

# Critical Race and Whiteness Studies



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RACIAL LEGITIMATIONS

## **The Village in the City: Critical Race Theory, Schooling, and a Life**

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*The research is framed around stories—counternarratives in the tradition of Critical Race Theory (CRT)—of the author coming to know his own historical racism as rooted in his geographical, political, racial, classed and religious upbringing in Chicago, United States. The paper specifically attends to the socioeconomic and religious aspects of race as defined and constrained by a place run through with its own racial historical leavings. As such, the work can be read as one continuous journey, or two very fractured versions of coming to know (the self and the boundaries around two fields of inquiry). The purpose is twofold: to explore the ways in which the disciplinary boundaries of two fields, CRT and Critical Geography, can inform a critical contextualisation of race and place for the author and the reader.*

### **Introduction**

I am stuck in the middle of the journey  
a highway without human activity  
a text without visible structure  
life on this side of the border  
on your side ...  
I no longer know who I am  
but I like it  
(Gómez-Peña, as cited in Soja 1996: 132)

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Places have stories, just as they do boundaries. The ways in which spaces become places through social interaction, are, as critical geographers argue, encapsulated in and outlined by the stories that become im/possible at the socially created borders of emplacement (Soja 1989, 1996; Lefebvre 1991).

These boundary-stories “can be racialized, and a racialized landscape serves to either naturalize, or make normal, or provide the means to challenge racial formations and racist practices” (Schein 1999: 189). They can also function as “highly regulated space[s] that demand compliance” (Giannacopoulos 2007: 2). This piece is meant to examine how silence functions to perpetuate white-washed stories in compliance with a specific narrative. As a white man, born of the stories and silences I seek to explore here, I can, at best acknowledge this process, highlighting the borders of what might (not) be possible in a re-examination, through what I hope is the antiracist action (Feagin & Vera 2005: 136) of questioning the commonsensical narration of a (racial) space.

Implicit in this border-making is the sense that the demarcation of space as included and excluded (inclusive and exclusive), people as internal or external, lies in a “moral virtue of one people’s claim to specific territory over that of others” (Garbutt 2006: 1). Such a construction of identity is rooted for Garbutt, in the notion of “autochthony” which denotes a local as being born of a land, in the process serving as an aid to collective forgetfulness for, say, how the land was appropriated. This allows for the “single unifying myth” (2) of the foundation of a space, a place outlined by “a founding forgetting” (3) whereby it becomes easy to mark outsiders foreign, alien, improbable and undesirable by erasing indigeneity from a place.

Quite often that which we choose to (and choose not to) tell of these stories of place and self (and thus other) determines where the lines of demarcation fall. Work in genres such as memoir, autobiography, and narrative, Laing (2000) argues allow for interplay between “self-perception ... [and] ‘other perception’” where “these perceptions and the various social and cultural factors in which they are steeped may conflict with one another, creating potential and actual instabilities” (as cited in Versaci 2007: 48). Indeed a central tenet of “whiteness as an epistemological *a priori*” (Moreton-Robinson 2004: 75) turns on the ability to define an ‘other’ through the construction of insider and outsider status whereby “whiteness is defined by what it is not (animal or liminal)” (78). For Giannacopoulos (2007) this involves the dual action of appropriated indigenosity for the sake of re-positioning what and who is possible in a space. And out of that action, those positionings, come stories, narratives.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) see ‘narrative’ as “the study of the ways humans experience the world” (2). A notion that Daniell (1999) further refines, believing that stories (most particularly memoir and narrative) become “how individuals and groups engage in self-formation” (408). In the same vein, Brodkey (1996) sees critical autoethnography as functioning similarly to “open up a space of resistance between the individual and the collective” at “contact zones” seen as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” such that “social identities are the serious, impish, ridiculous, generous, wary, contradictory singular selves constructed and reconstructed” (28), here, in the de-racialised stories of a space and place.

In this paper I will look to interrogate the borders around the stories of my birthplace, narrativising specifically silenced tales that have formed

unspoken/unwritten boundaries much in need of destabilisation. Because of the nature of my own identity, these may not be counternarratives, as such, since my whiteness colours the very option to re-tell, re-possess, engage actively with race and oppression on a daily basis and in scholarship. Options, in other words, are telling. This is, in a sense, the luxury of a waged whiteness. Still, a repositioning of space and place through the engagement with the silences at the borders of official histories enclosing a bounded space feels vital, necessary particularly at the edges of what is plausible for white scholars in or perhaps writing out of the academy.

I will be using Beverly, a neighbourhood of Chicago, in the United States as the location of these tales and very much as a version of the story in hopes of troubling commonsense formations of a (de)racialised self. As such, my purpose here is to create instability in the official narrative(s), through some version of a critical autoethnographic account of my childhood by way of reinserting that which has been long implicit, but ever officially edited out.

By way of beginning I'll draw here from what might be called an official history of Beverly, my home on the south side of Chicago:

[in the 1970s] the people of Beverly ... feared a decline in home values, resulting in financial loss, increase in crime, and schools deteriorating and becoming unsafe ... At the center of the problem were certain ever-present real estate brokers who often fueled the fires of fear ... Between 1970 and 1972, the people who wanted to leave, left, but the majority of people in Beverly did not ... one important factor ... was its excellent housing stock ... another key in Beverly's strong housing stock is that almost 80% of all housing units in Beverly, were ... single family homes ... [additionally] Beverly has always been politically well connected over the years (Oswald 2001: 30-32).

And while this story tells us some things, it very clearly does not tell us others. There is a self here (we of Beverly!), but no other. The wolves, it appears, were at the door in the early 70s, but we know not of what pack. This implied fear of the other, is a fear born of the concept of contamination. This is a clean telling of a place with the fear of invasion and dispossession (Moreton-Robinson 2005: 21) of and by an as yet undefined other just at the edges. Since the "right to possess is inextricably tied to perceiving [space] as a white possession" (22) we might assume just who is local and other, but the task of making this explicit will require a re-reading, a rewriting.

There are several ways to read the above story. One might read it as a triumphant tale of neighbourhood unity, or as a testament to the value of the democratic-political process; perhaps we might even view it as a clarion call in support of affordable homeowner lending practices. My goal here, however, is to read for the silences, inserting where I can, that which has been surgically, epistemologically, removed. My interest is to look at how race is silenced in the white-washed stories we tell and how stories about race either are not told or (at best) are put to the margins, left in dusty drawers for removal and a once-over in February, so much trivia about peanuts and railroads on bulletin boards, our (racial) past swiftly papered over by the shamrocks of March.

So let us re-present, re-read now noting that the above narrative is what Bonilla Silva's (2003) racism without racists might sound like, if written as a brief history of the white flight that surrounded my neighbourhood just prior to my birth. Joe Oswald (2001) and I went to the same grade school; we are immersed in the same (silent) discourse. Let us insert, in the gaps of the many truths of the place, race. My additions are marked by brackets:

[in the 1970s] the [white] people of Beverly ... feared a decline in home values, resulting in financial loss, increase in crime, and schools deteriorating and becoming unsafe [if blacks moved in]

and

At the center of the problem [of blacks moving in] were certain ever-present real estate brokers who often fueled the fires of fear [of nonwhite racial groups]

and

Between 1970 and 1972, the [white, affluent] people who wanted to leave, left, but the majority of [white] people in Beverly did not ... one important factor ... was its excellent housing stock ... another key in Beverly's strong housing stock is that almost 80% of all housing units in Beverly, were ... single family homes [bought by whites with loans secured through the Federal Housing Association post World War II while blacks in the Black Belt, unable to secure such moneys due to officially racist policies like Red Lining, continued to rent unable to build up the equity of their white counterparts] ...

and last

Beverly has always been [white and] politically well connected over the years (30-32).

If Rodriguez (2006) is correct in asserting that "stories build consensus, a common culture of shared understandings" (1070), then the holes in the story of home are at least as significant as the sweeping bigotry that was once a banner proclaiming race warfare in the 1920s. Indeed, over the course of the fifty odd years between those tempestuous times of ethnic-turned-white-turned-not-black, what we are implying speaks far louder than our bald assertions. And we have a consensus of silence about our own race, just as we scream oblique cautions about the race of others. Deferring, again, to Rodriguez I acknowledge that examining the other side of the coin, presenting mere "opposition" to the nonstory here "is not enough". Rather, I must "make [my]self anew" (1069). To do so, we must go back to school. But first, some context and a move to a specific territory, recalling as Garbutt (2006) cautions that "a territory" constructed through storytelling, as in any way "belonging to a people and a people belonging to a territory" will construct a dual identity of "we" and "here" that cannot but alienate (5). The epistemology of whiteness wrought through possession makes it necessarily so.

It is telling, then, that any published (or remembered) narrative of the Beverly that I have encountered begins with the colonisation of the land by German immigrants who organised wolf hunts and sought to drain the surrounding swamps in the late 19th century. This fictive history ignores the displacement of native peoples who are denied any “ability to determine a place in the world” (Brayboy 2005: 436) by a whitestreamed (123) history that imagines a land that was home to the Miami, Illinois and Potowatomi people—displaced west by federal policy through officially sanctioned racism and genocide—as empty and there for the taking. Thus a history, peopled, was drained and hunted as well.

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What follows is an/one account of my (family’s) life in Beverly. I will examine the official tales of Beverly, as I did earlier on, but in the process I attempt to attend to those stories—troubling, painful, whispered—left untold in any outlet beyond the kitchen table, the panelled den, the insular parish as they pertain to race. I will be, in essence, inserting brackets much as I did above, into those officialised stories of the home that made me. In order to theorise the retelling(s), these revisions, I begin by exploring Critical Race Theory—most particularly its conceptualisation of counternarrative—and the possibilities it holds for white scholars attempting to re-narrate our lives, our raced lives; our racist lives. In the process I will present vignettes of home that are problematic and have been (some of them) long silenced to try to bring visible structure to the previously invisible (deleted) text of the place, my family. My life.

The writing—and reading, by necessity—of this work may appear unconventional, at least in academic terms, but I ask you to be patient. I have chosen not to cohere the stories as I go along—not to give you my sense of them as they are told—because their meaning and by implication, the analyses they have required, were cumulative rather than episodic. That is to say that my own sense of coming to know the silences that shaped my racialised life through the discourse that is/was Beverly was (and to a certain degree will always remain) mystified at the temporal moment of each vignette. And as it has been only in retrospect that some modicum of clarity emerged, I have chosen—a conceit of the storyteller, I admit—to allow for process(ing) first, withholding the crystallising of analysis until the bulk of the story has unfolded for the reader. It is my hope that the text remains both dynamic, though not overly frustrating, as a mirror in some ways reflecting the manner in which I have experienced each memory.

### **Bound(ed)**

Because this is about boundaries, it is necessarily about the abject(ed). Here abjection is best understood as:

the affect or feeling of anxiety, loathing, and disgust that the subject has in encountering certain matter, images, and fantasies—the horrible—to which it can respond only in aversion, with nausea and distraction ... the abject (for Kristeva [1982]) provokes fear and disgust because it exposes the border between self and

other. The border is fragile. The abject threatens to dissolve the subject by dissolving the border (Longhurst 2001: 19).

Which is really what the construction of race was/is all about anyways: other(ing) and difference. Abjection.

Lewis (2004) puts forth the notion that "racial discourses, ideologies, and structural arrangements shift over time" (626) which means that "boundaries of racial categories are negotiated, challenged, and or reinforced in daily life" (625). And much the same, "there is no biological basis to the [concept] of race; there are no genetic characteristics possessed by all the members of any [racialized] group" (Ladson-Billings 2003: 259). Which is not to suggest, of course, that race matters any less in our lives because it is, in actuality, little more than a pastiche of leftover bigoted discourses rooted in sciences, religions, and laws meant to ensure that the fragile border between self and other remains crystallised in color(s). No. Race matters precisely because biology, which created and legitimated it as a social discourse (Omi & Winant 1986), can now be used in challenge of the discourse it created. "What does it mean," though, Lorde (1984) asks, "when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?" (110). It means, I can only assume, that we are left with a problem of the differend. Specifically here we're talking about the invention and maintenance of whiteness as a category of difference and status. Accounts of ethnic immigrants 'becoming white' (and by contrast those groups who are barred from or refuse/d entry into the wages of white dominance) abound (see Brodtkin 1998; Buck 2001; Bonilla-Silva 2006). This would be part of the unspoken story of how Beverly moved from German-Protestant to Irish-Catholic to white to 'socially and financially stable' or other such euphemisms. Indeed, of course, whiteness has little to do with the specifics of skin and is "not a culture but a social concept" (Leonardo 2002: 32) predicated on a discourse that specifically avoids identifying the in-built privileges and dominance perpetuated through its maintenance of self (and other). It is a "blindness to privilege" (Johnson 2006: 120) that functions to create versions of people as much as place. Hoskins (2006) reminds us that the value of place-based examinations of race and whiteness rely on our "being conscious of the mutually constitutive relationship between race and space" while attending to the ways in which "events ... both render whiteness invisible" while "racializ[ing] others" (100). My aim here is to make visible that which has been wilfully written out of one history of one place and its blindness to privilege and dominance as a function of the social.

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) utilise Lyotard's idea of the differend as a way to justify the counternarrativising which undergirds Critical Race Theory. The argument seems to be that "when a concept acquires conflicting meaning for two groups" (44) it is a coming to language for the underprivileged to be able to assert a story of challenge which runs contrary to the dominant and (assumed) oppressive voice. As one privileged by his insider status in and of Beverly, the vignettes of this text may not well be counternarratives in the truest sense, but it is from this tradition, in homage to it, that I seek to reinvent the stories of my former home.

Victor Villanueva (1999) writes about “the difference between speaking and being heard, that if one is constantly speaking but is never heard, never truly heard, there is, in effect, silence, a silencing” (653). The differend posited above, in very real ways, allows for a great deal of speaking and writing into the void. For if, when approaching a text—any text—we do not hold in our minds that racism is everyday, that there exists “a collective oppression ... a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism” which Grande (2004: 124) calls colonialism, then that work which Critical Race theorists seek to do is never truly heard by we who need its transformative possibility the most. Silenced.

What to do, then? One answer might be: Live on, and write from the borders, “viewing the world from a privileged perspective” (Bergerson 2003: 55) where, as a white, straight, male “challenging ‘manifestations of racism’” (58) that you observe might better illuminate that which others like you might otherwise let fade into the everydayness of life. This is never enough, of course; but we begin here. Make it safe for those around to follow Gómez-Peña into the prickling pleasure and fear of not-knowing quite so well who we are in a world we’ve never quite yet glimpsed for its flaws. Ultimately, this means making writing, making storytelling into a “counter-site,” which Soja (1989) sees as representing “all other (and absolutely different) real sites within the synchronous culture ‘simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted’” (196). Invert. Contest. Re-present. This is not the differend, not two sides of a coin; rather it is the heterotopia to be read as all-at-once that “a space,” as bell hooks suggests might be “there for critical exchange” (as cited in Soja 1989: 83). Tell the story/ies and open your life up in this way that the supremacy you challenge might immolate itself in the writing, remembering always what a privilege it is to be able to do so.

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Mom tells a story. This is rare enough. I’ve spent the past five years digging into a matrilineal past that’s more personal archaeology than strict genealogical work. There’s reticence and no shortage of just-below-surface pain and so these moments come in spurts. Some of this, as with any spread-limbed family tree has to do with early death—cancer, heart disease, car-wrecks—and not a small dose of alcoholism along with various other closetings that accrue over generations, skeletal or otherwise. For today, however, she’s talking, flush with merlot. I’ve asked about Dad.

“On the night I met your father, we were at a party at Mundelein and he and Tom Keevers and Tom Philpott showed up. They were the only boys there.”

It’s funny, I think, to envision my mother in college in the early 1960s, black hair bobbed, calling these men—these grandfathers—boys. That two of them are deceased makes it almost spectral, this blush of youth faded in the photograph of my mother’s mind.

The boys were students at Loyola University in Chicago, Mundelein's brother school.

"And I had been crying all night. Your dad was just so kind and shy and I was supposed to be dating someone else ..."

"Mom, so many dates? Gross." Sarcastic.

"Oh stop it. It was different then. We dated in groups. But he asked me out and I said yes and then somehow we fell in love along the way."

"Again. Gross. Why had you been crying, though?"

A pause. Quieter, conspiratorial though we two are the only ones home; she's blushing, now, from something other than the wine.

"We were in a minstrel show that night before he showed up and there was something in the makeup, the paint. It was," trailing off here, "burning my face."

Which leaves me to blush. To my right, in a place more prominent than any wedding pictures, or photos of overall-ed grandchildren, sits an eight by ten of the two of us smiling big, a then-newly-minted-senator Obama between us. What to do with this history, this so-subtle-it-screams education?

Write it out. Like an athlete stretching a muscle that the lactase toxins might drain into the blood, that the poison might be recycled for its uses; the excess is expunged in the sweat of the effort.

"Whites," Alderman (2006) notes, "locate racism in color consciousness and its absence in color blindness" (231). Another way to say this is that the untold stories of the ways in which overt (and implicit) racism have coloured my unconscious taken-for-granted whiteness thrive on their own absence within the discourse of my family, my life. We might be quick to point out that Mom—and I believe this—meant no deliberate harm at nineteen, parroting Al Jolson in blackface, but that does not mean that harm wasn't done. Or, to alter Duncan and Duncan (2006) slightly, we can say that "a seemingly innocent pleasure ... can act as [a] subtle but highly effective excluding mechanism for reaffirming class and race identity" (160). I doubt that my mother would, in retrospect see her forays into Amos and Andy-land as harmless, but I'm more concerned here with how such a story serves as a backdrop to another story of how she met my father. These layered tales bespeak the multifarious ways in which race and particularly the racialisation of the other function to maintain a silencing of the abject. More on this to come, but for now, context and history.

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Beverly Hills sits at the far southwestern edge of Chicago proper. It was, at its incorporation, a landed-Protestant enclave. The neighbourhood is dotted with turn-of-the-century denominational houses of worship, their stone fascia—



greying through a hundred-plus years of blizzards and burns—whisper of Methodism and Luther; they are largely deserted now. The Catholics (read: Irish, Polish, Italians; formerly races these) spurred by a nascent 20th century inlaid with the promise of progress moved in—and quick—pushing their way across the city’s arterial streets—these very real borders, like rivers of intolerance embanked by discriminatory rental and lending practices— bringing with them all their papacy, their ethnicity, their foreign-ness. Somewhere along the line these dangerous mumblers, their languages so scuttling, their smells unfamiliar, shed the otherness that kept them slummed. They became American; they became white. Toni Morrison notes that “for many immigrant groups, assimilation, in part, meant becoming ‘American,’ which is also to say, becoming White. And becoming White ... means that ‘A hostile posture toward resident blacks must be struck at the Americanizing door before it will open’” (as cited in Foley 2005: 61). Indeed at Grand and 43rd street (just north and east of Beverly) “in 1918 ... Catholics and Jews of foreign stock ... stretched an enormous banner screaming a battle cry borrowed from the Great War: ‘THEY SHALL NOT PASS’” (Philpott 1978: 160). THEY. The other, the abject. Black and very different. ‘Race,’ again functioning—made to function—“like other aspects of identity [as] a sociopolitical construction” (Parker & Lynn 2002: 12).

These images and actions of war—entrenchment, agitation, firebombing—laid a foundation imbued with a burgeoning sense in a still relatively young neighbourhood that white was important. Indeed ‘whiteness,’ considered “thus was defined in opposition to nonwhite, an opposition that also marked a boundary between privilege and its opposite” (Delgado & Stefancic 2001: 77). These were openly discussed (shouted) differences becoming crystallised in “an invisible barbed-wire fence of restrictive covenants” (Philpott 1978: 189) outside of the lone area safe (this is, of course a matter of degree) for blacks in the city. The Black Belt. Restricted. Cinched and encircled. We, in Beverly though, no longer shout such things. We’re much subtler racists now, but the borders are as concretised as the blacktopped streets that surround. And they’re rooted in the stories we (do and don’t) tell about ourselves—and by implications, about the other. Silences deafeningly loud at the interstices.

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The narrative of Beverly has always been about the creation of a (white) space (apart). Lefebvre (1991) suggests, however, “a social space,” such as this, “cannot be adequately accounted for either by nature ... or by its previous history” (77). That is: history and physical context matter, but so does the (re)telling of stories that necessarily challenge and revise a given space. This is thus, to the best of my ability—as a white, heterosexual, male in North American academia—a counterstory. It is, in short, a filling in of the holes of our shared narrative in what has become known as ‘The Village in the City.’ Delgado and Stefancic (2001) see such narratives as most useful in “attacking the embedded preconceptions that marginalize ... or conceal humanity” (42). For Lefebvre (1991) “ideologies,” such as racism, personal, systemic, or otherwise “do not produce space: rather, they are in space, and of it” (210). Attacking, then, the silent space—although these spaces are only racially silent for some—in which

these bigoted ideologies reside is part of revisioning a neighbourhood, a man, a family, a life.

According to census data, in 1960 Beverly had 14 black residents. This was a veritable plethora considering neighbouring Bridgeport, which had one intrepid settler of what was then called 'negro' descent. As of 2000, demographic data tell a different story as fully 32% of the twenty one thousand-odd residents of Beverly consider themselves black or African American (Grossman, Keating, & Reiff 2004: 1037). We might call this progress; we might also risk merely skimming the surface of a roiling silent prejudice.

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Micky O'Dea is over. Micky, when we need a bagpiper these days, is only too happy to oblige. We just have to spot him drinks. For our purposes, though, let us place him back in high school on a red couch in 1988, telling my mother a story. My brother, his friend, is standing behind shifting from foot to foot, ready to leave. O'Dea's never been good with social cues. See below. Call me eight years old.

This from OD: "So Mrs. Burke, like I said we were just walking minding our own business and these shines came up ..."

Sharp inhale. Even I stop. It's a word I know through the neighbours but something that, in a house where 'shut-up' is verboten, we ought never hear. Looking up from whatever army gear I'm messing with I see my brother bright red in the cheeks. Our family has inherited my mother's blush.

"We. Do. Not. Use. That. Word, Michael." She used his full baptismal name. Mom's pissed.

OD, a little baffled: "Well ... what do you call them?"

Lefebvre (1991) suggests that, from a "social standpoint ... one relates oneself to space" (182) situating the self based on context "plac[ing] oneself ... at the center" of a given space as the "measure of" what is accessible, possible, and safe for production there. For Micky, in a space of whiteness, as our home should have been by his reading, there could only be an us (assumed solidarity in a racial separatism) and them (labelled, othered, differently-skinned). Something in his experiences told him this, aloud and otherwise; something had "accommodated the ideological uniformity" (Montoya 2000: 521) of what he perceived as our shared historical—and contemporary—prejudice: White Supremacy.

Zeus Leonardo (2004) takes issue with the latent passivity behind the theorisation of white privilege. While he acknowledges that "privilege is the daily cognate of structural domination" (148) his cautions are pointed toward the "cost of downplaying the active role of whites who take resources ... and construct policies that deny minorities' full participation in society" (138). To amend what

seems a fundamental theoretical gap, Leonardo then suggests that we might best talk of white supremacy, the definition of which involves “whites invest[ing] in practices that obscure racial processes” (144) as a means for maintaining a racism meant to be hidden in the past. This is Montoya’s (2000) *Máscara*, an imposed ‘silence’ meant to accommodate an ideology of uniformity to a normalised white model. Call it macrooppression manifest through microaggressions—those sudden, stunning everyday exchanges of overt, if not malicious transactions that, and I’ll alter Delgado and Stefancic (2001: 1) a bit here, mar all of our daily lives—as simple and terrible as a high schooler talking to a mother wedged somewhere in the files of a memory. Such things, we must say, matter in ways much more lasting than just a moment, for they come to colour (no pun here) lives.

The trouble is that, as I’ve noted, Micky O’Dea is still a part of my life in more than just memory. And in the polyglot of Chicago where he lives, we dare not assume he spends his time avoiding encounters with people of colour in his daily life. Now, perhaps his proclivities regarding race have changed in the twenty odd years since that misted-remembered night, but maybe not. Then what?

“These people,” (Rodriguez 2006) remarks, “can nice you to death” (1081). And I, nodding, know that it’s not that Micky is one of ‘those’ people and I am not. He is, we are racists embedded in a contextual, spaced, discursive racism.

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Elizabeth Huntington Sutherland Elementary School, built in 1925 as a public grammar for, let us not mistake, the white children of Beverly sits three blocks from my Mother’s (and what I think of as my) home. A Chicago Public School, it was host in 2008—in a district serving a population that is 92% composed of racially minoritised groups—to a near even split of black and white students (Chicago Tribune n.d.). This is as I remember it. Friends—from Little League, the alleyways and climbing-trees of the neighbourhood—whose parents could afford (or preferred) to send them to the Catholic parish schools in the surround saw no racial spectrum in their schooled environments. Unless we’re counting the various shades of vestigial Polish, Irish, or Italian not-so-hidden in their various physiognomies, one supposes; this is muddled of course, as we’re all ethnic-become-white (Ignatiev 1996) in the end anyways. Our optional ethnicities matter very little here except as invented points of pride on specific drinking holidays dotting the calendar as well as their signalling what we clearly weren’t racially.

We were, at Sutherland, an anomaly in an era of great trouble for the Chicago Public School corporation: an integrated school, scoring well above city and state averages on standardised tests. What remains unreported, and that which adds sad tenor to the racial panacea that is/was to be Sutherland lies in simple bussing. That is, no matter my associations with children from school, those black friends of classes and recess hopped on a bus at 2:30 and out of our young-playing lives until the next morning. Out of the neighbourhood; in for school but gone for socialising. Busses, we learned subtly, were for the poor, the

perpetually late—weather, mechanical problems—the subsidised school lunch crowd. None of this spoken ever, but alive inside and very real as we learned the (in)tangible “benefits of the ‘public and psychological wages of whiteness’” (Allen 2004: 121). Here it meant walking home from school, or meeting up at Beverly Park for endless games (just a bike ride away) of pick-up football, our (white) faces, red and raw in the winds of uncounted fall days.

And a subtle rift opened up through the years between friends from block, and birthday parties and friends who we (white and Beverly-bound) knew, would disappear into the grind of the public high schools so far from our imaginations at the end of 8th grade. For we were, better or worse, Catholic-bound.

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A gift from bell hooks (1994): “When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice” (61). Put another way by John Berger, as regards narration, “it is no longer possible to tell a straight story sequentially unfolding in time, for today we are too aware of what continually cuts across ... laterally, of the ‘simultaneity and extension of events and possibilities’” (as cited in Soja 1996: 165). Combined, Berger and hooks allow for the ongoing and recursive processes of recovery, liberation, theory, and practice in counternarrative in particular for ‘white scholars’ seeking to “use CRT strategically” (Bergerson 2003: 59). After a fashion, counterstorytelling, as “writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths” (Delgado & Stefancic 2001: 144) opens up the possibility of the Foucauldian heterotopia (Soja 1996). That is, a space of challenge which exists outside of the linearity of historical and social conceptions of racism. For the counter-majoritarian work of Critical Race Theory is not only about rewriting law and revisioning history, nor is it merely a challenge to commonsense (concealed and concealing) normalised racism; rather it is all of these and more: a space apart open to the living breathing reality that traditional(ised) white epistemologies are biased and deadly if never examined, countered, reframed. This is an acknowledgement of and challenge to the inherent othering of silence and fear predicated necessarily and only upon a reinscription in discourse, in cities, in their boundaries stunted ways in which people come to defy and define the very existence of each/the other.

The work of re-conceptualising spaces through an opening up of the silences at the edge of accepted truths, of officialised narratives that ignore race even when reinscribing whiteness onto an imagined map, is perhaps how white scholars can serve as “outsiders within” (Collins 1986). Because boundaries and the stories of how they came to exist—rather than how they were enforced, codified, politically ensconced—in an epistemological frame of whiteness are bleached of intentionality, it may be necessary for white scholars to present the closest thing to a counterstory that can be told from a position of privilege, of dominance. This is less about redrawing borders and more about dwelling in a journey, in a text that will itself be rife with silences countenanced by a racial, racist life. But “critical writers use counterstories to challenge, displace, or mock ... pernicious

narratives and beliefs” (Delgado & Stefancic 2001: 43). This is about, in the end, writing for the sake of making a mess of the neatness of a packaged and unacknowledged racism constructing places. These messy stories, membered and remembered are, after all, at base about “the nature of truth and reality” (Ladson-Billings 1999: 259).

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My story, in very real ways is privileged in a system run through with an epistemology reliant upon white supremacy. Carbado (1999) reminds that his “telling of the story [of racial discrimination] is suspect because [he] is Black [and thus marked as] racially interested” (238). A white male, I do not suffer such stigma. The retelling of a raced life, then, is part of the resistance, he sees as needed (240); it is part of being white and “challenging ‘manifestations of racism’ [I] observe[ed]” (Bergerson 2002: 58) and absorbed.

I still have—rice paper thin now—the Marist, Class of 1998 t-shirt given to all 405 of us entering as freshmen in August of 1994. Had I hit my growth spurt yet, it would have behooved me to look around above my tow-headed classmates by way of taking stock of who really was there with us—Mighty and Strong Marist Men as the fight song we were learning, while donning our too-large ritualistic shirts proclaimed—and who, very clearly, was not. The bombast of the lyric aside—we weren’t much more than extensive orthodontic work, elbows and, insecurity at fourteen after all and very far from the men we by now have become—and amidst nodding heads mumbling beneath brass band entreaties, I would have seen a very different picture than any all-school gathering at Sutherland would have offered. Too I would have seen four African-American boys scattered oh-so sparsely in a sea of blonde and sunburnt-red, our shining white shirts only helping to magnify the stark contrast represented in the faces of John Jenkins, Timmy Smith, Rick Rusch, and Tom Jay.

For Freire (1974), “to be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world” (3). What happens, then, when such humanising contact is impossible due to segregated schooling? Segregated living? What happens when the extent of contact with a person becomes easily reduced to preconceptions (biases? prejudices? hatred?) fed by an ‘ordinary’ and everyday racism (Delgado & Stefancic 2001)—beginning at the level of society, stirred by a rabid-sensational media and maldistributive justice system, and trickling down through generational familial relations—where the very humanity of the other is become aberrational? We risk, Freire (1974) suggests, a domestication by “cultural invasion” which is “conquest” (104) making the dialogic exchange of teaching and learning, and most importantly *humanising* implausible, if not impossible. The project of Critical Race Theory is thus working toward what the dialogic might best do for Freire which is “devote [it]self to the constant transformation of reality” (104). This requires a deep sense that “the hegemony of those in power is vulnerable to internal as well as external critique” (Brodkey 1996: 240), which is why those four young classmates of mine have resurfaced; their stories at Marist differ from mine for very specific reasons of geography, race, and power that remain woefully under-examined.

'Marist' is an amalgam—in current lexical terms tied to the music industry, we might say 'mash-up'—of Mary-in-Christ. As with any religious order in the Catholic Church, the brothers and fathers and sisters believe themselves charged with a specific charism by which they might best minister to the (evermore wounded) world. These legends, these shirts, these songs and rituals were to bond us in our new home; we were to become brothers on that day, boys becoming men, as 'little brothers to Mary' all very much in the abstract. Highwater believes that "the greatest distance between people is not space, but culture" (as cited in Ladson-Billings 1999 267) and I'm thinking of John, Timmy, Rick and Tom wondering what distance they might have felt that day. I cannot know of course, and it would be cruel to presume to speak for these (now) men, but I can report what I know: John and Timmy transferred away before the end of that first semester and I never had class with Rick and Tom; they hadn't tested into honours (what say we of the cultural import of admissions tests and tracking?) and as neither played baseball or soccer, I never once spoke with either. It was easy, then, to avoid (actively or passively; it matters very little at this point) using the distance of our perceived different cultures as excuse; no relationship, no dialogue.

Why revisit these stories, though? Failing to examine certain contexts in which I was (and a great many others were) educated, would belie any hope for "education as an act of love ... by fear[ing] the analysis of reality ... under pain of revealing farce" (Freire 1974: 33). Much of this, then, is (re)teaching myself. And I realise I know nothing of my fellow little brothers of Mary; I can offer no exculpation, nor confession for we were segregated by the very silence that would never dare ask why, in a graduating class of 343, only two men of colour walked across the stage, beneath a sad-eyed rendering of Christ on the cross.

### **Ending/Emerging**

What of me, then? Stone (1997) writes that "most [narratives] fail ... because their authors mistake their experiences for a story rather than search out the story in the experience" (as cited in Versaci 2007: 59); and so it is that Critical Race Theory has allowed me to find some (previously) hidden stories of my experience. This is largely about revealing the ways in which the maintenance of "the whiteness of here" (Willinsky 1999: 14) can become less commonsensical through the reimagining of silence. The truth of my neighbourhood is that it remains, as my classmate Joe Oswald wrote, fiscally stable, well-provisioned in civic resources and rich in 'history.' But "all 'truth' is mediated" (Versaci 2007: 115) and the danger of not talking about the many truths of the racism that formed my childhood lies in the notion that "when one's history is abolished, one's identity ceases to exist as well" (87). A coin with only one face.

This exercise in the personal is/has been method and theory for existing as a scholar, a white scholar, a white scholar very much concerned with race and social justice in a troubled academe. For those of us looked at as arbiters and producers of knowledge the above might best be viewed as a caution to recall

that which we willingly conceal (about race particularly, but gender, sexuality, social class, etc.) in that which we write. Certainly I've rewritten a self here, but also a place which will last as a far more influential mediator of what is true and possible, well beyond me. It is my hope that the silences of life and place begin to fill in the many cracks of an undone official truth, allowing for many and multivariate possible truths.

I'll defer to Aciman (2000) by way of closing, who notes that "place, in this very peculiar context, means something only if it is tied to its own displacement" (138). Barrett and Roediger (2005) write of an Italian-American from Chicago musing on his early life. He speaks of a man running down the street in the midst of a race riot covered in coal dust "hollering ... 'I'm White, I'm White!' out of fear for his life. He was, the chronicler laments, 'caught up ... in this racial thing'" (35). Beverly, as with any narrated place comes to matter for the study of whiteness and race only inasmuch as the stories we retell begin to displace traditional notions of "landscapes" those "powerful media for dominant groups to present their case to the world" (Hoelscher 2006: 48) and the ways in which they and the residents who historicise and narrate them into existence acknowledge or fail to, the ways in which they too are caught up in (constituting, perpetuating and exacerbating) this 'racial' thing going forward.

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# Critical Race and Whiteness Studies



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RACIAL LEGITIMATIONS

## **Colonisation, Notions of Authenticity and Aboriginal Australian Performance**

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*The containment, control and assumption of possession of Indigenous Australian performance by white settlers in the nineteenth century and the performance of that possession have been critical elements in the enterprise of colonisation. This act of possession has had and continues to have a major impact on Euro-Australian knowledge of the shared exchanges of performance over much of the last 220 years. In accounts of Aboriginal Australian performances from 'blood curdling shrieks' at the beginning of the nineteenth century to terms such as 'sham' and 'whitey-black corroborees' by the end, imposed notions of authenticity act as a weapon of whiteness to assist in the colonising process through the effective erasure of cultural practices and to deny not only the authority of Indigenous people but also their 'authentic' physical presence. This paper examines the directions taken in the shifting notions of authenticity used by white writers and painters to legitimise or dismiss Aboriginal performances and cultures across the nineteenth century.*

### **Introduction**

This paper brings together examples of Aboriginal initiated and controlled performances from 1800 to 1950 that I have individually documented as performance events and events of white reception in other articles (Casey 2011b, 2011c; Casey & Bradley 2011).<sup>1</sup> I bring them together here as examples of the typical and consistent frames of white reception that have developed and

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<sup>1</sup> This is an extended and developed version of a paper presented at the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies (ACRAWSA) 2011 Conference and published in the proceedings, see Casey (2011a). I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for the generous feedback and constructive suggestions I received from the blind reviewers and the editor, Holly Randell-Moon.

been imposed on Aboriginal performers over the last 200 years regardless of the differences in performances and their context. The performances are public events for entertainment, usually referred to under the all encompassing heading of corroborees. The actual performances were produced in different colonial moments, places and times by different Aboriginal groupings, yet the reception in the white context reflects patterns of imposed notions of authenticity repeated across the country. As Ian and Tamsin Donaldson observe, the European view of Aboriginal Australians "has never been innocent, nor has it been neutral" (1985: 15).

I argue that over time, in the nineteenth century, visual images and press reportage of these performances acted as a form of public pedagogy to create an economy of authenticity for the embodied presence of Aboriginal people, setting the conditions of recognition and its corollary and in the process erasing a vast range of performances and genres of performance as well as people.<sup>2</sup> I would argue that this economy continues to influence notions of authenticity in the present. As Paige Raibmon has elegantly defined it, authenticity is not a stable state but a powerful and shifting set of ideas that create, define and impose external expectations of the 'other', attributing characteristics to them, and locking people into the authentic/inauthentic binary according to how well they fulfil historically specific notions of authenticity (2005: 3). This process in effect creates or invents the culture that is being authenticated according to these notions.

At the same time, authenticity is useful internally for cultural groupings as a frame of reference in cross-cultural negotiations. One of the tasks that labels of authenticity perform discursively is to provide the basis for terms of cultural respect and a language that enables discussion about performing arts from different cultures. Understandings of 'authenticity', as defined at any point in time, have been crucial as the basis for recognition of and respect for cultural specificity, either broadening the channels of communication or restricting them (Casey 2007: 227). As such, depending on how authenticity is defined, there is potential to perpetuate imperial and colonial practices or to act as a site where new cross-cultural engagements can lay the foundation for mutually respectful exchanges. The imperatives to shift away from imperial and colonial perspectives increase rather than decrease in the current context of cultural tourism driven economies, where for many minority peoples, notions of authenticity determine what is culturally real and unreal in their daily lives.

The issue in this context then becomes not the use of the term 'authenticity' but the frames of reference used to define the meanings of the term. In the visual arts, where the focus is on the artefact, nineteenth century notions of authenticity have been successfully challenged and opened up. However, in relation to the embodied presence of Aboriginal performers, the negotiations continue to be complicated and informed by past notions of authenticity. This is illustrated by the conservative journalist Andrew Bolt's published claims that he

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<sup>2</sup> Boyd Cothran also discusses an economy of authenticity but his usage of the term, though overlapping with mine, focuses more on commercial engagement with the financial opportunities the performance of authenticity offers. See Cothran (2010).

has the knowledge and authority to say who is and is not a real Aboriginal person and on what terms (2009a). According to Bolt, for Aboriginal people to be authentic, they must be identifiable by "racial differences you" can "detect with a naked eye", they come "from the bush", practice "real draw-in-the-dirt" art and "real Aboriginal techniques or traditions" (2009b).

These terms of recognition and respect are set within an economy of authenticity established in the nineteenth century that located the cultural and embodied 'real' Aboriginal people as savage and absent, something from the past, temporally and spatially distant. Logically therefore, Aboriginal people who are physically present and engaging cannot be real Aboriginals because they do not fit within the economy regardless of cultural heritage and life experience or even through signifiers such as skin colour. This economy of authenticity functions according to an orderly arrangement of parts that is repeated as truth and accepted as common sense. It results in performances and individuals being located within or excluded from the economy of authenticity. This economy continues to influence dominant thinking about Aboriginal identity and not just for people like Andrew Bolt. Research around land rights cases in the mid 1990s revealed that within the courts, in order to be received as an authentic Aboriginal person and therefore a credible witness, claimants had to be very dark skinned, from a remote area, illiterate, with minimal, if any, English skills and inexperienced in negotiating in a legal context (Walsh 1995: 98). I would note the irony that though the repetitions of references to skin colour in these types of notions of authenticity creates the impression that this type of signifier is central, it is not even necessarily key within the economy of authenticity as developed in the nineteenth century and applied to the embodied performer.

### **Performance Practice**

I will briefly outline the performance practices that set the context for the examples of Indigenous performances to be discussed. As I have argued previously, historical or traditional Aboriginal performances can be divided into three main groupings: ceremony, often secret and sacred; public versions of dreaming stories intended primarily for educative purposes; and topical performances for entertainment (Casey 2009: 117-9). The latter, styled as "ordinary corroborees" by Baldwin Spencer are often only recognised as authentic under the heading of oral history (Spencer 1901: 6). These performances for entertainment are the focus of this discussion. I am using corroboree as a general term. Corroboree in common usage is often applied to all types of events and is generally understood to refer to Indigenous performances involving dance and song with musical accompaniment. When discussed in relation to these performances corroboree is often now understood as referring to performances from ceremonies. However it is, and has been used, to denote a much wider group of performance types. There are many different words used by specific language groupings across the country to denote different genres of performances whether public or private. The use of the single word for hundreds of different types of performances constitutes an aspect of the imposed economy

of authenticity but as the term is part of common usage I will employ it here, despite its problems.

As I have documented elsewhere, though they are usually labelled either song or dance, historical or traditional Aboriginal performance practices for entertainment, like practices for ceremony, include alternating a number of elements within the framework of the performance. These elements include story telling through narrative, dialogue, poetry, dance, mime, song and visual art usually accompanied by percussion and other musical instruments (Casey 2011d). Operating within a paradigm of practice in many ways like European theatre practices, there were performers, musicians, dancers and actors, writers, choreographers, people responsible for body design or costume, props and set; and a manager responsible for organising the performance.

Topical performances for entertainment were created and owned by individuals who taught and directed others in the required elements of the performance, song, dance and story. Historically these performances were toured and traded between Aboriginal communities. These practices continued long after European settlement. There are examples such as those documented by Thomas Petrie, a European settler in the mid 1800s in Queensland (1904: 21). In 1902, John Walter Gregory, on a scientific expedition around Lake Eyre, South Australia, recounted that:

The natives were then celebrating a corroboree of new songs and dances, which had been composed by a native genius up in Queensland, and was being passed through the country from one tribe to another. A party of Cowarie blacks had taught it to some of the Peake natives at a corroboree on the Maoumba. The deputation were now performing it to their own tribe, after which they were going to teach it to the people of Oodnadatta (6).

Corroborees for social occasions were created around topical themes, events and observations. These were performed for intra- and inter-community gatherings (Hardley 1975: 6). The narratives centre on social events, celebration of hunting prowess, anything that can be turned into a story for entertainment. Amongst the Yanyuwa, originally largely from the Sir Edward Pellew Islands in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Northern Territory, now settled around the Borroloola region, these stories are *nguyulnguyul*, or in the Yanyuwa Aboriginal English—'fun'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Nguyulnguyul* which is glossed in the article as fun also carries more complex meanings and resonances, especially in relation to composition and performance that speak to the achievements within the creative endeavour. The word denotes the ideals that the performer and the composer have achieved in creating something that draws people to want to hear and participate in it. The term can be associated with ideals of excellence in creative endeavour at all levels. Thus a person who creates performances that are *nguyulnguyul* is also described as being *ngirriki*, which is glossed as 'tricky', but a thicker description would carry the weight of a person who transcends normal accomplishments. 'Aeroplane Dance' is described as *nguyulnguyul* and Frank Karrijiji is often described as *ngirriki*. The source for this information is John Bradley based on 30 years work on the Yanyuwa language and a dictionary in progress, see Casey & Bradley (2011).

This account of practices is necessarily generalised and there would have been and are regional differences. However the documented evidence suggests a high level of similarity in practices across the country in the long nineteenth century. There are literally hundreds of performances documented by early settlers and later bureaucrats, anthropologists, passing artists and tourists well into the twentieth century across Australia. Though there seems to have been little attempt to understand or engage with the performances, there are numerous details recorded such as the costume or body paint in one documented performance in New South Wales (NSW) in 1841 where a performer was described as having "his legs painted exactly like a Highlandman's hose, even to the garter" (A Bushman 1841: 2). Or description of sets and props, such as in one account in 1883, that included a 4.3 metre model of a crocodile described as "made of bark and painted so as to resemble one in the minutest degree" (Brisbane Courier 1883: 2).

### **Cross-Cultural Context**

Performances drawing on historical Aboriginal practices for entertainment were a common and constant form of commercial entertainment for white communities within the cross-cultural context in the nineteenth century (Casey 2009). From the first settlements, the prevalence of Aboriginal performance was so high that there were humorous accounts published such as one in 1924 about a British journalist who recounted "in all seriousness ... that ... the thought had occurred to him what a great development had taken place {in Australian cities} since ... [it] had been the home of the corroborees who had lived undisturbed in their native freedom" (Brisbane Courier 1924: 6).

These performances in the cross-cultural context are rarely examined except as examples of the lack of cultural power and agency for Aboriginal people. The three main positions from which they have been examined are as 'inauthentic', as hybrid or as cultural tourism. Candice Bruce and Anita Calloway, in their study of images of corroborees representing the 'inauthentic' position, describe these types of performances as a "white spectator sport" (1991: 88). They argue that Indigenous historical and traditional performances were controlled through their appropriation as "a form of entertainment staged specifically for the benefit and entertainment of 'whites'" (86). The latter two positions, hybrid and cultural tourism, overlap because they both rest on the premise that Aboriginal performances for entertainment were developed for white audiences and that these audiences are the critical point of reference for both form and content (Parsons 2002; Haebich & Taylor 2007: 30-1). Though many performances can be examined from this position, as a generalisation all three positions overstate settler cultural power thereby erasing Aboriginal historical practices and reasserting an economy of authenticity developed as part of the colonisation of Aboriginal people and their cultures.

Rather than being passive victims of white entrepreneurs and audiences, Indigenous people used their own historical practices of performances for entertainment to engage with the settler economy and assert their sovereignty.

At the same time as white entrepreneurs, such as Archibald Meston, were touring troupes of 'wild' Aboriginal people, Aboriginal entrepreneurs were also creating commercial opportunities drawing on their own traditions of entertainment as they negotiated the challenges of dealing with white audiences. In 1896 at Coorparoo, a group of Aboriginal people obtained permission to enclose a paddock with a wall of saplings and gum tree branches with a single entrance. The group, only identified in the article as "King Jacky and his court of thirty or forty", advertised their performances and sold tickets on the site, enforcing the rule no ticket no entrance (Queenslander 1896: 299).

### Three Performances

To illustrate the economy of authenticity in relation to Aboriginal performances and their reception in the cross-cultural context, I would like to offer three examples. Two of the examples were not primarily for cross-cultural audiences but performances by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people that some white settlers witnessed. Nor is one, I believe, a performance for entertainment but it illustrates the types of performances that were part of historical practices for informing other groupings about what was happening in others' country. My sources are mainly documents written by non-Indigenous colonists and settlers.

#### 1835

There is a description of a "Grand Corrobory" that was published in *The Colonist*, a Sydney based newspaper, in April 1835 (4). This was a large gathering on the Nepean River in NSW of Aboriginal clans from across the region. The anonymous white author describes feasting and hours of dancing and singing. Apart from a passing reference to a kangaroo dance, the detailed description focuses on one series of performances that include imitations of leading figures of the European colony at the time. An Aboriginal man, called Yellamundy, is described as playing a "native mourner", "mourning the loss of his hunting grounds and the independence of his nation". Yellamundy made a speech but the only words the writer understood were "White fellow sit down all about: black fellow murry miserable!"

Another man, Jibbinwy, is understood by the observer to be performing the character of a warrior. Painted up in red, suggestive of British military redcoats, he gave a performance that "strongly reminded" the European witness of a European military review. Other performances included Terribalong from Broken Bay, who performed a colonial barrister in a costume of legal robes made from "bandicoot skins" and a wig crafted from native grasses. The writer was very impressed by the sequential impersonation of the whole of the contemporary Australian bar. Two others performed two colonial attorneys. There was a performance where they re-enacted the "late division of the Bar" with Terribalong performing the role of the current Attorney General. Another man, named as "Saturday from Bathurst" performed a European "free settler". The last character performance described is that of "Young Bungary from the North Shore", who performed Governor Darling and "sustained the character well".



Darling was the Governor of the colony from 1825-31 who was responsible for a major expansion of the white colonisation of NSW and the orders to shoot Aboriginal people on sight (Darling 1826: 795-6; Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser 1827: 3).

Large scale inter-community gatherings from across regions were historically part of social, economic and political life for Aboriginal people prior to European settlement. The Nepean River event, as described by the European witness in 1835, sounds like this type of large inter-community gathering. Given the declared lack of knowledge of Aboriginal languages on the part of the European observer, and that he did not seek to find out the meaning of the gathering, the intentions of the performance and any associated discussions can only be speculative. The witness presents the event as entertainment.

I have argued elsewhere that this performance of colonial figures was not merely 'entertainment' (Casey 2011b). Information exchange was a standard part of large intergroup gatherings (Petrie 1904: 21). Though the structure was usually a series of oral presentations by elders, the Nepean River corroboree could be a different version of this practice. The men performing the colonists at the corroboree, especially with the quote from Terribalong about the social dynamics for Aboriginal people, suggests that the Nepean River performance in 1835 could have been, and likely was, aimed to inform those clans not immediately affected or as drastically overwhelmed by colonisation about the European settlers, perhaps as a prelude to discussion. It is an example of Aboriginal people noting and performing ethnography on the colonists and settlers. This would place this event into a different category of performance, not oral history, entertainment or to educate children but for immediate information exchange for elders and their communities through a performance that acts in a sense like documentary film footage. This was an event where Aboriginal elders were performing for other Aboriginal elders within their own cultural context to inform them about what was happening in their country.

### *1885*

Fifty years later in 1885 an estimated crowd of 25,000 non-Indigenous settlers from Adelaide turned out to watch the first night of a 'Grand Corroboree', making it possibly the largest spectator event of the nineteenth century at the Adelaide Oval (South Australian Advertiser 1885: 5; Cresswell 1900: 9). This was an exceptionally large crowd; in the previous December the total audience over the four days of the first cricket Test at the oval was 19,000 (Whimpress 2000: 7). In a context where Indigenous entry to towns was highly restricted, around one hundred Aboriginal people from Point Macleay Mission and Yorke Peninsula were invited to Adelaide during the week of the Queen's Birthday celebrations to perform a corroboree at the Exhibition Centre with licence to charge admission "for their own benefit" (South Australian Register May 1885: 7). The venue was changed to the Oval through the intervention of the South Australian Cricket Association to accommodate a larger audience in exchange for half the proceeds (South Australian Register May 1885: 4).

The invitation to the communities was more than likely issued by a member of the organising committee of the Queen's Birthday celebration in Adelaide. However it was not organised through official channels. The 'Grand Corroboree' was not organised by the Point Macleay or Point Pierce Mission authorities. After the performances, F. W. Cox, the Chairman of the Aborigines' Friends Association wrote to the newspapers stating that the Aboriginal performers had been "entirely without the sanction of the committee" and "unauthorised" by either the management of the Point Macleay or Point Pierce Missions (1885: 6). The Aboriginal communities at the Missions had previously had contact with John Cresswell, the secretary of the Cricket Association, when they played a series of football matches (Whimpress 2000: 7). It was probably through these connections that the performance was arranged.

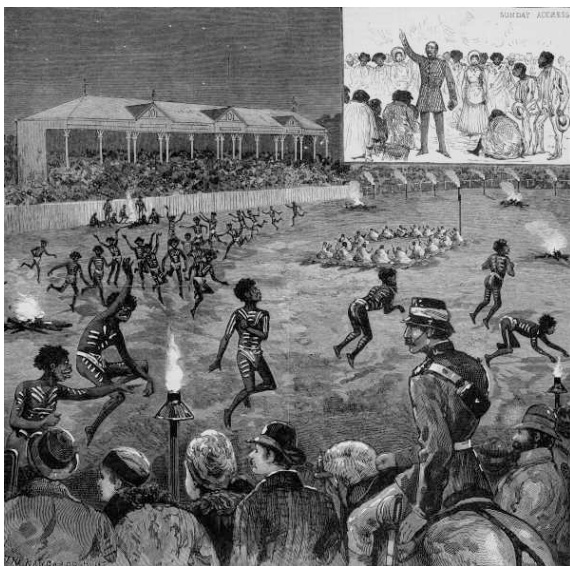
The 'Grand Corroboree' performance was planned to be presented on Friday 30 May and Saturday 1 June, 1885. Following historical practice, the Indigenous performers established a defined performance area, lit by fires, with specific places for male and female performers. Metal hurdles surrounded the performance area. The planned performance was divided into four parts. The first and third sections were two parts of a corroboree focused on hunting kangaroos. The second section was a satire about white civilisation teaching the audience the values of temperance. The last section was a traditional dance from the Yorke Peninsula described as a "saltwater dance" (South Australian Advertiser 1885: 6; South Australian Advertiser 1885: 5). The content of the performance was chosen and controlled by the Indigenous performers.

The performance was attacked in some newspapers as inauthentic because the "resistless march of settlement" had destroyed the Indigenous performers' connection to culture and as a result, they were now "tamed" (South Australian Register 1885: 4). The outraged contributor to the *South Australian Register* termed the event both "a revival of a barbaric performance" and went on to decry that the "whole affair was a gigantic sham" (4). The fear of a revival was the subject of a number of other responses to the performance (Cox 1885: 6; Taplin 1885: 7). Concerns were expressed that the event would, as Fredric Taplin, the superintendent of the Point Macleay Mission Station, argued, give licence to "bands of Aborigines trooping through country towns earning money by means of a beastly exhibition" (1885: 7). These fears appear to be mollified through describing the event as a sham or inauthentic. Another writer insisted that: "The affair might be appropriately called a whitey-black corroboree (sic) because of the utilisation of appliances of civilisation" (South Australian Register 1885: 7). The reference to "whitey-black" was not a reference to performers having mixed cultural heritage. It was a rejection of the performance as not authentically Aboriginal in cultural terms. The reference to "appliances of civilisation" refers to the wearing of European suits and dresses for the temperance satire.

A number of the performers were members of the Blue Ribbon Temperance movement. The "Blue Ribbon Movement" was an international temperance movement of the 1880s. As a symbol of the rejection of alcohol, men would wear a blue ribbon. At Aboriginal Missions such as Point McLeay, a condition of

membership of the Christian Church was abstinence from alcohol. The community had a "Band of Hope" temperance society that included hundreds of Ngarindjerri members (Andrews 1887; Blocker et al 2003: 76-78). Bands of Hope would give performances of short plays, sketches and recitals as temperance entertainments. This was relatively common in the 1880s with numerous examples. Michael Parsons points out the *Mt Barker Courier's* description (18 June 1886) of a commercial corroboree performance in 1886 being given by "Salvation Army natives" (2002: 20). Parsons argues that these performances were drawing on black and white minstrelsy traditions (21). This practice had been popular in Australia since the 1840s. However, whether or not the performers appropriated elements of minstrelsy, I would argue that the performances within the show also follow historical Aboriginal practices for educative and entertainment purposes that sets the context for borrowings from other forms.

The press responded to the satire as an act of educating the white audience by either ignoring that it happened or deriding both the concept and the performance (e.g. *South Australian Advertiser* 1885: 5). The performers claimed space to educate the white audience within Aboriginal historical practices and the response was indulgent ridicule from one journalist and non-engagement from the others while the people themselves were declared inauthentic. The image of the performance in Figure 1<sup>4</sup> that was published at the time includes an inset that can be interpreted in a number of ways. The first question is, why draw a juxtaposition of the performance of the kangaroo hunt to the gathering of



**Figure 1** "The Kangaroo Hunt at Adelaide Oval and listening to Sunday address", *The Australian Sketcher* June 29, 1885.

Aboriginal people in European dress in deference to a white preacher? Such a juxtaposition can be seen as a comment on the multiple aspects of Aboriginal lives. However, in the context of press comments such as "the appliances of civilisation" and the status of the preacher in the inset, I would suggest it resonates with assumptions that 'true' Aboriginal performance and culture is only an illusion in the present. The inset can be seen as a reassurance that clothes and religion tame the 'savage' body. It also represents contrasting relationships in that at the Oval, the white audience is receiving a cultural performance from the Aboriginal performers whereas in the inset, an authorial relationship with a white man is reasserted.

<sup>4</sup> The pictures included here are all out of copyright as far as I have been able to ascertain. If any pictures breach copyright please get in touch with the journal's Editor.

### 1940s

A further fifty-five years later, within Aboriginal community practices for entertainment, there were a number of corroborees created in northern Australia and the Torres Strait Islands during the Second World War about the impact of the war and in particular, aeroplanes. The war had a major impact on Indigenous communities. Sections of the north including Darwin were bombed, resulting in civilian fatalities, and large areas were used for military bases and airstrips. Both the mainland and islands were attacked.

The *Ka-wayawayama*, or 'Aeroplane Dance' as it is known in English, from the Yanyuwa people from Borroloola in the Northern Territory was a tangential result of a search for lost air crew after a crash. Hundreds of Allied planes crashed around the Gulf of Carpentaria. On 1 December 1942, a United States bomber called Little Eva was returning to base after a bombing raid over New Guinea. The plane hit a tropical storm and crashed at Moonlight Creek in the Southeast corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria. There was a massive aerial search and the Yanyuwa people participated in the ground search for Little Eva and her crew.

The performance text of the Aeroplane Dance is a series of songs, dances and mime created by Frank Karrijiji that enact a narrative composed at the time of the searches.<sup>5</sup> The dance originally extended over a week and was performed when people wished. Songs and dances present the plane airborne and finally crashing and then describe the Yanyuwa experience and response to the aerial search, the ground search and war. Karrijiji's creation of the performance included a number of forms of puppetry such as headdresses representing bi-planes and objects such as steering wheels to represent pilots in the planes. The central feature of the performance *mise-en-scene* is a life size 'plane' on an axis of east and west because in the song the plane's nose faces west and tail east.

As I have argued elsewhere, the Aeroplane Dance is an interesting example of the problems caused by categorising corroborees for entertainment as oral history (Casey & Bradley 2011). The Aeroplane Dance is not oral history but what in Yanyuwa is called *walaba*, an important genre of performance for entertainment. The crash and search marked a moment in time that contributed to the inspiration for the composing of the piece. Karrijiji began creating the dance when he was part of the ground search. In the verses he talks about walking. He talks about travelling, about being in clan country that is associated with him. He talks about speaking to one of his near relatives while walking. The verses also engage with the bigger picture of the war and why they are walking. There are verses about planes travelling at night, planes fighting in the north, which is probably the bombing of Darwin. There are verses about planes arriving home safely. It is a fictional narrative about planes, the war and its presence in the lives of the Yanyuwa. The narrative is not about Little Eva or her crew. The Aeroplane Dance is a creative response to a different event, the very large event

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<sup>5</sup> The information about the Dance is drawn from John Bradley's notes and observations over a thirty year period, Ron Rickett Murrundu, personal interview with John Bradley, Borroloola, 1988 and Jean Kirton, recorded statement, Doomadgee Mission 1967, John Bradley's personal collection.

of the Second World War, which was having an impact on the Yanyuwa and other Aboriginal and Islander peoples in the north of Australia at the time.

In the 1990s, the community wished to make a film of this performance and secured funding and a non-Indigenous director. Since the work was recognised as traditional, and within notions of authenticity in the twentieth century the categories of traditional performance have been habitually limited to ceremony or oral history, the film maker made a film focused on oral history. The event at the time the work was created was the crash of Little Eva. Therefore the focus of the film was oral histories of the crash and searches including the American survivor's testimony about the event. Since the performance was a creative work for entertainment and not oral history, especially not the oral history the film maker engaged with, in the final film, *Ka-Wayawayama – Aeroplane Dance* (1993) there was no place for the performance.

In these three examples, regardless of the content of the performances, the responses from white observers follow the pattern set by historically specific notions of authenticity from the particular period in which they were performed. Initially in the early nineteenth century performances are entertainment enacted for "mere exercise and pastime" (Westgarth 1848: 78). Then the second performance, like others in the latter half of the nineteenth century, is described as a "sham" and "inauthentic" and the third is received as oral history in the late twentieth century. The framing and understanding of these performances does not come from their content or form or the individuals involved but rather from non-Indigenous preconceived notions of meaning and authenticity.

### Images of Corroboree

Concurrent with the repetition of notions of authenticity in the reception of Aboriginal performance, in the popular press, personal journals and diaries and books, there are literally thousands of images of corroborees from the nineteenth century in the form of drawings, illustrated magazines, paintings, lithographs and postcards that visually reiterate these same notions of authenticity. These images were widely reproduced. They

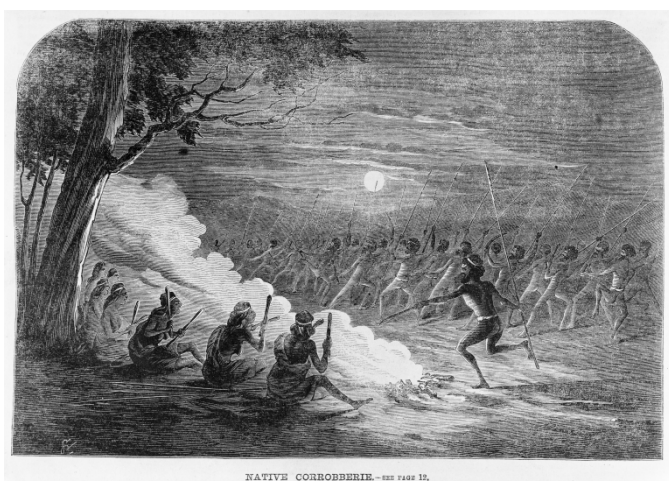
be found in books such as *Dot and the Kangaroo* (see Figure 2) and as mass-produced lithographs such as those commissioned by commercial printing companies like Calvert and Waddy and Shallard Gibbs & Co (see Figures 3, 4 and 5). The composition and representation of corroborees in these images are practically uniform.



**Figure 2** "Corroboree", illustration by Frank Mahony in Ethel Pedley, *Dot and the Kangaroo*, published by Angus and Robertson 1899, p. 32.

can

These images reproduced here range from the 1860s to the 1890s. The similarity is not just the result of selection but a dominant style of representation. In each image, the visual economy, literally and metaphorically, locates the performers in the shadows, and at a distance. There is no engagement with viewer. There is no indication that the performers are aware of being viewed and no sense of individuals being represented. These elements present Aboriginal people as a general group both spatially and temporally removed from the viewer. The Aboriginal people are a crowd of objects subject to the viewer's gaze, unknowing and unaware ethnographic images of the savage. Like images of other so called primitive peoples, these representational tactics act as "an 'essentialising distortion' that is part of a tradition of using [images] to mummify a so-called vanishing race" (Riley 1998: 63). This in turn acts as an invention of Aboriginal culture rather than a record of practice.



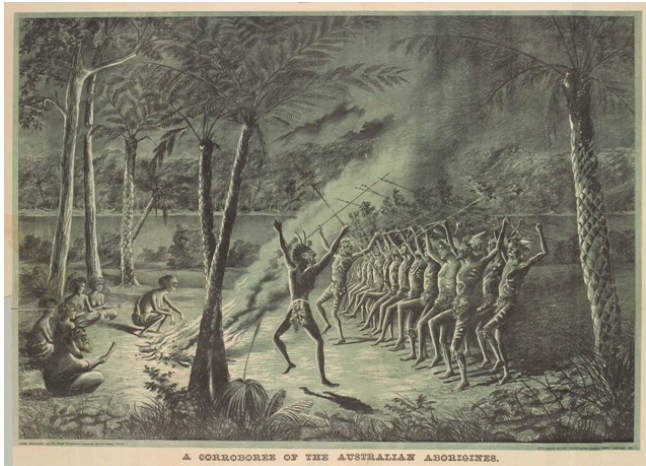
**Figure 3** "Native Corrobberie" (sic), Samuel Calvert 1864. State Library of Victoria.



**Figure 4** "A Corroboree of Aboriginal Australians", Samuel Calvert 1867. State Library Victoria.

Colonisation results in embodied encounters and spatial negotiations between colonised and coloniser. Sara Ahmed argues that these "Colonial encounters ... involve a transition from distance to proximity" (2000: 12). Ahmed argues that others become strangers through contact or proximity and from this meeting, recognition or misrecognition occurs (24). This proximity on the individual level according to Emmanuel Levinas affects the individual sense of self and demands a relation between the I and the other (1992: 66). As Bettina Bergo suggests "no event is as affectively disruptive for a consciousness holding sway in its world than the encounter with another person" (2011: 3). If Levinas' argument holds true in the everyday, in the encounter with the strange other in a strange environment, this must be even more affectively disruptive for colonists and settlers seeking to claim a strange and inhabited land. Thus there is the potential for a dislocating intimacy in the colonial encounter on the individual experiential level. However, in the colonial Australian context, what is marked is the active resistance to acknowledging this Levinasian encounter and its potential disruptions through the denial of any hint of proximity and intersubjective

relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals. The reception of Aboriginal performance in the nineteenth century denies the experience of proximity between people.



**Figure 5** "A Corroboree of Australian Aborigines", Shallard Gibbs & Co, Lithograph. Published as a supplement in the *Illustrated Sydney News*, January, 1873. Vol. 22. State Library of Victoria.



**Figure 6** "Corroboree of Victorian natives", undated c. 1896. Image pasted onto album page. In collection: Album of photographs of the Le Souef family. State Library of Victoria.

This process applies equally to Torres Strait Islanders. In 1892, the painter Tom Roberts visited the island of Mer (Murray Island) in the Torres Straits. His painting, originally known as "Corroboree Murray Island" painted in 1892 (see Figure 7) is an interesting example of the denial of proximity. Robert Bruce, a resident on Mer, recounts how he "got a big dance up" for Roberts during his visit to the island (Bruce 1892). Roberts, in his diaries and in the series of articles he published at the time in the Melbourne newspaper *Argus*, goes into detail about the vivid Islander performances he witnessed and an Islander wedding (1892: 4). Yet the scene in the painting is in daylight and shows no dancers. What is shown are the distant backs of people perhaps watching a performance in the shadow of large trees as sunlight spreads out across the foreground and most of the painting. Roberts in much of his work set out to document his social world, aiming to be specific to time and place (Topliss 1988). Helen Topliss suggests that the painting may have been misnamed (1985: 121). The painting, currently held in the Queensland Art Gallery, has been renamed as an "Indigenous gathering, Far North Queensland". However, in the context of the representations of corroborees as removed from the viewer, Robert's choice to name the painting a corroboree and frame the performance out of sight, making the event even further from the viewer than usual and reducing the Islanders to backs in the distance, is almost an exaggerated representation of the denial of proximity and a strong suggestion of the particular performance practices and Aboriginal people disappearing. If Topliss is right and the painting was misnamed, then it raises a further set of questions. Bruce mentions in his letters that Roberts painted the picture the morning after the performance (Bruce

1892). The choice to paint a group in shadows after witnessing a spectacular performance in itself engages in the erasure of the proximity that he had in fact experienced.<sup>6</sup>

One of the powerful aspects of this invention of an authentic Aboriginal culture within the imposed economy is the lack of engagement with what is being performed. No matter what sort of performance is depicted, the image has the same title, 'corroboree'. The representation gives no clue to time, meaning or context. This lack of specificity effectively gives even more power to the settlers' resistance to learning local words as they spread out across the country. The word corroboree is derived from the Dharuk language or dialect from the Sydney area that was then carried by the settlers all over Australia (Urry 1985: 63). Though the word, popularised by the European settlers, was accepted and used by Aboriginal people in the nineteenth century as part of the language of communication with settlers, it continues to carry that initial erasure of different Indigenous practices of performance.



164. TOM ROBERTS, *Corroboree, Murray Island, 1892*. Oil on

**Figure 7** "Indigenous Gathering Far North Queensland" Tom Roberts 1892. Reproduced by permission from the Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.

The visual aspects are articulated and reinforced in hundreds of newspaper accounts of 'corroborees'. The reportage includes repetition of the same elements. Despite performances by Aboriginal people being part of most civic events during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as local and touring shows initiated by both white and Aboriginal people, articles continually claim that

Aboriginal people are elsewhere, they do not perform corroborees anymore and they have not been seen for decades. For example in 1856 a discussion about a

performance by some Aboriginal performers in yet another 'Grand Corroboree' ends by saying it was: "a novel spectacle. Nowadays when one can live in Melbourne without knowing more of the original inhabitants than if we were in an English town ..." (Age 1856: 2). Over the sixty years between 1850 and 1910, dozens of times in every year in every urban centre, when a corroboree was advertised it is accompanied by the same claim: "it is seldom that opportunity is offered ... to witness these ancient dances of the blacks" (Sydney Morning Herald 1877: 5) and "you have to travel many weary miles to see one" (Advertiser 1900: 5). Words such as 'unique' and 'novel' recur in accounts of Aboriginal

<sup>6</sup> Roberts did paint another painting now known as "Night Dance" (1892) which reproduces the same iconography as the dominant corroboree images: dark figures dancing around a fire and framed by dark shadows.



performance on a near constant basis (see Camperdown Chronicle 1884: 3; Morning Bulletin 1892: 1; Advertiser 1898: 6).

This same information is repeated and repeated, the overt and overstated implication is to locate 'real' Aboriginal people elsewhere, like the images, they are spatially and temporally removed. Equally in the press accounts there is rarely any engagement with the content or form of the performances. Spencer and Gillen's reports of their 1901 expedition to Central Australia was more explicit in the assumption that the 'true' corroboree and 'authentic' Aboriginal people could be only be found in the north (see also Parsons 2002). This goes beyond representation to create an economy of authenticity. Representations work to reproduce a particular stereotype so that individuals within the grouping are expected to be like that. These repeated elements work differently to create an economy of markers that define who is and who cannot be Aboriginal. Within this economy, authentic Aboriginal people are spatially distant, savage and strange.

## **Conclusion**

The containment of Indigenous performance by settlers in the nineteenth century within an economy of authenticity, that changes as the land is claimed, is one of the critical elements in the enterprise of colonisation and continues to have a major impact on Euro-Australian knowledge of the shared exchanges of performance over much of the last 220 years. From accounts of Aboriginal performance as a 'mere pastime' at the beginning of the nineteenth century to terms such as 'sham' and 'whitey-black corroborees' by the end, notions of authenticity act to assist in the colonising process through the effective erasure of Indigenous cultural practices and to deny not only the authority of Indigenous people but also their 'authentic' physical presence. The economy of authenticity developed over the nineteenth century in relation to the 'corroboree' is part of an ongoing process that presents and represents Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians not as meeting through physical proximity and co-existing but rather as creating and maintaining distance between their embodied presences. The corroborees and therefore the Aboriginal people performing them effectively do not exist within the same spatial area as the viewer, who therefore cannot engage in any social or ethical encounter. The performances are rendered uncommon or novel and there is no communication between performer and viewer. The performers are located elsewhere and undifferentiated. This has the further effect of separating Aboriginal people who live in proximity to white people from the economy of authenticity.

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# Critical Race and Whiteness Studies



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RACIAL LEGITIMATIONS

## **National Identity, Transnational Whiteness and the Canadian Citizenship Guide**

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*How do modern states maintain the illusion of liberal democracy, even as they insert themselves into the discourse of a clash of civilisations or cultures endemic to the rhetoric that surrounds the 'war on terror'? In this moment of blatant imperial discourse, more so than ever, how do the paradoxes of liberalism manage to evade critique within dominant political and media discourse? In this paper, I explore these questions through an examination of Canada's newest citizenship guide, entitled Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Canadian Citizenship (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2009/2011). Discover Canada, I argue, is a document in and through which the contemporary politics of Canadian identity are negotiated. I situate this negotiation of identity in terms of Canada's participation in the transnational 'war on terror' and the attendant ideology of a clash of civilisations. My analysis demonstrates how, in the guide, increasingly exclusionary ideas around what constitutes Canadian identity persist alongside commitments to liberal multiculturalism. However, the terms of inclusion and multiculturalism are also reimagined in ways that advance a thesis of culture clash and reinforce the ostensible superiority of 'Western civilisation'. In other words, imagined exclusions are mutually reinforced through imagined inclusions in Discover Canada.*

### **Introduction**

How do modern states maintain the illusion of liberal democracy, even as they insert themselves into the discourse of a clash of civilisations endemic to the 'war on terror'? In this moment of blatant imperial discourse, more so than ever, how do the paradoxes of liberalism manage to evade critique by the general public?

In this paper, I explore these questions through an examination of Canada's newest citizenship guide, entitled *Discover Canada: The Rights and*

*Responsibilities of Canadian Citizenship* (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2009/2011). *Discover Canada*, I argue, is a document in and through which the contemporary politics of Canadian national identity are negotiated. I situate this negotiation of identity in terms of Canada's participation in the transnational war on terror and the attendant ideology of a clash of civilisations. My analysis demonstrates how, in the guide, increasingly exclusionary ideas around what constitutes Canadian identity persist alongside commitments to liberal multiculturalism. However, the terms of inclusion and multiculturalism are also reimagined in ways that advance a thesis of culture clash and reinforce the superiority of 'Western civilisation'. In other words, imagined exclusions are mutually reinforced through imagined inclusions in *Discover Canada*.

Designed to assist newcomers in studying for the Canadian citizenship test, *Discover Canada* is a 63-page, full-colour guide which was published in the fall of 2009. A second edition, with minor edits, was released in 2011. The guide was written in consultation with a range of "historians and experts", who, according to Conservative<sup>1</sup> Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, represented a range of views "across the political spectrum", from Conservative to Liberal (Brosens 2010). *Discover Canada* is notable for its strong emphasis on links to the Queen and British monarchy, national sovereignty, military defence, British colonial roots, and what the guide identifies as Canadian traditions, values and culture. The updated guide was accompanied by a revamped citizenship test in 2010, which was implicitly framed by Minister Kenney as a measure to increase the "value" of Canadian citizenship (Chapnick 2011b). The passing grade for the new citizenship test was raised to 75% (from 60%), and includes "tightened controls for linguistic competency" (Paquet 2012: para. 42-43). The questions in the new test are also reportedly tougher than in previous versions (Beeby 2010b). Applicants writing this new citizenship test have also had a lower success rate as compared to previous versions (Beeby 2010b). The updated Canadian citizenship test echoes recent changes made to citizenship requirements across other Western nation-states such as the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Australia (e.g. see Löwenheim & Gazit 2009: 150-1).

The new Canadian citizenship guide garnered significant national media attention. In part, this was because it appeared to represent a dramatic shift from its predecessor, *A Look At Canada*, last updated in 2008 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2008). In contrast to *Discover Canada*, *A Look At Canada* paid minimal attention to the monarchy and emphasised Canada's peacekeeping role rather than military defence. The 2008 guide was subtler in its discussion of

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<sup>1</sup> When *Discover Canada* was first released in 2009, there were four official political parties in Canada: the Conservatives, the Liberals, the New Democratic Party (NDP), and the Bloc Québécois. In general, the Conservatives are identified with right-wing ideologies, the Liberals with "centrist" ideologies, and the NDP with left-wing ideologies. The Bloc Québécois are primarily concerned with promoting the interests of the francophone province of Quebec (including Quebec sovereignty) at the federal level. Of the four parties, only two—the Conservatives and the Liberals—have ever achieved ruling party status. As of the 2011 federal election, the Bloc Québécois no longer holds enough seats in the Canadian House of Parliament to qualify for official party status.

"Canadian traditions", and told the nation's 'story' primarily with reference to the laws and governance that shape Canadian national identity, emphasising citizenship as a political-legal project. For instance, the 2008 guide states that Canada is "... a democracy. It has a system of parliamentary government. Parliament has three parts: the Queen, the House of Commons and the Senate" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2008: 29). By contrast, *Discover Canada* asserts that Canada is "a constitutional monarchy, a parliamentary democracy and a federal state" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011: 3). Note that while the content of each description is similar, the changed organization and phrasing of the sentence in *Discover Canada* emphasises Canada's links to the monarchy more strongly than *A Look At Canada*.

Many pundits concluded that the shift in emphasis in the new guide was an indication of the Conservative ideological underpinnings of the document. One commentator, for instance, questioned Minister Kenney on the "danger of politicizing [Canadian] national history" (Brosens 2010). However, an analysis of the guide as merely partisan is misleading, for two reasons. First, while the emphasis on themes such as patriotism, monarchy and militarism in *Discover Canada* may represent a significant departure from recent incarnations of the citizenship guide, the current guide bears striking similarities to older versions of the guide from the 1940s-1990s, most of which were produced through Liberal government regimes (Chapnick 2011a: 21-22). Second, centre and left leaning Opposition party members (the New Democratic Party [NDP], Liberals and Bloc Québécois) were mostly silent on the politically charged historical narrative of *Discover Canada*. Though these Opposition members offered critiques of the guide, they focused primarily on discrepancies such as the omission of references to environmental stewardship and Canada's natural landscape, and the omission of references to same-sex marriage in the first edition of the guide (e.g. see CBC News 2009).<sup>2</sup>

In what follows, I offer an alternative reading of *Discover Canada*. I begin by situating my analysis of the citizenship guide within a transnational context. Next, I examine the discursive tactics deployed in the document. These tactics, I suggest, enable the reimagining of Canada's national identity in increasingly exclusionary terms. This is followed by a look at how inclusion and multiculturalism are envisioned in the guide. I close the paper by reflecting on

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that public critique of the omission of same-sex references relied on a similar discourse about Canadian identity as that articulated by Conservative politicians. That is, uproar over this particular omission gained traction when it was revealed that Minister Kenney had purposefully removed references to same-sex marriage contained in earlier drafts of the guide (see Beeby 2010a). Kenney eventually bowed to pressure and agreed to re-insert this reference in the updated guide in 2011 (see Smith 2010). The self-identified LGBTTT critique focused narrowly on this exclusion while ignoring the broader implications of the guide. Some elements of this narrowly-focused LGBTTT analysis were found on the Facebook group, "Canadians for the inclusion of LGBTTT\* rights", with commentators making suggestions such as, "Is this or is this not Canada? Not China, not India. Canada. Put it back in the guide!" (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/366487592473>). Comments like this one relied upon a logic that pitted liberal Canadian values against those of presumably 'backward' nation-states.

the significance of shifting governmental strategies of inclusion for contemporary discussions of race, nation and citizenship.

### ***Discover Canada* and the Transnational Retreat from Multiculturalism**

I first want to locate *Discover Canada* within the transnational socio-political context in which it has emerged. Canada is, after all, not the only Western nation-state to have made recent changes to citizenship requirements. Though my focus in this paper is not on citizenship requirements per se, but on how citizenship is imagined, this current climate of shifting ideas and attitudes towards citizenship provides the backdrop for my analysis.

The specific functions, purposes and outcomes of new citizenship requirements in Western states varies (e.g. see Paquet 2012). However, they share a similar geopolitical context. Oded Löwenheim and Orit Gazit, for instance, locate the rise in formal citizenship testing<sup>3</sup> across Western states in terms of a political backlash and disappointment with multicultural policies that began in the late 1990s. The disappointment, Löwenheim and Gazit explain, stems from the perception that multiculturalism has not fostered the development of “common values and a sense of collective identity” and has triggered a turn towards policies focused on “civic integration” (2009: 148-9). In Canada, this shift is typified in the current government’s proposal to discard official multiculturalism in favour of a more assimilationist policy of pluralism (see Delacourt 2009). The criticism of multiculturalism implied by this shift is fuelled by the perception in dominant media and political debates that immigrants—and, specifically, those who are perceived to be Muslim—bring with them ‘backward’ cultural values that threaten the social cohesion or fabric of the nation.

I would suggest, moreover, that these changes to citizenship regulations not only contribute to the tightening of national borders and boundaries, but they facilitate the consolidation of a transnational white identity. The notion of whiteness as transnationally produced is discussed by Marilyn Lake (2005) in her examination of the literacy test as a trans-colonial technology of exclusion at the turn of the century. Lake critiques Benedict Anderson’s privileging of the nation as the primary mode of organization for “imagined communities” by drawing upon W.E.B DuBois’ observations in *The Souls of White Folk* (1910). DuBois observed that for the dominant subjects of racial-colonial regimes, a new subjective mode of identification was emerging in the early 1900s—an identification with whiteness—that crossed national borders (Lake 2005: 209). Most studies of whiteness, Lake argues, “have conceptualised their subject within a national frame of analysis, charting national dynamics and histories. When overseas ideas are identified as important they are usually conceptualised as external influences shaping a national experience rather than as constituting transnational knowledge” (2005: 224). Lake’s analysis reminds us that

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<sup>3</sup> While my focus in this paper is on how Canadian citizenship is imagined through the study guide, rather than on the citizenship test itself, I include this discussion here for general context.



conversations about race, citizenship and national identity have a transnational dimension that cannot be overlooked.

Recent scholarship on race and racialisation suggests that transnational identifications with whiteness are similarly informing current re-formations of nationhood. As Sedef Arat-Koc argues, across Western states such as Canada, the U.S., Australia, and many European countries, national identity is being “rewhitened” in accordance with an imagined set of common civilisational markers, such as democracy, modernity and liberalism. These national reconfigurations follow the response of the U.S. administration to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which “represented an attack on the United States and ‘the West’”, and by extension, an “attack ... [on] ‘Western civilization’ and its values of freedom and democracy” (Arat-Koc 2005: 34). Through the notion of “civilizational culture clash”—coined by Bernard Lewis and popularised through Samuel Huntington’s 1996 book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*—“those of Arab and Muslim background” have been jettisoned “from their place in Western nations and ‘Western civilization’” (Arat-Koc 2005:34). Meanwhile, “the national belonging and political citizenship of many other Canadians of colour” has become more precarious due to exclusionary rhetoric around national loyalty and belonging (Arat-Koc 2005: 34).

The response of the Canadian nation-state to the perceived war on Western values however, is not new. Rather, it is consistent with the Canadian state’s previous responses to crises of ‘national insecurity’. These responses have also served to demarcate the socio-political contours of the nation. As Rita Dhamoon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban have shown, during these moments, Canadian national identity has relied upon the construction of ‘foreign’, threatening Others in order to draw the internal cultural boundaries of the nation. As Dhamoon and Abu-Laban illustrate in their study of three moments of Canadian ‘insecurity’, processes of Othering and processes of nation-building have, in some instances, been mutually constitutive (2009: 165). In Western liberal democracies, “‘foreign-ness’ and especially the construction of ‘internal dangerous foreigners’ seems to coincide with discourses of nation-building, security, and race-thinking” (Dhamoon & Abu-Laban 2009: 164). This is certainly the case in *Discover Canada*. As I show below, the citizenship guide’s construction of national identity is explicit in its distancing of Canadian nationalism from foreign, menacing Others.

### **Mapping a ‘New’ Canada**

The visual and textual structure of *Discover Canada* reorients our vision of Canadian history in order to present us with a freshly imagined identity positioned within shifting transnational relations of war, security and terror. The visual strategies are critical to the guide, as are its overall structure and phraseology, which fashion an image of Canada that is embedded in its British colonial roots, loyal to the monarchy, and poised to meet the future head-on.

This image is immediately suggested to us by title of the guide, *Discover Canada*,

which evokes the doctrine of *terra nullius*, of an empty, inviting landscape waiting to be managed and settled. The colonial ideology is made contemporary with the central image on the cover page of the guide, which features a white, middle-aged couple canoeing towards us. The Canadian parliament buildings rest in the background, firmly cemented into the landscape as new territory is charted. Also suggestive on the cover are the images of space exploration and of a military veteran on the top left corner. The image of space exploration hints at the possibilities for conquering new frontiers, while the picture of the war veteran serves as evidence of an established history of militarism. These themes are repeated through images of wilderness, space exploration and war and militarism peppered throughout the guide.

Indeed, although the citizenship guide is on the surface, simply a tool to assist newcomers in understanding the requirements of legal citizenship in Canada, it is also a guide to the informal, cultural citizenship of the nation. The particular brand of Canadian identity articulated in the guide echoes the form and character of British national identity that is described by Paul Gilroy in *There Ain't No Black In the Union Jack*. Gilroy argued that discourses of nation, belonging and homogeneity in Britain both "blur[red] the distinction between 'race' and nation" and "rel[ied] on that very ambiguity for their effect" (1987: 45). He offered two examples demonstrating this particular formulation of British racism: the first was the representation of British citizenship through biological and cultural terms such as the "Island Race" and "the Bulldog Breed" (Gilroy 1987: 45); the second was the use of military metaphors such as "the enemy within" or an invasion of "alien cultures" to describe Black settlement, perceived as a threat to the nation. Through this sort of rhetoric, Gilroy argued, culturally-based racism cemented notions of inclusion and exclusion in the nation, marking who legitimately belonged to the nation, and who was subordinate within or outside of the nation.

The revamped Canadian identity that is articulated in *Discover Canada* similarly stakes out the boundaries of the nation, clearly marking its terms of inclusion and exclusion. We can observe this in the discussion of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, where the mantra of "responsibilities, not just rights" is repeated several times. This in and of itself is not remarkable. However, in contrast to the 2008 citizenship guide, which focused primarily on the content of laws providing for these rights and responsibilities, *Discover Canada* takes pains to explicitly situate these laws in a white, Anglo heritage. As we are told on page eight of the guide, Canadian rights emerge from an "800-year old tradition of ordered liberty dating back to the signing of *Magna Carta* in 1215 in England" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011: 8). While the inclusion of this information is not a recent addition to the guide, the emphasis accorded to it has changed. We are told this British heritage is an active part of contemporary Canada because the allegiance of citizens is to the British Crown. This is highlighted on the first page of the guide, which features the image of the Queen and the Oath of Citizenship that all new citizens must take. The oath reads:

I swear (or affirm)/ That I will be faithful/ And bear true allegiance/ To Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second Queen of Canada Her Heirs and Successors/ And that I will faithfully observe/ The laws of Canada/ And fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011: 2).

In the 2008 Canadian citizenship guide, the Citizenship Oath does not appear until the last pages of the document. A caption below the oath in the 2010 document goes on to assert:

In Canada, we profess our loyalty to a person who represents all Canadians and not to a document such as a constitution, a banner such as a flag, or a geopolitical entity such as a country. In our constitutional monarchy, these elements are encompassed by the Sovereign (Queen or King). It is a remarkably simple yet powerful principle: Canada is personified by the Sovereign just as the Sovereign is personified by Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011: 2).

Loyalty to the British Crown is not merely presented as a unique or distinct element of Canadian identity, however. The emphasis on the Crown is also arguably a strategy for confirming Canada's loyalties within the ongoing war on terror. Page 10 of the guide states that Canada "is known around the world as a strong and free country" which has "inherited the oldest continuous constitutional tradition in the world" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011: 10). The seemingly benign statement serves as a cultural marker of sorts. In the context of the purported clash of civilisations, it effectively situates Canada within an established legacy of Western civilisation, which in this case is constructed as liberal, democratic and modern. And, lest we forget that we are living in times of war, a section entitled "Defending Canada" appears as a sidebar on the same page outlining the responsibilities of citizenship. Though it clearly states that there is no compulsory military service in Canada, the strategic placement of this section may be interpreted as a not-so-subtle hint that military service is a significant aspect of belonging to Canada.

If the passages from the guide outlined above clarify what 'Canadian' *is*, additional sections clarify what Canadian is *not*. In a section entitled "Becoming Canadian", the guide states:

Some Canadians immigrate from places where they have experienced warfare or conflict. Such experiences do not justify bringing to Canada violent, extreme or hateful prejudices. In becoming Canadian, newcomers are expected to embrace democratic principles such as the rule of law (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011: 13).

The passage suggests that the Canadian state does not condone violence and does not tolerate hateful prejudice. On their own, these are both laudable goals. Yet, rather than affirming these principles with respect to a commitment within Canada to upholding social justice, the text implies that Canada remains a peaceful society because newcomers are discouraged from importing cultures of hate or violence. In other words, it is newcomers who contaminate Canadian peace, tolerance and civility.

Meanwhile, in a section entitled "The Equality of Women and Men", the guide goes on to declare that:

In Canada, men and women are equal under the law. Canada's openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, 'honour killings,' female genital mutilation, forced marriage or other gender-based violence. Those guilty of these crimes are severely punished under Canada's criminal laws (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011: 9).

This passage in particular provides a clear indication of the current Canadian government regime's attempt to locate itself within the discourse of a clash of civilisations, articulated through the purported defence of women's rights. In this passage, concern with honour killings, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) can be seen to evidence the Canadian state's interest not in women's autonomy or feminist politics as such, but a strategy of alignment with imperial interests. As argued by Miriam Ticktin, "debates and policies on sexual violence function according to logics of cultural otherness, condemning violence primarily when it is attached to readily recognized tropes of alterity, such as forced marriage, honor killings, or excision" (2008: 865). The rhetorical device of using the phrase "barbaric cultural practices" in conjunction with an open-ness to other cultures serves to implicitly position the (Muslim), non-Western woman as requiring salvation "from the excesses of their society" (Razack 2008: 86). Such rhetoric serves to mark the inherent civility of Western men and women and undermine the significance of gender-based violence in the West and in countries such as Canada (Razack 2005: 12). The narrative is a familiar one. As Razack argues, the figures of "the dangerous Muslim man" (guilty of perpetrating gender-based violence), "the imperiled Muslim woman" (oppressed by Muslim men and in need of salvation), "and the (usually unnamed) civilized European" (embodied through the voice of the citizenship guide) "have come to dominate the social landscape in the 'war on terror' and ideological underpinning of a clash of civilizations" (2008: 5).

In this context, we could read the condemnation of honour killings, forced marriage and FGM in *Discover Canada* not as a condemnation of these specific forms of violence, but as a tactic that enables the re-articulation of discourses about civilisation, and of the Canadian nation-state's embodiment of civilised gender relations. It is worth noting here that Opposition politicians were mostly silent on the mention of "barbaric cultural practices" in the guide, pointing to the salience of the culture clash thesis across a wide mainstream political spectrum. When a lone Liberal Member of Parliament, Justin Trudeau, stated that he objected to the description "barbaric", he was ridiculed by both Conservatives and left-wing NDP politicians, and eventually apologised for making the critique at all (Wells 2011).

### **An Improved Guide? Reading *Discover Canada* Through the Lens of Racelessness and The Three Pillars of White Supremacy**

However, it would be erroneous to dismiss *Discover Canada* as merely an exercise in tightening national borders and promoting exclusionary ideals of citizenship. The guide does not, after all, blatantly rearticulate the early twentieth century vision of Canada as a "White Man's Country" (e.g. see Dua 2000: 109). Liberal multiculturalism, as official policy and discourse, has not

disappeared in Canada. Rather, as Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Nisha Nath argue, “the contemporary Canadian state [is] one in which multiculturalism and liberalism co-exist with racialization and exception” (2007: 74). Indeed, as I show below, the content of the guide suggests that the Canadian state remains committed to some version of what David Theo Goldberg calls “racelessness” or colourblindness (an umbrella descriptor under which Goldberg includes liberal multiculturalism) (2002: 201). This expression of racelessness is enabled by inviting non-Muslim racialised Others and Indigenous nations to be positioned with the West in the war of civilisations.

Racelessness, briefly, is “the logical implication of racial historicism” (Goldberg 2002: 203). Goldberg describes racial historicism—which seeks to locate racism in the past—as having emerged over the course of the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the dominant discourse shaping racial governance, in contrast to naturalism—which is centred on the notion of racial hierarchy and white supremacy (2002: 202). A formalised commitment to racelessness, argues Goldberg, “grows out of the modern state’s self-promotion in the name of rationality and the recognition of ethnoracially heterogeneous states” (2002: 203).

Reading Goldberg’s notion of racelessness alongside Andrea Smith’s discussion of the “three pillars of white supremacy” is useful for analysing how notions of liberal multiculturalism are articulated in *Discover Canada*. As Andrea Smith argues, white supremacy and racism are not “enacted in a singular fashion” (2006: 67). Nor are their effects accrued evenly across racialised bodies. Rather, Smith suggests, “white supremacy is constituted by separate and distinct, but still interrelated, logics” (2006: 67). She names three such logics: slavery/capitalism; genocide/colonialism; and Orientalism/war. Briefly, the logic of slavery/capitalism devalues the labour of Black people, rendering them “inherently slaveable” (Smith 2006: 67). The logic of genocide/colonialism suggests that Indigenous peoples are dying/disappeared (Smith 2006: 68). Finally, the logic of Orientalism/war configures particular people as perpetually foreign or threatening to the nation (Smith 2006: 68). Smith argues that while we may be victimised through one logic of white supremacy, we are always invited to be complicit in other logics. Though we could quibble over the particulars of her framework, this notion of simultaneous victimisation and complicity is a useful way to think about how historically instituted structures of power overlap with one another. For example, the particular forms of racialisation that construct Black and Indigenous bodies in Canada may subject these citizens to higher rates of police violence. However, post-9/11 demands for ‘security’ also invite those perceived as non-Muslim/non-Arab to participate in the clash of civilisations discourse.

We can observe this in *Discover Canada* where diversity and multiculturalism are imagined through the superficial inclusion of non-Muslim Others into official narratives of the nation. We see this in the first place through the historical revisionism in the guide. This revisionism may, upon initial inspection, appear welcome and positive. After all, not only does *Discover Canada* acknowledge marginal histories that are seldom included in official accounts of Canadian

history—including those of Aboriginal residential schools, transatlantic slavery, Japanese internment, and the Chinese Head Tax—but the document also names Aboriginal peoples,<sup>4</sup> along with the British and French, as one of the three founding peoples of Canada (typically, dominant accounts of Canadian history completely disavow Indigenous claims to land). On this basis, some might believe the guide is an ‘improvement’ over its predecessors, in that it presents a more robust and diverse review of Canadian history. However, one must consider these inclusions in light of the fortified, whitened national identity found in the guide, as suggested by the evocation of Canadian military history, ties to the British Crown, and images of discovery and exploration discussed earlier. In this context, the inclusion of particular kinds of racialised bodies into the nation may be read as a means of affirming multiculturalism while remaining committed to the war on terror. We could say, moreover, that these admissions form what Sarah Ahmed calls “a politics of declaration, in which institutions as well as individuals ‘admit’ to forms of bad practice, and in which the ‘admission’ itself becomes seen as good practice” (2004: para.11).

Critics have, of course, noted that the historical narrative presented in the guide is not without its inaccuracies. For example, the guide states that the ancestors of Aboriginal peoples “migrated from Asia many thousands of years ago”, thus suggesting that Aboriginal peoples are actually settlers. I’m less interested in how ‘truthful’ the narrative is however, than I am in how it is mobilised to establish distance between what are seen as racist and colonial moments that have run their course, while absolving the present and future Canadian citizens of ongoing, continuing injustices. Everyday practices and experiences of racism and colonialism are thus effaced. For instance, it is stated that European settlers did not always respect treaties negotiated with Aboriginal peoples. This is followed by an explanation of the residential school system in Canada, which lasted from the 1800s until the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> The guide then goes on to say that a formal apology was made by the federal government in 2008, and further, that in today’s Canada, “Aboriginal peoples enjoy renewed pride and confidence, and have made significant achievements” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011: 10). The implication is that colonial injustices have had a clear start and finish, and are now over.

Moreover, by mentioning Aboriginal residential schools, transatlantic slavery,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> I use the term ‘Aboriginal’ where appropriate to reflect the language used in *Discover Canada*. Elsewhere, I use the term ‘Indigenous’.

<sup>5</sup> Residential schools were first established by missionary societies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and were subsequently supported by the Canadian government from 1879 to 1986 (Milloy 1999). In line with the assimilationist agenda of the government, the policy of residential schooling was a strategy to ‘civilise’ Indigenous children so that they could ‘integrate’ into Canadian society. Under the leadership of Canadian Churches, children were separated from their families and lived in deplorable conditions, often enduring multiple forms of abuse and violence. The Canadian Conservative government offered monies towards a compensation fund for living survivors of residential schools in 2005, and formally apologised to survivors in 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Slavery in Canada “was an institutionalized practice for over 200 years ... Canada may not have been a slave society—that is, a society whose economy was based on slavery—but it was a society with slaves” (Cooper 2006: 68).

Japanese internment camps,<sup>7</sup> and the Chinese head tax,<sup>8</sup> and by highlighting the official federal apologies to the survivors of these incidents (or in the case of slavery, by emphasising abolition movements), the guide delineates what does and does not 'count' as racism. If past racist-colonial practices are named and 'counted' as racism, then the reference to "barbaric cultural practices" can be constructed as neutral or, at worst, as simply 'politically incorrect'. Media responses to the "barbaric cultural" reference have been telling in this regard; many simply clucked their tongues at the use of such "strong language" (e.g. Carlson 2009; Hebert 2009). The commitment to racelessness "makes it hard to invoke any causal connection between history (for example colonialism) and contemporary racialized inequalities" (Abu-Laban & Nath 2007: 80). If past-Canada engaged in racist practice, present-future Canada is simply promoting national values. Such a construction of racism and colonialism of course ignores the social, cultural, political and economic structures, practices and discourses through which they are sustained. In other words, exceptionalising the racial and colonial violence of the past facilitates the justification of Western superiority in clash of culture narratives.

Two more inclusions are worth noting in the guide. First, as mentioned earlier, Aboriginal peoples are identified as one of the founding peoples of the nation. Second, Métis leader Louis Riel, who led two rebellions against the Canadian government in the 1800s—for which he was executed on the charge of high treason—is recognised as a hero and as a founder of the province of Manitoba. In his comments on the citizenship guide, Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo pointed to the limitations of these inclusions. He suggested there is a need to move beyond recognition of Aboriginal peoples, and towards policy and legislative change that will foster better relations between Canada and Aboriginal peoples (White 2009). However, the recognition of Aboriginal peoples in the specific context of the guide must be understood not only in terms of Indigenous-settler relations, but also in terms of the Othering of brown, Muslim bodies in the war on terror that is implied elsewhere in the guide (e.g. by the condemnation of honour killings). On its own, for instance, the recognition of Aboriginal peoples as one of the founding peoples of Canada is arguably only a tokenistic gesture. A few pages after professing the founding status of Aboriginal nations, the guide states that Canadian culture is composed of the settler nations, English and French. However, keeping in mind Smith's suggestion that those perceived as non-Muslim/non-Arab are invited to participate in the logic of

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<sup>7</sup> During the 1940s, the Canadian government forced 22,000 Japanese Canadians to leave their homes (Oikawa 2002: 73). Japanese Canadians "were imprisoned, dispossessed, detained, pressed into low-waged labour, and displaced" (Oikawa 2002: 73). In 1988, the Canadian government issued an apology and signed a redress agreement with the Japanese Canadian community (National Association of Japanese Canadians 2012).

<sup>8</sup> The 1865 Chinese Immigration Act stipulated that all Chinese immigrants to Canada pay a head tax of \$50 (increased to \$500 in 1923) (Backhouse, 2005: 24). From 1923-1947, the Chinese Exclusion Act virtually banned all Chinese immigration (Dyzenhaus and Moran, 2005: 7). The Conservative government formally apologised to Chinese Canadians for the head tax in 2006 and offered symbolic payments to head tax survivors and community projects (Chinese Canadian National Council 2006).

Orientalism/war, we can also read this as a tactic to invite Indigenous peoples to participate in a revamped formation of Canadian identity. By framing colonial violence as a series of past 'mistakes' or mishaps, Canadian identity can be constructed as unified and fortified in the war on terror, while simultaneously faithful to the tenets of liberal multiculturalism.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Clearly, the 'new' record of Canadian history presented in *Discover Canada* reveals less about Canada's past than it does about the construction of Canada's present (see also Bhabha 1990). As I have shown here, some marginalised communities and colonised nations are superficially recognised in the historical tale presented in the new Canadian citizenship guide. I have argued that we should not necessarily read this as a progressive move on the part of the current Canadian government. Rather, we should be suspicious. How do such strategies of recognition and inclusion ironically secure, rather than open, the boundaries of national identity and citizenship? This question is particularly important given the implication of strategies of recognition and inclusion in the discourses of a clash of civilisations. We need to spend some time contemplating how Indigenous and racialised minority subjects might similarly be absorbed into national narratives, and to what ends.

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# Critical Race and Whiteness Studies



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**Volume 8, 2012**

BOOK REVIEW

Chris Allen. 2010. *Islamophobia*, Farnham, UK and Burlington, USA: Ashgate.

**Henk Huijser**

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*Islamophobia* presents itself as filling a significant gap in the current literature, but not in the sense that there is a lack of usage of the term. Quite the opposite; the term has become increasingly prevalent and acceptable in society, as the summary statement in the book identifies, especially in the wake of September 11. This is precisely why there is a need for this book, for while the use of the term Islamophobia is becoming increasingly common, a wide range of different interpretations and definitions appear to exist, thus highlighting a lack of common understandings of the concept. In this book then, Chris Allen explores not only the history of Islamophobia as a phenomenon, but also its usage. This exploration starts from the fundamental question of whether Islamophobia as a phenomenon actually exists, or whether it is simply a different name and extension of earlier identified and defined phenomena, such as racism or anti-Semitism. Similarly, if Islamophobia indeed exists, is it simply a continuum of earlier versions of anti-Muslimism or anti-Islamism, or is it an entirely modern concept? These are important questions to consider, for the answers may provide the key to addressing the phenomenon, while the current vague definitions and usage of the term may instead exacerbate the ways in which it affects people's lives.

*Islamophobia* is usefully and clearly divided into six parts, starting with an introduction that discusses the "first decade of Islamophobia", with the starting point being identified as the publication in the UK of 'The Runnymede Report' (1997): *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all: report of the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia*. Furthermore, this introduction traces some of the high profile media cases (e.g. the Kilroy case in the UK, or Geert Wilders and Ayaan Hirsi Ali in The Netherlands) and their associated debates, which show the extremes of those who denounce any criticism of Muslims or Islam as 'Islamophobic', and those who openly espouse hatred. Between these poles there is a wide continuum of smaller and less explicit incidents and opinions (e.g. debates about whether the *niqab* is a barrier to integration in various European nations), but despite plenty of media debate,

there is still a large question mark over which of these incidents can rightfully be called cases of 'Islamophobia'. The second part of the book provides some useful historical context, and traces anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment back to the Crusades, the Reformation and Colonialism, while also touching on the influential literature related to Orientalism and the Clash of Civilisations. Especially the latter has become highly influential in debates about the supposed 'incompatibility of civilisations' and thus of 'cultures', which in turn forms the basis of various contemporary political anti-immigration platforms in the European context. In response, one of the central arguments of *Islamophobia* is that there is an urgent need for empirical research to test some of the most influential claims associated with what the Runnymede Report calls a 'certain identifiable phenomenon'.

The other central argument is that the definition and conceptualisation of Islamophobia are imprecise, which in turn leads to a variety of interpretations that suit whoever appropriates them. In Part Three, Allen identifies The Runnymede Report as the main cause behind that as the (flawed) definition used in the report has become rigidified as *the* definition since its publication. In an extensive critique of the report, Allen argues convincingly that despite its good intentions, the report may inadvertently be exacerbating Islamophobia, primarily through imprecise and inconsistent use of terminology. This again leads to the main question: what then is Islamophobia?

The next three parts of the book are an attempt at answering that question, starting with a more in-depth discussion of Islamophobia in context. However, it is here that some of the main weaknesses of the book surface. Firstly, there is a very heavy emphasis on the UK as *the* context for the discussions in this book, despite claims of a global phenomenon. While there is some discussion of the wider European context and the US context, these sections are limited, and it would therefore have been more fitting if the book had been called 'Islamophobia in the UK'. Secondly, there is a focus on discussions around the appropriateness of the term Islamophobia, and these discussions become rather repetitive, and are frequently slowed down by 'sidebars' into various areas of the literature that are not always directly relevant. It is not until a discussion about ideology in Chapter 10, that Allen begins to develop a key argument, and even then he remains rather reluctant to state a firm argument. Despite this, the value of the book lies in its ultimate identification of three different components of Islamophobia: its ideological component; its related 'modes of operation' through which meaning is sustained and perpetuated; and resultant 'exclusionary practices' targeted at Muslims and Islam. This is useful because it creates a clear focus for the identified and urgent need to empirically test the exclusionary practices in particular.

Overall then, this book provides a comprehensive overview and discussion of Islamophobia, even if it is mostly limited to a UK context, and even if it ultimately ends up with an unworkable definition that is 20 lines long! It nevertheless provides a good starting point for what could be important potential follow-up projects: an edited collection with contributors from a wide variety of global contexts, and a series of empirical studies that would provide the

necessary evidence to back up political actions to address “a certain identifiable phenomenon” (p. 194) called Islamophobia.

### **Author Note**

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# Critical Race and Whiteness Studies



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## BOOK REVIEW

Catherine Simpson, Renata Murawska and Anthony Lambert (eds.). 2009.  
*Diasporas of Australian Cinema*, Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books.

**Sukhmani Khorana**  
University of Queensland

*Diasporas of Australian Cinema* provides an overview of Australian films that challenge the monocultural and/or Anglo-Australian paradigm in the historical and contemporary representations of Australia. This is a worthwhile and timely project in its own right, and the diversity of hyphenated Australian voices and productions included in the collection lend credibility to the editors' intentions. However, as with a number of works on transnational, inter-cultural, or diasporic cinemas, it is not exactly clear where the boundaries of the 'Diasporas of Australian Cinema' begin and end. Similarly, it is not made explicit why the term 'diasporas' is used in place of say, 'multicultural', which although also problematic, is more recognisable in the Australian cultural lexicon.

Despite the above conceptual ambiguities, the introduction to the collection does make a worthwhile attempt to ground 'diasporic cinema' firmly in the Australian context. This is accomplished by using Tom O'Regan's still pertinent 1996 classification of Australian society and its cinema (as a European-driven society; a settler society; a New World society; and a diasporic society) as its theoretical reference point. Subsequently, the book only deals with the subset of Australian cinema that "can loosely be categorized within a diasporic framework" (19). While this loose categorization is a contested issue in both Australian cinema studies, and transnational film studies more broadly, the strength of the collection lies in its ability to dialogue with these discursive and theoretical positions rather than dismissing them outright. This is especially the case with the final two chapters on specific Lebanese-Australian and Korean-Australian films and their makers that privilege hybridity over the one or two-way journeys that often characterise the diasporic classification.

The introduction is also very useful in terms of both succinctly mapping the historical trajectories of Australian cinema for those unfamiliar with it, and also for situating the diasporic texts under examination within the context of each significant cinematic era. Such a mapping project is significant in that it

highlights the impact of migrant directors such as George Miller and Paul Cox on the Australian cinematic revival since the late 1970s. However, it is the films of the 1990s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that are highlighted as engaging more comprehensively with positive as well as negative social manifestations of Australian multiculturalism.

The three parts of the collection, namely, Theories, Representations and Film-makers, deal with important concerns in the practice, reception and study of Australian diasporic screen cultures. At the same time, the Film-maker section could have included filmmaking voices in the form of production essays and/or interviews, rather than just textual studies of particular films and auteurs. The chapters cover a wide range of themes, from teenage self-discovery and angst in migrant families, to the politics of place from the perspective of refugee arrivals. Chapters on representation examine the appropriation of 'Australian' comedy genres by migrant filmmakers in films such as Heng Tang's Hong Kong gambling comedy-inspired *The Last Chip*, and the wog comedies of the early 2000s. The latter, according to Felicity Collins, are significant in that they reconfigure the unquestioned Anglo-Australianness of the ocker genre, but also noteworthy in that the national archetype itself is not interrogated (74-75).

Similarly, Catherine Simpson reads Michael James Rowland's *Lucky Miles* as manifesting an international festival film, playing with the road movie genre, and yet displaying a very Eurocentric sensibility towards the landscape. Such a reading, that contextualises the film in the politics surrounding the nation's immigration policies (told from the point of view of three Middle Eastern male refugees landing in remote Western Australia) is important for opening up the representative field to texts that more than just "tinker at the borders" (39). In her study of the cross-cultural romance in refugee films such as *Molly and Mobarak* and *Amanda and Ali*, Sonia Tascon argues that the inter-cultural romantic narrative is imbued with ethical promise, and also stands in for the failure of multiculturalism policy. While this argument is certainly convincing on the personal as political level, it is less so in suggesting that such stories can repair the widespread damage of inhumane policy and monocultural representations.

Greg Dolgoplov's contribution is vital in shedding light on the cinematic representation of Russian-Australians, a group that is largely considered as consisting of individual outsiders who embody excess and are inassimilable. On the contrary, Rebecca Coyle's examination of recent Japanese-themed Australian films gestures towards reparation in Australia-Japan relations. Looking at Greek-Australian cinema, John Conomos notes cross-cultural tensions. He also highlights the essay film genre (as seen in films such as *The Butler* and *The Occupant*) as enabling Greek-Australian filmmakers to explore the subtleties of a diasporic existence. Overall, the coverage of non-Anglo film cultures in Australia, as captured in this collection, is comprehensive and the chapters speak to one another both directly and in terms of their thematic parallels.

In conclusion, this account of Australia's diasporic cinema is important not just for studies of Australian national cinema, and contemporary debates about



multiculturalism and its representation in Australian society, but for wider considerations of all national cinemas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as inevitably diasporic (if not transnational). This edited collection is significant in terms of its updating of the field of ethnic/migrant representation which has been mired in postcolonial studies for a while, and has not always taken post-globalisation flows of people in a number of directions (as opposed to an understanding of diaspora as a movement from a fixed home to a host culture) into account. And finally, it is also a small step in the direction of recognising the cross-cultural influences and subsequent impact of individual migrant directors – this niche area of production studies is increasingly significant in the era of digital filmmaking, and deserving of further scholarly attention.

### **Author Note**

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# Critical Race and Whiteness Studies



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## Volume 8, 2012

### BOOK REVIEW

Hamilton Carroll. 2011. *Affirmative Reaction: New Formations of White Masculinity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

#### **Timothy Laurie**

University of Sydney

To borrow a phrase from a program that foreshadows much of Hamilton Carroll's argument, *Affirmative Reaction* reads like a captain's log of what stressed out, fed up, self-sacrificing white men are up to on America's screens – and sometimes, on paper and CDs too. Drawing on films (*Brokeback Mountain*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Gran Torino*, *Traffic* and *Syriana*), television programs (*24*, *American Chopper*), comics (*The Call of Duty*) and music (Eminem, including *8 Mile*), Carroll argues that "appeals to injury... incorporate and mobilize failure as a constitutive force for the reorientation of posthegemonic forms of white masculinist privilege" (2). Rather than distancing itself from identity politics, associated here with "women's rights, gay rights, and civil rights eras" (7), white masculinity now announces itself as a marginal identity: Clint Eastwood the reformed racist and conscientious hero in *Gran Torino*, Michael Douglas the troubled and transformed father in *Traffic*, and Eminem the 'white trash' upstart in *8 Mile*. In other texts, notably *Million Dollar Baby* and a series of comics based on September 11 fire-fighters, the special status afforded to white ethnicity also serves as an alibi for familiar clichés of white male heroism.

The title of this book is misleading - better would be Hamilton Carroll's closing quip, "the new man looks very much like the old" (179). A brief glance at Eastwood and Douglas' filmographies (including *Dirty Harry* and *Falling Down*, respectively) remind the reader that this recuperative "white masculinity in crisis" is nothing new, and some of the author's close-readings may have been strengthened through an acknowledgment of the embattled Italian Stallion of the *Rocky* sextet (1976-2006), or the many films that strategically couple white and non-white victim narratives, like *The Defiant Ones* (1958), *The Deer Hunter* (1978), or *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994). More concerning, however, is the ambivalence of Carroll's historical argument for why these formations of white masculinity are 'new' in the first place. As many scholars have already argued, some white American men have tenably been victims of something (Carroll's own example is job losses in manufacturing sectors), but many mistakenly blame the

cause of their injuries on the perceived success of minority groups, rather than other factors, such as class inequality or global economic restructuring. The extent to which media representations address the concerns of disenfranchised, working-class white men, as opposed to those merely cashing in on the renewed currency of victimhood, is unclear throughout *Affirmative Reaction*. For example, automotive television program *American Chopper* is described as attenuating "the putative losses suffered by working-class men under the postindustrial service economy" (79), then later summarised in the following way:

*American Chopper* constructs a nostalgic world of blue-collar work in which the skilled manual laborer ... still reigns supreme, untroubled by the supposed defeats suffered by hegemonic masculinity in the post-civil rights era and by the labor losses of neoliberalism (99).

Carroll wants to read his text alongside a historical narrative, that of a crisis in masculinity, while claiming that this same crisis, understood interchangeably as socioeconomic and symbolic, is "supposed" or "putative". If these defeats are only supposed, why should *American Chopper* be troubled by them? This ambiguity reflects a tension between wanting to debunk the "so-called crisis in masculinity" (2), and arguing that texts can be read as symptoms of a real "erosion of privilege" (5, 11, 12, 17, 62). When Carroll claims that "white masculinity currently contests its dismantling", that it has "learned how to profoundly manage the stakes of its own failure" (9), the norm becomes both sickness and symptom, actor and acted upon, cause and effect. Somewhere in this reaction to a reaction, the event everyone is reacting to seems to disappear. The important distinction that R.W. Connell has suggested, between forces that rupture the internal configuration of hegemony *vis a vis* privileged norms, and challenges to the social structure of hegemony itself, is never explicitly made, and leads to confusion about who is and is not properly a victim, and why it might matter.

*Affirmative Action* does raise some important questions about the pragmatics of suffering and identification in Hollywood film. In his reading of *Brokeback Mountain*, Carroll argues that the story of same-sex desire "is routed through domestic melodrama and subordinated to the film's representation of the erosions of white masculinist privilege; thus *Brokeback Mountain* turns its queer subjects into disenfranchised white men" (17). Carroll is concerned that the anti-homophobic message dovetails too quickly with sentimental familialism and nostalgia for the masculine pastoral. Watching *Brokeback Mountain*, I also felt frustrated that complex political issues resolved themselves through self-sacrifice and virtuous suffering, not unlike Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) or *Lust, Caution* (2007). However, there does remain a strong popular perception that gay men have not been active participants in U.S. history, that homosexuals lack familial commitments, and that "queers" don't belong on farms. If *Brokeback Mountain* was to showcase a gay couple refusing every conceivable "familial" norm, what sorts of political work would this do?

This kind of question requires careful treatment, and while *Affirmative Reaction* raises important questions about the limits of identity politics, it struggles to find

a space outside the logics of identity and injury from which to critique these texts. When discussing *Traffic*, for example, Carroll rightly criticises the negative depiction of the black drug dealer, but then complains that the film "is unable to imagine a drug addict who is not white" (168). Yet surely one possible alternative, a film where all the drug addicts are not white, would hardly be a gift-send from Hollywood. A casual comparison between these films and, say, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* (2005) or *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) would have complicated the tacit assumption that more diverse casts of victims will automatically challenge either white privilege or hegemonic masculinity.

Concerns about the overall argument notwithstanding, the two opening chapters of the book, grouped under the heading 'Affective Time and the War on Terror', work extremely well. Carroll shows how the formal aspects of TV program 24, including its real-time "ticking-bombs", help to organise its post-September 11 moral universe, one in which the urgencies of terrorist threats are used to justify legal violations and impulsive brutalities, including the use of torture by U.S. agencies. By linking the vulnerable American hero to extant political rhetorics and memorial cultures, Carroll is able to demonstrate how white masculinity functions within a changing social structure (these chapters could be particularly useful for students wanting to bridge media analysis and political philosophy). As with the commentary on post-September 11 narratives, there is a wealth of media clippings and quotes from actors, directors, producers, and politicians, giving a strong sense of the personal idiosyncrasies shaping media production, and of the cumulative effects that particular images and word choices have in transforming representations of trauma into objectionable political agendas. Carroll's wide use of research materials also enhances the later discussion of the first Eminem three albums and *8 Mile*, offering some intriguing insights into the rapper's own negotiations of whiteness and class-based authenticity.

*Affirmative Reaction* does a good job of critiquing privileged media archetypes, while apprehensive about how to negotiate the inclusion of diversity in relation to the norm, or how to displace the norm altogether. This book will help forward an important dialogue about the contemporary status of white ethnicity, the masculinisation of class and nation, and the development of identity politics in the United States, but future work in this area needs to be clearer about what the stakes are in representing, contesting, or displacing white masculinity, and what the alternatives might be to a personal politics of injury.

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# Critical Race and Whiteness Studies



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BOOK REVIEW

Wendy Shaw. 2007. *Cities of Whiteness*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

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Recently while tutoring in a first-year humanities course my students and I were rehearsing the received version of (Horkheimer and) Adorno's critique of commodities and their slavish consumption courtesy of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In an attempt to think of a commodity so replete with cultural capital as to ensure exchange value dwarfed any use value it was, strangely, a gentrified suburb only ten minutes walk from the campus that instantly came to mind. 'Why would I live in Fitzroy?' I asked. The first answers came as stifled laughter. Of course, this young (white) Melbourne graduate student could only live in Fitzroy. Amongst the answers that followed, students mentioned the access to bars and cafes, the proximity to (young and hip) like-minded people and (absurdly) its 'affordable rents' for its aesthetically-pleasing terraced housing,<sup>1</sup> all aspects that are not only easily recouped by Adorno and Horkheimer as enviable cultural capital but also all aspects of the suburbs recent gentrification. None mentioned that I might live there because it was where public housing was available, at the Atherton Gardens housing development on Brunswick St, or that the public transport infrastructure made it a good location for low-income families, or that I might live there because of the many community service organisations whose offices are there, or that my family may have embedded lives in the long history of 'Dirty Fitzroy'. I do not blame my students for not thinking of these use values first, precisely because while these latter uses are linked to types of residents who are not visibly bound up in the touted and thriving economy of chic that makes Fitzroy desirable to the new middle class.

In Fitzroy, of course, the obvious rebuttal to unfettered gentrification is not only the grey towers of Atherton Gardens but their current expansion with the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Currently, 1 per cent of the available rental housing in the City of Yarra is classed as affordable.' Department of Human Services (VIC), 'Fitzroy, Atherton Gardens, Estate Development', <<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/housing-and-accommodation/fitzroy,-atherton-gardens,-estate-development>>.

addition of '152 energy efficient homes' on Brunswick St. This presents an interesting and perhaps misleading parallel to Wendy Shaw's study of the recent history of Sydney's Darlington, Redfern and Chippendale suburbs in *Cities of Whiteness* and its interest in the actions taken against the Aboriginal housing at its centre, the 70 Victorian houses known as The Block established in 1973. Whereas Atherton Gardens, the first residence of many asylum seekers and low-income migrants, is expanding, The Block has always been besieged. As Shaw tells us, inner Sydney is:

[I]n the grip of urban renewal ... The advent of gentrification, the refurbishment of Victorian housing stock and the redevelopment of its former industrial sites into 'apartments', has heralded a new era of revanchist mobilisations against a maligned, and heavily radicalised remnant of the formerly impoverished part of the city (2007: 1).

Part of the Antipode series, edited by Noel Castree, Shaw's book positions itself at the intersection between Whiteness Studies and the 'cultural turn' in Human Geography. As such, Shaw spends the first chapter sketching out some of the motivations behind her project, which includes, at its centre, an attempt to problematise the ethnologically-dominated thinking of some Whiteness scholarship. This evaluation comes in light of an abundant body of geographical scholarship that has attempted to critique material and symbolic stratifications by espying the workings of capital, race and globalisation. From early in the text, Shaw claims that whiteness is 'a slippery character', dividing it off from ethnic essentialisms and drawing attention to Bonnett's assertion that whiteness is 'temporally and spatially contingent'. In doing so, Shaw provides a strong review of the relevant scholarship, though she demurs from specifying new criteria. Instead she supplies some illustrative relations, following which we might say that whiteness is "a structure not an event" (Wolfe 1999: 2).

Focusing on The Block allows Shaw to address questions linked to what Harvey has called the "right to the city" in a distinctive situation (2008: 23). As is repeatedly pointed out (perhaps for the uninitiated reader) Aboriginals in Australia are not typically linked to urban environments, not because they have not been present but because urban Aborigines "have historically been accorded little visibility" (McGaw et al. 2011: 297); as such, the residents of The Block present an uncanny object, racialised as remote dwellers but insistently resident in urban 'Aboriginal lands'. This displacement, it seems for Shaw, partly motivates those who have seen fit to work towards ending the allotment's existence, though much more of the book's evidence concerns itself with the imagery of substance abuse and a politics of racialised fear traded by resident groups and print and televisual media. While the legal and political origins of The Block are not the object of Shaw's research – it centres instead on representations of its residents and the multiple fronts of its attempted erasure – the curious reader will be left grasping for how and why exactly these houses were gifted in the way that they were. It is difficult to imagine the 'gifted' origins of the properties not being central to recent conflicts with a regime of neoliberalist market development.

The real strength of Shaw's text is in the latter half of the book in which she engages with the history of one particular site, the Wilson Bros. factory, and with the 'cosmopolitan' metropolitan obsession with 'heritage' real estate. In the former case we are witness to the slow exclusion of a 'problem' population from community planning processes, as some forms of public use (parks) appear as safe, reasonable and equalitarian outweigh other forms of public use (community centres, Aboriginal service providers) that appear as dangerous and partisan. It may be of little surprise that what was permitted to remain at the site was the factory's façade, as a particular history of working class Darlington has become the prized 'heritage' of middle class gentrification. The very invisibility of the historical construction of both a certain era and its objects as 'heritage' illustrates the importance of Shaw's study, since – as in the 'whitewashing' of public space undertaken in the founding of urban parks (and National Parks) – a value for some is mistaken to be a value for all. As Shaw shows, by deeming an era to be a site's heritage you not only 'partition the past' into periods prior and post to the event of identity but also identify what must remain consistent for the site's future to be self-identical. At the same time the invisibility of this partitioning allows the fearless protectors of particular Darlington architecture appear as communal voices for the "tasteful" even as they "erode the material resources" of those they live amidst. As Shaw summarises: "Heritage making legitimates certain presences, in the present" (2007: 130)

The racialisation of The Block and its consequences within the community, in particular, help illustrate Shaw's more general approach to Whiteness Studies. Whiteness is evidently at work in the descriptions of the residents as pathological and abusive, in the politics of fear surrounding drug use, and in the abounding surveillance of streets and street corners, but to understand this as the work of strictly ethnically 'white' actors only serves to reinforce the symbolic division between black and white that is precisely a technique of whiteness. The discursive existence of distinctly 'white' groups is itself a precondition for the appropriation of various centres – legal, social, cultural, architectural – by whiteness, and thereby it is a division Shaw shows needs resisting at every appearance. As she concludes "[t]he assumption of white ethnicity not only detracts from identifying more nuanced processes of whiteness, it can also serve to enhance the power of whiteness" (174).

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## BOOK REVIEW

Nikki Sullivan and Samantha Murray (eds.) 2009. *Somatechnics: Queering the Technologisation of Bodies*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.

### **Anneli Strutt**

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Born out of the Somatechnics Research Centre at Macquarie University, this complex volume investigates issues of embodiment; how bodies are brought into being, and transformed, in culturally and historically specific contexts. A highly ambitious work, which brings together research from stem cell technoscience to self-demand amputation, the contributions range from the intensely personal to the densely theoretical, all of them intellectually challenging. The scientifically solid neologism of the title encapsulates the notion that neither *soma* (the body) nor *techné* (the techniques in and through which bodies take shape) precede the other: somatechnics “supplants the logic of the ‘and’” (3), whereby corporealities and technologies are always already enmeshed. Aligning itself with both poststructuralist and queer theory, the book raises the bar of queer thinking “by moving *beyond* a focus on sexual identities and practices” (6). For *Queer Interventions* series editors Michael O’Rourke and Noreen Giffney, the queering move is evident in the title. No longer a question of the-chicken-or-the-egg, somatechnicity itself is seen as originary.

The concept of somatechnics is perhaps best elucidated through specific examples rather than a broad overview. While the collection is divided into three sections, the somatechnics of the social body, Somatechnologies of sex/gender, and Somatechniques of the self, in the spirit of going against the grain, I chose four contributions for closer review based on alternative categorisation. As stated in the preface, various somatechnologies may have either normalising or even damaging effects, or they may function in a liberating manner. Others yet contain possibilities for both, and here I have selected pertinent examples of each.

In the opening chapter Jessica Cadwallader pronounces (Western) medicine as “the dominant contemporary technology of the body” (13), and unsurprisingly several chapters take issue with medical discourse. The question of health vs. aesthetics is raised by Samantha Murray in her honest, personal account of living

in, and as, a 'banded body,' after bariatric surgery. In addressing the somatechnics of weight loss surgeries, Murray exposes the discrepancy between how such procedures are advertised, and actual post-op existence. While the current 'obesity epidemic' is portrayed as a health concern, Murray detects "an acute cultural anxiety about the ways in which the fat body disrupts privileged ideals about normative gendered bodies and aesthetic appearance" (153). Capitalising upon this, such surgeries promise to grant both health and normative bodily form, and are portrayed as minimally evasive, with before and after photographs offering a narrative of simple, linear transition. Yet reality proves otherwise. Responses to Murray's changed appearance generally consist of comments that she 'look[s] fantastic,' where a slimmer form is instantly equated with well-being. Murray troubles this common assumption, encouraging us to be critical of how health is often measured visually—even aesthetically—by detailing a list of unseen, surgery-related complications she must endure. In confessing her inner turmoil of living a 'dis-abled' life in what looks like a healthy body, Murray bravely begins to queer the discourse of 'health'.

Alternatively, certain somatechnologies can act as resistant, or freeing. Matt Lodder's engagement with a highly complex Deleuzian vocabulary asks how to make oneself a Body without Organs—in this case, a body resistant to oppressive societal structures, or what Deleuze terms the 'desiring-machine'. Lodder speculates that such resistance might be possible if the body could be reorganised, and finds a solution in the somatechnics of (subcultural) body modification. Deleuze's hegemonic desiring-machine oppresses along three strata, firstly demanding that the (human) organism be organised, as intact and docile bodies are more easily governable. For Lodder, practises such as tongue splitting or implanting magnets in fingertips subvert organisation by rearranging and expanding the body, thereby "resist[ing] the holistic integrity of the organism" (198). Secondly, the governable body must signify and be interpretable. Lodder illustrates how the modified BwO can "redeploy significance to its own ends" (200) through tattoos, often falsely understood as signs inscribed with a fixed meaning. Yet if we grant that signification is also dependent on the decipherer, and that the 'meaning' of a tattoo may change for its bearer throughout a lifetime, then the modified body remains "disarticulate whilst appearing articulate" (200). Finally, if "desiring-production requires an orderly subject, whose subjectivity is clear and bounded" (201), Lodder offers the practice of flesh-hook suspension as an example of how a bodily experience may alter the consciousness. Lodder posits the modified BwO as a somatechnology in itself, and suggests that while the power structures that govern us are inescapable, resistance stems from their 'wilful perversion'.

Yet other somatechnologies can function as both constraining and liberating. In "Asian Sex Workers in Australia: Somatechnologies of trafficking and Queer Mobilities" Audrey Yue recounts the history of Australia's heteronormative and family-oriented immigration laws, showing how the category of (illegal) Asian sex worker materialises through anti-trafficking and prostitution control policies, only to be regulated and excluded by virtue of these very same policies. Yet there is hope: Yue demonstrates how such migrants may turn the situation to their advantage, whereby "the somatechnologies of trafficking are also the trajectories

of queer mobility" (66). One liberating 'counter-strategy' consists of 'unlocking'. In the Australian documentary *Trafficked*, this means not only uncovering the past of *Puangthong Simaplee*, an illegal Thai sex worker who died while in custody at an Australian detention centre, and who had claimed to be trafficked into Australia as a twelve-year-old, when in fact she had arrived on a false passport at the age of twenty-one. It also refers to finding out *why* she had constructed such an identity for herself. Unlocking exposes Simaplee's "tactic of queer mobility" (76): in appropriating the conventional rhetoric of sex trafficking Simaplee self-presents as the stereotypical victim in order to bring about lighter consequences.

Moving from filmic to textual analysis, Elizabeth Stephens' account usefully illustrates how somatechnologies are always historically and culturally specific. In comparing one early modern (1650) and one postmodern (2002) text on body modification/transformation, Stephens, like Yue, investigates both the limitations and the opportunities they afford. John Bulwer's *Anthropometamorphosis*, the "first cross-cultural history of body modification" (172), was written during a paradigm shift in thinking about bodily change. In the face of the emerging humanist notion of the autonomous, rational subject, personally accountable for deliberate acts of bodily tampering, Bulwer condemns such practices as piercing, branding and scarring, viewing these as culturally degenerative and signalling a return to primitivity. Self-formation for Bulwer equates to deformity or disfigurement, as it diverges from the 'natural' state of the body, thus render the body 'monstrous'. In Rosi Braidotti's *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, these monster-making technologies are embraced. According to Stephens, both texts view self-making as political resistance, and Braidotti's critique of the humanist ideal reinterprets the monster "as a potential site of positive difference" (179) due to its resistance to culture's normalising effects. Braidotti's queer *posthuman* bodies are somatechnical 'becoming-machines,' with promising opportunities for cultural change.

This thought-provoking volume will leave any reader pondering their own embodied being in the world. Both the introduction and each of the individual chapters clearly explain the concept of somatechnics itself. Yet, while adding to the collection's comprehensive nature, the inclusion of such diverse research areas means that the reader would benefit from prior knowledge in numerous individual fields. Lacking this, all contributions reward a repeat reading.

### **Author Note**

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