

EDITORIAL

CATHERINE KOERNER, KATHLEEN CONNELLAN & ALIA IMTOUAL

This special edition arises from the dynamic annual ACRAWSA conference held 10-13 December 2007 in Adelaide. The overarching theme for the conference was 'Transforming bodies, nations, knowledges' which encouraged a focus on issues of racial power and privilege in both local and global contexts. Indigenous sovereignty was a particularly important strand of the conference with a number of presentations (including keynotes) using issues such as the 'NT Interventions' as a way of grappling with the complexities of sovereignty and race power.

The authors whose work appears in this special edition include the keynote presentation from Sara Ahmed from (Goldsmiths College in London), Clemence Due, Stella Coram, Odette Kelada, Goldie Osuri, Damien Riggs and a book review from Lara Palombo.

All the papers address issues of critical race and whiteness as it is inscribed into and onto the body with its associations of sovereignty and knowledge. Ahmed unsettles the comfortable image of 'happiness' by providing readings of happiness through film as well as feminist and critical race appraisals. She shows what the condition of ostensible happiness is projected and expected to mean in culturally charged contexts. Ahmed digs deeply into the connection between happiness and the external material world of objects and families. She presents the condition as precarious yet at the same a strange requirement of normative white heterosexual society and shows how the 'melancholic migrant' or the 'feminist killjoy' is outside of this necessary 'good feeling'. Ahmed

is particularly interested in the 'points of conversion' in happiness and 'the reduction of pain' as these moments are contrived and orchestrated to return to 'scenes of happy diversity' where racism is considered 'backward' and covered over with a gloss of happy normal life.

Stella Coram's paper on mainstreaming highlights the problems of policy and positioning between advantage and disadvantage. Coram points out that inequality has become institutionalised to such an extent that 'race' has been silenced and made to disappear from policy. This has happened in the process of 'inclusion' and the 'integration of minorities into mainstream culture'. A 'discourse of disadvantage' has resulted. Coram asserts that the 'deployment of disadvantage' is a 'middle class phenomenon' and that 'mainstreaming as a model for increasing equality is paradoxical because equality exists or it does not'.

Due's deals with the theme of 'socially cohesive communities' as espoused by the former Federal minister of Kevin Andrews in relation to the irony of the white Australian 'absorption' of Sudanese migrants. Due points out that the mainstream media created stereotypes of the Sudanese as strangers who did not fit into the Australian 'way of life'. The continued denial of white Australia (who consider themselves as generous hosts to refugees such as the Sudanese) of the fact that they as white settlers have ignored the sovereignty of indigenous Australians is emphasised by Due.

Kelada's article focuses upon the role of paternalism in the play of fantasy and

reality within white Australia and the Northern Territory intervention in 2007. She shows that white blindness which is caught up in structures of power and authority is exacerbated by tactics such as haste and emergency. Beginning her paper with the popular children's storybook of 'Where the Wild Things Are', as an example of the convergence of colonial conquest and fantasy, Kelada shows how the white imaginary catches itself up in a fictive reality where the idea of rescuing children of 'tender' age from drunken abusive parents becomes a cause that must at all costs be enacted. Kelada shows how white manipulative techniques result in rushing the legislation through senate without consulting with the communities and without considering the facts of the 'Little Children are Sacred Report'. Her discussion of the notion of 'false memory' explicates the push and pull between fantasy and reality in the enactment of racialised power.

Osuri draws upon Achille Mbembe's 'necro-politics', a concept which she extends into a discussion of bio/necropolitics and geo/necropolitics. She does this by concentrating upon the 'performance of whiteness' and the tensions between war and peace. For example Osuri points out the irony of the Rudd apology to the Stolen Generation against the backdrop of the Northern Territory intervention which was simultaneously in process. Osuri brings the work of Perrera, Moreton- Robinson and others into a discussion of the 'multiple' formations and movements of whiteness and how such slippages allow for ambiguities, ironies and non-accountability. She asks what peace might look like for white Australia if it includes a continued exercise of sovereignty over Indigenous communities. Her paper argues that the benevolent Rudd is perhaps employing a 'bio/necropolitical regime of

management' which does not enhance the life of indigenous peoples whose existence is determined by white possession.

Riggs provides an eloquent but unremitting voice for the voiceless in his paper. Whilst his subject matter is the white fostering of Indigenous children, his concern in this paper is the way in which white mothers of Indigenous children are still more heard than their Indigenous mothers. In a careful critique of Cuthbert's methodology, Riggs shows how powerful the politics of voice can be – even in the work of a white feminist and race conscious writer such as Cuthbert. Riggs is most concerned with 'how the speech of those of us who identify as white thus functions as a form of violence' and this is especially evident when there is an understanding that some 'good' is being done. Riggs reveals complex hierarchies of voice as Cuthbert manages to evade issues of whiteness by negating the indigeneity of the Indigenous mother because she was 'tertiary educated' and dismissing the whiteness of the foster mothers by 'individualising their narratives.' This astonishing revelation shows how simple it is to do violence through the performance of voice and Riggs calls for an 'ethics of speech' that can deal with the 'unspeakable' and the 'unrepresented'.

A common thread in all the papers (beyond their commitment to critical race and whiteness issues) is the existence of ironies and pretence and the play of fiction against fact in representations of race in Australia.

Acknowledgments

Kaurna meyunna, Kaurna yerta, ngadiu tampendi.

The editorial committee recognises the Kurna people and their land.

Accrio tampendi, ngadlu Karuna yertangga banbabanbalyarendi (inbarendi). Kurna meyunna yaitya matnya Womma Tarndanyako. Parnako yailtya, parnuko tappa purruna, parnuko yerta ngadlu tampendi. Yellaka Kurna meyunna ito yailtya, tappa purruna, yerta kuma burro martendi, burro warriappendi, burro tangka martulyaiendi.

English translation:

We recognise and respect Kurna cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kurna people living today.

The 2007 conference of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association, *Transforming Bodies, nations and knowledge's*, was held by Karrowirra, The Torrens River, near the traditional country of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains.

ACRAWSA E-JOURNAL

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THE BORDERPOLITICS OF WHITENESS

EDITED BY CATHERINE KOERNER,
KATHLEEN CONNELLAN & ALIA IMTOUAL

THE POLITICS OF GOOD FEELING

SARA AHMED

This paper explores 'the politics of good feeling' with specific reference to debates about multiculturalism and immigration. The paper considers how certain bodies are seen as the origin of bad feeling, as getting in the way of public happiness, exploring the negative affective value of the figures of the feminist kill-joy, unhappy queer and melancholic migrant. Drawing on a reading of the film *Bend it Like Beckham*, the paper explores how the would-be-citizen who embraces the national game is rewarded with happiness. The migrant who refuses to integrate becomes an unhappy object for the nation, as the cause of unhappiness, terror and insecurity. The film participates in a wider discourse that reads public speech about racism as melancholic, as the refusal to let go of suffering. The paper explores how this conversion between unhappy racism and multicultural happiness takes place, and in so doing, offers a critique of what we would call 'the affirmative turn'.

'MAINSTREAMING' INDIGENOUS INEQUALITY AS DISADVANTAGE AND THE SILENCING OF 'RACE' IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICY

STELLA CORAM

Traditional constructs of inequality and discrimination to explain the life chances of indigenous Australians have been supplanted by the discourse of disadvantage. The boundaries of exclusion are made less clear by the emergence of inclusive discourse related to increased access and participation (outcomes) in which it is premised that disadvantage is the absence of opportunity and that the promotion of advantage will ameliorate disadvantage. In their critique of the rhetoric of outcomes, Smyth and Dow (1998) argue that outcomes fit the need for certainty in a world of increasing uncertainty. I borrow from Smyth and Dow's (1998) framework of central control to propose that

mainstreaming, as a statement of inclusion, paradoxically, obscures institutional practice. Through a reading of disadvantage represented in social, education and vocational training policy, I identify a set of themes that rename traditional group inequalities related to class and race as economic, individual and or cultural disadvantage respectively.

'WHO ARE STRANGERS?': 'ABSORBING' SUDANESE REFUGEES INTO A WHITE AUSTRALIA

CLEMENCE DUE

This paper analyses several newspaper articles which appeared in the media following the murder of teenager Liep Gony who had come to Australia as a refugee from Sudan, and the subsequent restriction on the African refugee intake made by the former immigration minister Kevin Andrews. The paper considers several discourses which appeared in these articles, and which were indicative of the wider press coverage following these events. These discourses centered on whiteness as the normative mode of belonging in Australia (as a result of the ongoing denial of Indigenous sovereignty over the land), and the desired absorption of any non-white refugees into the dominant white culture. The paper concludes that such constructions of white belonging in Australia further deny Indigenous ownership of the land, and attempt to override any perceived differences in non-white immigrants and refugees, whilst at the same time constructing the nation as generous and free of racism.

WHITE NATION FANTASY AND THE NORTHERN TERRITORY 'INTERVENTION'

ODETTE KELADA

This article, 'White Nation Fantasy and the Northern Territory 'Intervention'', looks at the term 'whiteness' and the notion of 'white blindness'. It seeks to illustrate how white blindness allows White Nation Fantasy to operate to the extent of becoming the real 'national emergency' at the heart of Australia's race relations. It draws on the recent Northern Territory Legislation (2007) as evidence of how White Nation Fantasy currently dominates Australia's socio-political landscape. It examines the ramifications of perpetuating colonialist narratives in relation to issues of identity, justice, paternalism and moral discourses as evident in the production of the National Emergency Response Bill 2007.

WAR IN THE LANGUAGE OF PEACE, AND AN AUSTRALIAN GEO/POLITICS OF WHITE POSSESSION

GOLDIE OSURI

This paper examines how war and peace as a bio/necropolitical regime informs Australian sovereignty. How do war and peace contribute to the Australian government's attempts to reconfigure the demand for Indigenous rights and redefine Australia's strategic military and peace-keeping role in a transnational context. Australia's peacekeeping mission in East Timor, for instance, has become a way of securing Australia's national interests in terms of 'keeping peace' in the Asia Pacific region. What are the implications of such internal and external consolidations of white Australian sovereignty? How may we think through and engage with this sovereignty through the concept of bio/necropolitics of white possession?

WHITE MOTHERS, INDIGENOUS FAMILIES, AND THE POLITICS OF VOICE

DAMIEN W. RIGGS

Ongoing histories of genocide, dispossession and child removal continue to shape the Australian nation. Speaking of such histories is fraught with racial power differentials that dictate which particular voices will be given space within public discourse. Examining how a 'politics of voice' is deployed within the writings of white academics is one important site for better understanding how it is that white voices continue to occupy a hegemonic position within the Australian academy and in everyday talk. In this paper I examine how particular representations of white foster/adoptive mothers of Indigenous children in Australia highlight the problematic nature of research seeking to represent experiences classified as previously 'unspoken'. In examining the work of one particular white Australian academic I suggest that it is important that white academics engage in research practices that highlight, rather than overlook, matters of race privilege and which ground white people in histories of colonisation and in a relationship to the fact of Indigenous sovereignty.

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

CLARE BRADFORD

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

What sets children's literature apart from other fields of textuality is that it is implicated in socialising practices, so that all the way along the chain of production and mediation—from authors and illustrators through publishers, editors, librarians, teachers and parents—adults seek to intervene through textuality in the lives of children. And as children are self-evidently future adults, the texts produced for them propose ways of being in the world, promote ideologies, model modes of

behaviour. Texts for children are centrally preoccupied with 'the nature of selfhood and its relationship to place' (Stephens 1999: 56), and my focus in this discussion is on the nexus between selfhood and place in a group of picture books from Australia, Canada and the United States. I have chosen these books not because they are representative of picture books for children, but because they are not; rather, they contest and undermine the unexamined assumptions about race which inform children's literature.

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

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

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

urgency of the transmission of stories (such as those told in *Down the hole* and *Home to Medicine Mountain*), which rely on elderly storytellers.

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

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

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

Spatial strategies of assimilation

A key spatial strategy exercised by colonial and assimilationist régimes was to quarantine education within spaces coded as white, and in the *Papunya Book*, *Home to Medicine Mountain* and *This Land is My Land*, the tactic of defamiliarisation is deployed to make strange the principles on which assimilationist régimes in Australia, Canada and the United States institutionalised Indigenous children: namely, that Indigenous peoples did not educate their young; and that Indigenous children could therefore be educated only if they were removed from homes, families,

languages and cultural practices. In the *Papunya Book*, a collage of oral histories, historical narratives, photographs, artwork and maps dialogically produce an account of the history of Papunya and Papunya School. On the page featuring the heading 'Papunya School Starts', the words of Smithy Zimran Tjampitjinpa represent the perspective of the children shown standing in line before the school building: 'I shifted to Papunya, where I began my schooling. It was there I began to understand the way things were. I realised we were living in a different world. It was someone else's world (2001: 30).

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

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

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

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

Tactics of Resistance

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

These picture books incorporate what de Certeau calls 'delinquent stories' (1984: 129-30), in that they 'organise the play of changing relationships between places and spaces' (1984: 118); and they model

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

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

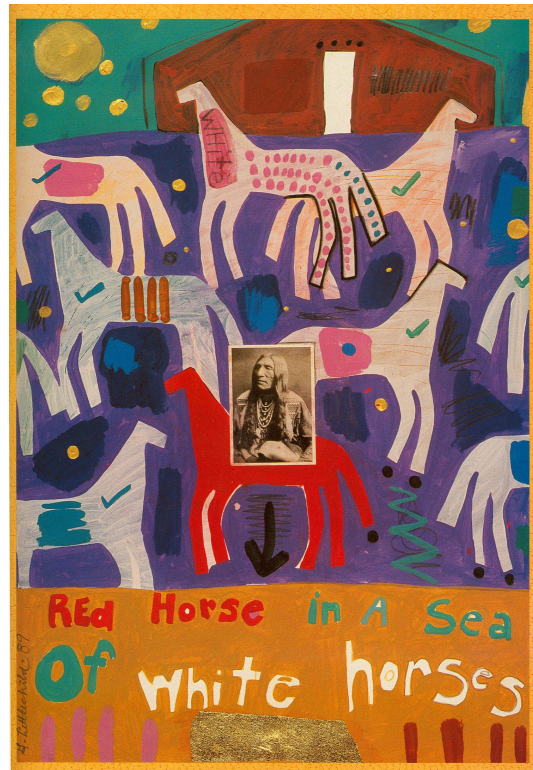
but on the capacity of Indian people, metonymised by the figures of Stanley and Leonard, to resist incorporation into the settler discourses represented by the boarding school. *Home to Medicine Mountain* is thus as much about the present as about the 1930s, and it claims a place for stories of resistance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

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

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

Just as the verbal narratives of these texts are focalised through Indigenous perspectives, so their visual texts disrupt the idea that the act of seeing is also an act of imperial power. In the painting 'Red Horse in a Sea of White Horses' in *This Land is My Land*, the artist George

Littlechild places one of Edward Curtis's photographs of 'an Indian warrior' astride a red horse, emblematic of Plains Indians. The building at the back of the picture signifies the school to which Littlechild was sent after his parents died; the white horses represent the dominant culture and its purchase on what is normal and correct, suggested by the check marks which appear on each of the white horses—but not on the red horse, which is 'always wrong' (Littlechild 1993: 20).



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

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

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

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

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

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

As I have suggested, the tactics of spatial resistance that these picture books deploy include re-valuations of historical events and re-inscriptions of identities. *Home to Medicine Mountain* lays claim to the spiritual beliefs which shape the actions of Stanley and Benny Len. In *This Land Is My Land*, the artist honours his ancestors and

re-replaces them in the contemporary setting. The *Papunya School Book* models direct political action in its account of the events of the early 1990s, when 'the community was not happy with the teaching at the school, so parents kept their children at home' (2001: 40), and the narrative describes the process by which the school community established its vision of two-way learning, articulated in the School Vision Painting and instantiated in the *Papunya Book*, which is itself the result of collaboration between the Papunya School community, the school's white Principal Diane de Vere, and Nadia Wheatley and Ken Searle, who assisted respectively with the written text and the book design.

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

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



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

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

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

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

The book's final illustration incorporates a reflexive moment as an adult shows a group of children the picture, from *Down the hole*, of adults lowering food to their children. Here, memory of the children's escape into country and of the resistance of their parents is woven into a triumphant assertion of communal survival and continuity; the text opposite reads 'I been still hiding away—and here I am today' (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 42). The peritextual material at the end of the book describes the lives of Edna Tantjingu Williams and Eileen Wani Wingfield, the two women whose story is told in *Down the hole*, and explains their motivations; this is what it says about Williams:

'Edna...saw this book as a legacy to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And also, her way of setting the record straight about what really happened to Aboriginal people with the 'people-that-come-lately': that is, the rest of us' (Williams, Wingfield and McInerney 2000: 45).

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

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

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

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

Jacobs refers here to the processes by which powerful groups within nation states manage and ameliorate the anxiety which derives from acknowledging the traumas and injuries which colonisers inflicted on indigenous people, or on groups marginalized as the nation's others. The repression of trauma can be read in *Home of the Brave* as personified by an unnamed man of Japanese appearance who undertakes a dangerous journey into the murky spaces of the nation's past: his kayak is swept through a gorge, down a waterfall and into an underground river. He

climbs up a shaft and finds himself in a desert where he sees two children, with luggage labels around their necks. He cannot make out the writing on these labels, or to read his actions psychoanalytically, he resists knowing what is painful to know. With the two children he struggles through a dust-storm and at length the three come to 'a row of buildings made of wood and tarpaper' (Say 2002: 18). When he enters one of these houses the man sees on the floor a luggage label like those around the children's necks, and he finds that it bears his own name; later, he finds another label carrying his mother's name.

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

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

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

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

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



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

The narratives of displaced children which I have discussed have all been published during the last decade, four of them in the last five years. All draw on communal and individual memory; all have been produced following large-scale investigations into the assimilationist practices to which they refer: in Australia the Stolen Generations inquiry; in Canada the Native Residential School Task Force; in the United States the

investigation into the incarceration of Japanese American people which resulted in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. These picture books belong to the substantial body of work—books, artworks, installations, films and documentaries—which thematise histories of racialised displacement in Australia, Canada and the United States. What is particular to them as a group of texts is that they model to child readers ways not merely of surviving experiences of individual and collective displacement, but of engaging actively in tactics of resistance.

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

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

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

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

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'MAINSTREAMING' INDIGENOUS INEQUALITY AS DISADVANTAGE AND THE SILENCING OF 'RACE' IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICY

STELLA CORAM

Abstract

Traditional constructs of inequality and discrimination to explain the life chances of indigenous Australians have been supplanted by the discourse of disadvantage. The boundaries of exclusion are made less clear by the emergence of inclusive discourse related to increased access and participation (outcomes) in which it is premised that disadvantage is the absence of opportunity and that the promotion of advantage will ameliorate disadvantage. In their critique of the rhetoric of outcomes, Smyth and Dow (1998) argue that outcomes fit the need for certainty in a world of increasing uncertainty. I borrow from Smyth and Dow's (1998) framework of central control to propose that mainstreaming, as a statement of inclusion, paradoxically, obscures institutional practice. Through a reading of disadvantage represented in social, education and vocational training policy, I identify a set of themes that rename traditional group inequalities related to class and race as economic, individual and or cultural disadvantage respectively.

Introduction

Disadvantage is a central theme in the explanation of the distance or gap between the life chances of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians in countless research projects and policy documents. The solution is the creation of advantage to meet the diverse needs of the individual

through increased access and opportunity (or targeted outcomes) in education, vocational training and employment. For Taylor (2004: 179), the shift from collective goals toward individualism bypasses the systemic nature of white supremacy, "an affair of statecraft". It is the erasing of history that obscures the systemic social engineering that has led to current patterns of inequality (Taylor, 2004: 179).

In their critique of outcomes, Smyth and Dow (1998) proffer that outcomes fit the need for certainty in a world of manufactured uncertainty. I borrow from their framework of decentralised-state control to develop the argument that mainstreaming, as a statement of inclusion, obscures the institutionalising of inequality. Whilst not denying the possibilities for change through *action* based measures, I suggest the importance for considering the implications underlying the discourse of disadvantage. The notion that inequality arising out of colonisation can be closed through increased access and opportunity, and the building of community capacity, unduly puts the onus on indigenous people to overturn the historical effects of structural arrangements. Furthermore, this delineates policy focus from understandings of how the privileged maintain their advantage and how outcomes reflect bureaucratic processes in the renaming or mainstreaming of inequality as disadvantage. This article, in examining the discourse of disadvantage, identifies a set of themes that depoliticise structural inequalities through the reframing of class inequality as economic disadvantage and of group or racial

inequality as individual disadvantage and or cultural disadvantage.

Mainstreaming Bureaucratic Process

Smyth and Dow (1998) view outcomes orientations as part of the new orthodoxy in economic rationalism and seek to debate the pervasive myth of outcomes, which in policy circles is an uncontested "article of faith". According to Smyth and Dow (1998) outcomes represents a naturalised and largely uncontested discourse. They explore the embrace of outcomes approaches and suggest that this is encased within a move toward technologies. The appeal of outcomes originates in the struggle to insert a degree of predictability and control in an age of manufactured uncertainty (Smyth and Dow, 1998: 291). There is no evidence that outcomes orientation actually produces results that improve the educational life chances of students. In contrast, Smyth and Dow (1998: 292) claim that outcomes has reduced, marginalised and rendered other discourses irrelevant.

Mainstreaming is the integration of bureaucratic process in policy. Artemjeff (2006: 20) cites the work of Sue Nott who proposes two conventions for understanding mainstreaming; that of the bureaucratic expert who revises existing policies and the participatory democratic who focuses on organisational change and strategy building. Mainstreaming thus is the re-organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that equality is incorporated into all policies at all levels at all stages (Artemjeff, 2006: 20). A broad anti-discrimination perspective under common policy, mainstreaming has its origins in gender constructs of equity. Gender mainstreaming originating in the 1970s has been widened to include other forms of exclusion in anti-discrimination policy and practice promoting equal opportunity. Mainstreaming, a new concept in the recognition of diverse

inequalities was adopted internationally including Australia (Artemjeff, 2006: 19).

The expansion of feminist mainstreaming to an overarching contemporary theory of inclusion is problematic. Generalist mainstreaming may overlook radical approaches that point to systemic oppression to explain inequality. In this context, the narrative of dominance is at 'risk' of becoming irrelevant to policy. Dobrowolsky and Lister (2006) observe that racial and or ethnic discrimination is no longer mentioned in British social policy. The noted critical cultural theorist Stuart Hall observes that "race and ethnicity are blanked out spaces" given the pre-eminence of statements of inclusion in British policy documents (cited in Dobrowolsky and Lister, 2006: 175). For Dobrowolsky and Lister (2006: 174) statements relating to social cohesion constitute cultural racism because of the requirement for the integration of minorities into mainstream culture. They note with interest that the term discrimination was later reinstated in subsequent policy for 2004. This is indicative of the contested politics of naming institutional (in) equality within policy.

In the inclusive discourse, two assumptions underscore the 'mainstreaming' of inequality; that disadvantage cuts across all social and economic sectors and that participation and inclusion will end disadvantage. Here, economic inequality and exclusion have been reconstructed as 'barriers' or disadvantages (to be removed) and social inequality have been reconstructed as a need to strengthen community cohesion or capacity. Vinson (2004) observes that ministers emphasise community building for mediating disadvantage. Hence, the discourse of disadvantage, underwritten by a lack of advantage, declares that anyone can suffer disadvantage (not just the historically oppressed) and that the community is 'there' to comfort the disadvantaged. To understand the discourse of disadvantage

in indigenous policy it is important to review a selection of major reports and policy statements, which consistently indicate the representation of disadvantage as a descriptive condition.

The Trend from Indigenous Inequality to Disadvantage¹

Landmark reports such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody RCADIC (1991) and *Bringing them Home, The National Inquiry into the Removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* (1997) are explicit in identifying the appalling treatment of indigenous Australians. The legacy of Australia's history helps to explain the disproportionate detention rates of Aboriginal people (RCADIC, 1991, Chapter 10). Ronald Wilson QC concluded in *Bringing them Home* (1997) that the removal of children constituted "an act of genocide" (p. 27). *Bringing them Home* made 54 recommendations including a prime ministerial apology, the implementation of indigenous self-governance (or self-determination) in indigenous affairs and compensation for children taken – the 'stolen generations' (pp. 34-50). Sadly, the continuing disproportionate incarceration of indigenous Australians (Gardiner, 2001) indicates that the 339 recommendations to come out of RCADIC such as early intervention programs and improved prison operations to reduce incarceration rates and deaths in custody are yet to impact.²

Not surprisingly, the narrative has since shifted from the language of oppression expressed as "genocide" to reducing disadvantage. In his national apology to the 'stolen generations' the incoming Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2008) acknowledged policy failures and the need for a new resolve to 'close the gap' between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians:

This new partnership on closing the gap will set concrete targets for the future within a decade to halve the widening gap in literacy, numeracy and employment outcomes and opportunities for indigenous Australians. (Kevin Rudd, 2008: 2)

His commitment to "closing the gap" to end indigenous disadvantage coincides with the policy of intervention in indigenous affairs established by the former Howard government. Jenny Macklin, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has already indicated that the Northern Territory Intervention Strategy 2007 under which indigenous welfare was quarantined and children submitted to health checks (Stafford, 2007: 4) will continue until the midyear review in July 2008. Macklin confirmed significantly that there will be no compensation to members of the 'stolen generations' (Skelton, 2008: 5). She did, however, restore the permit system to allow indigenous communities to determine access to their land as well as the Commonwealth Development Employment Program (CDEP), both cancelled under the strategy (Skelton, 2008: 5). The Minister's foreshadowing of concentrated efforts to address the need for housing and improved school attendance (Skelton, 2008: 5) continues the integration in policy of the creation of advantage to ameliorate disadvantage.

Altman (2004: 2) observes that following the demise of the Australian Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 2002, mainstreaming became the new approach to indigenous service delivery through the reallocation of indigenous specific programs to mainline departments. Closing the gap, the core indigenous affairs policy and approach is to be delivered through whole-of-government mainstreaming marked by collaboration, recognition of regional need, flexibility in delivery, accountability and leadership (Altman, 2004: 2-3). This is consistent with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which agreed in 2002 to trial working together with indigenous communities as

part of its Indigenous Whole-of-Government Initiative. COAG agreed to oversee the provision of more flexible programmes and service based on priorities agreed with communities and is informed by the principles of 'shared responsibility' and 'capacity building' for a 'shared future'.³

Closing the gap informs the focus in policy and research in terms of identifying 'what works' in policy elsewhere and setting achievable outcomes. The Social Justice Report (2007) refers to the need to understand 'what works' and 'why' (pp. 288 & 300). Gap analysis is about being evidenced based. As Jones (2003: 202) observes, an account of reality must be matched by proof. Gap analysis and the setting of targeted outcomes have been central to policy formulation for addressing indigenous disadvantage. In the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (1989: 1) it is stated that that despite improvements disadvantage remains. "Gaps persist between indigenous and non-indigenous students across the training and education sectors". The aim is to bring about equity by accelerating improvements in education outcomes for indigenous Australians. Strategic interventions in addition to mainstream funding will accelerate improvements in indigenous student learning outcomes (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, 1989: 1).

The commonsense response to disadvantage evidenced by the widening *not* closing of the gap is to increase access and equity. The national statement for vocational training, *Shaping our Future 2004-2010* champions "building equity into core business" so that "indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs" (*Shaping our Future*, 2004: 7). Consistent with the charter of strategic interventions mapped out in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy to "accelerate" indigenous learning, the slow pace of change has necessitated renewed rhetoric of action expressed in

'ramping up' objectives and targets. The Victorian Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike, is quoted expressing the need for "accelerating Koori learning outcomes" (Tomazin, 2008: 4).

Indigenous disadvantage covers a range of perspectives in reports and policy. The Social Justice Report (2002), sets benchmarking of indigenous disadvantage from a human rights perspective. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are significantly disadvantaged in contemporary Australian society..." (Social Justice Report, 2002: 2). Disadvantage is reflected in statistics showing significant health and unemployment, low attainment in the education sector, unsatisfactory housing and infrastructure, incarceration and deaths in custody (Social Justice Report, 2002: 2). The report continues: "The single, significant contributing factor to incarceration is the disadvantaged position of indigenous people socially, economically and culturally. The cause of systemic disadvantage is fundamental disempowerment and marginalisation of indigenous peoples (Social Justice Report, 2002: 2). Human rights represent individual rather than collective rights (Niezen, 2003). Given the 'threat' to collective identity, it is significant that disadvantage as a human rights issue for indigenous people continues to inform the Social Justice Report for 2007. Clearly, the purpose in linking indigenous disadvantage to human rights is to demarcate indigenous disadvantage from non-indigenous disadvantage namely because it is derived of colonial hegemony. Renaming the effects of 'history' through the discourse of disadvantage though is dangerous because it paves the foundation for the creation of the disadvantaged (diverse) individual not 'encumbered' by race or ethnic identifications. It is significant that the document *Addressing Disadvantage* (1994) prepared by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation writes of the shutting down of successful small business so as to limit competition for non-

indigenous operations (pp. 14-17). Disadvantage is not incidental or an absence of individual advantage, it is deliberate, a consequence of history, of exclusion.

The discourse of 'tackling' or 'overcoming' disadvantage is central theme in policy. The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000-2004 (2000: 4) refers to tackling educational disadvantages faced by indigenous children. The strategy sets as its model dual learning based on English literacy and numeracy in addition to indigenous culture and languages. The national blueprint *Overcoming Disadvantage* (2005) sets holding governments accountable for achieving this. This follows *Sustaining the Reconciliation Process* (2000: 1), which lists the strategies of promoting recognition of rights, overcoming disadvantage and economic independence in its road map to reconciliation. In terms of state policy, the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (p.1) states that "it is not possible to tackle the over-representation of Aboriginals in the criminal justice system without tackling the disproportionately high levels of indigenous disadvantage".

The turn to mainstreaming in indigenous affairs reflects longstanding policy failure. The former shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Dr Michael Wooldridge, in reference to the 25 years marking the Aboriginal Referendum 1967, which granted indigenous citizenship, observed in 1992 that: "Aboriginal health and Aboriginal employment, particularly self-employment, are areas where we have to say that to date we have failed". Interestingly, the 17 year gap acknowledged in Rudd's landmark speech in 2008 reflects a similar theme expressed in 1992. Dr Wooldridge writes that "Aboriginal life expectancy for men and women is 17 to 18 years less than for the general population". In parts of Australia life expectancy is actually decreasing. For

males in Central Australia, it is 40 years (Wooldridge, 1992: 28). He concludes that parliamentarians must act. "We have a chance to put the neglect and insensitivities of the past behind us... we owe it to our future and our children not to waste this opportunity" (Wooldridge, 1992: 29). Given as Australia's treatment of indigenous people is not cause for national pride, it is important to consider how this may be rewritten arguably so as not to reflect poorly on governments or institutions.

Recasting Class Inequality as Economic Disadvantage

The traditional explanations for inequality – gender, class and race – have been rescripted. Traditional class inequality between working and ruling classes has been subsumed to an emerging struggling middle class, which is now said to be suffering disadvantage. In his essay on the economic and educational disjuncture of the mainstream Watson (2006: 5) opines the "forgotten majority" who are at risk of losing their "national inheritance of egalitarianism". The deployment of disadvantage as a middle class phenomenon infers national identity grounded in the loss of egalitarianism – the 'fair go'. That is to say, it is the 'true blue' (white) Australian, who is now at a disadvantage. Watson is selective in that he does not mention Australians who have long comprised the "stream of disadvantaged", those who have rarely enjoyed access to the mainstream. The mainstream, representative of a fair society, glosses over the existence of an atypical sub-stream.

Watson's shrinking middle class is supported by Pusey (2003) who argues the increasing high stress mortgage belt of middle Australia. In his survey of 400 'middle' Australians, excluding the top 10 and bottom 20%, Pusey found that 80% expressed insecurity about the future and that 70% believed wage earners were 'losing out'. Their quality of life is in decline,

dispersed, fractured and hollowed out. Hamilton et al (2007) contest this arguing instead that Pusey deals with perception rather than reality. According to Hamilton et al (2007), who test for shrinking middleclass by looking at average income, fewer than 1 in 10 middle class people are struggling. Median disposable income has increase by 43% with the standard of disposable income approximately \$70, 000 (Hamilton et al 2007: vii).

The notion of the struggling middle class is the result of constant reinforcement of stress, unmet aspirations and the displacement of anxieties about moral decline (Hamilton et al, 2007). However, Hamilton et al do not account for expenditure including the rising costs of living associated with middle class aspirations of privatised health and education. Given that the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey for 1995 found that one in nine indigenous persons aged 15 or more received an annual income of more than \$25, 000 (Indigenous Australia Today, 1995: 6) it can be said that studies related to middle class earners of \$70, 000 are generally not inclusive of indigenous people. It is an indictment that indigenous people do not even get to 'struggle' with mortgage belt stress and an annual disposable income of \$70, 000 noted by Hamilton et al (2007).

The advent of the global-profit economy in which industries are relocated offshore to minimise production costs and maximise profit points to uncertainty for many in the labour market (Cunningham et al, 2000). A new policy discourse that privileges the rhetoric of re-skilling to meet labour demands means that occupational categories have been displaced. Australian workers must embrace 'life long' learning or 'skill-up' to ensure that they are able to compete in a competitive labour market. This is implicit in the national vocational training blueprint *Shaping our Future* (2004) in which it is made clear that employment is changing. "A typical career path is

becoming less linear and increasingly complex. As the knowledge economy evolves, some people change jobs by choice and others by necessity" (*Shaping our Future*, 2004: 6). Work it is acknowledged is no longer long-term. "The number of people employed part time, casually or on contract has increased by over 50% while full time employment has increased by just 11%" (*Shaping our Future*, 2004: 6).

Changes surrounding the nature of work have the effect of alienating the relationship between workers and their labour. A decentralised, deregulated competitive Australian labour market premised on reduced workers' rights including the right to strike, individual contracts, low wages and increasing casual employment (Workplace Relations Amendment Act, 2005) puts the onus on workers to ensure their place in the labour market through ongoing training and being 'flexible'. This underlies the Victorian skills statement; *Maintaining the Advantage* (2006). The individual learner must engage in "smarter learning, lifelong learning earlier learning and easier learning" (p. 1). It is the individual seemingly who must cope with casual work, loss of wages and conditions by being prepared to retrain in order to be employable.

Paradoxically, the acquisition of new skills is not always conducive to employment. Penny Toynbee, a British journalist who posed in a number of occupations – kitchen hand, childcare worker, hospital porter and a shop assistant – to understand the experience of being a 'low-skilled' worker in the UK found that these workers are not encouraged to 'skill-up'. Quite the opposite, the intent is to keep workers doing low skilled work. Skills acquired through experience or responsibilities translate into higher wages, the least desired outcome in the profit economy. Toynbee (2003: 210) concludes that the assumption of inequality is tied to ability not inability. Higher wages

for those at the bottom of the wages pool would translate into higher unemployment, thus workers would be worse off. This brings to light the tension between the market reliant on low wages and the rhetoric of 'skilling-up' (Cunningham et al, 2000: 22). Taking this into account, I argue that the skills training agenda is oppressive because it implores the disadvantaged to aspire to skill up at the behest of industry needs. The mainstreaming of low paid workers to the skills agenda is indicative of shifting politics in the renaming of worker exploitation as economic disadvantage.

Re-casting Group Inequality as Individual Disadvantage

The tradition of group identity to explain social inequality has largely made way for the discourse of the diverse individual or the individual with diverse needs. The national qualifications framework for vocational training statement: Working with Diversity (2004) sets a flexible system to attend to the diverse needs of individual learners. Diversity is regarded as the quality of being different and unique at an individual or group level.

"Recognising diversity means creating and sustaining an environment in which everyone can achieve their full potential" (Working with Diversity, 2004: 10). The mandate is to establish pathways for disengaged 'learners' so that there is a direct link between education and employment. This is captured in youth pathways (Burgell and Schulze, 2005). The national policy framework for youth, Footprints to the Future (2001), sets a commitment to aid the most 'at-risk' young people through secondary schooling and beyond. The youth framework is about sustained transition to independence allowing every chance for youth to achieve their potential and to contribute to the community.

It is significant that the Victorian Minister for Education Bronwyn Pike has just announced the initiative of establishing individual records for every Koori student in Victoria.⁴ Under a sweeping overhaul, Victorian schools will be required to develop an individual education plan setting out learning targets or goals to be negotiated with family. Each school will report back to the education department and be accountable to the Minister about the way they teach Aborigines (Tomazin, 2008: 4). On face value, tailored (managed) pathways make sense given the 'facelessness' of the competitive economy. However, the construct of the individual is problematic in the context of indigenous culture in which collective identity is valued (Birch, 1997). The initiative of an individual learning plan for Koori students seems paternalistic and beyond that little more than a contract or statement of agreement. The keeping of individual records conforms to Smyth and Dow's (1998) thesis of state control whilst delegating local management (mainstreaming). Though such 'partnerships' inaugurate democratic process, negotiated agreements between students, their guardians and the state to 'boost' indigenous learning outcomes remain driven by the state. Action charged rhetoric implies working harder at change rather than changing the 'course' for change.

The construct of the individual poses conceptual challenges for policy and research. Considine et al (2005: 29) attempt a distinction between groups and the individual in their framing of "a cohort of individuals who share similar experiences". Even though they privilege the individual, they do not relinquish group understandings in their assertion that "the factors contributing to disadvantage in vocational education and training (VET) are so interconnected that an understanding cannot be developed without recognition of the multiple and cumulative disadvantages experienced by groups"

(Considine et al, 2005: 29). Wurreker: The Koori Community and TAFE (2000) policy document in Victoria places the individual learner at the centre of policy surrounded by group principles relating to self-determination, building community, maintaining culture and equal partnership. The location of the individual at the centre of policy represents an attempt to deconstruct colonial hegemony premised on the marginal indigenous 'Other'. Positioning the learner at the centre of policy ensures recognition of both individual and collective identities.

Howes (2000: 6) argues that a culture that values diversity may fail to acknowledge that some groups will experience a reduction in power and privilege. To focus on the individual learner risks losing sight of how individuals as members of groups experience discrimination or are discriminated against. Blackmore (2005) in distinguishing between managerial and transformative diversity argues that the managerial in which learner needs are accommodated through the delivery of a flexible training system has supplanted the transformative model of diversity in which differences – especially cultural, ethnic and racial – are integrated into teaching practice. Apolitical diversity fits the rhetoric of mainstreaming in attending to the needs of the individual whilst at the same time shifting the focus away from group inequality.

Re-casting Racial Inequality as Cultural Disadvantage

Australian colonial history makes it clear that inequalities derived of race ideology have and continue to apply to indigenous Australians. Whilst the disadvantaged individual is prioritised, the aim in indigenous policy is to retain recognition of group inequality albeit in reconstructed ways. Collective experience of racial inequality has been redrafted as cultural difference and disadvantage. This is implicit in the

emphasis in the Social Justice Report (2002) on need to enliven indigenous cultural identity as a means to restore community. Cultural disadvantage emerges within and through the discourse of social cohesion, the strengthening of communities, as a buffer to disadvantage. For example, in response to the 'crisis' related to the widespread abuse of children in indigenous communities in the Northern Territory Anderson and Wild (2007: 262) conclude that a key trend in prevention is "strengthening families and communities and promoting resiliency".

Social and cultural constructs of disadvantage present an unintended consequence in the supplanting of colonial race history. That is, the reconstruction of indigenous inequalities merely as disadvantage obscures the hierarchical nature of disadvantage premised on institutional and structural inequalities (Coram, 2007: 9). Though I am sympathetic to the importance in maintaining indigenous cultures, I am concerned that the emphasis on capacity building through culturally relevant programs masks institutional neglect of communities.

Underpinning the need for strengthening communities is the assumption that low social cohesion is linked to predictors such as poor education, familial unemployment and postcode namely rural or remote locations in addition to disadvantaged suburbs in major urban centres. Low social cohesion is also indicated by high rates of imprisonment thus high social cohesion is linked to decreased rates of imprisonment. The antidote to alienation rests on the assumption that one is less likely to offend in the presence of community cohesion. Vinson's (2007) *Dropping off the Edge* finds that 33% of people living in disadvantaged suburbs suffer low social cohesion, equated with high rates of imprisonment High social cohesion conversely is equated with low rates of imprisonment (Catholic Social Services Australia, 2007). Taking into

account the location of indigenous communities in rural or remote parts of Australia, the identification of disadvantaged suburbs in effect means suburbs populated largely by non-indigenous people. This is not to suggest that indigenous people do not live in major urban centres, indeed they do. Instead, it is to highlight that disadvantage by area (suburb) does not begin to consider the most marginalised who live transiently as the poor and isolated communities often do.

According to Mowbray (2004) social cohesion is a popular term with governments because it is good for promoting affirmative messages. Governments he claims understand the value of the imprecise in deflecting liabilities for problems away from themselves towards localities and families through programs promoting community building (Mowbray, 2004). Approaches to disadvantage are imprecise because the focus tends to be on what the disadvantaged are not doing rather than what the advantaged do to maintain their advantage. Mowbray (2004) expresses concern about the influence of analysis based on association (through social cohesion), at the expense of 'causal' explanations, such as the relationship between inequality and an economy premised on low wages.

The emphasis on social cohesion suggests that it is up to the disadvantaged to overcome their dislocation. The excluded are encouraged to empower themselves and to assuage the impact of their exclusion from the main economy through community strengthening. As an expression of value, social cohesion is acceptable so long as it does not turn into a smoke screen that obscures the destructive impact of a competitive economy based on itinerant work. Some do not belong to the mainstream because this is how the system works. Selective use of cohesion to convey the need to integrate the 'alienated' back into the mainstream becomes an easy

platform for obscuring the effects of institutional inequality.

Donahoo (2005) argues that Australian state governments have adopted the Blair government's rhetoric of community building. They have struggled to achieve significant change because very little is done to redevelop policy for the Australian population. No matter how similar populations may appear, policy does not translate that simply. Australian policy makers need to come up with their own original ideas and look deeply at the research of their own communities to find the answers to our inequitable wealth division (Donahoo, 2005:35). This has its challenges given the role of bureaucracy in mainstreaming policy.

Conclusion: The Orthodoxy of Disadvantage

The construct of a lack of advantage to explain disadvantage implies that disadvantage is momentary and apolitical (Coram, 2007). An important paradox is that minorities have suffered as a result of policy reform intended to benefit them (Tomlinson, 1997). As Smyth and Dow (1998) observe, the state directs policy while appearing not to do so through the setting of benchmarks. In this context, mainstreaming is the instrumentalist trajectory for incorporating inequality as actionable barriers to be overcome through the identification of benchmarks or priorities. Gap analysis is indicative of the pragmatism of instrumentalism in the pursuit of research questions that contribute new or additional knowledge in preference to questioning existing knowledge. Mainstreaming of structural inequalities as disadvantage displaces the politics of race discrimination and difference. It marks liberal ideology of increasing (equal) opportunity and in turn the premise that race discrimination is no longer relevant for explaining the social and economic status of indigenous Australians. Taylor (2004) reminds that individualism

encourages the forgetting of history and the nature of white supremacy in the systematic social engineering leading to inequality.

The appeal of outcomes originates in the struggle to insert a degree of predictability and control in an age of manufactured uncertainty (Smyth and Dow, 1998). The rise of disadvantage as a descriptive in policy imports a momentary condition that overlooks capital, privilege, power or authority. Mainstreaming is intended to give back what has been taken – autonomy, identity, language and culture – in the absence of institutional change. Mainstreaming relies on the 'feel good' in which expressions of social cohesion are intended to blunt the impact of alienation from the mainstream economy. To critically dissect the discourse of disadvantage is important because meanings form the backbone of policy.

Mainstreaming as a model for increasing equality is paradoxical because equality exists or it does not. There can be no such thing as more equality unless this means that the pool of people who are equal to each other is greater, or increasing, compared to the pool of people who are outside of this. If disadvantage is merely an absence of advantage then we make light of those whose collective experience is telling of trenchant inequality. If the absence of advantage explains the exclusion of the oppressed from the mainstream then we require urgently a more satisfactory framework that does not hide behind imprecision. It is instructive that reference to discrimination and inequality can be interpreted as a gap for which government can be held accountable and that this might explain the preference for descriptive not nominal disadvantage. It is timely for unencumbered expression of the excluded that remain largely invisible in the trajectory of mainstreaming.

Author Note

Stella's primary research interest is race formations – evolutionary hegemony or the changing significance of race – mediated within and through Indigenous contexts in sport, education, policy and popular culture. An independent scholar, she is published in peer reviewed journals including the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* and the *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*. Stella can be contacted via email: stella.coram@education.monash.edu.au

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Endnotes

¹ The objective here is to highlight the institutionalising of disadvantage in reports, initiatives, policy statements and the like. Given the sheer breadth of material documenting indigenous disadvantage it would be near impossible to try to capture the essence of every relevant document. On that basis I provide a selective and rudimentary sampling of documents to indicate the prescience of disadvantage. This includes Victorian documents and newspaper clippings.

² Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCADIC, 1991)

³ COAG Whole-of-Government Initiative accessed April 5, 2006 from www.dest.gov.au/sectors/indigenous/education/policy/issues/reviews/coag

⁴ Koori is a term of identity in reference to Indigenous people and place in Victoria (Birch, 1997: 11).

'WHO ARE STRANGERS?': 'ABSORBING' SUDANESE REFUGEES INTO A WHITE AUSTRALIA

CLEMENCE DUE

Abstract

This paper analyses several newspaper articles which appeared in the media following the murder of teenager Liep Gony who had come to Australia as a refugee from Sudan, and the subsequent restriction on the African refugee intake made by the former immigration minister Kevin Andrews. The paper considers several discourses which appeared in these articles, and which were indicative of the wider press coverage following these events. These discourses centered on whiteness as the normative mode of belonging in Australia (as a result of the ongoing denial of Indigenous sovereignty over the land), and the desired absorption of any non-white refugees into the dominant white culture. The paper concludes that such constructions of white belonging in Australia further deny Indigenous ownership of the land, and attempt to override any perceived differences in non-white immigrants and refugees, whilst at the same time constructing the nation as generous and free of racism.

Introduction

In recent years, issues such as increasing levels of border control, increasingly restricted immigration (especially concerning asylum seekers), and rising concern around national security issues stemming from the so-called 'War on Terror', have all contributed to discussions surrounding the concept of belonging in Australia, and who is considered to be 'Australian'. Such discussions were seen recently in relation

to the former Minister for Immigration, Kevin Andrews', restriction on refugees from Africa on the basis of claims of 'African gangs' and a supposed failure by refugees from Africa to integrate. This was exemplified when he stated that; "Australia has the right to ensure those who come here are integrating into a socially cohesive community" (cited in Farouque and Cooke 2007), echoing Howard's famous 2001 election campaign statement; "We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come" (cited in Marr and Wilkinson 2003: 245).

Andrews' comments regarding integration came soon after the bashing murder of teenager Liep Gony, who came to Australia eight years ago from Sudan. The comments were made despite the fact that Gony's attackers were in fact neither Sudanese nor refugees, and also despite the fact that, as Gony's mother stated, it was incorrect to label Liep as a refugee or as Sudanese since he was an Australian citizen (Dubecki 2007). The media quickly picked up on the story of Andrews' restriction on the African refugee quota and his subsequent comments about the integration (or implied lack of) of African refugees. Whilst some of these articles focused on the personal stories of African refugees, or reported on the response given from African people or refugee advocates, the majority focused on issues such as integration (or perceived lack of integration) or economic concerns such as refugee funding, whilst at the same time laying claims to Australia's generosity and tolerance towards asylum seekers. Almost all the articles

contained ideologies which centered around a normative white mode of belonging in which those located as racial Others – such as the Sudanese people – have to conform to a dominant white perception of the Australian ‘way of life’.

As such, these articles were reflective of similar sentiments as those predominately seen in the mainstream press surrounding Indigenous Australians, whom the media has frequently vilified as ‘criminal’ (Cowlshaw 2004; Cuneen 2001), representing Indigenous men as sexual predators, and Indigenous women and children as passive, vulnerable, and in need of white society to save them. These stereotypes were frequently seen in the mainstream newspapers printed around the same time, which regularly depicted Indigenous communities as dysfunctional and violent, and frequently produced graphic descriptions of child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities. It was on the basis of such stereotypes that the Howard government was able to advocate paternalistic approaches to Indigenous peoples such as Shared Responsibility Agreements which forced Indigenous peoples into ‘reciprocal’ agreements with the government in return for basic services which the government has a responsibility to provide for all people (see McCausland 2005). It was this approach to Indigenous peoples which culminated in the Northern Territory Intervention. As discussed later in this paper, the relationship between such attitudes towards Indigenous peoples and the treatment of refugees was intimately bound together with the ‘imagining’ of Australia as normatively home to white people.

There has been much research conducted on belonging within the field

of critical race and whiteness studies in Australia (for a sample of this see Hage 1998; Imtoul 2007; Osuri and Banerjee 2004; Perera 2005). Such research has highlighted how those identified as ‘white’ in Australia are *a priori* taken as belonging within the Australian nation, the corollary being that those who are not identified as such must prove their suitability in order to belong. The depiction of the Australian nation as normatively white serves also to deny the histories of colonisation and dispossession that lie at the very heart of the nation, and in so doing refute ongoing claims to Indigenous sovereignty. As such, hegemonic, racialized power relations are reinforced and maintained. Such depictions of Australia as a ‘white nation’ hold considerable import for the ways in which non-white immigrants and refugees are represented in Australia, and the nation’s representations of such people are intimately related to its desire to deny or refuse Indigenous sovereignty.

The relationship between Indigenous sovereignty, white Australia and refugees is summarized well by Katrina Schlunke (2002), who writes that “...the indigenous person, the refugee and the new and old ‘settler’ sit in an awkward arrangement of relationship which is radically exposed through the reality of indigenous sovereignty. Indigenous sovereignty insists the question is asked: Who are strangers? The situation of the refugee insists the question is asked: Who is able to practice hospitality?” (Schlunke 2002).

These questions are particularly relevant in the face of claims of *terra nullius*, or of Australia being a land free of inhabitants prior to colonisation, and the corresponding denial of Indigenous Australians as occupiers of Australia. These claims were one of the main

methods by which colonial settlers claimed an identity as other than migrants in Australia, and such issues "...went to the heart of the manner in which the continent was settled. The myth of *terra nullius* was dependent upon the non-recognition of the local population and the 'indigenisation' of their white conquerors" (Ahluwalia 2001: 65). Such a method of being seen to be native to Australia, which relied so strongly on denying the belonging of Indigenous Australians, meant that for British settlers Australia could be seen as a legitimately *white* country. As such, belonging in Australia came to be seen via a "racially coded model of citizenship" (Perera 2007: 6) in which the people who were considered to be legitimate Australians were white.

Therefore, as a result of acts such as dispossession and genocide forced on the Indigenous people, it is largely assumed that Australia is in fact a 'white' country rather than an Aboriginal one, and consequently in order to be seen to belong in Australia in such a way as to be best able to access resources, education, health care and so on, people have to either have enough cultural capital in terms of 'identifiers' of whiteness (such as having 'white' skin, speaking English, having an Australian accent and so on) to be seen to be white, or be seen to be adhering to the rules and values laid out by the white nation (Hage 1998).

The questions raised surrounding white Australia's legitimacy to accept or not accept refugees in the face of Indigenous sovereignty means that there is an urgent need to maintain a white Australia, and in many cases non-white refugees "disturb the coloniser's sense of self" (Perera 2002: 4). In other words, given that white Australia needs to maintain a perception of the country as normatively white (as opposed to

legitimately belonging to Indigenous Australians), immigration by people who are not perceived to be white threatens such ideologies, and by implication also becomes threatening to the white nation. This is also the case with regards to Indigenous Australians whose status as First Nations peoples also threatens normative conceptions of Australia as legitimately white. This is especially so since, as Jon Stratton (2007) argues, "Australians who claim whiteness distinguish themselves from those they identify as non-white and as not properly Australian. White Australians understand themselves as always already here, in Australia. Of course, this raises a huge question about the status of Aborigines and marks the paradoxical anxieties... of settler Australians" (Stratton 2007: 173).

Following from these issues of white belonging, is the question of how non-white people exist within Australia. In many cases, non-white migrants and refugees are only accepted if they are seen to be behaving in a way deemed acceptable to white Australia, and are therefore able to be absorbed easily into the country without being threatening to the country's status as legitimately white. Hage argues that this perception of a dominant white culture within Australia is "maintained through a process of incorporating Australia's multicultural reality by constructing it as a reality of tamed ethnicities located around a primary white culture" (Hage 1998: 209). In other words, as previously mentioned, if Australia is seen to remain firmly as a white country then any other people living within the country are seen to exist *in addition to* the white majority, and they also have to be seen to be acting in a way which conforms to white conceptions of living.

This means that, to draw on Hage once more, non-white people are generally constructed as being *tolerated* by the

white majority rather than as belonging in Australia in their own right. However, as Hage (1998) argues, the notion of 'tolerance' is problematic because of the unequal power relations which are embedded in the term. The ability to be tolerant implies an equal ability to be intolerant should one choose to do so, which therefore, as Hage argues, "leaves the power of the racist unchallenged" (1998, p. 95). In other words, the power to be intolerant is not taken away just by asking people to be tolerant. Thus there is an imbalance of power that is implicit in discourses around tolerance, in that it is only those who are in positions of power (white Australians in this case) who have the ability to 'tolerate'. To illustrate this, Hage points out that it doesn't make sense to consider a newly arrived migrant being 'tolerant' of a white Australian, because they neither have the power to do so, nor the power to make such decisions about the Australian national space (Hage, 1998). Discourses of 'tolerance' therefore position one group of people (white Australians) as managers of another group (minority racial groups) within the national space.

Osuri and Banerjee (2004) extend this argument of white people as national managers when they argue that "it is through the logic of... white teleologies that the Australian government has been able to continue its detention of asylum seekers, perform a racialised border protection, and continue its ongoing targeting of Muslims and Arab Australians" (Osuri and Banerjee 2004: 169). In other words, such conceptions of whiteness as the norm in Australia (as opposed to, say, Indigenous populations) allow for issues such as border protection from predominately non-white 'illegal immigrants', and conceptions of minority racial groups to be seen to be potentially threatening to the country, as opposed to simply

presenting a different reality in which "white people are not the main occupiers of the centre of the national space" (Hage 1998: 19).

In other words, and following from Hage, there are normative conceptions in place within Australia regarding what it means to be 'Australian' and to have an 'Australian way of life' and, as previously discussed in the literature regarding Indigenous sovereignty, these normative conceptions primarily revolve around traditional 'Anglo' values. This is discussed by Imtoul (2007) who argues that there are normative conceptions of 'Australian-ness' in place, writing that "the majority group in society ('guardians of the nation') believe that you can neither *feel* nor *be* Australian if you do not conform to particular normative conceptualisations of what it means to *feel* or *be* Australian" (Imtoul 2007: 5). Such normative conceptions revolve primarily around Australia being conceived as a 'white' country, and this is reflected in the ways in which, for example, the Howard government in particular attempted to coerce Indigenous Australians into assimilating into white culture. This was seen in attempts to create 'nuclear families' and promote home ownership (Dillion 2007); values and aspirations considered to be typically 'Western', and therefore typically 'Australian'.

Another technique used to maintain a perception of Australia as a normatively white country is that of the denial of the existence of any of the systemic racist behaviours which are seen as a result of the aforementioned normative white modes of belonging in Australia. Such denials in turn lead to positive self-presentations of the country and the way in which white Australia 'deals' with 'issues' such as refugees and Indigenous affairs. So, whilst racism is widely recognized by many scholars as

fundamental to colonial nations such as Australia (e.g., Moreton-Robinson 2004; Nicolacopoulos & Vassilacopolous 2004), the existence of racism is still widely denied. Such denials of racism serve not only to justify any sort of racist behaviours or opinions which may be exhibited, but also to position the white nation of white people as not racist, and thus to deny the existence of racist behaviours at all. One outcome of this is that racism is not considered to have any relation to the overall attitudes or behaviours of dominant group members (Van Dijk 1993). This is reflected in the press, where the strategy of denying the existence of racism in a country "reinterprets, marginalises and integrates evidence of racism" (Szuchewycz 2000: 497), thus reinforcing a dominant and positive view of the country as being tolerant and welcoming, and at the same time legitimizing white group dominance and asserting white values and white ownership of the national space.

Such techniques mean that, whilst it could be considered to be a racist act to cut the intake of a specific group of refugees (especially a group so in need), instead Australia's policies regarding refugees are presented as leading the world and generous beyond necessity. This construction of the nation as 'generous' is also reflected in Indigenous affairs where the government is often constructed as generous due to the amounts of money spent on Indigenous peoples, despite the fact that much of this is spent on administration costs and very little is spent on programmes which are owned and operated by Indigenous peoples on Indigenous terms. Therefore decisions which result in the reduction of the African refugee intake or in the erosion of Indigenous rights and self-determination as was the case in the Northern Territory Intervention, are portrayed as existing within a dominant

framework of a tolerant and generous country. Thus it is made easier for the public to be uncritical of such decisions because they believe that Australia is fundamentally a good nation.

As will be highlighted throughout the remainder of this paper, all of these discourses were frequently seen throughout the media and the press in response to the then Immigration Minister's comments regarding integration, and his decision not to accept any more African refugees.

Methodology

Since the media is one of the primary sites through which most people living in Australia gain their knowledge of minority groups, especially refugees, this paper will consider extracts from three articles which were considered representative of much of the press surrounding this issue. These articles were; 'Big hearted' by Andrew Bolt which appeared in *The Herald Sun* on the 5th October 2007, 'In time of strain, Minister failing test of leadership' by Farah Farouque published in *The Age* on October 11 2007, and an editorial from *The Herald Sun* on the 12th October 2007.

Before speaking about the analysis of these articles, I would like to briefly acknowledge that terms such as 'race', 'whiteness', 'minority groups', 'Indigenous Australians' and so on are problematic and complicated terms to use, not self-explanatory ones. Such terms take a wide range of differing experiences and combine them into one category. As such, these terms are used mindfully, and reference the fact that it is as a result of such stereotypes of exclusive racial identification and belonging, (and through the existence of binaries between 'self' and 'other', or

'us' and 'them') that racial inequality and privilege is able to continue to exist in Australian society today. This means that whilst this paper acknowledges that such terms are the result of social constructions which prioritise racial differences as a mode of categorizing people in the social world, the terms here are used as they appear in the media and, since this paper focuses on the differences between people classified as 'white' or 'black' the usage of these terms, whilst problematic, is unavoidable.

Analysis

The analysis of these articles revealed three main themes of belonging within Australia. Specifically, these were; who it is who gets to belong, (or more specifically who is tolerated) by the dominant white group, the assumption that whiteness is the normative mode of belonging within Australia (which is primarily constructed in opposition to Indigenous belonging), and finally a denial of the existence of racism within Australia.

Many of the articles in the broader corpus of articles examined for this paper contained themes of belonging which centered upon marginalized racial groups being *tolerated* by white Australia as discussed earlier. One of the striking things about this was that in many cases, and in all 3 articles I am analyzing here, this theme of tolerance was exemplified by a discourse of *absorption*.

An example of this is Bolt's article, in which he states;

...you'd think from the hate-dancing party on Andrews' head that never before have we set quotas on refugees from any one area and only now will we act in this "racist" way.

False. Governments from both sides have for many years set such quotas, and have no option, given that there are more than 20 million refugees looking for homes.

Limits must be set, as must quotas for refugees from any particular area – not just to spread our help but to quietly ensure we don't take in so many from one particular group so as to overwhelm our ability to absorb them

In this extract, Bolt defends Andrews' decision to reduce the intake of African refugees on the basis that 'limits must be set' because of the huge numbers of refugees looking for a place to find refuge, and because of a need to 'quietly ensure we don't take in so many from one particular group so as to overwhelm our ability to absorb them'. What this line of argument appears to be stating is that there is a finite number of people from 'particular groups' (in this instance, Sudanese people) who will be able to be 'absorbed' by the white nation. The use of the word 'absorbed' seems to imply that the limits set around refugees from certain areas ensure that they can be 'swallowed' as it were by a white Australia so that their 'difference' to the white majority is as least noticeable as possible, and therefore makes as little difference to white Australia as possible. The word also seems to be an example of the fear held by white Australia that it could be changed by non-white people or 'invaded' by non-white Others. It could be suggested that such fears contain the denied knowledge of colonization in Australia, where it has been white people who have invaded and refused to be absorbed.

The word racist, placed in inverted commas, serves to deny and undermine claims of racist behaviour, or even that Andrews' decision was made on the basis of race (despite the fact that this is

explicitly what he stated). Such denials of racism will be discussed later.

This theme of absorption and integration is also demonstrated in another excerpt from Bolt's article in which he states;

These are not people like my parents and so many other post-war immigrants from Europe... Those migrants knew many of our codes to getting on. They didn't need the kind of help that governments now must offer the Sudanese, including even teaching them to treat our road rules as, well, rules and our police as public servants not public enemies.

It is for reasons like this that sensible governments make sure they bring in only as many refugees from any one area that they can hope to integrate.

Again, this extract focuses on the 'integration' of refugees, and implies that there are a certain number of people from any particular area who will be able to be successfully 'integrated'. Once again, this implies that white Australia will only be able to manage a limited number of non-white 'others' who are not familiar with 'our codes to getting on'. The implication of this is that these 'codes to getting on' are white codes which are closer to those of Europe, and this serves to place Australia within a Western and white world and again denies Indigenous sovereignty over the land.

The justification Bolt supplies for Andrews' decision, that a 'sensible government will make sure they bring in only as many refugees from one area as they can hope to integrate' also provides legitimacy for reduced intake, and presents it as the common-sense approach. However, the extract does not consider that, rather than simply being about 'absorption' by white Australia, 'integration' of refugees will in large part depend upon the number of

resources available to newly arrived refugees, for example, how many hours of English lessons they receive (this is currently just 610 hours for those over 25 with low levels of education, and only 510 hours for most refugees). Clearly, knowledge of Australia (such as 'road rules') is important for refugees, and therefore perhaps the billions of dollars invested in Australia's detention centers and border control would be better spent on helping refugees learn skills that would provide them with opportunities for employment and community-building.

This theme of 'absorption' is also illustrated in the next extract taken from the article by Farah Farouque;

One of the great contradictions, however, is that some people in this diverse country continue to express fear of new waves of migration. Yet while fear might be a hallmark of the nation's migration story.... We have shown a great ability to absorb and integrate new peoples.

Whilst the extract begins by stating that it is a contradiction that people in Australia fear migration (presumably because all non-indigenous Australian people are migrants), the extract continues to state that this is unfounded because 'we have shown a great ability to absorb and integrate new people'. As such, the 'fear of new waves of migration' is not unfounded simply because refugees are in themselves not threatening; it is because we can 'absorb' them, and presumably any differences they bring which we do not like.

The use of the word 'we' is also interesting. It occurs many times throughout articles such as this which speak of a minority group ostensibly in comparison to the rest of Australia. However, it is useful to question who is

included in this 'we'. As Katrina Schlunke (2002) questions, "how does the omnipotent 'we' hold for the most recent new-comers?" In a similar way, it could also be asked how the 'we' holds for people who have just become Australian citizens, or how it holds for people from other minority racial groups who may have been in Australia for generations, yet still are considered 'different'? For example, in the above usage, 'we' clearly does not hold for Sudanese Australians. The usage also excludes Indigenous Australians who did not make a choice to absorb or integrate white Australians.

It is arguable that this 'we' refers to the dominant (white) group in Australia, thus rendering visible the assumptions and ideologies regarding white Australia's authority to decide who it is who gets to live within the country. The use of this word serves to reinforce perceptions of Australia as a dominant white country by excluding other, non-white people, and therefore by constructing white people as the norm. Clearly such assumptions are threatened by Indigenous Australians' prior claim on the land, yet issues of sovereignty are neatly overwritten when the 'we' of white Australia is constructed as all-encompassing.

This theme of an underlying assumption about whiteness as being the legitimately dominant mode of belonging within Australia, with white laws and white customs being the measuring stick against which all other groups of people are judged was also common throughout the articles. This is exemplified in another extract from Bolt's article, where he states;

...no one can deny that bringing in refugees is a more costly and risky game than bringing in educated and skilled professionals from countries much like ours.

Refugees rarely pay their own way, to be frank. Take the Sudanese. Many had their schooling disrupted by genocide and come from a very poor and tribal culture a world away from ours. Add to that the fact that they look different and no wonder it's a challenge for some to get going. No wonder the young men in particular hang out with each other for support, and show attitude rather than defeat.

There are several instances in this extract in which we see whiteness being constructed as the norm in Australia. Firstly, we see a denial of an Indigenous people in the term 'countries much like ours', since by this he presumably means Western countries. Secondly, whiteness is portrayed as the norm where Bolt states that 'they look different'. The question has to be asked here, different from whom? Different from other Sudanese or African Australians? Clearly not. Is it a 'problem' that they look different from Asian Australians or Indigenous Australians? This is unlikely too. Presumably what Bolt refers to here is that they look different from *white* Australians, thereby once again constructing whiteness as the 'norm'.

Whiteness and typical 'Australian-ness' was also a feature of the article by Farouque, who writes;

The story of Ajang Gor is a personal testament: When the teenager was attacked, he was returning from a true-blue youthful pursuit – working a shift in a fast-food store for pocket money. How typically Australian.

Seventeen year old Ajang Gor had also come to Australia from Sudan, and was attacked with bottles by a group of men shouting racial abuse shortly after Liep Gony was murdered.

In this extract we see again the construction of belonging in Australia as a white belonging. For example, it is

considered to be 'Australian' to be working a shift in a fast-food store, but is it considered equally 'Australian' to be brought up in an Indigenous community? Or to work in an African restaurant? Or live in a Sudanese-Australian community? Perhaps the author here does not mean 'Australian' but 'Western', or 'white' which is the identity that the government and many people within Australia are continually trying to reinforce and retain.

And what if Ajang Gor had not been working a shift in a fast food store for pocket money? What if he had been doing something which is *not* considered to be 'typically Australian', would he then have 'deserved' his attack? Would it have been more justified if he hadn't been acting in an 'Australian' way?

The editorial also contains themes of a normative white mode of belonging, as well as a denial of the existence of racism in Australia. For example, one extract stated;

Last week Immigration minister Kevin Andrews said that because Australia had filled the already reduced African refugee quota, we would take no more before next July.

The minister said he is concerned about their ability to integrate.

Inevitably the minister has been vilified as racist by those whose preconceptions lead them to believe that whenever there is racial tension it is the fault of the rest of us.

As in the previous extracts, the use of the inclusive pronoun 'us' works to exclude Sudanese people, thereby constructing their form of belonging in Australia as being something other than the norm – they are not included in 'us'. This works on the assumption that 'the rest of us'

are the people in Australia who are not Sudanese, and therefore also constructs a divide between 'us' (the Australian people) and 'them' (the Sudanese people). Such black-and-white, all-or-nothing constructions were common throughout the articles, and leave little room for understanding differences in the ways in which people may perceive their belonging and existence within Australia.

The extract also denies the existence of a racial element to the Ministers comments and decision by stating that he has been 'vilified', and by placing anybody doing this 'vilification' in a negative light. The sarcastic tone of the last sentence implies that any racial tension cannot be the fault of 'us' who are not Sudanese, and therefore by implication must be a result of the behaviour of Sudanese Australians. Again, such black-or-white constructions leave no room for considering that in fact racial tension might, at least in part, the fault of 'us'.

The technique of denying racism was commonly seen throughout the articles reviewed, as was the technique of the positive presentation of Australia. These methods were frequently used to either defend Andrews' comments, or, if the author was critical of the Minister's comments, at least to defend the Australian community as not racist.

So, for example, Bolt quotes Australia's African refugee intake as 30 per cent of the 13,000 people accepted per year, and then argues that;

That's a lot of refugees, actually, and not what you'd expect from a country rotten with racism. We're a generous people, really, which some seem terribly determined not to believe

Clearly this passage performs several functions. Firstly, it attempts to present

Australia in a positive way by arguing that Australia is taking in a lot of refugees. However, in many contexts, that is not the case. Firstly, Australia will accept over 150,000 immigrants in the 2007-2008 migration programme (DIAC 2007). Thirteen thousand refugees is not 'a lot' compared to that. Neither is the initial 3,900 African refugees 'a lot' in the context of the 200,000 people killed and 2.5 million people displaced by fighting in Western Darfur (Costello 2007). It is also not 'a lot' in the context of other countries and the number of refugees they take in. According to Mares (2001), Australia ranked number 33 on the UNHCR list of total refugee population and did not even make the list of the top forty countries for the number of refugees per capita. According to the UNHCR, Australia hosts 3 refugees per 1000 inhabitants, compared to Armenia which hosts 80 per 1000. And according to the United States Committee for Refugees which includes Palestinians in the equation (not done by the UNHCR), the ratio of refugees to the total population in Australia is 1:1145 compared to Jordan 1:3, Thailand 1:285 or Canada 1:566. Bolt however conveniently ignores these statistics, presumably assuming that 13,000 will seem like a lot at face value.

Secondly, the passage (based on the assumption of the large refugee intake) portrays Australia as a 'generous' people, 'which some seem terribly determined not to believe'. This passage serves two functions. Firstly, it presents Australia positively, as generous. And secondly, it presents people who do not accept that Australia is generous, who are presumably the same people who disagree with Andrews' decision to reduce the African refugee intake, in a negative light.

Whilst critical of Andrews' comments regarding the inability of African people

to integrate into Australian culture, Farouque's article also denies racism within Australia;

It would be a great mistake, however, to condemn Australia as a racist society and Australians collectively as racist. The days of institutional racism have long gone with the dismantling of the White Australia policy and Aborigines obtaining the vote.

The author provides evidence for her claim that 'the days of institutionalized racism have long gone' in the form of the 'dismantling of the White Australia policy and Aborigines obtaining the vote'. There are several issues with this statement. Firstly, these two events in themselves do not mean that there is no longer any racism or that racist practices no longer exist. As previously discussed, it is clear that white privilege is still very much institutionalized within Australia.

Secondly, as has been argued many times before in relation to Indigenous people, just because a form of institutionalized racism is formally brought to an end does not mean that racial equality suddenly occurs, nor that everyday racism no longer exists. To use the example given in the extract, the fact that Indigenous people now vote does not mean that racism no longer exists and instead it is the case that, as is evident in social indicators such health outcomes, equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia is still far from being reached.

The editorial also speaks proudly of Australia's record with refugees thereby presenting Australia in a positive light, stating;

Australia's record in giving sanctuary to refugees from a multitude of ethnic and religious background leads the world.

We can also be proud of our success in absorbing them with minimal difficulty.

Again Australia is represented in a positive way here, despite the fact that many people would argue (and in many cases the figures suggest) that Australia does not lead the world, either in terms of the number of refugees it accepts or the way in which people who come to seek asylum in the country are treated. It could also be argued that, given the need white Australia feels to maintain its power and the fact that people from minority racial groups are only accepted on certain terms, there is not quite so much success to be proud of as is suggested.

The extract also employs the discourse of 'absorption' as was outlined earlier, which again reinforces the fear of difference portrayed by the white nation, and the desire to hold onto white belonging as the normative mode of belonging in Australia, a theme which has been seen throughout this paper.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the above analyses, issues of belonging were at the centre of much of the discussion in the media following the murder of Liep Gony and former Immigration Minister Andrews' decision to reduce the African refugee intake. This discussion was often constructed specifically in terms of the absorption of non-white Others in a country in which whiteness is the normative mode of belonging, and also consisted of denials of racism in, or positive self presentation of, the white nation.

In many cases, Sudanese and other African refugees were constructed as unable to be as easily integrated or 'absorbed' as other immigrants, primarily because of how different their

appearance and culture is to white Australia. Such constructions overlooked the many differing cultures that exist within Australia already and instead located belonging in Australia specifically around whiteness and white culture. It was also frequently portrayed by the media that people who are considered different to the white majority will only be accepted if they can be 'absorbed', and if their differences can be minimalised so that they are not as confronting. However, national belonging on the terms of whiteness can never be as easy as that, considering the ongoing fact of Indigenous sovereignty. As Katrina Schlunke states; "Decisions about who belongs and who doesn't are very complicated ones to make in a settler nation whose non-Aboriginal population has no treaty with the owners of the land...." (Schlunke 2002). Yet decisions about who does and does not belong have been made, and made to the detriment of African people waiting in refugee camps for somewhere to live.

Even articles which were more sympathetic to African refugees still operated within a framework of maintaining white hegemony and 'absorbing' African people so that their difference to the white majority becomes unnoticeable. Many of these articles seemed to gloss over why Australia is meant to be offering refuge in the first place, and placed the need of Australia to remain white above the obligation to provide asylum for people who are displaced from their home countries. As Allon (2002) states; "In the context of the changing world order, there is a need to recognize that a community's obligations extend beyond itself" (Allon 2002). However, as seen in these articles, it was the need to maintain a perception of whiteness as the main mode of belonging which was the central concern in the reporting of

this issue. As such, the mainstream media simultaneously overlooked the needs of refugees and denied Australia's Indigenous heritage and the rights of Indigenous people to their land by constructing Australia as normatively 'white'.

Despite the racist element of the restriction on African refugees, the press generally denied the existence of racism and presented Australia in a positive light. It was maintained frequently that Australia was in fact a tolerant country, and a country free of racism. Such constructions allowed for Australia's refugee policies to be considered generous, despite evidence to the contrary, and therefore any restrictions on the intake of refugees was able to be legitimized.

Such constructions of generosity and tolerance mean that it is extremely difficult for non-white minority groups' claims of racism to be heard and listened to. The constructions also make it difficult for any acknowledgement of the existence of white privilege in Australia or of the corresponding subordination of Indigenous Australians and many refugees. As long as such an acknowledgment is lacking, white hegemony will continue in Australia, and restrictions on refugees desperately in need of somewhere to live will continue to be able to be made on the basis of the claim that some groups of refugees are not integrating. Yet such restrictions may in fact also be to the detriment of white Australia since, as Schlunke states;

... it is only within the figure of the refugee that the hope of an Australia with integrity can come into play. Only through a constant openness and expressed hospitality to the stranger who is also ourself can we simultaneously decentre the racist imagining of the anglo-Australian and transform our relationship with

indigenous Australia. There is no resolution in this. Only a constant negotiation between welcoming strangers, farewelling ourselves and discovering the possibility of integrity within our shores (Schlunke 2002).

Author Note

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WHITE NATION FANTASY AND THE NORTHERN TERRITORY 'INTERVENTION'

ODETTE KELADA

Abstract

This article, 'White Nation Fantasy and the Northern Territory 'Intervention'', looks at the term 'whiteness' and the notion of 'white blindness'. It seeks to illustrate how white blindness allows White Nation Fantasy to operate to the extent of becoming the real 'national emergency' at the heart of Australia's race relations. It draws on the recent Northern Territory Legislation (2007) as evidence of how White Nation Fantasy currently dominates Australia's socio-political landscape. It examines the ramifications of perpetuating colonialist narratives in relation to issues of identity, justice, paternalism and moral discourses as evident in the production of the National Emergency Response Bill 2007.

Introduction

There is a popular children's story called *Where the Wild Things Are*. In this story a little white boy called Max dons an animal suit and travels across oceans to a land filled with wild things/monsters. He proceeds to not simply play with them but to conquer them:

And when he came to the place where the Wild Things are, they roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws, till Max said be still and tamed them with a magic trick of staring into all their yellow eyes without blinking once [1963, 17 – 21].

He becomes king of all the Wild Things. He can even tell them when to stop causing a rumpus and go to bed. Then he gets lonely and hungry and returns home, stepping into his 'private boat' despite the pleas from the Wild

Things for Max to stay, coming back to his nice hot supper.

This is the story that many children in Australia have grown up with and loved. It has been critiqued for its colonial underpinnings – white boy who conquers a strange land of savages – and such texts are starting points to understanding what studies of whiteness mean, how colonial narratives slip into mainstream discourse and our psyche. Stories such as this may be seen as children's fantasies but what often goes unrealised is the extent to which fantasy can infiltrate adult realms and national identities with highly detrimental consequences.

This article looks at the term 'whiteness' and the notion of 'white blindness'. It then seeks to illustrate how white blindness allows White Nation Fantasy to operate to the extent of becoming the real 'national emergency' at the heart of Australia's race relations. It draws on the recent Northern Territory Legislation (2007) as evidence of how White Nation Fantasy currently dominates Australia's socio-political landscape.

'Whiteness' is not necessarily a biological fact of birth or physical marker, as this can be a misleading categorisation. 'Whiteness' is the 'location of experience' as bell hooks describes this racial positioning of subjects [hooks, 1996, 18]. This location of experience is generally invisible because as stated, whiteness is

perceived as 'natural, 'normal' and 'human' rather than constructed and oppressive.

Ruth Frankenberg in the influential text *White Women, Race Matters* specifies whiteness as follows:

'Whiteness...has a set of linked dimensions. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a "standpoint", a place from which white people look at themselves, at others and at society. Third "whiteness" refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed [cited in Warren, 2003, 22].

Ghassan Hage defines whiteness as a 'fantasy position of cultural dominance borne out of the history of colonial expansion. Not an essence that one has or does not have' but an aspiration [1998, 20]. Hage argues that 'whiteness and Australianness – of which Whiteness remains a crucial component can be accumulated' and people can be said to be more or less white and Australian depending on the social attributes they possess such as looks, physical characteristics, accent, language, demeanour, taste, nationally valued social and cultural preferences and behaviour [53-54].

No matter how much it is maintained that multiculturalism reflects the reality of Australia, the visible and public side of power remains essentially Anglo White: politicians are mainly Anglo white, customs officers, police officers and judges. At the same time, Australian mythmakers and icons, old and new are largely Anglo white, from shearers to surfers to television and radio personalities ect. This creates a lasting impression that power, 'even if open for non-Anglos to accumulate whiteness within it, remains an Anglo looking phenomena [190- 191]

Richard Dyer also noted in his seminal text, *White* (1997), that identifying as universally human is the most powerful position one can inhabit. While there is this invisibility to whiteness in the sense of naming it as a race, its domination in terms of representation through media, advertising, literature, visual arts, social artifacts etc. is practically all

pervasive in the West. The term white blindness refers to this invisibility and inability to see whiteness as raced but rather normative and universal.

In August 2006 an event titled 'The White Blindfold Ritual' was held by ANTAR at the Melbourne Town Hall where legal and union leaders among others, literally put on white blindfolds. This was to symbolise the inability of white people to see, understand and acknowledge their own race as visible, the consequences of white blindness to Indigenous people and to mark a commitment to 'see things differently'.

Human Rights Lawyer Julian Burnside said at the ceremony that 'It's fair to say that my white blindfold only came off fairly recently and until that time I didn't know that I had it on. But perhaps that's the point' (ANTAR, 2007).

Working to remove what has been termed 'the white blindfold' counters the inability to see whiteness as a race but rather as the norm. One does not have to be 'white' in order to be 'white washed' for colonialist discourse is predominant, pervasive, internalised and often so integrated into the order of our society that it is invisible.

An awareness of white blindness enables an acknowledgement of how this racial dominance informs political strategies and events. This can be seen through examining as a case study the way in which the events in the Northern Territory unfolded. Looking at the production of the recent Northern Territory Legislation provides insight into how whiteness works as an ideological force shaping Australian society at every level of power and capital - from political

power and national identity formation to land rights and possession.

Here understanding and *seeing* 'whiteness' enables one to move beyond the misdirected emphasis on the 'other', the oft cited 'Aboriginal Problem' to realise what it reveals about white Australia - what can be learnt about how whiteness works, its constructions, conceptualisation, belief systems, how whiteness is produced, circulated, performed and reiterated to sustain its cultural power. Then one may determine that as Germaine Greer stated, there is no Aboriginal problem in Australia, there is a white problem [2004, 2].

The following study of the Northern Territory Intervention utilises the framework of 'White Nation Fantasy' as this exemplifies the impact of whiteness as a social construct and the ramifications of white blindness. White Nation Fantasy is a concept which has been critiqued and developed by numerous cultural and race theorists, a primary one of which is Ghassan Hage who wrote *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* [1998]. Hage provides the following definition:

White Nation Fantasy is where white racists and tolerant, white multiculturalists both see their nation structured around a white culture which they control, with Aboriginal people and migrants as exotic objects [48].

Hage notes that this fantasy, while socially and historically grounded in ideals of white dominance emerging from the history of white colonisation of Australia, has a great capacity for adaptation so is able to sustain itself and offers the subject 'a relatively stable and viable sense of themselves', so a 'credible and continuing sense of white dominance' [209]. In this landscape, white Australians

...share in a concept of themselves as nationalists and of the nation as a space structured around a white culture where Aboriginal people and non-white 'ethnics' are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a white national

will' [18]. This belief in mastery over the nation is defined as White Nation Fantasy. 'Nationalist practices seem to be necessarily grounded in an image in which the nationalists construct themselves as spatially dominant' with 'managerial rights over racialised/ethnicised groups or persons which are consequently constructed as manageable objects [48].

Such a framework when applied to the Northern Territory Intervention allows an insight into why Australia accepts the intervention/invasion occurring and what this indicates about race relations in Australia. Here is a brief timeline of the events I am referring to:

-15 June 2007 - *Little Children Are Sacred Report: Report of the Northern Territory Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse 2007* is released.

-22 June - Federal Government declares a National Emergency as a result of report findings on child abuse and details of his plan begin to emerge

- 27- 28 June - Federal Government seizes control of the administration of Indigenous Communities in the Northern Territory. Troops move into Central Australian communities.

- 7 August - The Federal Government has introduced draft laws into parliament that allows it to intervene in Northern Territory Indigenous communities.

-16 August - The Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill is put to vote in the Senate.

- 17 August -The Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill is

passed in the Senate with no amendments.

Further, the effects of the legislation include:

- Permits will not be required to visit larger public townships and the roads that connect them.

- Widespread alcohol restrictions, creating a general ban on people having, selling, transporting and drinking alcohol in prescribed areas.

- Fines of \$75,000 and up to 18 month imprisonment could be imposed on people who try to smuggle alcohol into the remote communities.

- The government acquires five year leases over townships and takes over the town camps.

- bans on the possession of pornography for five years, and impose regular audits on publicly-funded computers to stop sexually explicit material being accessed through the internet.

- It becomes an offence for people in Aboriginal communities to possess pornographic material, or for the material to be sent into the areas. People caught in the prescribed communities with five or more pornographic videos or magazines will be considered "traffickers" and could face up to two years in prison.

- It allows heavier penalties to be imposed on anyone who supplies five or more pornographic items.

- Australian Federal Police officers are given the same powers as local NT police.

- The Federal and NT governments will retain ownership of buildings and infrastructure on Aboriginal land that are constructed or upgraded with government funding.

-The legislation also prohibits Northern Territory judges and magistrates taking Aboriginal law into account when sentencing or considering bail applications.

[From 'NT Indigenous intervention bills introduced to parliament', National Indigenous Times, 7/8/07]

How Does the Northern Territory Legislation relate to White Nation Fantasy?

One of the key elements in viewing White Nation Fantasy in action and a key point I wish to draw from the case study, is that this fantasy depends on paternalism as this enables management and control to create a space structured around a white culture where 'Aboriginal people and non-white 'ethnics' are national objects to be moved or removed' [Hage, 1998, 18]. This legislation can be seen to fit into the definition of nationalist practices grounded in an image in which the nationalists construct themselves as spatially dominant with managerial rights over a racialised group 'consequently constructed as the manageable object' [48].

Elements of white fantasy can be seen in much of the Government policy on Indigenous Affairs. Robert Manne notes that Indigenous Australians have been long been subjected to policies and special laws in the name of protection which included 'controlled movement, marriage, sexual behaviour, children, employment, savings and the consumption of alcohol' [2007, 30].

When we look at this legislation and the way in which it was produced, there are three elements of

paternalism I wish to focus on to help appreciate the effects of such laws and actions. These are 1) observation/surveillance, 2) management and control, 3) lack of consultation,

In terms of surveillance, intensive scrutiny and monitoring is a necessary arm of paternalism as information on the movement of subordinated bodies is a vital mechanism for control of these bodies. Michel Foucault captured the effectiveness of surveillance and observation for disempowering and controlling subjects in his work *Discipline and Punish* [1977]. He drew on the example of the Panopticon to describe how this works. The Panopticon was a building designed for maximum surveillance of prisoners with the least deployment of resources.

The Pan-opticon has a tower in the centre surrounded by a ring shaped building composed of cells, each housing a prisoner. It allows for the continuous observation of inmates...Panopticism is the exemplary technique through which disciplinary power is able to function for it relies on surveillance...The major effect of the Pan-opticon; to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. [MacHoul & Grace, *Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject*, 1995, 67]

The inmates never know when they are being watched so they start to watch themselves all the time. In effect, the Northern Territory legislation, dependant on audits and checks, the takeover of Aboriginal land, quarantining of welfare payments practices, widespread alcohol restrictions, controls over the use of computers, takeovers of the administration of Aboriginal councils, created a Panopticon. To put the laws into action require instruments of surveillance which ensure Indigenous subjects are rendered constantly visible. The effect of such surveillance is an erosion of liberty, esteem and self – empowerment. In itself, this panoptical observation is a form of violence, the violation of consistently being watched and monitored. The fact that this legislation targets a specific race and people to be

subject to such supervision exemplifies discrimination on racial grounds. With these mechanisms in place, disciplinary management and control are achieved with greater ease.

Another aspect of paternalism is lack of consultation – This can be seen in the haste with which the legislation was passed, the lack of consultation with Indigenous peoples and the failure to take into account any of the recommendations of *The Little Children are Sacred Report*.

Democrat Senator, Andrew Bartlett described the procedure thus:

I have also been informed that the government intends bringing the legislation on for debate in the Senate tomorrow, with the aim of having it voted on by Thursday. Efforts by myself and others to seek to ensure a Senate Committee can look at the new laws and give Aboriginal people and others from the Northern Territory the chance to have a say, seem set to be squashed by the government. [2007]

Along with Bartlett, others expressed concern about the lack of consultation and haste. Law Council of Australia President, Tim Bugg, said that “the ultra-speedy passage of these Bills is also clearly designed to avoid public scrutiny” [Law Council of Australia site, 2007]. Labor MP Warren Snowdon called the tactics an abuse of due process. [Snowdon Site, 2007] A delegation of Indigenous leaders from the NT condemned the rushed legislation, one of the whom, John Ah Kit, compared the legislation to genocide saying “What is being pushed through parliament in the next couple of days is something that will go down in history as one of the bleakest days in the history of the

country" ('Indigenous intervention laws genocide', *The Age*, 2007).

The justification for the haste was to quote Mal Brough "This is an emergency situation in the Northern Territory and we need to act quickly," Mr Brough said, "Each and every day, children are being abused. We need strong powers so that we are not weighed down by unnecessary red tape and talk-fests, and can focus on doing what needs to be done" (*National Indigenous Times*, 2007). Anyone who criticised the measures was either 'Not a parent or doesn't have a soul' ('Legislate in haste, repent at Leisure', *The Age*, 2007) Strong words to counter opposition – If you disagree, you are soulless.

It was the declaration of a National Emergency tied in with moral discourses which provided the avenue for radical paternalist action – the declaration by Howard that the time for talking is over [*ABC News Site*, 2007] and the subsequent surveillance, management and control manifest in the 'intervention'. White Nation Fantasy is built on desire for power which is ultimately ensured if one continues to advocate paternalism. While paternalism prevails there is always a limit on the power, responsibility, freedom and self-governance of those inhabiting the 'child' space in the paternalistic dynamic.

A crisis or state of emergency which calls for a paternalist response is a crisis which self-perpetuates, bites its own tail and creates the destruction it supposedly responds to so diligently. This meets the criteria of fantasy as the solutions put forth are inevitably illusory - illusions of cleaning up, restoring order, containing chaos. To appreciate the complexity of fantasy is to become aware that fantasy needs this chaos to exist. It thrives upon representations of disorder and crisis to ensure its own survival as it is through the stimulus of fear and alarm that its own existence is validated as necessary and access to control and capital as the domain of the white paternalist figure remains protected.

The case study of the Northern Territory events demonstrates in luminous detail the current discourse of paternalism. What is worth noting here is that the climate in Australia is one where this is openly expressed, acknowledged, accepted by the proponents and now law in this country. Federal Health Minister, Tony Abbot, called for 'a new paternalism' to address problems of abuse in Indigenous communities [Grattan, 2007]. John Howard himself has openly declared these moves are interventionist, paternalistic and racially discriminatory. Noel Pearson, director of Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership and a strong influential voice in this debate stated: 'Ask the terrified kid huddling in the corner when there is a binge drinking party going on down the hall if they want a bit of paternalism'. Howard responded 'We are dealing with children of the tenderest age who have been exposed to the most terrible abuse...what matters more: the constitutional niceties, or the care and protection of young children' [Karvatas, 2007, 1].

It is Howard's emotive response to children of the tenderest age which allows the paradox of the constitution being made up of niceties, as opposed to safeguarding constitutional rights and laws. Thus the scene is set for a contravening of the constitution if need be. And in such a way that one would be either not a parent or soulless to disagree.

This overt paternalism and the call for a National Emergency is warranted through the literal reference to the child and the use of morality and child protection discourses. To analyse the tropes of child protection provides further insight into the justification for observation, control and

management and lack of consultation.

The Little Children are Sacred Report was the report of the Northern Territory enquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse 2007. It was this report which appeared to reveal the shocking epidemic of child abuse which galvanised a national emergency to be declared. The reaction was such that one would be forgiven for thinking this report had uncovered new truths. As writer and academic, Jennifer Martinello states, 1989,1991,1993,1997 and 2002 is a list of the years that reports were presented which told the government in detail about these problems and lobbied for proper resources in place of neglect ['Howard's new Tampa children overboard are our Aboriginal children', 2007]. In 1989, Judy Atkinson wrote a report for the 'National Inquiry on Violence' stating that sexual abuse was endemic and epidemic in Indigenous communities. Only a year ago, she says that it was one of Mal Brough's advisors who asked her if all the talk of child sexual abuse documented in these extensive reports was just 'false memory' syndrome [Chandler, 2007, 5]. It is after these years of inaction that Brough claims the legislation must be rushed because delays put children at risk.

Emotive language in the place of discussing practicalities, rights and due procedure was evident from the beginning of the events. Despite being the justification, none of the 97 recommendations in *The Little Children Are Sacred Report* were included in the intervention. As Pat Anderson, one of the writers of the report stated "There's not a single action that the Commonwealth has taken so far that corresponds with a single recommendation...There is no relationship between these emergency powers and what's in our report" ['Govt to push through Indigenous intervention laws', 2007]. Anderson also stated, 'I would appeal to the Prime Minister to stop. Please stop, don't proceed. Just stop so he can talk to more Aboriginal people, to talk to Aboriginal leaders' [ABC's Lateline transcript, 2007].

It is important to appreciate that White Nation Fantasy is extremely dangerous. As a fantasy it is not real. As it is predicated on race, it exists and is perpetuated by inequality and ignorance. From this base, no effective solutions can be found, no real dialogue performed, no acknowledgement of a situation can be represented and validated. The treatment of *The Little Children Are Sacred Report*, which supposedly galvanised Howard's National Emergency is an example of the disjuncture and anomalies which occur when fantasy is at play. While Howard claimed to have taken the report seriously enough to have sent in the troops, he is able to simultaneously ignore its recommendations and violate many of the major principles expounded in the report such as consultation. There is no need to draw on the studied and researched recommendations even if citing the report as the basis for radical action. Here paradox is married with contradiction – all elements of the fantastical.

The discourse of child protection echoes the 'For their Own Good' approach essential to the Stolen Generation tragedy. It was the rhetoric of child welfare that justified the removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Jennifer Rutherford highlights the link between morality and aggression in Australia's history, demonstrating in her work *The Gauche Intruder* [2000], that aggression has historically manifested itself at the very moments when white Australia has set out to do good. Rutherford notes that national fantasy is built on fantasised images of a good Australia. She draws on Lacan's *Ethics of Psychoanalysis* to explore the link between doing good and causing grief.

When a subject, a state, a nation sets out on the path of realising its good, what is inevitably in play is the logic of power. "The domain of the good is the birth of power...ie. to exercise control over one's goods is to have the right to deprive others of them" [citing Lacan]. This identification with the power to do good underpins the numerous attempts at social engineering that have characterised Australia's shady history of black/white relations: relations that have deprived Aboriginal Australians at every turn, of their good. The intent to do good is the alibi that is called upon whenever this history of deprivation momentarily registers in the national conscience. (2000, 26 – 27).

There is often an inevitable link between paternalism and the deployment of morality child centred discourses. To analyse tropes of child protection can provide insight into the manipulation of emotive imagery and representation of the most innocent and vulnerable to warrant political strategies which appear to become increasingly suspect in intention.

Instigating moral alarm works on ideological structures and belief systems rather than requiring much factual realities or truth. Emotions are engaged and heightened through drawing on the imagery of exploited innocence. These emotions can then be used to justify actions otherwise disallowed by law and publicly sanctioned systems. Once this occurs, stereotypes and bias representations fuelled by emotive language may gain power. On the basis of moral arguments comprising these complicating factors, the unacceptable becomes accepted, the unthinkable justified in the name of 'for the good of...' whichever group is being managed and controlled.

Paternalism therefore utilises moral discourse to great effect. The greater the moral crisis, the more paternalism may be not only permitted but desired and received with relief. Raimond Gaita in 'The Nation Reviewed' asks 'could such disrespect as the failure to consult be shown to any other community in this country? He felt no, because:

Aborigines and their culture are still seen from a racist, denigrating perspective. From that perspective, the (sincere) concern for children is concern for them as the children of a denigrated people, just as it was when children whom we now call the Stolen Generation were taken from their parents. [2007, 13]

In Oxfam's report, Prof. Jon Altman stated,

I could find no evidence of the proposed measures being connected in any way to child sex abuse, and concluded that there may even be some risk of exacerbating the situation if the permit system is relaxed ['Oxfam research: Land Rights Act changes detrimental and will not reduce child sex abuse', 2007]

He also noted that changes to the permit system are based on an ideological position rather than any factual basis, because there is no evidence that child abuse is more prevalent in areas where the system exists.

There are claims the intervention/invasion is to do with a broader push towards assimilation, mining uranium and with deals made with the US to provide land for uranium waste. One cartoon in *The Age*, captured this contradiction with the caption 'We believe the best way to protect your children is to take over your land and start mining uranium' [14/7/07, 7]. Suffice to say that as White Nation Fantasy is all about power, then uses of power to accumulate or designate resources is all part of what colluding in such a fantasy allows a nation to do. White blindness means that in Australia, this fantasy prevails.

White Nation Fantasy requires the power to act paternalistically through discourses of morality and crisis. Once these discourses are engaged, the power to oversee and manage and control a group of people excluded from the white nation such as Indigenous peoples, without consultation is achieved. As long as this power is utilised, the fantasy is self-perpetuated and any equity or fairness cannot be achieved. There can be no long term solution to problems created by dispossession and discrimination and thus no meaningful reconciliation. To shift this, we need to become aware of how white fantasy is indeed something Australians are fed as children in stories like *Where the Wild Things Are*.

This article began with the tale of *Where the Wild Things Are* as an example of the enculturation in childhood of colonialist ideology. White male contains and conquers savages and thus restores safety and order. As adults, we are not read children's stories anymore, but we do get told and continue to tell the same fantasies – the narration continues in the guise of the leader of the country telling us he is stepping in and taking control, the wild savagery at the heart of the country in the form of Indigeneity is contained. Hence this is met with some relief by the white majority. The narratives of colonialism lay the ground for such fantasy fulfilment. The need to wake up before continuing the cycle of harm is the *real* national emergency. If this was achieved, then the possibility of responding to the nation-wide epidemic of child abuse and alcohol related issues and violence could be addressed as 'National Emergencies' nation-wide.

In his famous Redfern Address, Paul Keating said 'We failed to ask the most basic questions. We failed to ask – What if it were done to us?' Martinello asks this same question now. What if the military seized control of white communities and placed them under military occupation?

This is not Israel and Palestine. The Northern Territory is not Gaza or the West Bank. This is

Australia – but is it the Australia you thought you lived in? Walk in our shoes, Aboriginal Australia's, and ask yourselves, what would it be like to have this done to us? And then, walk with us. [2007, 4]

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WAR IN THE LANGUAGE OF PEACE, AND AN AUSTRALIAN GEO/POLITICS OF WHITE POSSESSION

GOLDIE OSURI

Abstract

This paper examines how war and peace as a bio/necropolitical regime informs Australian sovereignty. How do war and peace contribute to the Australian government's attempts to reconfigure the demand for Indigenous rights and redefine Australia's strategic military and peace-keeping role in a transnational context. Australia's peacekeeping mission in East Timor, for instance, has become a way of securing Australia's national interests in terms of 'keeping peace' in the Asia Pacific region. What are the implications of such internal and external consolidations of white Australian sovereignty? How may we think through and engage with this sovereignty through the concept of bio/necropolitics of white possession?

Introduction

This paper explores how whiteness is performed in bipartisan politics in Australia through the exercise of sovereignty in relation to internal Indigenous and non-Indigenous others as well as geopolitically in relation to other nation-states. I argue that this performance of whiteness may be read through the conceptual framework of a biopolitics of white possession. A biopolitics of white possession, as I argue and demonstrate in this paper, entails an active shaping of worlds, subjectivities, bodies and knowledges which benefit the maximisation of life and wealth for a white Australian sovereign nation at the expense of

Indigenous and non-Indigenous, non white sovereignties in the Asia-Pacific. This biopolitics of white possession operates through a number of political undertakings. In this context of this paper, I analyse a specific set of political operations: the recent apology to the stolen generations Australia's Indigenous peoples, the Federal intervention purportedly to check child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities as well as Australia's historical and contemporary interventions in East Timor.

Apologies and Interventions

On February 13, 2008, the apology to the stolen generations of Indigenous children in Australia was nationally heartening in its effect. It appeared to have generated goodwill from the seat of power in Canberra for many Indigenous Australians. Many non-Indigenous Australians like myself finally felt a sense that a bridge had been crossed in acknowledging the terrible trauma of the histories and the effects of stealing generations of Indigenous Australians from their families. Not only was this trauma acknowledged, but that very seat of power—the government, the parliament, and its laws were acknowledged as enacting violence in relation to Indigenous Australians. Reading this event in the context of speaking about war and peace then, it would appear that the apology was and is a gesture toward peace, between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians.

Yet, some questions nag the event. Even as Kevin Rudd apologized for the stealing of generations of Indigenous children, the Howard government's Federal Intervention in the Northern Territory in response to the *Little Children are Sacred Report* (2007) remains in effect. The Federal Intervention is a parliamentary Act, which enables targeting Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory through the justification of the protection of children. And while the Labour government is reviewing the terms of the intervention, and it has promised to consult Indigenous leaders and communities on the issue (a recommendation of the *Little Children are Sacred Report* which was not followed by the Howard government), it appears unlikely that the intervention will be scrapped. My point in making the connection between the apology and the intervention is not to suggest that the racist policies of stealing children in the attempt to 'breed out the black' and the 2007 Intervention were made on exactly the same grounds. There are historical differences in the context of these events. The stolen generations were justified by the policy to 'breed out the black' and the attempt to solve the racially defined 'half-caste' problem.¹ The 2007 Federal Intervention was enacted ostensibly in relation to 'protect' little children, not by removing them, but by forced medical checks, quarantining welfare payments for member of Indigenous families, scrapping the permit system gained through the Land Rights Act (1976) and other extreme measures by framing the issue as an 'emergency'. Yet the discourse of protection and problem-solving is racially framed, directed and applied. And, like the stolen generations policy, the Intervention appears to be causing harm and disempowerment in many communities rather than addressing any problems of abuse.²

I read the apology in the context of the still-in-effect Federal intervention in order to point out other consequences of these discourses. Some of these consequences were identified by Irene Watson in her Keynote address at the 2007 Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Conference, 'Humanitarian Intervention: What is Saved?' Analyzing the intervention, Watson suggested that there was a need to identify how Acts like the Federal Intervention were productive of power. What new powers were being consolidated in relation to Indigenous subjects? What kinds of Indigenous subjects did these forms of power aim to produce? These are necessary questions to continue to ask. And it is these questions that I would like to keep in mind as a reference point in thinking about how power is productive in relation to the exercise of white sovereignty in Australia.

Reading white Australian sovereignty through the language of war and peace is one manner of highlighting its productive powers. This language has informed and continues to inform the direction of Australia's policies in national terms as well as internationally, and it is characterised by a biopolitics of white possession and interests. Sketching out a new research agenda for sociologists through a rereading of Foucault's biopower in relation to Critical Whiteness Studies, Aileen Moreton-Robinson suggests a number of challenges that need to be met. One of these challenges is 'to extend an understanding of the terrain of sovereignty in Australia as relations of force in a war of races normalised through biopower, contributing to an understanding of how Indigenous sovereignty and its disavowal have shaped Australian nationalism' (2006: 389). If we take this challenge to be a key one in thinking through the formation of Australian nationalism, it is

also necessary to take into account the geopolitical formation of Australian nationalism precisely through the logic of 'relations of force in a war of races' (Moreton-Robinson 2006: 389). The question of race may not necessarily be identified as racial in this context, but is often coded racially yet named through the language of nationalism and national interests. This slippage between race and nation, since it was advocated in the 19th century through the writings of John Stuart Mill on nationalism, continues to pervade contemporary nationalisms. Suvendrini Perera has outlined the importance of reading the exercise of white Australian sovereignty simultaneously within and without Australia in her edited collection of essays, *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty 2001* (2007). In the introduction to this edited collection, Perera argues that the 'seemingly disparate initiatives' which target racialised others within and without Australia reveal a 'renewed insistence on territorial sovereignty, the protection of national borders and the promotion of a racially coded model of citizenship' (2007a). Whiteness, therefore, informs the notion of Australian sovereignty in relation to its internal and external others. In the Australian context, whiteness has been defined as 'governmental belonging' or a 'belief that one has a right over the nation' (Hage 1998). Building on this definition, Moreton-Robinson suggests that the 'right to possess is inextricably tied to perceiving the nation as a white possession', a definition of whiteness which directly informs this essay (2005). The nation as white possession is, as Perera suggests, a 'multiple formation.' She suggests that whiteness as a 'multiple formation' may be read as,

'a palpable material and quantifiable category against which those to be excluded were measured The state and the

bodies of its citizens were explicitly constructed in and through their relation to whiteness establishing a hierarchy of belonging and entitlement. It is important to note that a definition and measure of Australian whiteness was, from the outset, derived and asserted to its multiple racial others, rather than to a single reference point. Spatial as well as racial hierarchies came into play in positioning the subjects of the nation, against its asymmetrical non-white others, indigenes and aliens' (Perera 2005).

In her insistence on whiteness as a 'multiple formation', Perera highlights the exercise of white sovereignty as 'a set of movements radiating both outward into the surrounding region as well as inward to the denied Indigenous sovereignty that founds the Australian state' (2007a). This essay is concerned with tracing this double movement in the continual palimpsest that white sovereignty appears to write and rewrite over Indigenous sovereignties as well as a non-white sovereignty in East Timor.

Acts of Peace as War: Bio/Necropolitical Regimes

So what does a biopolitics of white possession and interests which structure a white Australian sovereignty entail in the national and international arena? How does this biopolitics generate a language of war and peace? And perhaps most importantly, what does peace, which may serve the interests of a white Australian sovereignty, look like? In order to examine how a biopolitics of white possession structures a white Australian sovereignty, it is necessary to trace the concept of 'war as a biopolitical regime' as Hardt and Negri phrase it.

Drawing on the theoretical itinerary of Hobbes, Clausewitz, and Foucault, Hardt

and Negri differentiate their theorisation of contemporary war from a modernist one, as a 'limited state of exception' (2006: 6). They draw on Foucault's notion of biopower as playing a regulative role where 'the socially pacifying function of political power involves constantly re-inscribing this fundamental relationship of force in a sort of silent war and re-inscribing it too in the social institutions, systems of economic inequality, and even the spheres of personal and sexual relations' (2006: 13). Extrapolating on Foucault's theory of biopower, therefore, Hardt and Negri suggest that 'War . . . becomes the general matrix for all relations of power and techniques of domination, whether or not bloodshed is involved' (2006: 13). Furthermore, as a regime of biopower, 'a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life', 'war brings death, but also, paradoxically must produce life' (2006: 13). As Hardt and Negri explain it, 'this does not mean that war has been domesticated or its violence attenuated, but rather that daily life and the normal functioning of power has been permeated with the threat and violence of warfare' (2006: 13).

While Hardt and Negri do not mention race as a regulative code in war as a regime of biopower, Moreton-Robinson draws on Foucault's reading of racial and religious differentiation as providing a caesura, a break within populations, to determine how technologies of killing and letting die can function. Or as Katia Genel puts it, '[t]he analysis of racism is the response to the question of knowing how to exercise the function of killing within biopower' (2006: 49). Foucault discusses this function of killing in the context of the Nazi regime in Germany, but Moreton-Robinson suggests that biopower may be understood specifically in relation to Indigenous

sovereignty in a number of other ways. As discussed earlier in this essay, whiteness as a multiple formation provided that racial caesura in the Australian context. But to take this racial logic further, for Aileen-Moreton-Robinson, the link between biopower and Indigenous sovereignty produces some key questions: 'If sovereignty is predicated on fiction that arises through war, how does biopower enable sovereignty to deny war through a legal fiction of Terra Nullius? Is the refusal to declare war itself a tactic of war?' (2006: 388). Arguing for a biopolitical direction in Critical Whiteness Studies, she suggests that 'what would be useful is to consider the representation of power within the law, rights, sovereignty paradigm by approaching Indigenous sovereignty and state sovereignty as relations of force located within a matrix of biopower' (2006: 388).

Moreton-Robinson appears to have raised some very crucial questions. In the Australian context, 'the refusal to declare war' through discourses of peaceful settlement appears to have continually reproduced the very basis of white subjectivities who resist or cannot acknowledge the notion of Australia's colonization. So, even as events like the apology from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd acknowledge the 'mistreatment' of Indigenous peoples in Australia, the key question of the basis of Australian sovereignty, the ability of the Australian parliament to enact laws and conduct its business, cannot be brought to the fore. Simultaneously, ironies like an apology for the stolen generations, yet the exercise and performance of sovereignty over Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory in what appears to be an act of war in the name of humanitarian intervention do not appear to be ironies. The Prime Minister's attempt to institute a bipartisan 'war cabinet' in relation to

Indigenous issues appears to be, therefore, not so much a Freudian slip, but an outcome of this irony. What appears to remain intact is the sovereignty of the white Australian nation which consolidates its exercise of biopower in a racially coded manner.

Australia's Bio/Necropolitical Regimes

It is this relation between white sovereignty and Indigenous sovereignty that urgently brings to the fore the issue of a biopolitics of white possession. White possession as Cheryl Harris (1993), Moreton-Robinson (2004), Irene Watson (2005) have theorised it, illuminates the historical alignments between property rights and race, and in Australia, white possession played a 'definitive role in constructing and affirming white domination and economic success at the cost of Indigenous racial and economic oppression' (Moreton-Robinson 2005). White possession and ownership is pervasive in Australia from cultural representations of landscapes to monuments, territorial definitions and property rights, and is crucial to the question of the sovereignty. Linguistically, this ownership is expressed through terms such as 'settler' or 'British migrants'. As Giannacopoulos points out, the distinctions in these terms are generated by a law that obfuscates its status as immigrant, diasporic, and racially violent' (2007). And it enables the generation of the 'non'-migrant, 'non'-diasporic, white sovereign' subject which can position itself as 'mystically un-ethnic and transcendental by asserting its jurisdiction over the bodies it looks out toward' (Giannacopoulos 2007).

In Australia, many of us are perhaps used to the manner in which this white sovereign subject is represented through

Howard speak. However, during Kevin Rudd's election victory speech, I was struck by how this white possession was displayed structurally precisely in Rudd's positioning of himself as a 'mystically un-ethnic and transcendental' body who asserted his jurisdiction over Indigenous and 'all' Australians. Rudd displayed this possessive benevolence by claiming first of all to be 'a Prime Minister for Indigenous Australians' (Rudd 2007a). While this particular statement may have been referencing John Howard's 1996 election speech which suggested that he would govern 'for all of us', i.e., those white Australians supposedly marginalized by the supposedly sectarian interests of the leftist multiculturalist, Indigenous rights alliances, this linguistic white possession and governance for Indigenous Australians makes visible that meeting point of the white patriarchal sovereignties displayed by Howard and the benevolent Rudd. Here the exercise of white power and possession over Indigenous lives and bodies, the exercise of biopower, is entrenched regardless of which side of politics one can vote for.

This entrenchment of white power points us in the direction of Achille Mbembe's theorisation of necropolitics because it introduces into the heart of sovereignty, the rule of colonial difference. Hobbes theorised war through the concept of conquest of another sovereign state, whereas colonial sovereignty constructs non-European sovereignties as available for appropriation. These parts of the globe, Mbembe suggests are 'locations par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of "civilization" (2003: 24). This violence of the state of exception takes the form of necropower—where the sovereign right to kill or disallow life is not 'subject to

legal and institutional rules' (2003: 25). Mbembe's thesis, that necropower works through the suspension of the controls and guarantees of judicial order, needs to be reformulated in the context of the operation of colonial law. Thus the question is not whether or not necropower functions in conditions where colonial sovereignty suspends law, rather, as Watson (2005), Moreton-Robinson (2006), and Giannacopoulos (2007) have theorised it, colonial sovereignty operates through legal fictions which disavow their colonising status.

This necropolitical relationship has historically informed a white Australian national identity. Here the massacres of Indigenous nations, policies of breeding out the black by stealing generations of Indigenous children, setting up of reserves and camps for Indigenous peoples illustrate a colonial sovereign violence where the 'peace' of settlement took on the face of a war without end. And the violence of the state of exception, as Mbembe would put it, was deemed to 'operate in the service of civilisation' (2003, p. 24). This racial violence against Indigenous peoples as well as an attempted racial exclusion of 'Pacific Islanders' and 'Asians' informed the first two acts of parliament in Australia manifesting itself in the white Australia policy. As Suvendrini Perera points out, the Immigration Restriction Act 'targeted non-white migration' and the Pacific Islander Laborers Act was 'designed to end the presence of Melanesian labour in the cane fields' (2005). These acts proclaimed the simultaneous bio and necropolitical exercise of power where white possession of land and nation was fostered at the expense of Indigenous and non-Indigenous non-white lives and bodies. Furthermore, the situation of Australia as white in an Indigenous/Asia/Pacific region

simultaneously attempted to erase what Perera calls 'well-established histories of prior contact between Indigenous peoples and their neighbours in Asian and Pacific societies' (Perera 2005). The construction of whiteness in Australia and its attempted erasure of this pre-existing geography of international relations generates war as a biopolitical regime—thereby fostering the alignment of white Australia's territorial and racial integrity in a geopolitical context. Peace and the notion of peaceful settlement, in this context, has masked horrific racial violence in the necropolitical relation of massacres, camps, as well as its exclusionary violence towards non-white non-Indigenous others. Australian national identity emerged from these racial wars, and this national and transnational attempt to regulate Australia's population is a manifestation of both bio and necropower as these wars were fundamental to a bio/necropolitics of white possession. In other words, the maximisation of life and the security of a white colonial Australia was dependant on the attempted genocide of its Indigenous inhabitants as well as the racial exclusion of non-Anglo peoples. Thus, I would argue, that war has been a bio/necropolitical regime in the management and regulation of social and national life in the Australian context.

In contemporary terms, this bio/necropolitics of white possession occurs through discourses of protection and humanitarian intervention. Drawing on Spivak's analysis of 'white men saving brown women' as a colonial trope, Irene Watson states that this protectionist discourse utilises the 'image of the black woman in need of 'rescue' and 'works to contradict the call to freedom and self-determination of women, children and men (the entire community) (2005: 26). Inderpal Grewal argues that 'though 'modes of humanitarianism'

may often be seen as oppositional to necropolitics or the right to 'expose to death', they may not be in opposition to 'forms of power that produce inequalities' (Grewal 2003: 537). Rather, 'it is the interrelation between the sovereign right to kill and the humanitarian right to rescue that constitutes modes of modern power' (Grewal 2003, p. 537). This interrelation between the right to kill and the right to rescue can be historically traced through the massacres of Indigenous peoples and the subsequent decision to 'protect' Indigenous peoples in reserves and camps—the protection itself was a punitive process which spoke more to a Mbembian necropolitical exposure to death rather than a protection as such. In tracing this history through the identification of the Agambenian camp as a biopolitical paradigm, Wadiwel (2007), for instance, outlines the devastation and despair that this protectionism generated for Indigenous inhabitants, especially in the case of Palm Island. In effect, therefore, the discourse of protection has historically functioned as a racial war, one in which the interests of colonial sovereignty, such as the extraction of Indigenous labour or the possession of Indigenous land, lie barely concealed.

Such a right to rescue has most recently been exercised through the late Federal government's Intervention in the Northern Territory. In response to *The Little Children are Sacred* report on child sexual abuse among Aboriginal communities, the Howard government responded by enacting legislation enabling the Federal government to make interventions in the lives and over the bodies of Indigenous communities. The quarantining of welfare payments and related disciplinary measures, the removal of Indigenous permits, and the management of Indigenous land by managers (Northern Territory National

Emergency Response Bill, 2007) speak of a war against any exercise of Indigenous sovereignty in the name of protection. And, rather than addressing the problem of domestic violence or child sexual abuse by installing programs or building on existing programs which would provide support for the victims of sexual or domestic violence, the Howard government's real interests appear to have been a take-over of Indigenous land and its management—thus re-enacting what Mbembe would name as the exercise of colonial sovereignty which for some communities has been resulting in greater poverty and inequity—thus an exercise in letting die.

In the language of biopolitics, therefore, a necropolitical engagement is established through the right to save. The Federal government's Intervention in the Northern Territory especially through the involvement of the police and the military was a declaration of war against Indigenous sovereignty. Hardt and Negri argue that the language of war has become 'the foundation of politics itself' (2006: 21). This foundation as Hardt and Negri suggest involves the 'constant and coordinated application of violence' which 'becomes the necessary condition for the functioning of discipline and control' (2006: 21). War, in this context, becomes a 'regulative activity that creates and maintains social hierarchies' (2006: 21). The Federal Intervention in the Northern Territory enabled the Howard government to apply this 'constant and coordinated application of violence' in its disciplinary measures creating fear for many in the Northern Territory Indigenous communities—thus maintaining racial hierarchies, and taking over Indigenous land, rather than fostering the health and well-being of Indigenous communities. So, while the rescue of Indigenous children from sexual abuse in Indigenous communities may be seen as

bio rather than necropolitical, it is the exercise of a white colonial sovereignty through a humanitarianism conducted in the language of war that produces and maintains the current unequal regulative order between the Australian government and Indigenous communities.

The current labour government has now reinstated the Indigenous permit system with some modifications (Karvelas 2008). Organisations like Women for Wik and the Combined Aboriginal Organisations have requested a review from the Labour government, and the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has promised to review the Intervention by the end of 2008 (Wilson 2007). However, it remains to be seen how much of the intervention will be retained by the Labour government in the biopolitical matrix of power relations between colonial and Indigenous sovereignties. Thus the fostering of life through the right to save may still generate a continuous war between colonial sovereignty embodied through the discourse of 'good' economic management and an attempted erasure of Indigenous sovereignties. So unless the bio/necropolitics of white possession is addressed; in other words, unless the question of Indigenous sovereignty is addressed, engagement with fostering Indigenous lives, as Irene Watson suggests, will be a 'conjuring act' (2005: 15).

Geo/necropolitics, Australia and East Timor

If war is a regime of biopower that reproduces all aspects of social life within nation-states, then it is important to remember how this form of biopolitics is also waged in the sphere of geopolitics or international relations. Or as Hardt and Negri point out, 'international relations and domestic

politics become increasingly similar and intermingled. As discourses of war shift from the emphasis on 'defense' to 'security' globally, 'security requires rather actively and constantly reshaping the environment through military and/or police activity. Only an actively shaped world is a secure world. This notion of security is a form of biopower, in the sense that it is charged with the task of producing and transforming social life at its most general and global level' (Hardt and Negri 2005: 20). As with social and political actors within the nation-state, an analysis of biopolitics waged in the sphere of geopolitics requires us to identify whose security is being consolidated, which governments or nation-states require an actively shaped world and why.

In the geopolitical arena, this necropolitics has been exercised in historical and contemporary terms in the Asia-Pacific region. I would like to discuss these necropolitics specifically in relation to East Timor. In fact, Mbembe's notion that colonial violence operates in suspension of law is applicable in this context. Katsumi Ishizuka (2004), Simon Philpott (2006) and David Mercer (2004) have outlined the continuing asymmetrical relationship between Australia and East Timor before, during and after the invasion of East Timor by Indonesia. Katsumi Ishizuka, in particular, has traced the manner in which Australia recognized the sovereignty of Indonesia over East Timor in 1978 despite the UN General Assembly's resolution rejecting Indonesia's claim, and despite opposition from the Australian Labour Party and the Australian public. Much of the attempt to retain ties with Indonesia despite the illegality of Indonesia's sovereignty over East Timor appears to have been related to Australia's interest in exploiting the gas rich resources of the Timor Gap. Or as Ishizuka suggests, 'The Timor Sea between East Timor and

northern Australia is estimated to contain the world's 23rd largest oil field, with reserves of five billion barrels of oil and 50 trillion feet of liquid natural gas. Therefore, Australia understandably made use of the economic benefit of this 'Gap' in its diplomacy on the annexation of East Timor' (2004: 277). Yet these negotiations were illegal as Ishizuka points out, 'Indonesia of course had no legal right to negotiate East Timor's resources in the first place, given that its occupation of the territory was illegal according to international law' (2004: 277). It is necessary to extend this point to the illegality not only of Indonesia's occupation of East Timor, but to the illegality of the Timor Gap treaty between Indonesia and Australia. In fact, the Australian government's tacit support of Indonesia and its recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor suggests the waging of a necropolitics of possession—where East Timor's annexation by Indonesia was seen as an opportunity for Australia's appropriation and exploitation of resources which belong to the East Timorese people. Furthermore, if necropolitics is an exercise of the sovereign right to let die, Australia may be said to be responsible for the letting die of those East Timorese killed by the Indonesian military. While the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke responded to the Santa Cruz massacre by 'calling on the Indonesian government to abandon the use of military force and to begin negotiations with the people of East Timor' in 1991, Australia was simultaneously signing contracts with international oil companies and Indonesia to begin explorations under the Timor sea (Ishizuka 2004: 279). Thus, the expense of Australia's exploitation of Timorese resources was paid by those who were allowed to die.

Post-independence, the United Nations Transitional Administration simply

replaced Indonesia with East Timor in the content of the Timor Gap treaty. Although the East Timorese government headed by Mari Alkatiri hoped to renegotiate the maritime boundaries of the treaty which favour Australia, the Australian government refused to discuss these boundaries (Ishizuka 2004: 280). In current terms, 80% of the petroleum royalties are due to go to Australia, while Australia will enjoy the benefit of an increase in employment opportunities, increased investment, and business and technological innovations (Ishizuka 2004: 281) through exploitation of the gas and petroleum resources. Meanwhile, Ishizuka suggests, 'East Timor itself will reap only a few of the benefits through employment opportunities as a result of the processing in East Timor from the Timor Sea project' (2004: 281).

One of the ways in which Australia has been able to get away with its dominance in relation to the exploitation of East Timor's sea-based resources has been through its donor aid to East Timor and its peace-keeping mission there. As Ishizuka outlines it, 'Australia has consistently contributed the largest number of troops to a nation-building process and the maintenance of security in East Timor' (2004: 282). Peacekeeping suggests a biopolitical act—i.e., contributing to the fostering of East Timorese lives. However, this dependence on Australia especially in relation to peacekeeping forces, and 'the training and management of the country's new police force' has enabled Australia to maintain its exploitative economic and political relationship with East Timor. As Ishizuka states, 'the continuing dependence of East Timor on Australia in economic and security terms, and the balance of power politics involved in regional hegemony in the area, encourage the status quo' (2004: 283).

Such a use of peacekeeping missions as a bargaining tool in exploitative trade relations necessitates a re-theorisation of peace. Peacekeeping in this context has less to do with peace as such and more to do with the economic and political interests of those governments sending peacekeeping missions. In Australia's relationship with East Timor, peacekeeping consolidates Australia's international identity and image as a donor country interested in maintaining peace in East Timor. However, this identity and image masks the exploitative economic and political relationship between a vulnerable and poor nation-state such as East Timor and Australia which, it appears, has been directly responsible for thwarting East Timor's self-determination struggles pre and post-independence. Furthermore, Laura Zanotti comments on the fact that international peacekeeping missions have become 'an aspect of an international disciplinary security regime that took shape in response to the unpredictability of threats. In the face of the impossibility of devising strategy and controlling all variables, international risk is managed by domesticating and normalizing states that are perceived as potential sources of threat and instability' (2006: 151). In this sense, Australia's peacekeeping interest in East Timor has more to do with disciplining the East Timorese state into a nation that will function in accordance with Australia's security and trade interests. In other words, the exercise of biopower in this context may have more to do with fostering white Australian sovereignty. Or as Ishizuka puts it, 'it is obvious that East Timor will have to put itself within the framework of the security policy of the regional power of Australia' (2004: 282). This interest in regional 'security' was apparently one of the primary reasons why Australia decided to recognise Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor in the first place in accordance with U.S.

anti-communist support of the Suharto regime and in fear of radical left-wing resistance from East Timorese freedom fighters.

Before the 2007 elections, the Labour government suggested that it would commit more funding for education and health in East Timor (Rudd 2007b). However, the Rudd Labour government's emphasis on security as part of the biopolitical engagement remained similar to the Howard government's policies in East Timor (Rudd 2007b). But the recent and as yet unsolved political crisis in East Timor which has seen the death of Major Alfredo Reinado (the military leader who became a rebel) and the wounding of Prime Minister Jose Ramos Horta has appeared to offer an opportunity for Australia to play a strong role in shaping East Timorese politics. In an opinion piece in *The Canberra Times*, Nicholas Stuart suggests that 'Kevin Rudd has shown, decisively, that he intends to take a far more active role in shaping our region than any government since Gough Whitlam's back in the 1970s' (2008). He argues that the 'additional deployment (of 340 personnel) is a direct intervention in the internal affairs of another country. It's a high-risk strategy, and it demonstrates that, under Rudd, Australia will seriously try to shape the region' (2008). Stuart suggests that this sending of troops is unlikely to produce desired results; he states, 'instead of assisting the Government, the obvious deployment of more Australian soldiers may simply have the effect of further alienating the people. Security is necessary to enable peace, but continuing to send soldiers is no answer when other skills are urgently required in this vulnerable country' (2008). But the presence of Australian soldiers, Australian intervention in East Timorese politics, its exploitations of crises in East Timor, enables the Australian

government to actively shape and discipline East Timor for its own strategic interests. Thus Australia's "geobiopolitics", if you will, through the protectionist discourse of peacekeeping, maintains the power of white sovereignty through its disciplining effects on East Timorese sovereignty.

Identifying Peace as War: A Question of Sovereignties

In her discussion of the consolidation of white Australian sovereignty within Australia and in the Asia-Pacific region, specifically the Solomon Islands, Suvendrini Perera discusses the manner in which the Australian state embraces 'crisis as an opportunity for asserting itself on multiple fronts, and for renewing and expanding a sense of racial mission at home and abroad' (2007b). Perera reads the exercise of white Australian sovereignty in different terms to what Razack suggests in relation to Canadian peacekeeping missions. Perera argues that while Canadian peacekeeping missions, as read by Razack (2004), are enabled by the 'forgetting or erasure of its internal acts of colonisation', in Australia, 'state projects of maintaining security, peacekeeping, nation building and aid in the region in turn reflect back on and reinforce an ongoing internal project of enacting or reasserting colonial sovereignty over Indigenous bodies and lands' (2007b). Thus, it is necessary to trace the implications and consequences for the war/peacekeeping bio/necropolitical regime that governs Australia's internal and external policies and identity. It is important, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2006) suggests, to identify the biopolitical matrix of power relations which govern white Australian relationships and arrangements both internally and externally. This identification does provide a way of analyzing what a biopolitics of white

possession entails. It entails an active shaping of worlds, subjectivities, disciplined and assimilated bodies and knowledges which benefit the maximisation of life and wealth for a white Australian sovereign nation at the expense of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, non white sovereignties in the Asia-Pacific. This waging of the war of bio/necropolitics in the language of peace consolidates a colonial sovereignty in the Australian context which benefits from stolen land and resources on the continent of Australia as well as illegal exploitation of resources in the Asia-Pacific.

The task of transforming white sovereignty and its war-like relationship to other bodies, nations, and knowledges is still an uphill one. As Irene Watson (2005) suggests, we still need worker-gatherers—those who will continue to wage this war against the bipartisan system of Australian politics which may lead to a world of co-existence rather than inequalities, a biopolitics of fostering white sovereignty and necropolitical colonial engagements. But the links between Australia's internal and international policies are necessary to identify as they may provide us new ways about thinking about the question of sovereignty itself—perhaps one might name these intersubjective co-existent sovereignties which may foster lives and bodies rather than a sovereignty which fosters a bio/necropolitical regime of war.

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state governments legal guardianship over Indigenous children from as early as 1911 on. In 1937, governmental legislation overtly enabled the taking away of Indigenous children from their parents. As the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families report states, 'Government officials theorized that by forcibly removing Indigenous children from their families, and by sending them away from their communities to work for non-Indigenous people, this mixed-descent population would over time, "merge" with the non-Indigenous population' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report 1997).

² The Women for Wik website has been tracking many of these stories of disempowerment. The website is available at www.womenforwik.org

Endnotes

¹ The stealing of Aboriginal children in Australia was enabled by protectionist legislation which gave white Australian

WHITE MOTHERS, INDIGENOUS FAMILIES, AND THE POLITICS OF VOICE

DAMIEN W. RIGGS

Abstract

Ongoing histories of genocide, dispossession and child removal continue to shape the Australian nation. Speaking of such histories is fraught with racial power differentials that dictate which particular voices will be given space within public discourse. Examining how a 'politics of voice' is deployed within the writings of white academics is one important site for better understanding how it is that white voices continue to occupy a hegemonic position within the Australian academy and in everyday talk. In this paper I examine how particular representations of white foster/adoptive mothers of Indigenous children in Australia highlight the problematic nature of research seeking to represent experiences classified as previously 'unspoken'. In examining the work of one particular white Australian academic I suggest that it is important that white academics engage in research practices that highlight, rather than overlook, matters of race privilege and which ground white people in histories of colonisation and in a relationship to the fact of Indigenous sovereignty.

Introduction

The centrality of 'voice' continues to be an organising principle in much feminist research seeking to elaborate the impact of patriarchy upon women's lives. Increasingly, however, attention

has been paid to the politics of voice. Particularly within feminist politics, issues continue to be raised concerning the problems associated with particular women speaking *for* other women, and the implications of this in the context of nations formed through colonisation (e.g. Moreton-Robinson 2000). Moreover, the ways in which *white* women's voices continue to be prioritised within feminist research has been rendered visible as an enactment of racial privilege that highlights the investment that white people have in maintaining the unequal distributions of racialised power that circulate through academia (Moreton-Robinson, 2003). The act of speaking is thus increasingly recognised as one that is inextricably linked to issues of power, and is one aspect of feminist theorising that requires continued attention.

In this paper I take up the problematic of voice by engaging with recent Australian feminist work by Ravenscroft (2003), in which she provides a much needed framework for understanding how it is that white Australians always already speak in a relationship to colonisation, and how the speech of those of us who identify as white thus often functions as a form of violence. Whilst locating instances of such violence may be a relatively straightforward act if the white person under scrutiny identifies as a member of a right-wing political group (for example), it is often somewhat harder to examine how violence is enacted when the voices under examination are those

represented as 'doing good' (see Riggs, 2004, for more on this).

In her work, Ravenscroft (2003) examines the writing of Kathleen Mary Fallon (2002), a white foster mother of an Indigenous boy (now adult).¹ Ravenscroft, through her engagement with Fallon's work, elaborates an account of the difficulties of speaking as a white subject who is clearly marked as inhabiting a relationship to colonial violence: as Ravenscroft suggests, Fallon stands as "the scapegoat for a nation's guilt for the stolen children" (237). Importantly, both Ravenscroft and Fallon (writing as white women) attempt to explore what it means for particular histories to be (un)spoken: how some histories are unspeakable, and how others should potentially *not* be spoken, or at least not spoken in ways that are likely to enact further violence.

Ravenscroft (2003) thus calls for "a reading practice that allows this unutterable to stand" (235), and it is in response to this call that I write within this paper. In doing so I take up the (necessarily difficult) task of being a white male engaging with the voices of a group of white foster/adoptive mothers of Indigenous children, or more precisely, with how their voices are represented in the writings of another white academic: Denise Cuthbert. In examining Cuthbert's research I hope to provide an account of how certain voices are rendered invisible, whilst other voices enact violence simply in their speaking. I conclude by suggesting, following Ravenscroft and Fallon (2002), and drawing upon the work of Moreton-Robinson (2004) and Nicoll (2004), that what is required is the beginnings of an account of 'ethical speech' that locates white Australians firmly upon the ground of Indigenous sovereignty and within a relationship to the possessive

investments that continue to shape the Australian nation.

The Spoken

In her research on the experiences of white foster/adoptive mothers of Indigenous children, Cuthbert renders visible a particular set of relationships that she feels have been given little or no space. She states, for example, that "non-Aboriginal adoptive and foster mothers of Aboriginal children have been rendered invisible and silent in the process of coming to terms with [an increasingly acknowledged] assimilationist history. For these women, their experiences have gone from being not spoken about to being not able to be spoken about; i.e. from the 'unspoken' to the 'unspeakable'" (2001: 142). Despite acknowledging that talking about the experiences of these mothers is difficult, challenging and inherently problematic, Cuthbert nonetheless considers important the act of creating a framework wherein that which has been rendered unspeakable is at the very least represented.

One way in which Cuthbert provides justification for making the white mothers' experiences speakable is through analogising their experiences to those of Indigenous mothers. Thus despite acknowledging the "incomparable suffering of the thousands of Aboriginal mothers whose children were forcibly removed" (2001: 142), Cuthbert sets up a direct comparison between the white foster/adoptive mothers of Indigenous children that she interviews and the Indigenous mothers from whom the children were removed. She states clearly that:

Just as Aboriginal mothers, who endured the tragic loss of their

children, were rendered silent and invisible by the processes of child removal, the role of the non-Aboriginal women who raised these children, either directly or indirectly, in response to the assimilationist imperatives of governments and the part they played in this historical process have now also been occluded. A perspective that allows us to consider such *parallels* may provide a way of seeing the experiences of *both sets* of women in terms other than those offered by the prevailing discourses, both those pertaining to adoption generally and those dealing with the forced removal of Aboriginal children specifically (2001: 142, emphases added).

As can be seen in the words placed under emphasis, Cuthbert appears intent upon bringing the white and Indigenous mothers into a relationship that, whilst acknowledging the potential complicity of the white mothers with 'assimilationist imperatives', nonetheless effectively denies this complicity through the comparisons drawn. The consequence of this is that the ongoing violence enacted against Indigenous communities as a result of the process of removal becomes a secondary narrative to the presumed-to-be shared (or 'parallel') pain of being 'rendered silent and invisible' that both Indigenous and white women are depicted as experiencing.

This of course begs the following question: are we to believe that the white mothers are rendered invisible in ways that are even remotely commensurate to the denial of life and connection enforced upon Indigenous mothers (and their families and communities) via colonisation? Whilst the white mothers' specific narratives of fostering/adoption may hold considerably less cultural capital in contemporary Australia than they may

have in the past (as Cuthbert cogently elaborates), the women themselves can in no way be considered invisible as *white women* in a society that accords considerable space and representation to white women (amongst white people more generally: see Nicoll, 2000, for an elaboration of this point). To conflate the relative lack of representation of these women's narratives with the lack of representation of Indigenous people more generally in Australia does a great disservice to the 'tragic loss of their children' experienced by Indigenous mothers and communities.

In another paper produced from this project, Cuthbert legitimates her research method through a comparison between her own project and that of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's *Bringing them Home* (1997) report. She states that:

A further appeal of a methodology which invited women to tell their own stories in the terms they found most appropriate was that it echoed what has become a dominant methodology in Aboriginal activism on the issue of forced child removal, with personal narratives of stolen children making significant contribution to the way in which this issue has been represented in the public sphere (2000: 212).

Here Cuthbert makes direct comparisons between Indigenous people's testimonies about forced removal (testimonies that occurred in the context of a decade-long state sponsored move towards reconciliation via the acknowledgment of colonial violence and its ongoing impact upon Indigenous communities), and white women's experiences of fostering or adopting Indigenous children. Here Cuthbert equates the need for issues of genocide and dispossession to be 'represented in the public sphere' with

the need of a group of white women to validate their experiences of mothering. The aforementioned problems associated with equating these two sets of experiences are exacerbated by the fact that whilst white people in Australia in general continue to enjoy considerable attention from all facets of the media and through the direct support of government policy (directed as it is by the needs and beliefs of white people), Indigenous people are still largely underrepresented in the media (or represented in negative ways) and are the objects of punitive government interventions.

Furthermore, Cuthbert does not mention the fact that governmental and legislative responses to the HREOC (1997) report failed to adequately address the findings of the report. As writing on litigation and witnessing by Indigenous people in regard to the effects of child theft continues to demonstrate (e.g. Luker 2005; Moreton-Robinson 2004; Nicoll 2004), the response of the Australian government and Australian courts of law has typically been to deny the validity of the voices of Indigenous people represented within the report and in subsequent litigation demanding reparation. Such voices have been accorded only limited space within the realms of the courts and parliament, where the (white required) burden of proof has continually been asserted to deny the validity of Indigenous knowledges. In contrast to this, white voices continue to be accorded space, white testimonies continue to be recognised, and white forms of documentation continue to be prioritised. As such, Cuthbert reiterates the divide between which voices will be heard and which will not precisely at the very moment where she draws comparisons between white foster/adoptive mothers and Indigenous

mothers and their children who were stolen from them: in proposing this analogy and using it to justify her methodology, Cuthbert fails to see that her participants as *white women* are already clearly located within a racialised politics of voice wherein they can presume the right to speak, even if they (and Cuthbert) believe they are not necessarily heard. By contrast, whilst Indigenous people continue to assert their sovereign right to speak, this occurs in a context whereby only certain voices are acknowledged as 'truly speaking', when speaking is defined on the terms of whiteness and its framework of evidentiary proof.

Finally, by evoking the need to 'tell the stories' of white adoptive/foster mothers, and without locating these stories in a context whereby certain voices are always already accorded privilege, Cuthbert perpetuates a logic wherein only those voices recorded, examined, and analysed in particular ways are accorded validity. That her white participant's voices can be shared and thus known on the terms of whiteness only serves to recentre both Cuthbert and her participants' racial privilege: it does not require a decentring of their privileged speaking position (even if it does in places render visible their complicity with colonisation).

In this section I have highlighted how what is spoken, regardless of its reasons for being spoken, holds the potential for overwriting particular marginalised voices with the voices of those who already enjoy considerable privilege and representation. As Ravenscroft (2003) suggests; "There is no picture of 'black' and 'white' that can only represent; in the very act of trying to 'show', representation reproduces the old violences, the old logic, the old story" (240). In her desire (however much

tentative or clarified) to 'give voice', Cuthbert fails to recognise that what she speaks of, and the ways in which she speaks, contributes directly to a politics of voice that does not give sufficient attention to the multiple alternate voices that are *not* being spoken, as I elaborate in the following section.

The Unspoken

In focusing on the voicing of previously unspoken or unspeakable narratives, Cuthbert's account of loss and grief amongst white foster/adoptive mothers is premised upon a highly individualistic understanding of families and parenting. This allows her to 'give voice' to the white women for whom the pain of not seeing themselves represented in Australian society is great, yet this requires her to do so primarily by focusing solely on the white women as *individual women*. Cuthbert spends considerable time in each article produced from the project elaborating why she is tentative in how she positions the women. Yet it is possible to read this tentativeness as itself an evocation of the subject position 'middle-class white woman' that functions to deny the relevance of this subject position to the topic under examination. As Moreton-Robinson (2003; 2004) has demonstrated through her theorisation of whiteness as a proprietorial investment in warranting the 'goodness' of white people, the fear that many white people claim in the face of acknowledging our complicity with colonisation functions, at least in part, by decrying presumed accusations of racism, whilst failing to examine racial privilege. In the face of the violence of the narratives of her participants, and in regard to her own position as a white woman, Cuthbert reasserts the goodness of her participants (and indeed herself) by individualising their actions, and thus rendering them

exempt from accountability as *white people*. In other words, and following Nicoll (2004), whiteness functions within Cuthbert's research precisely by asserting the individuality of white people (and their actions), rather than viewing white people (and their actions) as enacting racial privilege that functions as a constant (albeit in differing ways) across white people as a *group*. As such, Cuthbert legitimises 'giving (more) voice' to the white women by first introducing them as white women who must be heard, and then summarily dismissing their whiteness (and thus race privilege) by individualising their narratives.

Cuthbert also appears to give little consideration to how different her research might have been had she also talked with the Indigenous children who are constantly referred to (often in negative ways), or (where possible) to the Indigenous mothers whose children were stolen from them. One can only wonder how different her account of 'similarities' might have been were she to have interviewed all three groups of people. The net effect of her focus solely on the white mothers is that Cuthbert only presents a very small part of a much wider narrative, and in so doing speaks only one particular (dominant) truth. As such, Cuthbert's drive to 'give voice' to one particular group of people results in the experiences of other groups of people being left unspoken. Whilst of course this is true of much research, it is particularly salient in this instance where the white mothers' experiences are premised upon the corollary trauma of removal experienced by Indigenous communities.

These points about the missing accounts of Indigenous mothers are particularly salient in relation to one paper from the project where Cuthbert (2001) focuses

exclusively on the account of one white mother. In this account (which, it should be noted, is subjected to the highest level of incisive analytic scrutiny) Cuthbert shares with the reader the insights to be gained as to how speakability plays out in the lives of the white women she interviews, and how particular forms of speech hold the capacity to wound. The narrative provided by the participant 'Faye' is cleverly problematised by Cuthbert for the ways in which it epitomises how the very articulation of particular knowledges can be experienced as harmful. To summarise the analysis: 'Faye' reports how, upon finding out about her adopted son's Indigenous birthright after nearly thirty years of care, she was forced to reflect upon some of the negative things she herself had said, and which had been said in her presence, about Indigenous people. In one particular narrative, 'Faye' reports on what she assumed her son's mother would be like:

Prior to me finding out about Michael being Aboriginal, Tom and I went up to Mildura and going along in the bus we see these Aboriginals living in their little humpies along the road and I said to Tom, 'God, look at them... !' They were so dirty ... and that was sort of my idea of how they would be, that they were all like this... Which Michael's mother, believe me, is far from what I imagined Aboriginals to be. She's a very clever woman in her own right and in the position she holds in the Aboriginal community (tape stopped at Faye's request as details of Michael's Aboriginal birth mother, her employment and family circumstances are described) (149-150).

This extract is interesting for the ways in which Cuthbert (via 'Faye') constructs speakable versus unspeakable subjects.

Whilst we must of course read the final comments in brackets as representing Cuthbert's respect as a researcher for the confidentiality of 'Michael's' birth mother,² it nonetheless signals a very clear break in how knowledge about characters in the narrative is represented within the article. In contrast to the witnessing we are called to provide for 'Faye' (and to a lesser extent 'Tom' and 'Michael'), we are barely able to discern the location of 'Michael's' birth mother within the text. Whilst she is clearly identified as not being like 'these Aboriginals living in their little humpies along the road', she is nonetheless still represented as a shadowy figure outside of the main narrative – her dispossessed relationship to Michael is, in effect, perpetuated by her location outside of the narrative.

Curiously, however, Cuthbert later identifies 'Michael's' birth mother as a "tertiary-educated professional" who (along with her other children) are "socially mobile, middle-class professionals" (2001: 151-152). That this form of identification is not a cause for erasure within the text is somewhat alarming, particularly if we are to consider the small percentage of Indigenous women who would be identified within the category 'tertiary-educated professionals'. One must thus very much read this descriptor as primarily serving Cuthbert's analytic purposes, rather than intentionally providing some space for 'Michael's' mother within the text. The net result of this particular set of representations of 'Michael's' birth mother is that she is located as an object of both Cuthbert and 'Faye' – her location outside of the category 'Aboriginals living in their little humpies' does not actually function to identify her as a subject with her own narratives. Instead, she is largely figured as a plot device, both for 'Faye' and for

Cuthbert. That Cuthbert subjects 'Faye's' account to significant analytic scrutiny is thus undermined by the fact that such scrutiny only serves to further accord subject-status to 'Faye', problematic as this is as it comes at the expense of 'Michael's' birth mother: she remains a largely unspoken object within the text.

These points about 'Michael's' birth mother highlight the silences that surround many accounts of the theft of Indigenous children. The *Bringing them Home* (HREOC, 1997) report being a notable exception, public discourse on the experiences of the Stolen Generation typically focuses on the experiences of children who were stolen from their families, but does little to examine the racial politics of reproduction for Indigenous communities post-colonisation. What is left unspoken, then, are the accounts of inter-racial relationships between Indigenous women and white men, relationships that were frequently constituted through rape, abduction, and other forms of violence committed against Indigenous women in the name of colonisation (see Haebich, 2000, for an elaboration of this). In her work on race and the 'genetic tie', Dorothy Roberts (1995) examines in detail how US law has historically been used to justify conditions of slavery (e.g., through the transmission of ownership matrilineally despite the racial identity of the father). In Australia the removal of Indigenous children into 'care' was typically predicated on the logic that 'lighter skinned' children were more likely to be assimilated through an upbringing provided by white families (or in service to white people). That these children were potentially the children of white fathers has received little attention or consideration, even though the implications of this are considerable

(Probyn,³ 2003, being a notable exception).

As I have briefly suggested here, Cuthbert's focus on the need to voice the previously unspeakable narratives of white foster/adoptive mothers of Indigenous children is premised upon the perpetuation of unspeakability. In other words, in order to bring her participants' stories into being, Cuthbert seems unable to equally give voice to the Indigenous mothers and children (and their potential fathers) within her writings. Indigenous people are thus largely left unmentioned within the texts, even as they are most often the topic of the white women's narratives: Indigenous women function as plot narratives (or objects of derision), but rarely as active subjects in their own right. Furthermore, Cuthbert authorises her white participants to speak precisely by denying their privilege as white women: she herself evokes the subject position 'middle-class white woman' to justify both her own speech and that of her participants, but in so doing she largely ignores the relevance of the location from which she and her participants speak. As I will suggest in the following section, the unspoken nature of both Indigenous narratives and the whiteness of both Cuthbert and her participants within the papers published from the project is thus largely the product of what appears to be issues that Cuthbert herself finds unspeakable.

The Unspeakable

Part of the problem, it would appear, facing Cuthbert in her analysis of the white women's narratives, is finding a framework within which to both do justice to their experiences, whilst also subjecting them to analytic critique in regards to their location as white people living in a colonial nation. I have

suggested already that this problem arises partly as a result of the sole focus on the white women's narratives, which are not forced to stand alongside those of Indigenous mothers or children. I would also suggest here that the problem of finding a framework is further exacerbated by (at least) two other things: Cuthbert's lack of engagement with the field of critical race and whiteness studies, and her failure to adequately consider the potential need for some stories to remain unspoken.

In regards to my first point, I do acknowledge that the field of critical race and whiteness studies was relatively young when Cuthbert collected her data and began analysing it for publication. Nevertheless, texts such as Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) *White Women, Race Matters* had been around for some time, and could be seen as crucial to constructing an informed account of white women's complicity with colonial regimes. One of the most significant contributions of the field, and one that I introduced in the previous section, is the concept of 'race privilege', which could have afforded Cuthbert significant analytic leverage for examining how the white mothers were both part of the 'assimilationist imperative' as well as being women living under patriarchy.

The both/and location of white women living under patriarchy is captured neatly in Ravenscroft's (2003) narration of Fallon: "she is the colonising subject and she acts against this and she is the colonising subject and..." (241). Whilst it is not apparent in the extracts that Cuthbert presents whether or not the white adoptive/foster mothers did attempt to 'act against' their role as colonising subjects, Ravenscroft's point is nonetheless salient: throughout the published articles from this project,

Cuthbert goes to considerable length to elaborate a very clear 'yes but' that informs her research: yes the women were complicit in the functions of colonisation, but they did so as women who were greatly disempowered via their location under patriarchy. As I have suggested elsewhere in regards to white queer people (Riggs, 2006), this is the wrong 'yes but'. An alternate formulation, as informed by a consideration of race privilege, would suggest that 'yes the women experienced disadvantage and co-optation as a result of patriarchy, but they did so as white women who nonetheless benefited from living under *white heteropatriarchy*'. A consideration of the function of privilege as central to the white mothers' experience may have helped to voice what appears to be the central, yet apparently unspeakable, aspect of Cuthbert's findings: white people who are represented as marginalised are still benefactors of unearned race privilege.

This then brings me to my second point about the problems within Cuthbert's analysis. Whilst in the last point, matters of race privilege appear to be in many ways 'unspeakable' for a feminist analysis of white foster/adoptive mothers, there are other matters that very much appear to be speakable for Cuthbert, but which, I would suggest, should perhaps remain unspeakable. As I suggested in the introduction, a politics of voice is inextricably linked to issues of power. This is exemplified by the weight accorded to the voices of white women in Cuthbert's research, where there is little attendant weight given to the voices of Indigenous women. (It could, for example, have been feasible for Cuthbert to utilise the *Bringing them Home* report (HREOC, 1997) as a means of standing the voices of Indigenous women alongside, or indeed against,

those of white women). This leads me to suggest, again following Ravenscroft (2003), that what is required is a consideration of the moments in which particular voices may need to be left unspoken.

Certainly in regards to the data presented by Cuthbert, we see yet more repetitions of white violence, where the voices of the white mothers are permitted to speak of Indigenous people in derogatory ways. Whilst Cuthbert signals her discomfort with this and mentions her challenges to the women in the interviews, we nonetheless witness yet again the violence of white privilege, with little attendant functional utility produced: the presentation of the narratives in most instances (other than the aforementioned analysis of 'Faye') do very little, in my reading, to shift how particular voices function to enact violence. My point thus is not that the white foster/adoptive mothers' voices should be occluded from the public record *per se*, but rather that their presentation must do more than simply exhibit them as (potentially) 'racist voices' – it must also extrapolate from them opportunities for shifting the priority accorded to particular voices. For, as Ravenscroft (2003) suggests:

To the extent that [Fallon's text] might be 'autobiographic', it is the autobiography of all white Australians, the story of our own origins that we nevertheless disavow. In this sense it is not Fallon's story, or not her story only. It is the one 'we', as white Australians, write too. It is the story in which we are all implicated, the story that we write so that we can be written (235).

Elaborating this point may have assisted Cuthbert in extrapolating how it is that the white women's accounts demonstrate *all* white people's complicity with colonisation – how the

women's narratives are narratives of a nation founded upon dispossession and genocide.

Nicoll (2004) offers one way of thinking about whiteness that highlights the need to forcibly locate white people within a relationship to Indigenous sovereignty. Nicoll terms this approach 'falling out of perspective', in which white people engage with the complex terrain of race relations in Australia by actually locating ourselves on the ground of Indigenous sovereignty, rather than continuing to claim an objective position outside of the ongoing effects of colonisation. This would certainly appear a useful approach when considering Cuthbert's work, particularly in regard to her deployment of the politics of voice and its reliance upon certain forms of voicing and testimony. Cuthbert's implicit theorisation in places of the white women as somehow removed from accountability occurs because she allows space for the women's narratives to exist merely as 'perspectives' upon colonial histories – she does not sufficiently connect their narratives to their actual embodied practices as white people.

Moreton-Robinson's (2004) elaboration of what she terms the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty further suggests how Cuthbert's failure to connect the women's narratives to the ongoing practices of colonisation is informed by a possessive logic that relies upon claims to an objective perspective on the part of white people. In this sense, whiteness functions as a form of possession that is constructed as resulting from merit and 'hard work', not from the effects of illegal possession and genocide. Yet this logic only holds true if white people continue to enact a 'postcolonising amnesia' (Luker 2005) in the face of the well documented fact of

colonial violence. In this sense, the desire to claim any form of 'objective location' requires white people to speak from outside of colonial relations – to theorise and live colonisation as something to which we do not have a relationship. Cuthbert enacts this 'position from above' when she fails to adequately locate herself as a benefactor of white privilege, and where she allows her participants' narratives to stand as relatively disembodied reflections upon 'mothering the other': her accounts of the women's actual parenting practices and their beliefs about Indigeneity come to stand in for colonisation, yet in so doing are divorced from the real world effects of child theft and genocide. The net effect of this attribution of perspective or distance to both herself and her participants allows Cuthbert to reassert a possessive logic whereby what one claims to do or have done is read as justification for one's social location: most of the women claim to be good mothers, and Cuthbert claims a location as a good researcher, hence these positions are taken *a priori* as being true. Yet this fails to adequately address the investments that the participants and Cuthbert have in legitimising a particular view of Australian history, and its role in propping up white race privilege.

'Falling from perspective', as Nicoll (2004) suggests, would require both Cuthbert and her participants to land squarely within the terrain of Australian race relations, and to consider how their speaking effects certain silences, how their own narratives in many ways overwrite the narratives of Indigenous families and communities, and yet how this overwriting always fails to deny the fact of Indigenous sovereignties, and ongoing resistances to white hegemony. In the very process of speaking of whiteness Cuthbert both reifies it and

normalises its effects. A move toward 'falling from perspective' may have assisted Cuthbert (and if incorporated into her methodology, her participants too) in recognising how claims to voice are always already located within a field of racial politics that make possible the telling of particular histories that are reliant upon the silencing of others.

Conclusion

Of course my writing in this paper may to some read like one white academic attacking another and in so doing claiming the moral high ground. My interest in this paper, however, has neither been to dismiss Cuthbert's work outright nor to somehow locate myself outside of whiteness. Rather, my interest has been to examine how some of the academic research practices that embody a particularly white way of being and knowing about the world serve not simply to perpetuate white hegemony, but in so doing preclude reflexivity about the role of race privilege. Thus, following Moreton-Robinson (2003), I have attempted to demonstrate the subject positions that are allocated to white women within academia and by white academics, and how these are often reliant upon the objectification of Indigenous people.

To counter this I have proposed that any politics of voice must give consideration to the ways in which some voices are heard at the expense of others, and that in the process of warranting particular voices it is often the case that certain people are constructed as active subjects at the expense of other people who are constructed as objects. In her role as the 'Doctor from the University' (2000), it is incumbent upon white researchers such as Cuthbert to engage in methods that foreground issues of privilege and its functioning in accounts

of colonisation. Most importantly, and as Ravenscroft (2003) suggests, this entails white researchers (such as Cuthbert and myself) critically examining our own locations as white people who, whilst holding differential relationships to the norm of white-male-middle-class-able-bodied-heterosexuality, nonetheless benefit from the legacies of colonial violence. Considering how our speaking may at times contribute to such violence is thus central to engaging in a politics of voice that is mindful of the racialised power dynamics of academic research and public spaces, and the implications of this for ways in which we speak about (and ourselves inhabit) the lives of white people.

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Endnotes

¹ It is important to note here that whilst in other non-fiction work Fallon identifies herself as a white foster mother, the piece examined by Ravenscroft reads as a fictionalised account spoken through multiple voices.

² One can only hope that the many forms of information shared about 'Tom' and 'Michael' meet with their approval as to the public availability of their lives.

³ It is important to note that whilst Probyn's account contributes an important theoretical framework to understanding how and why white fathers are largely missing in the public record, it does so in places through a similar logic to that employed by Cuthbert: it potentially constructs white fathers as 'victims' of colonisation. For example, she states that "Cohabitation [with Indigenous women] mean that white fathers lost whatever privileges were associated with whiteness" (2003: 70). This, I would suggest, is a significant overstatement of the prohibitions placed on white fathers of Indigenous children, and one that fails to grasp the differential functions of privilege.

BOOK REVIEW

LARA PALOMBO

Petrilli, Susan (2007). White Matters: Il Bianco in Questione, Roma: Meltemi Editore.

The bi-lingual collection of essays from "White Matters" or "Il Bianco in Questione" places whiteness "at the centre of the question: do white matters matter?" Through various modalities of analysis this centering calls into question the privileged and/or dominant position of whiteness. Susan Petrilli introduces 'whiteness' as a "rational, ideological, philosophical, historical, cultural, political, juridical construction" that poses ethical concerns. Critical Whiteness Studies is introduced here as a wide range of approaches to whiteness and "its characteristics, privileges, historical processes that have sustained and favoured its development, its metamorphoses, its crises, its relations with black and non-white identities and the different gradations of black and white". As an active member of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association (ACRAWSA) and a feminist diasporic subject located within the historical complexities of the North and South divide of Italy and its ramification in the ongoing racialised heteropatriarchal hierarchies of Australia, this bi-lingual project is an important start and one that I have been waiting for.

This volume has resulted in the production of a collection of essays from a broad range of authors, 29 to be exact who are from various (inter) disciplinary, geographical and cultural locations. Some of these authors are already connected by the field of enquiry of "Whiteness Studies" or "Critical Whiteness Studies" that has

developed over the last twenty years especially in the US, UK and Australia that within its variants focuses on 'whiteness' as an object of inquiry. Yet, a number of papers from Italy are also involved in this bi-lingual initiative.

The first of the six sections in the book is dedicated to theoretical and ideological questions. This section includes articles on the conceptual limitations of whiteness, reconceptualisations of race matter, relations between patriarchy, capitalism and racism, the "fuore genere" or outside gender, typification, species, and roles. This includes the article by Wangui Wa Goro who poses the question "Why Whiteness again and why not?" and problematizes 'whiteness' as a single gaze locus of analysis. This article rejects whiteness as a conceptual model as it is perceived unable to respond to the needs of translation theories and practices or to consider multiple positionings and simultaneous responses. This author proposes instead the use of "Ethical Hectorosexism", as mode of theorising "power relations in inequality in/and their varied intersections".(p.53) I am not too clear here however, how Goro sees "Critical and Whiteness Studies" reproducing various forms of 'supremacy' or even threatening the call for "equality". And although I am in agreement with the author that a single locus gaze is a problematic issue, including an ethical one, to me critical whiteness as a tool of analysis dismantles the racialised 'hegemonic' naturalisation and privileging of (supreme) locations of 'white' or black' and their positioning within a binary framework that this article rejects.

The article by Arun Saldanha "Phenotype: Matters of Race" is also an important paper. In this article, the author seeks to defend materialist ontology of race. The author indeed wants to re-define the materiality of 'race' and to seriously consider "its biological dimensions". So race should not be eliminated, because it potentially shows the openness of the body. It should instead be harnessed through a cosmopolitan ethics.

The author is critical of linguistic, ideological, discursive theories of race that treat it as a cultural construct and do not consider the physical body. The recognition that phenomenology, corporeal feminism, anthropological approaches, biological and even Deluzian models have been linked to racialised practices, is transformed here into a desire not for reproducing racial oppression but producing a 'corporeal race'. So 'race' or phenotype of race, although it is recognised as culturally embodied through violent racialised regimes and practices, is not rejected but re-imagined as a corporeal heterogeneous presence ready for these forms of 'knowledge' to empirically appreciate or liberate. These theoretical models and conceptual tools or historical technologies of power are also re-imagined as something that can be distanced or partly distanced (if not entirely then through spatio-temporal elements) from the 'ugly' and 'violent' physical/corporeal embodiments of race. But to me this becomes a rational and disembodied desire for race that is more concerned with actualising the aims of anthropologists, feminists, biologists, philosophers etc...than actually engaging with the dismantling of race. To me more effort needs to be placed on undoing 'race' and not on 're-imagining race'. Who is deciding here that 'race' is useful and should be

saved? My question is how is whiteness operating here through forms of knowledge that claims to want 'race' and how do we know its potentialities in light of all the evidence of its violent effects?

The second section of the book "The Style of Dominion" critiques discussions of national borders to introduce "transnational perspectives", postnational post-colonies and discussions of European colonisation. In this section is Arjun Appadurai's republished essay on the need to extend the discourses of the post-colony to include analysis of the US, that is, "into the heart of whiteness". This is where current formations of non-territorial, transnational and post-national forms of allegiances are incubated. In this same section, Melanie E. L. Bush also sets up a discussion on the intersection between nationalism and race in the US for people of European descent.

For me, this article follows some of the points also introduced in Susan Petrilli's discussion of Australian migrants, which although it also includes non-European subjects, still argues that today these are being recognised "as white" for political, social and economic and cultural reasons. From my location within an Australian context, I too am concerned with an historical "investment" in whiteness and the social/political benefits associated with it, especially in relation to participating in the dispossession of Indigenous land and in the ongoing denial of Indigenous Sovereignty. But having worked on the historical positioning of women of Italian origins and their internment during World War 2, I also find it problematic to claim that European migrants have now become "white". This supposition not only denies the historical conditions or relations of power that enforced initial and continuing investments in

hegemonic whiteness but also the un-ruling relations that affect European subjects and that occur in a white (anglocentric) diasporic post-colonial society like Australia. Being granted the status of 'white' to me does not provide stability but rather the "recognition" that this can always be taken away by hegemonic 'whiteness'.

The Third Section "Persistences and Diffusions" includes work on In-between and Imprecise Cultures in Latina America, Beauty and Skin Colour, the Stockholm Syndrome in African Americans, and Post-Apartheid South Africa. This includes the work of Maria Solimini on post-apartheid South Africa that argues that the power of a white minority (i.e. Afrikaaner and English) that was dominant during the apartheid period is reconstituted through relations of global capitalism. The development of South African capitalism intersects with the development of a form of western capitalism that produces a "global apartheid" that concentrates on the proletarianisation and pauperization of South African black population. This create a contradiction between a post-Apartheid South African state committed to the welfare of its citizens and the diffusion of poverty, malnutrition and diseases like AIDS.

The fourth section dedicated to "Writing, Figuration, Performance" presents critical work on Indigenous theatre performance, on the British musician Stephen Patrick Morrissey, Peter Gabriel, White Colour in Art and Writing and more. It includes the work of David Buchbinder examining the performative role of 'racial passing'. This article moves away from a focus on skin colour and provides ways to rethink what the author calls Whiteness Central as performative rather than a natural essence.

The section "White Australia and Fear of the Other" includes critical studies of indigenous and white relations, the Law and colonial ruling, young Australians and whiteness, moral panic and media responses, White Australia and its paranoias, refugees and national responses, white terror and white ideology. It is opened with a work by Aileen Moreton Robinson who meticulously critiques the "epistemic violence" that produces or invents the 'racialised other' within the distinctive "socio discursive regimes" of modern legal and academic institutions. These institutions "possessively" categorise or produce members of the Stolen Generation and Indigenous histories as unreliable sources of the 'truth' and assert their own neutrality and objectivity. Whiteness in this article is then summoned to be denaturalised from its dominancy or supremacy. It is treated as an epistemological *a priori* within knowledge production that becomes privileged contextually, or within "the borderlands where indigenous and white relations prevail. The book ends with a final section on paradigms and exclusions that engages with metaphors of whiteness, racial passing, Indigenous conceptions of whiteness, binary divisions and language.

The selection of these broad ranging papers placed me on a continual critical mode that questioned my own critical knowledge and understanding of this inter-disciplinary field. But it also brought forward my own criticism of the effects of such an open anthology. This is a well established field of inquiry and the volume seems to limit its own scope by the decision to publish such a wide range of essays, including some that clearly claimed to understand whiteness but did not engage with 'whiteness'. Nor did I see any attempts at linking Italian writing with its historical but also

ongoing legacies of whiteness through local, national and transnational intersecting relations. The book ends with a call for linking whiteness to rigorous processes of letting go all 'distortions' or forms of identification so to be outside all genders, types, species and roles. But how can one let go 'whiteness' if its power has not been acknowledged yet?

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Endnotes

¹ See Goro discussion of the mythical figure "Hector", p.53