or resist the dominant discourse become the failures of a system unsympathetic to difference. Some become excluded entirely. (pp. 9-10, emphasis added)

As anticipated earlier, international education was first introduced in Australia as a form of humanitarianism, for which Australia was accepting the 'burden' of helping its neighbouring countries via the bestowment of Western knowledge and skills. As Burke observes, the international representation of Australia as authoritative "educator" of the Asia-Pacific region was complemented in local metropolitan and rural newspapers with the one of white-Australian citizens as responsible parents of Colombo Plan students (2006, p. 339).[7] Conversely construed as "surrogate children", the students coming to study and live in Australia were depicted in the same fora as an undifferentiated group of grateful, passive and easily impressionable recipients of aid (pp. 339-346). These depictions bespeak of the long-standing Australian orientalist tradition of representing Asian nations and their populations monolithically as a passive and homogenous object of Western knowledge and intervention (see Broinowski, 1982). Orientalism is here understood as a symbolic order and set of perceptual practices that define the contours of the subjectivity of the 'oriental' other in such a way that encounters between 'Asian' students and their 'hosts' were guaranteed to occur under the auspices of an "uneven exchange" (Laforteza, 2007, p. 9). It is no coincidence that, so infantilised, the cultural heritages and knowledge traditions of Colombo Plan students were at the best represented as a matter of "anthropological curiosity" (Burke, 2006, pp. 340-341). The students thus were expected to adjust to the "Australian way of life" without any reciprocity of knowledge exchange (pp. 344-346).

This expectation signals the passage from a total exclusion of 'Asians' from the territorial and cultural borders of Australia to a temporary inclusion of them provided they adapted to the Australian mainstream culture. According to Jon Stratton, this possibility had emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War as a result of race being reconceptualised from a signifier of biological to cultural differences (1998, pp. 43-53). This redefinition can be also linked to Ghassan Hage's theorisation of whiteness as a form of cultural capital which migrants can accumulate through assimilation (1998). This expectation hence suggests that a partial inclusion of 'Asian' students in Australia had become possible provided that they deployed their education within the 'Australian way of life' as a means of minimising their physical racial visibility. In this sense, the depiction of Asian

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[7] Contrary to the public emphasis on the humanitarian nature of the program, international students were always partly or completely privately funded. The program encompassed two types of international students: those who were entirely sponsored by the Australian Government, and those who were privately funded but paid reduced fees. Because both groups were allowed to enter and study in Australia to improve the living conditions of their countries of origin, they were generally both considered recipients of Australian aid. In any case, the number of private students who came to study in Australia under the Colombo Plan was far bigger than the number of government-sponsored students. These students were predominantly ethnic Chinese from Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong and were mostly enrolled in secondary schools and universities. For further details on this distinction, see: Nesdale, Simkin, Sang, Burke & Fraser (1995) and Megarrity (2005).

students as "surrogate children" stands for the intersection of orientalism with whiteness, hence their reciprocal specification, in a historical time where blunt state racist exclusionary practices had become unacceptable internationally (see Winant, 2004).

Taking Rizvi and Walsh's reflections on the limits of the new educational policy of internationalisation into consideration, it becomes relevant then to investigate how the orientalist legacy of the representation of 'Asian' international students as "surrogate children" has affected the way in which their cultural differences have been construed more recently within discourses regarding their pedagogy and administration. To do so, the next section will analyse the academic discourse of support services for international students, which became prominent during the transition from exclusion to political and economic validation of cultural diversity which characterised the educational policy of internationalisation outlined above.

Asian International Students and the Australian Western Will to Mix

In the years following the phasing out of the Overseas Student Plan, The International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges Ltd (IDP) began to organise workshops on international education to provide a platform for discussing "the challenges and the problems posed by the influx of full-fee students" (Williams, 1989, p. x).[8] As a result of one of these workshops, international education scholars and administrators were invited to submit papers for a collection titled *Overseas Students: Policy and Practice*. Edited by a former vice-chancellor of the University of Sydney, Sir Bruce Williams, this collection epitomises Australian universities' institutional response to the "challenges" posed by overseas students in terms of academic performance and learning style. In this regard, it is worth examining Bryan Burke's account of the problems and difficulties that international students were generally supposed to experience as they came to study in Australia (1989, pp. 73-86).

At the time of the publication of this collection, Burke was the coordinator of the International Student Centre of the University of New South Wales, as well as the author of several publications (1986, 1988) regarding "various aspects of the post-arrival experiences of overseas students, not least, academic adjustment and performance" (Jones, 1989, p.40). From this perspective, his account of the "difficulties commonly experienced by overseas students in Australia" (Burke, 1989, p. 73) is particularly illustrative of the way in which the representation of 'Asian' students as subjects in need of the supervision of white Australians came to be incorporated into the new neoliberal ethos of competitive economic efficiency by being re-articulated into the language of international students' "needs" and "support services".

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[8] The International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges Ltd (IDP) is still active, and it is an organisation that formally represents and provides services for all public universities and private educational institutions subscribed to it. For further information on this organisation, see the IDP website: http://www.australia.idp.com/about_us/about_idp_australia.aspx

In his paper "Support Services for Overseas Students", Burke examines both "policy and practical issues" involved in the provision of such services by discussing in detail two sets of problems deemed to be specific to international students: lack of meaningful interactions with domestic students and academic adjustment (1989, p. 73). In discussing the first set of problems, Burke states that this is an issue faced in general by all students going to study overseas:

> The failure of visiting students to establish friendship with their host has been widely documented for foreign students in both Western and Asian countries. Visiting students not only associate almost exclusively with fellow nationals, but their close relationships are generally limited to their compatriots; relationship with host nationals tend to be restricted to formal and utilitarian contracts. (1989, p. 77)

The use of neutral adjectives such as foreigner and visiting seems to suggest that Burke approaches Asian and Western students as equals. Allegedly, both groups of students tend to miss the opportunity of establishing meaningful relationships with their hosts as a defensive mechanism employed to avoid re-adaptation difficulties upon their return home (Burke, 1989, p. 78). Nonetheless, this initial appearance of equality is immediately contradicted by a following passage in which Burke comments on the failure of visiting students to meet the objective of "developing mutual understanding and fostering good relations" between countries:

> In discussing international education programs, it is generally taken for granted that studying in another country is an effective way of developing mutual understanding and fostering good relations. However these values may be held more strongly by program planners and administrators than by the student participants. (1989, p. 78)

In explaining the cause of such a failure, the author distinguishes abruptly between Asian and Western students:

> Students from Asian countries tend to have a predominantly pragmatic view of their educational experience, seeing it primarily as a way to obtain a valuable qualification, improve their English proficiency, and gain some understanding of Western ways. By contrast, exchange students or study abroad students from Western countries typically seek interaction with the locals and want to develop greater awareness of the host culture. (Burke, 1989, p. 78)

Once again, an orientalist conceptualisation of cultural differences is employed to rationalise the lack of meaningful relationships between Australian 'guests' and 'hosts'. According to this conceptualisation, 'Asians'' cultural orientation to education is already known to the West and congruently reducible to a prescriptive explanation: 'Asian' students' indifference to genuine cultural exchange. It is obvious that this reductive explanation allows Burke to ignore the historical marginalisation of non-Western traditions of knowledges in Australian educational institutions. It is less evident that this explanation enables the author to displace successfully the responsibility of forming meaningful social relationships from Australian educational institutions and students to international students. This displacement takes place through a few metonymic slides. The first metonymic slide occurs when Burke equates an alleged Western will to interact with, and learn from, other cultures to the Australian international

education programs' planners and administrators' by simply indicating that visiting 'Western' students are "typically" willing to interact with host nationals and cultures. As a result of this first slide, both Australian educational institutions and students are uniformly excused from any responsibility just for being 'Western', hence culturally determined to establish meaningful relationships with their international counterparts. Conversely, the second metonymic slide occurs when Burke associates the failure of visiting students to establish meaningful relationships with their hosts with the purported 'Asian' pragmatic attitude mentioned above. Because of this attitude, 'Asian' students are indifferent to learning about Western culture and are thus responsible for frustrating the Western will to know and mix with other cultures as this is represented and embodied by both Australian educational programs' planners and administrators and students.

The metonymic slides from Western to Australian and from international to Asian are even more evident when the author discusses the second set of problems affecting international students: academic adjustment. In discussing this set of problems, Burke commences by stating that many scholars agree on the fact that a lack of English proficiency negatively affects the academic performance of international students (1989, p. 79). Drawing on Ballard's findings (1980), Burke reports that overseas students are commonly disadvantaged by an inadequate level of English proficiency in both academic writing and participation in class discussion. Burke also argues that overseas students are furthermore disadvantaged by their cultural reticence to question the authority of their teachers (1989, p. 79). Moreover, in further discussing the learning difficulties faced by international students in Australia, he writes:

> The language and communication problems of overseas students may be further compounded by different learning styles and *inefficient* approaches to study … Overseas students from countries with *distinctively different cultures* need to be alerted to some of the new learning situations to which they will be exposed in tertiary study. They need to develop listening and note-taking skills to cope with lectures, to understand and be able to use the library system, to learn more *effective* and *efficient* reading techniques, to learn how to structure essays, reports and other written assignments, to prepare for various forms of assessment and to understand laboratory instructions and procedures. (Burke, 1989, p. 81, emphasis added)

In this passage, the author slides from learning styles and traditions to approaches, skills, techniques, instructions and procedures. The slide from one set of concepts to another is not devoid of consequences. Whereas learning styles, traditions, and cultures are qualified as being either different or new, international students' learning practices and skills are consistently described as being either deficient or ineffective. From a conceptual point of view, styles and traditions of learning cannot be completely reduced to a host of skills and practices. Differences between epistemic systems cannot be translated exclusively in terms of effective ways of reading, taking notes or following instructions. In Burke's account, it is precisely the need for translation that is missing in that differences between styles of learning are conceived as lacks. As such, cultural differences do not need to be translated or mutually accommodated but must be overcome.

Yet in defining international students' countries of origin as characterised by "distinctively different cultures", Burke appears to be as inclusive as possible. In effect, all the cultures in the world could be understood as being distinctively different and, hence, have idiosyncratic traditions of learning and knowledge productions. However, it is sufficient to go back a few pages to notice how the author already narrowed the range of possibilities down to only one option: "Differences in the style and traditions of learning between *Western* and *Asian* countries frequently cause difficulty. Overseas students often find it difficult *to master* critical analysis, patterns of arguments and principles of relevance" (Burke, 1989, p. 75, emphasis added).

The slide from Australian to Western, and from international to Asian, is thus accomplished and so is the understanding of their difficulties within an orientalist conceptualisation of their cultural differences. They are in fact equalised to each other and reduced accordingly to a monolithic block of values imagined as oppositional to Australian educational and cultural ones. Positioned as bearers of a set of negotiable lacks, Asian international students can therefore, at the best, aspire to acquire those skills which have made Western traditions of knowledge universal: "critical analysis", "patterns of arguments" and "principles of relevance". It is not by any chance that Rizvi and Walsh have emphasised that only those international students who manage the expectation of unilateral cultural adaptation that are deemed successful (1998, pp. 9-10).

"Asian" International Students, Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Onto-Pathology of White Australian Subjectivity

At this stage of the analysis, it seems obvious to conclude that international students, at least until the Hawke-Keating Governments, were irrevocably understood as being 'Asian' and, as such, discursively positioned as being the irreducible other of their domestic counterparts. This conclusion is partially correct in that Burke's understanding of Australia domestic students is not as homogenous as it appears to be. Reading through his paper it is possible to observe that not all domestic students are understood as being equally equipped with "effective" and "efficient" learning techniques and practices. To elaborate, this section will focus on some marginal comments that the author provides with regard to domestic students. For instance, at the beginning of the "Support Services for Overseas Students" paper, Burke states that international and local students negotiate similar 'personal' problems in transitioning from secondary to tertiary studies. These problems are nonetheless aggravated for international students by their status as foreigner and full-fee payer students (1989, pp. 73-74). This opening contrast hence seems to reinforce the impression that Burke conceives of international and domestic students as two groups culturally irreducible to each other. Yet, his parsing of the specific needs of international students with respect to differences within the domestic student cohort reveals a complexity to the seeming domestic/ international student binary initially set up.

> Although overseas students confront similar problems of personal development, and experience many of the difficulties encountered by local students, there are obvious differences. These need to be given special attention if overseas students' academic progress and personal development is to be maximised and disruption kept to a minimum. (Of course the same applies to other groups entering our

> institutions with "special" needs or a different background such as Aborigines and migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds). (p. 73)

As the passage in brackets shows quite clearly, not all domestic students are conceived as being the same. This second category is indeed multiple. It comprises both students with "special needs" and "different background". The author does not specify what he means for "special needs". Nonetheless, we can safely assume that he refers to students who are differently abled and to students who come from impoverished socio-economic backgrounds. Likewise, he does not clarify what he means for "migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds". It is not clear whether the migrants he refers to are first generation migrants or their descendants, whether former British colonies such as India and Singapore count as an English speaking background or not. Fortunately, the author clarifies these ambiguities when, later on, in the same paper, he states that a university staff trained to "be sensitive to cultural differences in traditions, values, and expectations" of international students would be equally effective for addressing the difficulties faced by local students coming "from a non Anglo-Celtic background" (pp. 76–77). Clarifications like this one reveal how Burke ambiguously oscillates from indiscriminately contrasting the experience of international students against domestic students to selectively comparing their academic difficulties to those supposedly faced by local students who do not have an Anglo-Celtic background: Aborigines and non-white migrants. This oscillation, in turn, does the work of further defining the Australian academic tradition of knowledge as being not just Western but specifically Anglo-Celtic. This delimitation is not coincidental but symptomatic of the history of race relations in Australia starting from its invasion.

As Stratton argues, the category itself of Anglo-Celtic can be regarded as the result of such history.[9] In spite of being an historical fiction, this category has represented what is still understood as being the dominant culture in Australia and, as such, employed to divide the Australian population into whites and ethnics during and after the adoption of the policy of multiculturalism (Stratton, 1998, pp. 9-20). Elsewhere, Stratton also defines whiteness as "a constructed category, the meaning, and the content, of which have both varied considerably over time" (1999, p. 171). In line with Rizvi and Walsh's understanding of cultural differences and identities, this definition aptly emphasises how whiteness itself is the historical product of economic, cultural and social relations. At the same time, Stratton's dichotomic distinction of the Australian population into white and ethnic overlooks the multiplicity of ways in which diverse national groups have been and continue to be differently racialised and positioned within and without the geographical and socio-cultural borders of Australia. From this perspective, Hage's work on whiteness might assist us in understanding how non-white migrants, whether temporary or permanent, are not conceived by the

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[9] Stratton prefers to use the category Anglo-Celtic to emphasise the later inclusion of the Irish into Australian definitions of whiteness in contrast to the original identification of whiteness solely with Britishness. The inclusion of the Irish marked an important shift in the history of the Australian Federation in that it furthered the distance that Australia, as a nation, had taken from the English 'Motherland'. For further details, see also: Stratton (1999, 2004).

state homogeneously and hence require different levels of assimilation labour (1998, pp. 53-67).[10]

Hage's approach to whiteness is more focused on the ways in which it is used in everyday life to determine national belonging than the historical one of Stratton. In light of this approach, Hage notices how whiteness can be considered as a loose array of cultural values, practices and physical attributes sanctioned as national (1998, p. 53). As mentioned above, he conceptualises whiteness as a form of cultural capital that non-white migrants can accumulate over time through assimilation (p. 54). Yet, as he highlights, the cultural capitals which migrants either bring with them or are born with in Australia are not the same but a priori assessed as being more or less assimilabile to an ideal Anglo-Celtic citizen. As a consequence, some migrant groups will always be regarded as being more foreign than others regardless the length of their stay or lineage in Australia (pp. 56-57). Most importantly, he emphasises how these same migrant groups will always be reminded that they are "like White Australians" instead of being "naturally White Australians" (p. 61). For Hage, it is this distinction which enables white Australians to maintain a position of dominance in the racially discursive field of the nation. Because of it, they are the only ones who can claim to naturally possess all the cultural qualities necessary to govern any other in the best interest of all. He understands Australian national identity then as a field of power where the Anglo-Celtic group has to struggle to "impose a specific national order in which they have a dominant position" (p. 65). This national order is, in turn, an idealised representation of the position of white Australians in the field of the nation and, as such, it is defined by Hage as an expression of a fantasy of white supremacy (p. 18).

From Hage's perspective on whiteness, we can begin to understand why Burke aligns international students with domestic students having a "different background". If we consider Australian academic traditions of knowledge as a form of naturalised national cultural capital we could then understand how the dominant group has to position both international and non-white domestic students as subjects who need to accumulate Western learning skills to be considered like Anglo-Celtic students. Yet, it still remains to explain why Burke represents Asian students' academic capital not only as "distinctively different" from the Australian one but also as "ineffective" and "inefficient". The consistent use of these adjectives to describe 'Asian' students' knowledge and learning practices betrays a moralising judgment of inferiority. Understandably, Hage's model of whiteness, focused as it is on nationalistic practices of spatial management, exclusion and inclusion, does not say much about how cultural

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[10] Most recently, Stratton has complicated his distinction of the Australian population into white and ethnic by applying the concept of "honorary whiteness" to 'Asian' international students to argue that their increased presence in the upper and middle class does not undermine but further consolidate white hegemony in Australia. He argues so by showing how the bestowment of "honorary whiteness" is always premised on the acceptance of core Australian values by 'Asian' professionals and hence their 'white' status is conditional. Yet, he does not examine the discursive mechanisms through which their original cultural capital is rendered as non-Australian or less than Australian in the first place. In this sense, Ghassan Hage's conceptualisation of whiteness is more pertinent to grasp the nuances of racial identity and cultural stratification in Australia. For further details on the concept of honorary whiteness and its application to 'Asian' professionals, see: Stratton (2009).

capitals deemed different from the national one are assessed by Australians in terms of value, and whether they are ranked accordingly. From this perspective, Suvendrini Perera's (2005) work on whiteness in Australia may be more suitable to fully understand the consequences of the positioning of international students as 'Asian'.

In her article "Who will I become? The multiple formations of Australian whiteness", Perera unpacks the construct of Australian whiteness to retrieve the multiplicity of racial groups existing in Australia before and after the country became a Federated nation-state in 1901 and shed light on how all these groups were differently positioned within a "racialised scale of desirability for non-white labour that includes Aboriginal and Islander people as well as Chinese, Kanak and Indian workers" (2005, pp. 31-32). She contends that in Australia whiteness "was manifested as a palpable, material and eminently quantifiable category against which those to be excluded were measured, rather than one that has functioned as an implicit structuring presence" (p. 31). Most importantly, she writes:

> It is important to note that the definition and the 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 [Aboriginal blackness]. 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. (p. 31)

Perera's definition of Australian whiteness as an identity category which content and value was "derived and asserted" in relation to a multiplicity of racial groups helps us to understand how the positioning of international students as 'Asians' not only amounts to a unilateral expectation of cultural adaptation but also functions as a measure of the value attached to their contribution to Australian universities.

Taking Hage's and Perera's definitions of whiteness together, it is then possible to conclude that the iterative depiction of international students' cultural differences in orientalist terms has served two main purposes with regard to their inclusion in Australian educational institutions and broader society. Firstly, it has worked as a mean to devalue their cultural capitals as well as an injunction to convert these capitals into more recognisable practices and techniques of learning. Secondly, it has contributed to position international students within a transforming hierarchy of racialised positions in which domestic students, like migrants in general, are already distinguished and differently valued in relation to students with an Anglo-Celtic background. Yet, it remains to explain how white Australians have managed to acquire, and maintain throughout time, the capacity to establish themselves as the yardstick against which to measure and differently rank the cultural desirability of any other racial group.

In this regard, Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos' work on the ontological conditions characterising white-Australians' relation to the land assist us in digging into their self-positioning as dominant alongside unravelling the deep-seated effects of the violent dispossession of Aboriginal people on contemporary relations between white and non-white migrants (2004, pp. 32-47). On the one hand, for these authors, Australians as members of a Western liberal order are encouraged to relate to each other as property owning subjects.

On the other hand, Aboriginal people have been denied this kind of subjectivity because of their continued dispossession. As a consequence, Aboriginal collective subjectivity has been rendered as non-Australian (p. 33). Nevertheless, white Australians "need to be recognised as rightful owners" of the land in order to "exercise orderly possession and control" over it (p. 33). Because of their occupation, white Australians cannot expect this recognition to come from the same people they have dispossessed. According to the authors, this paradox has engendered, and perpetuated over time, an ontological condition of anxiety, which they define aptly as "the onto-pathology of white Australian subjectivity" (p. 33). Historically, Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos argue, this recognition has come instead from a more "suitable 'other'", for example Southern European migrants, who they define as "white-non-white" or as "white-but-non-white enough" (p. 32). According to the authors, these migrants have been positioned as "the perpetual foreigner within the Australian state" to legitimise the authority of white Australians over the land and thus alleviate their anxiety (p. 32). In exchange of this recognition, Southern European migrants have been allowed to be acknowledged with a "white property-owning subjectivity with a not white-cultural identity" so that they can participate "in the social network of commodity circulation" (2004, pp. 45-46) but still depend on the white benevolent permission to stay in Australia.[11]

This conclusion strongly resonates with Laforteza's reflections on the trope of the 'White Man's burden' discussed above with regard to the Colombo Plan. Like her, Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos highlight the connection existing between benevolence and the anxieties surrounding white settlers' foundational claim for sovereignty in Australia (Laforteza, 2007, p. 3). This resonance, in turn, has the merit of further elucidating how orientalist descriptions of international students have intersected with ever-changing understandings of whiteness to carve out a space for them in the Australian educational institutions and broader society as imagined by the dominant white group. Moreover, Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos' theorisation of the onto-pathology of white Australian subjectivity allows us to appreciate fully the distinctions that Burke draws within the category of domestic students with a "different background" between "Aborigines" and "migrants from a non-English speaking background" (1989, p. 73). It is because of the continued rendering of Aboriginal knowledges as non-Australian and the devaluation of non-Anglo-Celtic migrants' epistemic traditions

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[11] The authors also claim: "by recognizing white authority, the Southern European become fully complicit in the ongoing violent dispossession of the Indigenous people" (2004, p. 46). Similarly, Perera, writing on "sacred ignorance" and how this is cherished and reproduced by institutions, states: "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, system of colonisation. Not even my own experience of colonisation, on multiple levels, had alerted me to this" (2005, p. 33, original emphasis). As I myself was a temporary Southern Italian migrant in Australia, these two passages had informed my own positioning as an active participant in the ongoing dispossession of Aboriginal populations' sovereignty and land, which thus compelled me into questioning the academic division of labour existing between non-white/ white migrants' relations and Aboriginal populations/ white migrants' relations studies.

that white Australians have managed to position themselves as the exclusive authoritative source of Western knowledge in the Asia-Pacific region.

Conclusion

This article addresses the failure of the educational policy of internationalisation to tackle the cultural differences of international students in light of the history of race relations in Australia. It shows how this failure is not coincidental but the result of the investment that white Australians have into the dispossession of Aboriginal populations' sovereignty and devaluation of those cultural capitals which do not resemble the dominant Anglo-Celtic linguistic and cultural values. In so doing, this article gestures towards the necessity of establishing alliances between international students, non-white migrants and Aboriginal people in order to question the epistemological assumptions underpinning Australian universities and their authority overseas. If these alliances are established, international students in Australia will be more likely to escape the stigma of epistemic inferiority and enjoy equality beyond any tokenistic appreciation of their diversity.

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GENERAL ISSUE

Whiteness Attacked, Whiteness Defended: White South African Rhetorics of Race in *JULUKA* Newsletter

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This essay explores the rhetorical strategies employed when whiteness is challenged, questioned, or attacked and when whiteness is defended. It uses as a basis letters to the editor of a North American-based South African newsletter, JULUKA*. The analysis suggests that when whiteness is critiqued, several rhetorical manoeuvres emerge—retaliatory rhetorical attacks, defensive rhetorical posturing, and rhetorical reversing/shifting of the critique. In* JULUKA*, these rhetorical responses, ultimately, limit the newsletter's ability to be, consistently, what it desires—a publication marked by a genuinely diverse exchange of ideas. By extension, one might argue that predominantly white spaces desirous of diversity and dialogue, particularly published venues, require constructive interventions and strategies to achieve such an environment.*

Keywords: whiteness, rhetorical strategies, South African, expatriate discourse, defensiveness

When *JULUKA*, the bi-monthly South African newsletter based in the United States of America, began in August/September 1991, it was intended to "inform … investigate … entertain … encounter, charm … and challenge" (Matheson & Kekana, 1991, p. 2). It was articulated as a publication that would reflect South Africa's "diverse cultural heritage" and would be a "forum for the exchange of ideas" (p. 2). After a decade, the newsletter's website described *JULUKA*, in part, as intending to help South Africans adjust to emigration/immigration within the United States and as providing a "forum for networking and the exchange of ideas and opinions" (*JULUKA*, 2001). The exchange of ideas occurs via articles, guest editorials, but most interactively via Mail Bag, the 'letter to the editor' feature. Unfortunately, these goals of diversity and exchange of ideas find difficulty coming to fruition in the newsletter, especially in Mail Bag, and particularly in the cases I discuss below, due to the rhetorical responses of letter writers when addressing whiteness. Using the newsletter's Mail Bag as a case

study, this paper explores the emergent rhetorical strategies that ensue when whiteness is challenged or attacked and when whiteness is defended, in order to understand how whiteness is discursively engaged in such situations, especially within a South African context. In these Mail Bag contexts, letter writers mention race explicitly, a significant divergence from much white South African rhetoric about race, which employs implicit, coded rhetoric.

This analysis concerns over 25 (out of nearly 140) letters to the editor in 23 *JULUKA* issues from April/May 1999 to August/September 2003. The letters I chose to examine were those in which whiteness was clearly a subject or point of contention. My method of analysis is rooted in an attention to emergent discourses and ideologies of race, whiteness, and nationality, and is informed by a cultural-rhetorical studies approach. I focus on three cases when whiteness is critiqued/defended and work through the varied responses of letter writers to demonstrate the complex and collective rhetorical responses related to whiteness' critique/defence. Ultimately, I contend that the responses can be roughly categorised as retaliatory rhetorical attacks, defensive rhetorical posturing, and rhetorical reversing/shifting of the critique. My analysis also helps to further demonstrate the relationship between language/rhetoric/discourse and power. It acknowledges rhetoric's ability to implicitly call forth history and to evoke hateful, injurious, and racist contexts (Butler, 1997). It understands that language exhibits ideology (Hall, 2003; McGee, 1980). It recognises, with Foucault (1980), that discourse has the power and ability to influence, to categorise, to normalise, and to manufacture power relations.

Moreover, these letters give some insight into how white South African expatriate rhetorics take shape when whiteness is critiqued and defended in this specific context of a post-apartheid, post-Mandela period. I chose this publication as a site of examination because of its longevity, reader-professed significance, and its uniqueness as a publication (in that few others like it existed during this period of time). The late 1990s, early 2000s were a key moment of transition for South Africa given that it was the beginning tenure of a new black President/leadership after Mandela's presidency. Many saw Mandela as a reconciliatory first black President and a respected, legendary figure in the South African anti-apartheid struggle. At the same time, white South Africans were continuing to leave the country to migrate elsewhere. With the respect to the newsletter, my analysis took place at the end of the long-standing liberal editor's tenure and just before this black and white newsletter was sold and developed into a full-colour glossy magazine (in early 2004).

In this essay, I first articulate the relationship of South African whiteness to that of the United States. Next, I offer a summary of research relevant to whiteness being attacked and defended. I then highlight the rhetorical responses in *JULUKA*'s Mail Bag when whiteness is critiqued and protected, before concluding the essay.

South African Whiteness in the United States

South African whiteness cannot be understood without acknowledging its historic relation to apartheid and racism. It is marked by various cultural experiences in part due to the differences and tensions among many English- and Afrikaans-

speaking whites. Steyn (1998) has discussed the "colonial imagination" and its binary approach to viewing Europeans (whiteness) and Africans (blackness), which also informs many white South Africans' narratives of racial identities regardless of their ethnic identifications (see Steyn, 1999, 2001). She comments on white fears, white awareness of "black violence," and the societal repositioning of whiteness in the new South Africa that has varying consequences for white identity (1999). Other scholars note that many South African whites feel they have lost certain privileges that they once had (Farred, 1997; Goodwin & Schiff, 1995; Vestergaard, 2001; Ndebele in West, 2010). Farred (1997, p. 73) asserts that white South Africans can no longer find "physical and mental sanctuary" in post-apartheid South Africa due largely to their "sense of place [being] endangered in real, ideological, and metaphorical terms." This experience seems to manifest itself, at least in part, in what Steyn (2005) describes as "white talk," which is intended to maintain privilege, preserve the inherited white status quo, to slow the transition towards democracy and multiculturalism, and to maintain centredness via exclusionary strategies and tactics and negative portrayals of the 'other.' There are distinctions to be made between Afrikaans- and English-speaking white identities, experiences, and rhetorics (Goodwin & Schiff, 1995; Steyn, 2004). Yet, within the United States, and particularly when the maintenance of South African national identity is the focus, these differences are not always articulated.

Steyn (2004) points out that South African whites, unlike most United States whites, have always experienced their whiteness and white privilege as visible given that South Africa's specific political and historical factors have contributed to white South Africans knowing they were racialised, though their privilege was assumed as natural. She suggests that white South Africans held to such a narrative in part because of the perceived tenuous insecurity of whiteness in South Africa. In the new South Africa, white political power became significantly limited (though economic and cultural power were still strong) and white identity was in crisis. Steyn (2005, p. 122) argues, thus, that white folks require "new narratives to explain who they are, what they are doing in Africa, and what their relationship is to the indigenous people and to the continent." When white South Africans move to the United States, where white political power is intact and where there is an ongoing history of Native American dispossession (Moreton-Robinson, 2008), it is important to acknowledge and analyse how white South Africans conceive of their racialisation and the security of their whiteness and how often they appeal to old and/or new narratives.

Scholars have argued that among white South Africans (both in South Africa and the United States) a shared sense of fear, be it the traditional fear of "swart gevaar" (black danger or black peril) or the fear of reverse discrimination shapes white identity (Schutte, 1995; Steyn, 2001). There are also very pronounced constructions of white victimisation (Crapanzano, 1985; Goodwin & Schiff, 1995; Schutte, 1995; Steyn, 2001; van Rooyen, 2000) that South African whites draw upon to rhetorically craft themselves as the victims of black violence (Schutte, 1995; Steyn, 1999; van Rooyen, 2000), often with the implication that violence is inherent to blackness (see Schönfeldt-Aultman, 2009, 2014a, 2014b). These ironic claims of white victimisation from white persons emerging from South African apartheid and choosing residence in a United States grounded in Indigenous dispossession amidst a hiding of that history (Moreton-Robinson, 2008), is not insignificant. In these white rhetorics of national identity, and in my

own argument, blackness functions as a "white epistemological possession" to "displace Indigenous sovereignties and render them invisible" (Moreton-Robinson, 2008, pp. 82-83) in a United States' context.

Thus, the binary, racist discourses of white victimisation/innocence and black violence/crime find an easy fit in the United States due to the logics of white settler colonialism. Even though South Africa and the United States have different histories and different institutional structures of whiteness, the similarities of white privilege allow for similar (functioning of) rhetoric and rhetorical constructions. Moreover, being in a predominantly white space (as opposed to the predominant black space of South Africa) allows white South Africans to blend into whiteness, enabling them to be less consciousness of their being racialised as 'white,' and permitting their rhetorics (e.g., of identity) and rhetorical representations of whiteness and blackness to appear more justifiable, accurate, or true, in large part because of what Frankenberg (1993) refers to as the specific assumptions, value structures, and belief systems that mark 'white' social spaces, spaces such as *JULUKA*'s Mail Bag and many white South African spaces of residence in the United States.

When Whiteness is Attacked—When Whiteness is Defended

While much of the literature on whiteness discussed in this section is concerned with whiteness in the United States, it is still applicable to white South Africans living in the United States because of the overlapping logics of white settler colonialism that inform US and South African rhetorical strategies. When whiteness is directly discussed, questioned, critiqued, challenged or attacked, white folks have a litany of rhetorical strategies from which they draw. These rhetorical arguments and tactics work to protect white authority by invalidating challenges to it (Projansky & Ono, 1999) and by ignoring historical or systemic power relations (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995) and white power and dominance (Dyer, 1988; Frankenberg, 1993). The strategies I reference below are especially called upon when whiteness is attacked or defended.

One of the motivating factors when responding to whiteness being attacked or defended is to avoid being tagged a racist (see Jackson, 2006). The rhetorical strategies involved in such contexts of attack and defence include the denial of racism (van Dijk, 1992; Wise, 2008), the minimising of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Kivel, 2002), creating distance from responsibility (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), making appeals to unintentionality (Johnson, 2006; Kivel, 2002), and employing rhetorics of dismissal (Kendall, 2006), of mitigation (van Dijk, 1992), or denial more generally (Johnson, 2006; Kivel, 2002). Rhetorics of justification are common (Baldwin, 1965/1998; van Dijk, 1992), sometimes with specific appeal to anger and/or fear (Verkuyten, 1998). Other strategies include claims of white virtuousness (Feagin, 2010) or of the "good white" (Johnson, 2006), presentation of the white self positively and of the 'other' negatively (Jackson, 2006; van Dijk, 1992), and blaming the 'other' (Baldwin, 1965/1998; Foster, 2009; Johnson, 2006; Kivel, 2002; McIntyre, 1997; van Dijk, 1992; Verkuyten, 1998).

Scholars have also argued that white folks often articulate rhetorics informed by colour-blindness when discussing numerous socio-cultural or identity issues

(Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 2001). Unfortunately, colour-blind rhetorics often result in professions or demonstrations of ignorance of other realities (McEwen & Steyn, 2013; Verkuyten, 1998; Steyn, 2012), in disregarding of the effects of history (Baldwin, 1965/1998; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; McEwen & Steyn, 2013; Steyn, 2012), in the minimisation of other histories (McIntyre, 1997; McKinney, 2005), in claims that things are better (Johnson, 2006) or in arguments that certain racist activities have ceased (Kivel, 2002). When others seemingly insist on discussing race or continue to challenge whiteness, charges of oversensitivity, exaggeration, or intolerance (van Dijk, 1992) or "sick and tired" rhetorics may emerge (Johnson, 2006).

In defensive situations, white rhetors (e.g., speakers, writers) also make use of evidential story-telling (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; van Dijk, 1992; Verkuyten, 1998), claims for authenticity (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), disclaimers (van Dijk, 1992), and euphemisms (Moon, 1999; Riggs & Due, 2010). Other strategies include redirection of conversation (McIntyre, 1997), redefinition (Kivel, 2002; Verkuyten, 1998), and renaming (Johnson, 2006) of racial injustice. Silence (McIntyre, 1997) and nervous laughter (McIntyre, 1997) are sometimes employed when whites are challenged on their privilege. And, not surprisingly, counter-attacks directed toward the critic of whiteness are not uncommon (Kivel, 2002; van Dijk, 1992).

Finally, though also very prevalent in white defensive posturing, and as I have already indicated above in the specific context of white South Africans, are rhetorics of white victimisation (Frankenberg, 2001; Jackson, 2006; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Kivel, 2002; McIntyre, 1997; McKinney, 2005) or of the innocent victim (Ross, 1997), reverse racism (Frankenberg, 2001; Shohat & Stam, 1994; van Dijk, 1992; Wise, 2008) and anti-affirmative action discourses (Jackson, 2006). There is a long history of the rhetoric of reverse racism that "goes at least as far back as the days of slavery" (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 25). Generally speaking, the rhetoric of white victimisation and disadvantage is prevalent both in the United States (Apple, 1998; Gallagher, 1995; Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe, 1999) and in South Africa (Duster, 2001; Steyn, 2001).

My objective in this essay is to highlight what I believe to be some strategic rhetorical responses when whiteness is critiqued and various rhetorical strategies when whiteness is defended in the context of letters written by readers of a North-American based South African newsletter. These responses, which sometimes work in conjunction with one another, amount to retaliatory rhetorical attacks, defensive rhetorical posturing, and rhetorical reversing/shifting of the critique.

The first rhetorical manoeuvre analysed is defensive rhetorical posturing. This rhetoric is manifested via claims of authenticity, reference to affirmative action unfairness, denial of racism, reference to white victimisation or to the constant attack on whiteness, employment of universalising phrases, and rhetorical reclaiming of the thing critiqued. This rhetorical reclaiming is evidenced via, for instance, praise of and professed patriotism to the United States and congratulatory rhetoric for the individuals critiqued (e.g., praise of white courage, passion, and intelligence).

Retaliatory rhetorical attacks consist primarily of attacking the critic of whiteness more so than the critique of whiteness that is being levelled by a prior letter writer. Among these attacks are charges of smugness, cosiness, racism, ignorance/lack of intelligence, arrogance, hypocrisy, bias, non-productivity, ranting/griping, nonsense-spewing, and assertions of failure to see the reality of the (white) South African experience (namely crime and worrisome life situations). There is also a rhetorical effort to invalidate the critic's personhood and perspective, sometimes by labelling it or relegating it to something not necessarily relevant to the issue at hand.

The third rhetorical manoeuvre analysed is the simple reversal of the critique and shifting the focus of the argument to the 'other' via binary and colonialist discourse, in an effort to demonstrate the writer's perception of the actual situation. These rhetorical reversals include attaching tropes of violence, crime, and inadequacy to black South Africans, as well as claims of blacks' inability to govern and their lack of goodness and commitment to freedom.

Case 1—Highlighting Defensive Rhetorical Posturing

Although infrequent, some letters to *JULUKA* reference their author's whiteness or someone else's blackness. Such attributions of racial identity are typically in response to a perceived or actual challenge to whiteness. Reflecting on white framings of Africa and blackness, as well as on the notion of white fear, a letter in Mail Bag of June/July 1999, from a white South African living in Washington, D.C., argues that "most white South Africans are full of sh*t (sic)—running scared due to their own insecurity and inner fears" (Greenland, 1999a, p. 10). He makes the claim based on a recent visit to South Africa marked by

> racist outbursts from whites from various backgrounds: a self-proclaimed academic/intellectual from Wits; a Durban harbor pilot, and a piece of worthless scum from Madeira—all espousing vile hatred towards Africans. What was evident there was basically the same—insecure whites filled with their own inadequacies, and still claiming their undeniable right to ownership of all the spoils that they were used to under the past regime. (Greenland, 1999a, p. 10)

Apparent in this letter is a homogenising racial construction of "most" white South Africans as racist, insecure, angry, and fearful—across apparent class, education, and gender backgrounds. It challenges the common white South African rhetorics of deterioration and crime by offering an alternative racialised discourse that positions whites and white identity as being the problem, rather than black South Africans or black South African identity. Moreover, this letter positions the author as different from most South African whites, that is as non-racist, thereby constructing a different version of whiteness from the one the author critiques.

Subsequent respondents to this letter challenge the author's self-characterisation. For instance, one letter suggests that his perspective is skewed given his holiday-observations and that white South Africans have "plenty to worry about, believe me" (Sewell, 1999, p. 10). The letter notes that the author's "SA clients of any nationality or color do not have money" and that "there ain't no jobs" for people with "white skin." The letter closes with the retaliatory retort/attack (which also works to discredit Greenland on the basis of

his emigrant status), "Try living here, you cosy, smug little Washington resident, and you'll see what I mean" (Sewell, 1999, p. 10).

White anxiety manifests here through reference to the lack of jobs for white folks. It is justified and defended primarily on grounds of authentic experience or authenticity and an alignment between white working class and the working class of people of (any) colour without specificity of experience. The letter's retort however is arguably class-grounded, as implied in the use of the word "cosy," and the implicit reference to the stereotype of upper class smugness. The respondent also draws on a common, homogenising discourse/narrative that links being white in South Africa to limited employment opportunity (Steyn, 2001) and potential threat to middle/upper class status, which is often argued directly, or as in this case, implied, as a consequence of government-imposed affirmative action policies that benefit blacks. Gallagher (1995), Giroux (1997), and Kincheloe (1999) note similar expressions among whites in the United States regarding white employment and affirmative action, thus providing fertile ground and support for related expatriate white South African rhetorics. However, according to journalist Richard Morin (2004), 2002 South African government statistics suggested that even with "aggressive affirmative action programs, whites still outnumber blacks among top managers by nearly 10 to 1." He continues, "Even among middle managers, whites still outnumber blacks in a country where blacks make up 79 percent of the population, whites are 9.6 percent, mixed race are 8.9 percent and Indian 2.5 percent." Such statistics further suggest that white victimisation in the labour market is rhetorically rooted rather than economically widespread.

Interestingly, this anti-affirmative action discourse, with which some whites identify and which works ideologically to unify whites (Burke, 1950), is also alluded to by a South African letter writer, writing in the same issue as Greenland, and responding to Ridwan Nytagodien's critique of white power and dominance (in a prior issue). The letter writer asks why Africans like Nytagodien are returning to South Africa "in hordes to enjoy the real privileges offered to them by their own" (Smith, 1999, p. 10). Here, the defensive posturing comes through the language (i.e., "hordes") that shifts the focus of critique to the 'other' by implicitly referencing former diasporian South African blacks as an invading mass that profit unjustly and unfairly by the very fact of their "sameness" with government officials. It is not clear if this sameness is necessarily racial or if it may also refer to their shared philosophical or political perspectives, or even their historical experiences. What is clear is the ideological binary framing of all blacks as similar with one another and different from whites, a binary construction numerous scholars have noted about white rhetorics (Kincheloe, 1999; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Projansky & Ono, 1999; Steyn, 1998).

In this case, the binary works to essentialise identities, to discredit black re-investment in South Africa, to suggest favouritism among blacks, while avoiding the white racism/ideologies and racist structures that contributed to earlier black departure and to current white departures. In the larger rhetorical scheme of white South African rhetorics, blacks returning/remaining are characterised as barbaric and criminal "hordes," reinvigorating the fear of the "swart gevaar." Departing whites are conversely described through the religiously connoted term

"exodus," and whites remaining are depicted as victimised by the hordes of black South Africans returning/remaining (see van Rooyen, 2000). The black-white binary construction reinforces colonialist ideology and representation and reiterates white innocence and superiority. Relatedly, whites' racial and other difference from government officials results in a crisis of whiteness (of white class, careers, culture, and safety). This point is an important one when recalling Mercer's (2000) claim that people more intensely and consistently concentrate on identity when it is in crisis. In this case, and in others below, letters defend white identity vigorously because it is perceived as under attack and in need of defence.

Another letter (Bub, 1999, p. 10) responding to Greenland's letter (1999a) constructs Greenland, the aforementioned Washington South African, as an author of "a racist anti-white letter complaining of anti-black racism in SA." Such a construction is a retaliatory act of naming or labelling that functions to minimise and dismiss the legitimacy of Greenland's letter. This same letter of response references the author's (Bub's) own visit to South Africa and his defensive conclusion that "fear (which is felt by both whites and blacks) is a legitimate emotion when faced by rampant violence and an inadequate police force." Thus, the letter employs race and authentic experience as tools of attack to discredit an argument, to re-present white and black identities, and to justify the fear white and black South Africans feel. It also constructs the critic of white "racists" as a racist (an anti-white, white racist, that is). This letter leaves histories, privilege, and power unaddressed, as do other white rhetorics that scholars have studied (Dyer, 1988; Frankenberg, 1993; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). The letter also alludes to the tropes of black violence, black crime, and inadequacy (of black police), thus implying that such violence, crime, and inadequacy are reflective of blackness/black identity. The letter suggests these links when referencing the (newer, predominantly black) police force that many media reports have constructed as untrained, ignorant, inadequate, corrupt, and prisoner-sympathising (see Magardie, 2001; Mawson, 2002; Moore, 2002; Moya, 2003; Nedbank, 2001). Scholars have both acknowledged the role of media in circulating these rhetorics (Gastrow & Shaw, 2001; Shaw & Gastrow, 2001) and made efforts to study crime rates historically and public response to crime (Gastrow & Shaw, 2001), police corruption (Newham, 2000), and police transformation (Gastrow & Shaw, 2001).

In response to these two critiques (by Sewell and Bub on the matter of Greenland's critique of whiteness), the original letter writer pens another letter asking, "how can I, of Anglo Saxon descent, really be seen as a racist anti-white?" (Greenland, 1999b, p. 10). The letter notes the convenient way these aforementioned respondents "refer to everything back home as racist," noting that the

> supposed 'legitimate fear' you speak of is nothing less than the insecurity of a people who never gave the new South Africa the slightest chance of survival, let alone see the reason or need to contribute towards it's (sic) reconstruction and development. (Greenland, 1999b, p. 10)

The letter also states that the author travelled in South Africa "with my eyes wide open to gain a true sense of life about me." One interesting aspect of this letter is the assumption that being white precludes being a "racist anti-white,"

who is racist toward whites. What is intriguing here is the claiming and constructing of white identity to dismiss the possibility of the author's racism against whites, as if prejudiced practice is only possible toward an(other) race and not one's own racial group. This letter may not be engaging in racist rhetoric, but it is certainly critical of whiteness or of white rhetorics. Ironically, it actually appeals to a racist Anglo Saxon heritage to claim lack of racism toward Anglo Saxons. That is, the reference to Anglo Saxon background appeals to, yet fails to fully articulate, the Anglo Saxonist historical, structural, social, and cultural racism (against 'others') to argue that one who is white and benefits from such a system cannot be racist against the other Anglo Saxons—that is, white racism is constructed as occurring only against other races to dismiss the possibility of white intra-racism. The letter also returns to the rhetoric of whites' insecurity and their fear of black governing, suggesting that whites' racism prevents them from contributing to the betterment of South Africa. The letter indirectly counters the earlier claims of authenticity (from Sewell and Bub) with its own defensive appeal to authentic experience, observation, and a more objective "true sense" of the South African situation.

These exchanges demonstrate the "rhetoric of authenticity" (Radhakrishnan, 1996) or the discursive engagement with a "politics of authenticity" in which one draws on authenticity, especially in the one case (Sewell's), "to trump or to close [these] particular … cultural and political debates" (Keith, 2000, p. 521). Obviously, the explicit acknowledgement of whiteness is important in such arguments in order to strategically authenticate one's perspective. What is also evident in these interactions is the emergence and expression of white angst articulated as fear, blame, and/or lack of faith concerning black nature, violence, leadership, and mismanagement which Steyn (1998, p. 111) suggests also grounds the "type of thinking [that] largely motivates the emigration of Whites to countries that are more supportive of White identity" (see also Ballard, 2004; McEwen & Steyn, 2013). A subsequent letter from one of these three speakers in this exchange (Sewell), in fact, expresses the intent to emigrate. The defensive rhetoric and retaliatory attacks in these letters, in large part, work to recuperate and construct a home' for many white South Africans in the United States, a home that is articulated as better than the one from which they emigrated (e.g., due to lack of jobs and violence), yet one in which white identity can be similarly defended and represented ideologically as it was/is in South Africa.

Case 2—Focusing on Retaliatory Rhetorical Attacks

So far I have explained how defensive racial arguments serve a protective function for whiteness via invalidation, ahistoricity, and power-evasiveness. These rhetorical efforts demonstrate that whites resist, refuse, or hesitate to interrogate whiteness (Jackson, 1999). Sometimes, as below, the protection/dismissal of a challenge and the lack of attentiveness to power relations and white dominance occur via retaliatory attack on the writer making a critique. One case that evokes the retaliatory rhetorical manoeuvre is Brody's (2001, p. 10) letter. It responds to the previous issue's reporting of his "guilty as charged" declaration to a survey encouraging whites to recognise how they benefitted from apartheid, as well as comments on "bad South Africans" benefiting from apartheid and staying behind. The letter, which does not reference race, claims that "the ones who benefited the most seem to have stayed because they couldn't make it anywhere else, or they had no incentive to

do so." The letter also states that those who did leave, because of the "benefit of a Western education" (in South Africa) left, and "thanked their lucky stars not to be mired in the decline of the old country." In effect, this statement is an indirect or implied challenge to whiteness. Brody also expresses some concern that the black South African government is isolating "hundreds of thousands of people [i.e. expatriates] willing to do something for them." The next issue of the newsletter (June/July 2001) contains a response in a letter that identifies the author as a woman who is "a white South African living in the US" who accuses Brody of being "full of arrogance" (Morris, 2001, p. 10). The letter continues,

> Let's face it—many white South Africans would not have left if things remained the same. Leaving is not an option for many people and many have made the *courageous* choice to stay. Many have remained because they *feel passionate* about the country and want to be part of it. Their choice to stay has been a hard one. Brody has *little knowledge* of what is really going on in the country and speaks with such authority from his *cosy nest far away*. (Morris, 2001, p. 10, italics added)

This letter not only acknowledges the whiteness of the South Africans that Brody's letter implied but also then defends these white South Africans while applauding their courage and passion for staying. This courage is dependent on and an allusion to the rhetoric of crime and violence that victimises whites. Similar to the earlier letter that commented on white South Africans (Greenland, 1999a), Brody is criticised for being in a "cosy" location far from South Africa. His intelligence is also questioned ("has little knowledge") by this retaliatory rhetoric, not unlike the questioning/disparaging of blacks who lead or who challenge whiteness in other socio-cultural and mediated contexts.

A letter ascribed to a South African couple in the following August/September 2001 issue repeats the retaliatory critique of Brody's intelligence and the defensive lauding of courage and passion of South Africans remaining in the country. This letter claims that Brody "knows so little of what is really going on in his country of birth," that he has the "audacity to speak for all South Africans" and cannot "presume to know or understand the courage it took to consciously decide to remain and help rebuild the country that we love" (Stein, 2001, p. 10). The letter also reverses Brody's critique of white benefits when noting "the comments and criticism of self-righteous and arrogant emigrants who presume to know it all." It continues, "Many such people spent years riding the crest of the wave, stashing money in overseas banks in preparation for their comfortable emigration." Obviously, these responses seek to invalidate what Brody's letter implies about white privilege and whites both remaining in and leaving South Africa by questioning Brody's intelligence, audacity, comprehension, arrogance, class, and commitment to South Africa by broadly invoking white folks' courage and love for South Africa. The responses, however, do not treat in depth the issues to which Brody's letter alludes, namely white power and dominance and the historical, systemic power relations of South Africa. There is, in other words, what Crenshaw (1997) calls a "rhetorical silence" about these things.

(A Special) Case 3—Recognising the Relationships Between and the Repercussions of Rhetorical Reversals, Shifts, Retaliation and Defensiveness

Some of the most aggressive and defensive letters in *JULUKA* were in response to Nytagodien's "Bridging the gap" column. These responses are important to discuss at length because Nytagodien's column was the most consistent, critical, and direct critique of whiteness in *JULUKA*, and one made by a man of colour. One article in particular ("Patriot This!", 2002) resulted in letters in two issues, perhaps due in part to the article's discussion of patriotism post 9/11. The article critiques the "white expats who declare their patriotism and new-found belonging in the United States" (Nytagodien, 2002, p. 9). In the same issue, Jo Gordon's "Culture shock" column (2002, p. 8) addressed Nytagodien's essay, which she titled "We are *not* amused," in response to Nytagodien's statements of being "amused" by such white expats. Some of the letters in the subsequent issue's Mail Bag sided with Gordon or expressed appreciation of her column's critique of Nytagodien, which employs all three of the primary rhetorical manoeuvres I highlight in this essay.

Before examining these examples, it is worth noting that Nytagodien's "Bridging the Gap" column ceased appearing after two articles in which he was especially critical of whiteness (titled, "Whiteness" and "Patriot This!"). In the issue in which his last column ("Patriot This!") appeared, Jo Gordon responded to that column (in her "Culture Shock" column). It is a rare practice to have a response to a feature in the same issue in which it appears, particularly in Nytagodien's case. In the next issue after this occurrence, an editorial appearing in Nytagodien's former space (p. 9) comments on this unusual practice of same issue response, and discusses Nytagodien's column within the context of *JULUKA's* goals and readers. In fact, this practice resulted in Nytagodien's resignation (Matheson, 2003; Nytagodien, 2003). Also interesting is that Jo Gordon's "Culture Shock" column, which sometimes appeared on the same page (or on the opposing/preceding page) and often espoused the typical white ideologies and perspectives Nytagodien critiqued, subsequently sat where Nytagodien's column used to. According to editor Cliff Matheson (2003), this placement was related to layout format. Still, the use of column space and voice communicate here that whiteness recentres itself as dominant and normative when it is marked and critiqued too heavily.

Notably, Gordon's same-issue response to Nytagodien is mostly defensive, referencing whiteness and the "safe haven" the United States provides for expatriate white South Africans while drawing on white victimisation rhetorics and white authenticity claims. She also rhetorically reclaims privilege twice, arguing at one point that the "privilege I enjoy in the US is not 'white privilege' but human privilege" (2002, p. 8). She notes that the United States gives her a "vantage point from which to view both my history and my future with pride and hope." Such statements seem to not only reverse Nytagodien's argument regarding white privilege, patriotism, and ignorance of white South Africans in the United States, but to charge him with hypocrisy through the suggestion that while he "has so much to say about others who have flown the coop," he is not critical about or does not apply the same argument to his own status as a "coop escape" (p. 8). She suggests that his comment that white expatriate South Africans cannot lay claim to South Africa because of their departure is not extended to himself. Her rhetoric, of course, reflects the very denial and ignorance of racial difference and privilege, and ideology of colour-blindness, about which Nytagodien is critical.

The first response to Nytagodien's and Gordon's columns is an atypical one, which points out that Jo Gordon in "her defensive haste to put pen to paper as well as the content of the column … exposes herself in a way that makes his point beautifully" (Gonsenhauser, 2002/2003, p. 10). This letter refuses to articulate a position supportive of Gordon's critique. Moreover, the placement of this letter before the other three pro-Gordon or anti-Nytagodien letters in this Mail Bag, arguably, frames the other letters. That is, this placement may be the liberal-leaning editor's way of encouraging readers to take the other letters with a grain of salt. Or, it may be a placement that sets up the first letter to be later discredited or forgotten. One might also argue that the newsletter itself frames the letters, and thus, works to marginalise the first letter, though this depends on one's interpretation of *JULUKA* as a whole.[1]

The other letters responding to Nytagodien and Gordon use several rhetorical strategies that are representative of white rhetorics when defending whiteness or when whiteness has been challenged. Not unlike the responses to Brody noted above, retaliatory charges of arrogance, cosiness, and lack of intelligence surface in regard to Nytagodien. The letters refer to race, both black and white, at times. There are homogenised appeals to race, charges of hypocrisy and racism, disparagement of blacks or this particular black man, and expressions of praise and patriotism toward the United States.

One letter, which constructs the author as a self-professed "great fan of Jo Gordon's column," who the author sees as "usually so on target with [her] observations," asks, "Who is this Ridwan person anyway?" (Ravden, 2002/2003, p. 10) The letter asks if he is "speaking to the black point of view" but notes that the author cannot determine if Nytagodien is, since she "cannot be sure exactly what it is he is saying." The letter suggests that *JULUKA* "do itself a favor and find someone with something relevant and interesting to say." It then notes that "We are all sick to death of hearing 'everything white' berated from beginning to end—it is over-used and boring. I thought educated people had moved on from there a long time ago." This letter makes a retaliatory attack on Nytagodien by sarcastically asking who he is, suggesting that what he has to say is incomprehensible, irrelevant, and boring (in comparison to Gordon's typical perspectives), and implying that this "educated" person is not so advanced.

Simultaneously, the letter implicates the author's own whiteness and ignorance by not being able to (or refusing to) comprehend Nytagodien's critique or to see its relevance to her. In other words, the author's ignorance gets framed (reversed) as Nytagodien's ignorance or lack of articulation, such that white knowing trumps black knowing, and thus, as Maher and Thompson Tetreault (1997) argue, whiteness seeks to establish its intellectual domination or superiority. The letter also employs universalising phrases of "we are all" and "everything white" not only to obscure, indirectly reference, and/or code whiteness, but also to represent Nytagodien as inaccurately attacking "everything" white. By employing the words, "we are all," the letter assumes that all readers of *JULUKA*, regardless of race, are "tired" of Nytagodien's critiques and thus sets the entire readership against him. There is, thus, a problematic construction of a common "we" that does not mark differences of power and

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[1] I am indebted to Ruth Frankenberg for making this observation, in an early draft of this essay, about the newsletter framing the letters.

simultaneously sets up a binary of a "we" against Nytagodien, the "single dominant Other" (Brah, 1996, p. 184).

The praise of Gordon continues in another letter that calls for "three cheers" for her article and "castigation of Nytagodien's apparent hypocrisy" (Riddell, 2002/2003, p. 10). The letter suggests that Nytagodien's "sole reason for … being in the USA is to lecture Americans about the nonsense that the USA represents freedom, equality and opportunity." The letter, in a retaliatory attack, then argues that Nytagodien "seems to have failed dismally" in this supposed effort, since "during the '90s more than 34-million immigrants made this country their new home." The letter then shifts focus and attempts to disparage black-governed countries and black people when inferring that "countries north of the Limpopo River" are far from "paragons of virtue and freedom" and are not desirable immigration spots. That is, blacks are represented as not being able to govern properly or to be virtuous and do not endorse or value freedom in countries where they have majority-power. The letter states, defensively, that even though the United States has faults, it offers this author the "best opportunity to live my life to the full." The letter concludes with a slap at Nytagodien who, it argues, apparently "accepts US dollars for his 'self-serving parasitism' (to quote him) and not 30 pieces of silver which he appears to be accusing white South Africans of accepting."

Riddell's (2002/2003, p. 10) letter congratulates Gordon and affirms the white rhetorical strategies she employs in her "castigation" of Nytagodien. The letter tags Nytagodien as a hypocrite who preaches "nonsense," a parasite, a failure, and even a traitor to something holy or precious. The allusion to Judas's betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver sets up a metaphorical exchange where Nytagodien is suggested as betraying South Africa for US dollars. The betrayal analogy—which directly acknowledges whiteness by referencing "white South Africans" but only indirectly implies Nytagodien's blackness—breaks down, since Nytagodien is not white and cannot thus betray the group of which he is not a part, nor can he really betray the United States since he is South African, nor can he betray South Africa since he defends it. The analogy works, however, if one reads it via the white lens that sees Nytagodien as betraying the readership of *JULUKA* (of which he is a part), or at least the white sensibilities and comfort zones of many readers. As if to re-patriotise the author and justify his leaving South Africa with his family "more than 50 years ago," this letter praises the United States for its freedom, equality, and opportunity (and in effect, bestowing of white privilege) that gives him the "best opportunity to live my life to the full." By not naming that "opportunity" as white privilege, however, the letter enacts what Frankenberg (1993, p. 189) has called a "color- and power- evasive repertoire."

A third letter notes Nytagodien's "vitriol" (a representation not uncommon when white people describe the "black savage" or black male) and sarcastically claims that Nytagodien attacks all South African whites with the exception of those "handful" of whites "who joined the armed struggle or ended up in jail for opposing the illegitimate regime" (Lubbe, 2002/2003, p. 10). The letter then defensively states that "we [whites] learn that we are delusional in believing that the United States is a great country which represents freedom, equality and … opportunity!" In an apparent retaliatory jab at Nytagodien's intelligence and credentials, the letter questions what "the professor" might think about "the rule

of law, individual and religious freedom, an unfettered press, a high standard of living, and an abundant opportunity for education" and "where a better situation would now be found." Such attacks on black intelligence or efforts to demonstrate white intellectual superiority are not uncharacteristic of white rhetorics addressing blackness, as scholars have noted (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 1997; Kincheloe, 1999; Shome, 1996). The letter then subtly identifies the author as a US citizen (of South African birth) when noting that "Most Americans are fully aware that *our* system can be improved at many levels" (italics added) and then reduces Nytagodien's critique to "reckless ranting" that is a "waste of time and energy" (Lubbe, 2002/2003, p. 10).

As should be obvious, the patterns in the above letters consist of attacks on Nytagodien's character, framing him as ignorant, praise and expression of patriotism and loyalty to the United States, direct acknowledgement of whiteness, and describing the challenge to whiteness as nonsensical and an unworthy endeavour. The refusal to engage Nytagodien's critique as anything other than "reckless ranting" is an indication of a lack of intent to engage seriously in reflecting upon the meaning of whiteness and of patriotism in relation to white privilege in the United States. This retaliatory rhetorical manoeuvre is the manifestation of yet another fear, of racial self-interrogation, that inflects expressions of white South African national identity. Incidentally, one of these same letter writers addresses another of Nytagodien's essays in the April/May 2001 Mail Bag. Initially, the letter appears to be in agreement with Nytagodien's position but this is conveyed through sarcasm. For example, the letter notes that Nytagodien "rails against whites and is contemptuous of those that want to let them off the hook too easily" (Lubbe, 2001, p. 10). The letter further suggests that South Africa would be better off by not following Nytagodien's "advice." Such advice would lead to something like a "socialist system," which the letter characterises as "not very auspicious."

A letter in the February/March 2003 Mail Bag continues employing these white rhetorical strategies of dismissal, retaliation, reversal, and defensiveness. The letter claims that "people like myself find ourselves too busy with real stuff to be bothered with debating and getting involved with nonsense the likes of … [Nytagodien's 2002] 'Patriot This!' article" (Wilson, 2003, p. 10). While the letter does not explicitly say "people like myself" means white people (that is, it does not mark it as such), it implies white people, particularly since Nytagodien positions himself as clearly critical of whiteness and white South African rhetorics of patriotism and privilege. The letter, like Riddell's (2002/2003) earlier letter, labels Nytagodien's critique of whiteness and patriotism as "nonsense" and implies it is not "real" (or rather not "real"ly important). In what can be read as a retaliatory move to discredit Nytagodien, his university, and "blacks," the letter asks if "academic environments or institutions" which hire folks like Nytagodien have a "department of 'White Studies,' or is a field such as this only reserved for blacks to promote more hate and self-serving theories" (Wilson, 2003, p. 10). Curiously, the letter, in a reversal of the critique of white egoistic patriotism and parasitism, constructs blacks as responsible for hate and self-serving theories rather than whites. The letter reduces Nytagodien's critique of whiteness to hate mongering and as beneficial only to himself but characterises white studies as a field that would help white people maintain privilege with the creation of self-serving theories. The letter puts forth all of these arguments with little or no apparent self-consciousness about the way such rhetoric continues to uphold

white privilege, even as it renounces the justifiability of a call for redress for blacks. The arguments also manifest an amnesia of an apartheid that fostered hate, white advantage, and white self-serving theories and policies in South Africa.

The letter (Wilson, 2003, p. 10) continues by subtly praising the United States, while belittling the black South African government by saying that the "government and mindset that [Nytagodien] defends cannot provide him with a lifestyle equal to the one he now enjoys!" Such a statement assumes knowledge of Nytagodien's lifestyle while also suggesting that a mindset and government found in the United States (and implicitly coded as white) is beneficial to this black man. The writer implies that Nytagodien ought to be thankful and appreciative of the United States that has offered him work and a good "lifestyle." The letter continues,

> Nytagodien, Africa is all you wanted it to be, so go back and enjoy what you sought so hard to overthrow. Get down from your ebony tower, stop teaching racism, and go back home. I, like Martin Luther (sic) too have a dream: Go back to Africa, stop griping … get on with something that resembles productivity, and put your money where your mouth is—in Africa! (Wilson, 2003, p. 10)

Omniscience and assumption of superior knowledge (both often marking white rhetorics) are employed in this final retaliatory paragraph to apparently put Nytagodien in the place where he belongs (i.e. Africa). Once Nytagodien's appropriate geographical position has been established, his critique of whiteness is reduced to "racism" and "griping," in part by appealing to Martin Luther King and the rhetoric of non-productivity that numerous scholars (Frankenberg & Mani, 1996; McClintock, 2000; Steyn, 2001; Young, 2000) note often accompanies white and colonialist framings of black activities.

Incidentally, the title the newsletter gives to this letter is, "Leave the ebony tower, then walk the talk!" Given that the phrase "walk the talk" appears nowhere in the printed letter, arguably, the newsletter contributes to white rhetorical defensiveness and retaliatory attack, especially given the meanings of the phrase "walk the talk!" in quotidian use. Although this titling may be indicative of an editor attempting to summarise the 'spirit' of the letter, it is also possible that some readers could conclude that the word choice of title reflects the views and endorsement of the editor for this particular Mail Bag. Moreover, the retention in the title of/and the letter's use of "ebony tower" inaccurately suggests not only the black takeover of the "ivory"/white academy but the judgment that black critique of whiteness equates to unjustified racism and complaint. Rhetorically, whiteness is reinstalled with power. In addition, the reference to Martin Luther King casually and erroneously as "Martin Luther"—a 16th century white, German monk, theologian, and key figure of the Protestant Reformation—symbolically reflects the expelling and whitening of significant black historical achievement and of the black King. The absence of 'King' also works rhetorically and metaphorically to link to and obscure the historical significance of black South African patriarchs/royalty.

The final letter critiquing Nytagodien's "Patriot This!" article (Geffen, 2003) persists in some of the white rhetorical strategies I have already noted. It demonstrates an apparent ignorance of the experience of many people of colour

in the United States, yet does so under the guise of all-knowingness. It continually praises the United States and defends patriotism, because whiteness enables privilege in the country. Via a retaliatory move and a reversal of the critique, the letter frames the "professor's" intelligence as patronising and cynical and compares him to a prejudiced (though not termed 'racist') National Party of apartheid. The letter does not frame the United States as racist. Instead, it frames Nytagodien as racist for his critique of white patriotism and whiteness. For example, the letter sees Nytagodien's column as doing a "great disservice to the New SA" and "greatly insults" the United States. The letter praises the United States as a place giving "émigrés a home and opportunity for a new life," as a "society … with relatively little prejudice against being foreign born," and as more "welcoming" than most countries to "new residents/citizens" (Geffen, 2003, p. 10). The claim that the United States is not prejudiced toward immigrants is not historically accurate or universally applicable and fails to consider the role race and "white"ness plays in immigrants' experiences. While the United States has "warts," the letter writer sees it as a "country that has led the way in civil rights and opened society to freedom and democracy." The positioning of freedom and civil rights as auto-produced by the country ignores the sovereign dispossession of Native Americans and the struggle for civil rights as largely driven by people of colour, which forced US government administrations to make relatively modest social and political adjustments.

The letter also claims that without the "US groundbreaking, open societies elsewhere would not have developed as well—if at all." Clearly, the letter defensively reframes US colonialist, oppressive, and self-serving activities throughout the world, because it is represented as a caring, concerned, fair, mostly unprejudiced country for which the world should be grateful. This praise for, and rhetorical reframing of, the United States is not uncommon in the newsletter (see, e.g. Richardson, 2001) and fails to acknowledge the historical and extant counter-narratives that highlight the country's white supremacy (see Bush, 2010). The letter rhetorically invalidates and renders unjust the critique and critic of whiteness/white patriotism, describing them as marked not only by "racism" but also by "intolerance, and poor generalizations [that] distort the facts to mislead" (Geffen, 2003, p. 10). Of course, what happens here is that the letter accuses the critique/critic of whiteness of practicing what is commonly a white rhetorical strategy (intolerance, generalisation, distortion, misleading, and racism). So, again, a turning around of the critique exists, which seeks to free up whiteness and simply dismiss the challenge to it, so as to not have to interrogate whiteness. In enacting a rhetorical strategy of reverse racism (see Shohat & Stam, 1994), the letter, along with its other rhetorics, evidences defensive rhetorical posturing, retaliatory rhetorical attacks, and reversal/shifting of Nytagodian's critique.

Conclusion

This analysis has argued that when whiteness is critiqued, several rhetorical manoeuvres emerge—retaliatory rhetorical attacks, defensive rhetorical posturing, and rhetorical reversing/shifting of the critique. These rhetorical strategies are rhetorics of justification. They work together to bolster claims for the crisis of whiteness for white people. They work to maintain white innocence, superiority, and authority. They attempt to rescue, justify, and bulk up

whiteness. They assume self-omniscience as a way of refusing to engage in an actual critique of race privilege and inequality. They deny, ignore, and eschew history, white privilege, and power relations. They also suggest that one cannot critique a system from which one benefits, or can do so only under certain circumstances. Ultimately, these are the marks of the enacted rhetorical strategies when whiteness is attacked and when whiteness is defended within white South African expatriate discourse. In these moments, the rhetorical responses demonstrate more broadly the difficulty of talking about whiteness in ways other than those that are celebratory, congratulatory, or implicitly coded. They also show a limited functional framework for productively and constructively engaging with whiteness as a structural system of power. As is clear above, white people have a wealth of defensive and retaliatory strategies through white rhetorics to resist self-interrogation. Consequently, many white folks fail to interrogate their whiteness and complicity in racial power. In turn, this failure reinforces the idea that white folks are unreflective. Finally, and with respect to the newsletter, amidst the reassertion and protection of white privilege and perspectives, a climate of inclusivity and diversity of perspectives is difficult to maintain, despite the reality that South Africa is itself so diverse racially and culturally. Thus, the exchange of ideas that *JULUKA* seeks and purports to foster is more accurately described as the routine rejection of 'other' perspectives and the re-enforcement of rhetoric that centralises and defends whiteness.

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