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Alternative stories about race, gender and interracial intimacies at the turn of the twentieth century

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Based on empirical material from Danish exhibitions of so-called exotic people in which people of color were exhibited as mass entertainment at the turn of the twentieth century, the article aims at nuancing established scholarly understandings of interracial relationships and Asian masculinity. As the analysis of the empirical material does not follow the expected path of racial, gender and sexuality constructions established by post-colonial scholars, the article discusses if we as researchers have become blind towards alternative versions of interracial engagements. Based on Spivak's famous question 'Can the subaltern speak?', the article asks, 'Can the non-subaltern researcher listen?' The article tries to provide alternative ways of listening by supplementing written sources by photographs. Using these sources, the article explores how interracial relationships between white women and Asian men were not necessarily condemned, as generally argued, as well as how Asian men, also contrary to general scholarly belief, were constructed as hyper masculine and sexually attractive to white heterosexual women.

Keywords: History, gender, race, sexuality, photography.

Introduction

In most European cities, a large number of exhibitions of so-called exotic people took place from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Here women, men and children, often from African and Asian countries, were on display as entertainment and education for 'ordinary' European spectators. While research has been carried out on the exhibitions taking place in the major European cities (Paris, London, Hamburg) (Blanchard, 2009; Poignant, 2004; Lindfors, 1999; Coombes, 1994; Rothfels, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001) as well as on the world fairs

which also hosted exhibitions of 'exotic' people (Brenna, 1999; Greenhalgh 1988), only very limited research has been done on the exhibitions in Europe's periphery (Andreassen, 2003; Andreassen & Folke Henningsen, 2011; Schou, 1987). One of those peripheries is Northern Europe, with Denmark hosting a large number of exhibitions between the 1870s and the 1910s. Many of these exhibitions were hosted by the Copenhagen Zoological Garden and the amusement park Tivoli. In a previously unknown archive in the Copenhagen Zoological Garden, I have discovered a vast amount of sources from the Danish exhibitions; letters, posters, photographs, contracts, performance schedules, etc. This empirical material provides valuable information about the Danish exhibitions and the racial and gendered constructions which accompanied them. Besides the empirical material from the Zoo archive, I have analyzed approximately 150 articles about the exhibitions from newspapers, catalogues and advertisements. The material discloses a series of romantic and sexual relationships between the men on display and the local female audience. Drawing upon this archival material, I aim at filling parts of the scholarly lacuna in this area, but more importantly this material has forced me to challenge and re-think some of the established academic insights on race and interracial intimacies.

For a number of years, I have been inspired by post-colonial and critical race theory scholars (among others Said, 1978/1995; Eng, 2001; Young, 1995; McClintock, 1995; Stoler, 1996) in my work and thinking. As I began my work with the archival material, I approached the empirical sources with these theoretical insights in my mind. But to my surprise, the material did not follow the paths laid down by this post-colonial thinking; rather, the material, and especially the material about the interracial relationships, challenged established thinking. In this article, I therefore want to describe and discuss these challenges and take the reader through a process of re-thinking race, gendered raciality, racialised desires and interracial intimacies. I especially examine the interracial relationships, unveiled by the historical sources, and look critically at how they did not always follow established modes of moral as well as gendered and racialised expectations. Furthermore, I explore how Asian masculinity, in these historical sources, is often constructed contrary to scholarly expectations (Eng, 2001), as the Asian men on display appear as hyper-masculine and attractive for heterosexual engagement.

Theoretical approaches and analytical framework

Theoretically, the article builds upon theories of gender and race as social constructions (Butler, 1990/1999) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Furthermore, the article draws upon post-colonial feminist theory and whiteness studies. Post-colonial feminism (Lewis & Mills, 2003) has illustrated how gender, race and power are interconnected and has pointed to the importance of giving voice to people in marginalised positions, whereas whiteness studies (Frankenberg, 1993; Dyer, 1997) have shown how whiteness and privilege continue to be connected and play a central role in processes of power and domination.

In order to approach the historical sources, I try to redevelop the traditional historical method of historical criticism. I analyze the empirical material as historical remains, which, according to the conventional tradition of historical criticism, serve as pieces of information about the past. However, I also see the remains as illustrations of past performances, where certain ideas, ideologies and images of gender, sexuality and race are at play. In other words, I consider the historical remains to be representations by way of which meaning and power are constructed (Hall, 1997/2003). Analytically, I look for ways in which gender, race, sexuality and intimacy are being verbalised and negotiated, as well as where these same categories are being silenced; I also look for where the categories seem to be important, and where they might play less important roles.

A central problem when working with historical sources is the lack of sources from 'ordinary' people. In my research, the absolute majority of sources are produced by white, European, middle-class men. There are very limited, if any, sources from the hands of women and from the people on display. This creates disproportionality, as the information about women and people of color is provided by white men. Spivak has questioned whether the subaltern can speak in her famous article "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988); I want to re-phrase this question and ask whether the non-subaltern researcher can listen? In this article, I aim at showing that we as researchers need to listen to other sources than the obvious written sources from—in my case as in most others—white middle-class men. In order to listen, we might have to struggle to find alternative sources, we might ask different questions, and we might need to use different tools than the ones we use when analyzing more traditional written sources. Spivak has later nuanced her prior position by arguing that we, as researchers and teachers, should not only "be unlearning one's own privilege" but rather be "learning to learn from below" (Spivak, 2009). My aim to listen can be seen as one way of 'learning to learn from below'; however, I would argue that in order to listen we need not simply to learn from below but also to struggle to locate voices from below as well as to re-think our research approaches.

A story about condemnation of interracial encounters

The Danish exhibitions of 'exotic' people were reviewed by contemporary newspapers and magazines, much in the same fashion as film and theater are reviewed today. Often the reviews were accompanied with condemnatory descriptions of how local women became involved with the men on display. An illustrative example is a description from the so-called China exhibition, hosted by the amusement park Tivoli in 1902:

> If one is near Tivoli's Chinese village in the morning hours before it opens, one can see several young ladies and young women outside the locked gate. They communicate with the sons of the East, either in English or by using sign language. Sometimes even kisses are involved. There seems to be a kind of freemasonry among the young women. Here where passions are decisive, they have no secrets for one another; rather, they unite in a

> common adoration of the Chinese, who roll their slanting eyes and become very enthusiastic. This is not much different from what we have seen repeatedly every time a group from distant countries has visited Tivoli. When there is a Bedouin or a Negro in the Danish landscape, a number of girls become unfaithful to the domestic ideals and happily give themselves to the unknown. However, there is one difference from the past. Previously, it was mainly petty girls with open-minded and cosmopolitan views who became voluntary victims of the invasion. This year it seems as though young ladies from high society have also lost their heads along with their hearts. (Moustache, 1902, July 31)

According to the writer, several Danish women forget and betray their national, domestic ideals at the chance of becoming involved with a foreign man. Domestic ideals refer both to the contemporary racial hierarchy where white men were considered superior to men of color and hence more attractive (Young, 1995, p. 92 ff.; McClintock, 1995, p. 36 ff.) and to the contemporary morally correct conduct, according to which white women should be involved with, and reproduce with, white men. In the description, the women are criticised because they are held responsible for the national and racial reproduction. The women's involvement with foreign, non-white men is characterised as an "invasion", indicating that foreign men's involvement with local women's bodies is an invasion on national territory. Feminist scholars have shown how women's bodies mark the border between 'us' and 'them' in national and racialised narratives (Lutz et al., 1995, p. 91); here the border is crossed by the Chinese men's involvement with Danish women.

The phrase about how the "young ladies … [have] lost their heads along with their hearts" indicates that the young women engaging with the Chinese men are interpreted as potentially insane; they have lost their heads (minds). At the same time there is also an indication of genuine sadness in the phrase, as the women have lost their hearts. Losing one's heart can be seen as a melancholy loss; the women's romantic engagement with the—non-white, non-national—Chinese men is a failed romance. Both from an individual perspective and from a national point of view, the newspaper article frames the interracial romances as leading to sadness and loss; the white women are scattering seeds (hearts) on barren ground (non-national men of color).

This newspaper description—with its condemnation—of interracial relationships follows the pattern of European condemnation of interracial relations at the turn of the twentieth century (Young, 1995; McClintock, 1995; Stoler, 1996). Thus, the obvious proceeding would be to interpret this newspaper article as a proof of this discourse. Scholars like Ann Stoler (1996), Anne McClintock (1995) and Robert Young (1995) all did groundbreaking work on race and sexuality in colonial discourses, and their work has since functioned as a basis for the understanding of colonial discourses on race and sexuality. Most importantly in this case, they all show how interracial sexual engagement was condemned, and how race became one of the most—if not the very most—important factor when determining human history and human character from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Among European scientists, there was a general belief that human history and development happened as

linear progression. Different races and people had developed differently and were seen as inhabiting different stages of the common human progressive development. The white European male was considered to have developed the furthest, and he therefore embodied the highest stage of culture and civilisation; all other races were ordered in a racial hierarchy below him (Young, 1995, p. 92 ff.; McClintock, 1995, p. 36 ff.).

Alongside of this racial hierarchy was a strong fear of interracial relations or miscegenation, as it was labeled at the time; i.e. a fear of interracial sexual engagements and interracial reproduction.[1] Interracial reproduction threatened the established racial hierarchy, and racial segregation was a strong means to preserve the hierarchy (Stoler, 1997, p. 199; McClintock, 1995, p. 48; Young, 1995, p. 95). Interracial reproduction was also seen as a threat against European (white) culture. Like the white European race and the European society (civilisation), European culture was also considered globally superior, and other cultures' influence on European culture was believed to potentially contaminate and degenerate it. In European colonies, the colonisers felt a need to protect their domestic spaces and families from potential local contamination (Stoler, 1996), and interracial sexual intimacies were prohibited by law as well as morally prohibited. While Stoler argues that the European colonial fear of 'the other' as well as the fear of potential contamination from non-white colonial subjects were cultural rather than racial fears, Young argues that the fear of 'the other' was mainly racial. I do not want to get into a discussion here about whether the fear of interracial encounters was culturally or racially based, but rather challenge the idea of this fear being widespread.

When I analyze the sources accompanying the Danish exhibitions, I have a number of newspaper articles, like the one about the Chinese exhibition cited above, where interracial romance and sexual encounters are condemned and defined as morally wrong. Another illustration is an article commenting on an exhibition of Abyssinians (Abyssinia was part of contemporary Ethiopia and Eretria), cited below, in 1909. Here the author criticises European women for their lack of moral chastity when foreign men of color visit their city.

> It is a rather sad fact that a certain kind of woman has a peculiar weakness for everything exotic. While the Buffalo Bill Company was in Germany, many thoroughbred Indians [i.e. Native Americans] shared their wigwam with a Berlin woman suffering from an exotic tantrum. Now we see the same phenomenon repeating itself at the Berlin Industrial Fair, with our new black countrymen [from the German colonies in Africa] exhibited in the Colonial section and the Arabs in the Cairo section … Also the Moroccan Arab Company in the Panopticon exerts the same attraction on the female part of the audience … By the way, these women seem to have taken a special fancy to the Japanese. Almost daily, one can witness several of these slanty-eyed sons of "the land of dawn" walking arm in arm with a beautiful girl in Tiergarten [a park in Berlin] … Most of the women—married

[1] I use the term interracial relations instead of the term miscegenation, as I find that the term miscegenation is imbued with ideologies about racial hierarchies as well as negative attitudes towards interracial intimacies.

> and unmarried—are from higher society, and the scandals that these twofold illegitimate relations cause are soon countless in number … Lately, here in Aarhus [Denmark's second-largest city], we have had the opportunity to witness the same kind of "exotic tantrums" among several of our ladies … It is the Abyssinians at the National Exhibition who seem to have completely turned the heads of several women, who spend every chance they get to gather around and rub themselves against the laughing black men … The phenomenon here is the exact same as the above description in the Berliner Tagesblatt. (Kuller hos Damerne, 1909)

Typically for the time, this article, as well as all the other articles, is written by white middle-class men; i.e. the men who are being rejected as romantic and sexual partners. I have not been able to locate any sources from the women who engage in these relationships; neither have I been able to find any sources from the foreign men involved with the local Danish women.

I want to question whether we can interpret contemporary scientific utterances lecturing against interracial encounters and newspaper discourses as representative of a general public discourse? I do not want to argue that this condemnation is not a part of a public discourse, just as I do not want to question whether Stoler, McClintock and Young do locate these discourses in the colonial sources they work with. But I do want to question if we as researchers have become blind towards other less verbalised discourses. Maybe the subaltern (the women and the foreign men) cannot speak because we—as academics who are very preoccupied with words, written texts and verbalised discourses—are not able to locate (their) other, less verbal, discourses.

If I only rely on written sources in my research about interracial intimacies at the turn of the twentieth century, I will conclude, like the scholars before me, that romantic and sexual interracial encounters were morally prohibited, and women engaging in such relations were condemned. However, if I begin looking at different sources, for instance photographs, I am able to draw a different picture of the past, and hence dig out a potentially challenging discourse to the condemnation discourse.

Three couples posing—an alternative story about interracial encounters

For this article, I introduce two photographs which potentially can unveil a different story of interracial intimacy. One photograph which might provide us with another story of attitudes towards racial intimacy is the photograph posted below. It is from the Copenhagen Zoological Garden's so-called Japanese exhibition in 1902.

I have found this photograph (see Figure 1) in the archive of the Copenhagen Zoo. It has not been possible to identify the individuals posing in the photograph, except that the two Japanese men in the photo were part of the group of Japanese on display at the Zoo's Japanese exhibition during the summer of 1902. The six people are positioned as three couples; each woman is holding a bouquet of flowers with both her hands,

making room at her elbow where a man is holding her so they stand arm in arm. The women as well as the white man are nicely dressed, with clothes and accessories indicating their belonging to the middle and upper middle classes; most likely they belong to the Copenhagen bourgeoisie. One of the Japanese men is dressed in traditional Japanese clothing, whereas the other is dressed in pants and a shirt and is barefoot. The three women and the white man might have been visitors to the Japanese exhibition, and they might just have met the two Japanese men during this photo session; they might have been acquaintances or friends; or they might have been three romantic couples.

Figure 1: Couples posing in front of the so-called Japanese village in the Copenhagen Zoo in 1902. The Buddha figure is erected for the exhibition, just as the banana and palm trees are imported for the occasion. The photograph is a stereoscopic photo so popular at the turn of the twentieth century. By taking two photos of the same scenery from two slightly different angles, it was possible to gain a three-dimensional effect when viewing the photo in a stereoscope. Courtesy: Copenhagen Zoo Archive.

In this photo, they pose as couples, and most importantly, they pose as three similar couples. In the photograph there is no difference between the monoracial, white couple to the right and the two mixed-race couples. From this photograph it is not possible to argue that race is important, neither is it possible to locate or detect any condemnation of interracial relations; on the contrary, the photograph seems to embrace such relations. It was rare to have one's photograph taken, and most photographs were explicitly staged at the turn of the century. This photo is no exception; the six people are nicely organised for the photographer, and the scene that the six individuals represent performs respectability and heteronormativity rather than illicit behavior. The photographer is Peter Elfelt, a famous Danish photographer and filmmaker (he made the first Danish moving picture in 1897) who had been appointed Royal Court Photographer (*Kgl. Hoffotograf*) in 1901. It would have been unlikely that he would compromise himself, his career and position by taking photographs of illicit behavior. One could therefore argue that this photograph indicates that certain segments of the population (here parts

of the Copenhagen bourgeoisie and a royal photographer) did not consider interracial engagements morally wrong.

The story of Ingeborg and San—another alternative story about interracial romance

Figure 2: Ingeborg Emilie Danielsen (left) and San Wung-Sung (right) around 1902. The identity of the person in the middle is uncertain, maybe it is the brother of San Wung-Sung. Courtesy of the Wung-Sung family.

Today this photograph (see Figure 2) belongs to Jesper Wung-Sung, the great grandchild of San Wung-Sung (born in Canton (Guangzhou), China, in 1883) and Ingeborg Emilie Danielsen (born in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1883). According to Jesper Wung-Sung (interview January 10, 2011), San Wung-Sung and his brother came to Copenhagen in 1902, where they performed at Tivoli's Chinese exhibition, and during the summer of 1902 San met Ingeborg Danielsen, a young working-class woman. Despite their communication problems (she spoke only Danish, and he knew only a little

English) and her family's initial opposition towards the relationship, the young lovers insisted on their relationship and love. When the Chinese exhibition ended, they eloped. They left Copenhagen and settled in the small Danish rural town of Frederikshavn where they married a few years later. One of the marriage witnesses was Th. Danielsen, most likely Ingeborg Danielsen's father, so the young couple did receive her family's blessings after their runaway. When I look at the photograph of San and Ingeborg, inserted above, I do not see individuals hunted by moral condemnation. I see three young people, a white woman and two Asian men, dressed up for an occasion—possibly the occasion of having their photograph taken, which was rather unusual at the time. I see two men as the Wung-Sung family believes that the person in the middle might be the brother of San Wung-Sung, who was also at display in Tivoli in 1902. However, it might be a woman, as the floral brooch on the center of her(his) hat indicates feminine status; Ingeborg is wearing a similar brooch on her hat, whereas San is wearing a knot, indicating male status, on his hat. Judith Butler has argued how gender is a performative act: "Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1990/1999, p. 43 f.).

Photographs can similarly be viewed in this social constructionist frame, as they can be seen as performances; they perform gender, sexuality, race, and the other categories through the stylisation of the bodies they portray. In this photograph, the three figures can be interpreted as portraying, performing and hence constructing certain forms of masculinity, femininity and racial constructions. In the photograph of Ingeborg and San, all three individuals are dressed in traditional Chinese clothes, indicating an acceptance of Chinese culture rather than a view of culture where Chinese culture is seen as inferior to a white Danish / European culture. Both Ingeborg and San look as if they are about to smile, even if they are trying to pose serious, as was the ideal photographic look at the time. Importantly, the figures are positioned at the same table, Ingeborg's and San's arms mirror each other and they appear as each other's equal. Hence, while gender is indicated and performed via their clothing, there is no explicitly staged gender hierarchy by portraying the male standing and the female sitting, as some family photographs did at this time. Similarly, there is no explicit staging (or performance) of racial hierarchies; in this photograph, neither distinctions nor hierarchies related to gender or race seem to play dominant roles.

Mica Nava has argued that young, white, British women's involvement with non-white foreign men (most often black Americans) should be interpreted as "a viscerally experienced, domestically located and gendered cosmopolitanism" (Nava, 2006, p. 62). She interprets interracial romances as expressions of cosmopolitanism and sees interracial intimacies as signs of emotional cosmopolitanism (p. 66). Ingeborg's relationship with San, visualised in the photograph, could be interpreted as such. Ingeborg's love towards San, and her physical sexual relationship with him, indicate her openness towards diversity and foreignness, and her dressing up in Chinese clothing signals an embracing of 'the other' and the other's culture. However, one could also argue, in contrast with Nava, that this

openness was guided by orientalist exoticism. Engaging in a relationship with one Chinese individual might not signal a general openness towards diversity but could just as well be an expression of an attraction (or even fetish) towards Asian men as exotic.

Furthermore, it could be argued that white, European women's engagement with foreign men of color was an act of rebellion at the turn of the twentieth century. At the time, there were strong gendered and racial expectations towards the women, as illustrated by the newspapers' condemnation when these expectations were not met. By forming relationships with foreign men, and especially with men of color—and hence refusing the national, white men—the women might have been able to resist the racial and gendered expectations imposed upon them by society and hence by these national, white men. Furthermore, engaging in relations with foreign men might have been sexually liberating; maybe it was possible for the women to behave more freely instead of having to follow a morally strict script about women's passive sexuality. Interracial intimacy might have been a tool to escape the strict gender and sexual regimes of the time. Today, we cannot know this, but just because we as researchers do not have any written evidence from these women, we should not interpret them as (only) being passive, oppressed and condemned.

Different discourses at play simultaneously

These two photographs enable a different view of interracial encounters. I would argue that there seems to have been several discourses at play simultaneously at the turn of the century. There was the well-documented, scientific discourse which condemned interracial relations and women engaging in such relations. This discourse found expression in, among others, the newspapers, where white male journalists discredited European women for engaging in interracial relationships. Parallel to this discourse, there seems to have been other discourses influencing daily life in Copenhagen which allowed women to engage with, date, and finally marry foreign men of color.

As a researcher aiming at uncovering the past, one repeatedly experiences that the subaltern does not speak. But this does not necessarily mean that the subaltern *cannot* speak; rather, it may merely suggest that we are bad listeners. The problem with our lack of listening is not only that we risk creating a rigid image without nuances of the past, but also that we keep repeating a patriarchal and racist discourse. It is our task, as non-racist researchers, not simply to describe the past's racism and sexism, but also to illustrate, if possible, how that racism and sexism were challenged and resisted at the time.

Asian masculinity

Asian men have often been constructed as feminine and sexually inferior compared to white European and white Northern American men during the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Eng, 2001; Fung, 1999; Lee, 1999). But this does not seem to be the case if looking at masculinity construction at the Danish exhibitions of Chinese and Japanese men. The many relationships between the Chinese men and the local Danish women which accompanied the Chinese exhibition in 1902, and especially the criticism of these relationships which emphasises how attracted the women are to the Chinese men, actually make the Chinese men appear as sexually attractive to (white) heterosexual women. An article with the aim of criticizing interracial relationships nevertheless portrays an image of Chinese men as attractive to Danish women.

> As many of Tivoli's Chinese are being influenced by Danish culture, the male members of the [Chinese] troupe acquire small notebooks in which they write the names of their admirers and their favorite rhymes. However, their scribbling is not always limited to this, sometimes they also write the time and place for a rendezvous, and yesterday even for an abduction. … At a quarter past midnight, three Chinese climbed the fence … but they were heartily welcomed by two of Tivoli's guards [who held them back]. Meanwhile there was a hansom with three nice English-speaking young ladies waiting in Bernstorffsgade [the street name where Tivoli is situated]. … Finally, the hansom left, and the Chinese returned to the Chinese village. (Teater og Tribune, 1902)

Here the Danish women are presented as so eager to meet and engage with the Chinese men that they are willing to break the law and try to 'abduct' the men, and the men appear energetic as they climb the fence and try to escape the exhibition ground in order to unite with their Danish girlfriends.

During the Chinese exhibitions, there were articles which directly aimed at discouraging Danish women from getting involved with the Chinese. The discouragement was framed via descriptions of the Chinese men as having very different habits, as illustrated below:

> The Chinese [men] want money in order to treat the ladies who come to visit them to Swedish soda pop. The other day, a salesgirl was served a barbecued rat tail, which made her so uncomfortable that she ended her relationship with Tjen-Tjim. (Kineser-Oprøret, 1902)

Or the discouragement stemmed from presenting the Chinese men as polygamous; the discouragement did not take place via representations of the Chinese as feminine or sexually inferior:

> [The newspaper reporter is talking to one of the Chinese men from the Chinese exhibition] He showed us his little collection of Danish portraits, among which there was also a picture of the above-mentioned girl. Furthermore, he showed us a little note, on which the girl had provided him with information about how long it would take him to reach her home, and how much he would have to pay for the train ticket. 'She wants to marry me!', he said. 'I already have a couple of wives, so she would be number three. And I like her.' We [the newspaper] have told this story because we find it interesting in itself. But we have also told it to give pretty girls, who might want to enlarge the Chinese beauty collection, but who really should rather not. (Moustache, 1902, July 31)

These warnings against dating the Chinese men on display do not provide the reader with an impression of the Chinese men as being less masculine than the Danish men. On the contrary, the much-courted Chinese man with many relationships and three wives comes across as hyper masculine and hyper-sexualised.

I have only been able to find one article (out of dozens of articles about Asian men on display) which feminises the Asian men. This article provides a general description of the Chinese exhibition, and a small part of this description is about one of the Chinese men, Tjan-Thi, who is dressed up as a woman.

> Tjan-Thi is stomping around with a woman's gestures and poses like a female comedian. (Moustache, 1902, June 28)

Here the traditional feminisation of Asian men takes place. Importantly, however, this feminisation is presented as an enactment; the Chinese man is posing as a female comedian. He is not presented as 'naturally' feminine. These findings challenge previous scholarship on racialised masculinity, or at least calls for a nuancing of previous understandings of racialised gender constructions and racialised sexuality. The tradition of viewing 'the Orient' as feminine was established with Edward Said's analyses of how the Orient was framed as feminine while the Occident was masculine (Said, 1978/1995); a tradition which has been developed by analyses of the Western feminising of Asian-American men (Eng, 2001; Fung, 1999; Marchetti, 1993). Eng argues—in his analysis of Asian masculinity in North American cultural representations—that "the feminization of the Asian American male in the U.S. cultural imaginary typically results in his figuration as feminized, emasculated, or homosexualized" (Eng, 2001, p. 16). As shown above, the Asian men on Danish display were not feminised, de-sexualised or homosexualised; rather, they appeared as masculine and sexually attractive to white, heterosexual women. My aim here is not to discredit Eng's findings but to warn against imposing the established image of Asian men as castrated on all Western empirical material, and I believe that my material might be representative of most of Europe; not just the European periphery of Denmark. One central difference between Eng's analysis and mine is that the Asian men in my material are often described and represented via their relations to women, whereas the Asian men in Eng's material are often represented as physically isolated from women (Eng, 2001, p. 17 f.). This calls for a special attention toward the local context.

In order to listen to the subaltern voice it might be of great importance to pay attention to time, space and place. Racial formations and constructions take local nuances, and local populations make different meanings of race and racial hierarchies. My empirical material, incl. the photographs, is from a period of history marked by a series of social changes. The racial formations illuminated in this article—Asian men being hyper-masculine and interracial relationships taking place between white women and Asian men—might not testify to a general Danish national construction but rather to a more locally situated formation in the city of Copenhagen. During

these years, the city of Copenhagen witnessed extensive migration of single women from the countryside to the city. Here the women formed a new workforce and challenged the landscape of the city's everyday life. These women increasingly organised, forming labour unions and demanding the right to vote. It is possible that a number of women chose to follow their hearts rather than the public moral code, and that this choice was made possible by the many changes witnessed in the city of Copenhagen.

Conclusion

This article nuances established scholarly views on race, gender and sexuality. Based on empirical findings from the turn of the twentieth century, the article discusses interracial romances and illustrates how interracial romance and sexual encounters were not always condemned. Similarly, it analyzes the constructions of Asian masculinity that accompanied the exhibitions of Chinese and Japanese people, and shows that these Asian men were not feminised but rather appeared as masculine and sexually attractive to white women. The article advocates in favour of supplementing written historical sources by visual material, as this might supply the researcher with alternative stories. The article also questions if we, as middle-class researchers preoccupied with written and verbalised words, become blind (deaf) towards the voices (stories) of 'ordinary' people (the subaltern) who do not leave any written or verbal material behind. In order to overcome this blindness / deafness which runs the risk of reproducing patriarchal and racist discourse, the article argues in favour of using visual sources and analysing these as performances, as well as to pay special attention to the local context in which the analysed racial formations take place. This will not completely remedy the lack of voices from subaltern people, but it might provide us with more nuances and more alternative stories in the field of race, gender, sexuality and interracial intimacies.

Author Note

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Waging a War of Terror: Invasion, Surveillance and Desire in Robert Drewe's *Grace*

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The decade long "war on terror" is laden with accounts where hegemony has been inscribed on to human bodies. This paper aims to draw attention to a theme that resonates throughout these narratives: the desire to control women's bodies. While War on Terror discourse imagines the Muslim female body to be oppressed and in need of emancipation, conversely the Western female body has been appropriated as a signifier of freedom and sexual liberation, while paradoxically constrained under the rubric of "family values". Viewed through this lens all female bodies are therefore perceived as sites that must be liberated protected, policed and controlled. This paper will argue that Robert Drewe's post-9/11 novel Grace (2006) explores issues of male surveillance and control of the Western female body though the depiction of the relentless stalking of its female protagonist. Grace's politically gendered body becomes metonym of a post-9/11 Australia—increasingly concerned about its borders and security, whilst steeped in a violent history of colonial oppression. This paper will argue that her body refuses the reductive binaries inherent in "war on terror" discourse and instead becomes an anxious site of multiple conflicts, both sexual prey as woman and sexual predator as white and where white paternalism is juxtaposed with the fear of alien penetration.

Keywords: War on Terror, whiteness, feminism, Australian fiction, post 9/11 fiction, surveillance

Introduction

> "The woman's body is the contested ideological battleground, overburdened and saturated with meaning"—*Dianna Fuss*

It has now been over a decade since the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11th 2001. Colloquially referred to as 9/11, this event became the catalyst for the global spectacle that has become known as the War on Terror. Forceful and unrelentingly, War on Terror discourse has been disseminated worldwide, through multiple conduits, impacting on our material existence to such an extent that it has attained the significance of metanarrative (Baker, 2006, p. 45). It is not a war on *terrorism* as such—which seen as an event or act has the potential to be contained—but rather a war on *terror*—which is a state of mind so pervasive that it escapes temporal and geographical boundaries, underpinning the way we frame our everyday lives. While the War on Terror is laden with accounts where hegemony has been inscribed onto human bodies this paper aims to draw attention to one theme that resonates throughout these narratives: the desire to control women's bodies. While War on Terror discourse imagines the Muslim female body to be oppressed and in need of emancipation, conversely the Western female body has been appropriated as a signifier of freedom and sexual liberation, while paradoxically constrained under the rubric of "family values". Viewed through this lens all female bodies are therefore perceived as sites that must be liberated protected, policed and controlled. By investigating the way in which women's bodies are presented and circulated within the particular formations of gender, race, sexuality, and nationhood that are bought into play in War on Terror discourse this article offers a crucial insight into the complex and challenging corporeal existence of Western women, with a focus on Australia, during the decade following 9/11.

Despite its geographical dislocation Australia has been implicated as a player in the global spectacle of the War on Terror. As a member of the "coalition of the willing" Australia's active participation has included the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, along with the introduction of fifty-four anti-terror laws, surpassing similar laws enacted in the U.S. (Farouque, 2012).[1] In light of heightened national anxieties regarding race, sexuality and territory, the then Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard, was quick to echo the U.S. Bush administration's rhetoric surrounding women. Given that women's bodies literally wear their culture—be it mini-skirt or burqa—women's bodies were once again appropriated as territorial symbols of redrawn and reconfigured national boundaries and notions of sovereignty while simultaneously being co-opted by transnational alliances where their bodies become symbols of globally shared cultural values.

Robert Drewe's literary post-9/11 novel *Grace* (2005) explores contemporary issues of male surveillance and control of Western female bodies though the depiction of the relentless stalking of its protagonist. *Grace* offers a destabilising counter-narrative to current hegemonic

[1] The term "coalition of the willing" is a post-1990 political phrase used to collectively describe participants in military interventions for which the United Nations Security Council cannot agree to mount a full UN peacekeeping operation. The U.S. Bush administration used the term "coalition of the willing" to refer to the countries who supported, militarily or verbally, the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent military presence in post-invasion Iraq.

readings of national identity that imagine that Australian values are synonymous with female freedom and demonstrates an ability to generate critical insight into the anxieties that have gripped the nation over the past decade (Schwarz, 2007, p. 13).

This article takes a discursive interdisciplinary approach drawn from literary studies, cultural studies, critical race and whiteness studies and women's studies and therefore maintains that culture and ideology is continuously articulated through symbolic forms like literature and that literary representation is thus intrinsically tied to social context. To begin the discussion, this article will open up a space for rethinking the scope by which the War on Terror is generally defined in order to draw out its more implicit agendas. The discussion will then turn to a critique of the way War on Terror discourse appropriates feminist sounding rhetoric of 'freedom for women' while simultaneously working to control women via a return to 'family values' discourse. It will then move onto a discussion of women's bodies in relation to territory arguing that the feminisation of the national space allows for female bodies to be viewed as sites for colonization and invasion that can be both "penetrated" and "policed" (Grosz, 1994, p. 79). A feminist reading of the novel *Grace* will then demonstrate how the Western female body of the protagonist is viewed as an unstable territory, a "volatile" (p. 78) site of sexuality that must be protected, monitored and controlled. Finally, it will employ the novel *Grace* to demonstrate the racialised gender dimensions of the War on Terror. Located at intersection of sex, race and gender Grace's sexual encounter with an escaped young Muslim asylum seeker powerfully expresses how white Australian women become complicit in racial hierarchies of power. By elaborating on the racialised gender discourses of the War on Terror this article proposes that the fictional text *Grace* can be appropriated as a means to unravel how the ambivalence of national discourses of citizenship and belonging are mapped onto the female body.

Terror on Three Fronts

In order to critique War on Terror race and gender discourse it is useful to interrogate how we define it. The War on Terror is generally considered as a series of frontline military interventions aimed at stopping global terrorism.[2] U.S. plans for this 'war' initially focused on military action such as the invasion of Afghanistan. However, the military component of the War on Terror "is just one aspect in this endeavour, which also involves diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement, and financial efforts intended to defeat terrorists around the world" (Feickert, 2005, p. 1). Over the last half century it has also become increasingly popular to expand the

[2] It took less than twelve hours after the 9/11 attacks for U.S. president George W. Bush to declare the start of the global War on Terror. In a special address to the joint session of congress and the American people President Bush asserted: "The War on Terror begins with Al Qaida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated" (Sept 20, 2001) George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint session of Congress and the American People.

meaning of the term 'war' from conventional armed conflicts to include metaphorical campaigns against social ills.[3] In the context of the War on Terror this metaphor is particularly useful because it sets up two distinct sides- good and evil—as well as distinguishing it from conventional wars since it does not have a clear end (Hoffman, 2006, p. 23). In *Dangerous Brown Men: Exploiting Sex, Violence and Feminism in the War on Terror*, Gargi Bhattacharyya argues that "[t]he War on Terror is not only a series of military interventions and transnational security measures: it also entails a cultural project that seeks to remake the terms of belonging, legality and otherness" (2008, p. 24). Thinking about the War on Terror in this light enables an understanding of the various locations on which its battles take place: firstly, as a series of frontline armed conflicts, secondly, on a national level through the promotion of ideals of citizenship as a means of domestic containment and control, and thirdly, on a global scale that acts to draw a metaphorical battleline in which sections of the world were cast as either pro-freedom or pro-terror.[4]

The Battleground of Women's bodies

One of features of the rhetoric surrounding the War on Terror has been its very particular focus on women's bodies. As noted by feminists around the world, in the period following the 9/11 attacks, there was a manifest escalation in discourses regarding freedom with a particular emphasis on the emancipation of women (Eisenstein, 2002, p. 80; Hawkesworth, 2008, p. 5; Hunt, 2006, p. 52; Mohanty, 2008, p. 3; Steans, 2008, p. 160). One of the key features of this new gender politics was the hijacking of female rights and the use of 'freedom for women' rhetoric to justify the War on Terror. The tenuous link this discourse drew between the fight against terrorism and a battle for the rights and dignity of women functioned as an essential prop to shore up support of the War on Terror. The 'us verses them' polarity between the West and the Islamic world, as outlined by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), was (re)constructed and (re)enforced. The 'war' came to be perceived as a 'civilising rescue mission' with the West acting as the heroic savours of women, battling the brutal and barbaric forces of Islam in the East.

However, the 'freedom for women' rhetoric was far from feminist because, as Ferguson and Marso rightly point out, it was "grounded in a conservative binary gender ideology, which characterises men as

[3] For example in 1964 U.S. President Johnson declared an "unconditional war on poverty", in 1971 President Nixon declared a war on drugs, there have also been metaphoric wars on crime, cancer, illiteracy and obesity etc. Joy Melody Kramer, 'War on (Insert Here)', (NPR : National Public Radio : News & Analysis, World, US, Music 2006).

[4] President George W. Bush was quick to enlist the 'free' world to his cause. "They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other … These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life … this is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom" (Sept 20, 2001).

dominant, masculine protectors and women as submissive, vulnerable, and lacking in political agency" (2007, p. 5). Behind the façade of protection, military action (re)activated historically embedded colonial practices, signalling a return to discourses that supported white male domination and of female vulnerability, inadequacy and inferiority. Familiar forms of colonial violence and biopolitical exclusion were justified within a "rhetorical embrace of gender equality, multicultural coexistence and personal liberty" (Mohanty, 2008, p. 3). The West was portrayed a place where autonomy, freedom and tolerance underpins society and where equal rights had been granted to women by "enlightened men" (Steans, 2008, p. 164).

While the utilisation of women's bodies in war narratives is not unique to the War on Terror, it is the appropriation of feminism by right-wing governments—who are traditionally opposed to women's rights—that sets it apart (Hawkesworth, 2007, p. 27; Hunt, 2006, p. 57). Prior to the events of 9/11, the Bush administration in the U.S., along with other Western right-wing governments, were elected on platforms underpinned by a return to 'traditional family values'.[5] Neo-conservative groups that supported these governments actively fought to roll back women's rights around the world, including access to abortion and birth control and equality in the workplace (such a maternity leave and equal pay) and promoted neo-conservative values about sex and sexuality in an effort to control 'liberated' women.[6] In an Australian context, during his time as Prime Minister, John Howard's 'family values' emphasised the traditional roles of male 'breadwinner' and female 'homemaker' which found clear expression in social policy.[7]

Therefore, although War on Terror discourse necessitated Western women's bodies have the appearance of a certain type of freedom- this freedom was in fact conflicted and contingent on conformity to gender specific modes of behaviour. Within these competing expectations Western women were positioned on the geopolitical stage not as actors in their own right but as discursive representations of modernity, and neoliberal freedom: created through "insistent repetition of ideas about

[5] Bloodsworth-Lugo & Lugo-Lugo note that in the aftermath of 9/11 then U.S. President George W. Bush repeatedly articulated family values as a signifer of patriotism which acted to position homosexuality and "other" sexual behaviour as un-American (2010, p. 9). See also Pugliese's article "Abu Ghraib and its shadow archives" on the demonization of Arab men by visual "transgendering" of their bodies in photos taken at the U.S. containment facility Abu Ghraib (2007, p. 248).
[6] For further discussion of influence of neo-conservative lobby groups on U.S. social policy see Dorothy Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalising Family Values* (*2003).*
[7] For example in Australia the Liberal government under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard "Family Values" rhetoric was combined with the implementation of social policy such as the Baby Bonus that effectively encouraged families to have children by means of a $3000 financial incentive and the Parenting Allowance that paid parents (most usually mothers) who chose to stay home to care for their children rather than participate in the workforce (Randell-Moon, 2007, p. 38). Tiat and Bennett observe the "Howard years" were marked by the overt employment of political rhetoric such as "ordinary Australians" and "working families" (2008, p. 33).

bodies, sexuality, gender, race and entitlement" (Eisenstein, 2004, p. 24). The appropriation of the feminist goals of freedom and emancipation for women, as framed within War on Terror discourse, was far from feminist. It required that women's bodies be protected, scrutinised, defended and kept under surveillance by men. In a strategic move, Western governments captured women's bodies, on both sides of the East/West divide, positioning them as "ideological battlegrounds" over which War on Terror discourse was then fought (Fuss, 1995, p. 27).

Terror(torialised) Bodies

Robert Drewe's 2005 novel *Grace* traverses the entire continent and some 80,000 years of history while holding a mirror to contemporary Australia. *Grace* interrogates how, via the cultural project of the War on Terror, women's bodies became markers of preferred citizenship and as such become territorial sites of surveillance. Drewe is an award-winning journalist turned novelist, known mostly for his novel *The Bodysurfers* (2001), as well as his prize-winning memoir, *The Shark Net* (2003). His sixth novel *Grace* looks contemporary Australia "directly in the face" (Marr, 2003, p. 3) addressing a diverse range of issues firmly located in the post 9/11 Australian imaginary. The broad sweeping novel not only tackles national anxieties regarding British colonisation, Indigenous cultural appropriation, the city/country divide, refugees and asylum seekers, and government regulation impinging on personal liberties but also seeks to address global unease regarding internet pornography, capitalist consumption and environmental concerns as experienced on a national level. *Grace* was written at a particular moment in Australian history—at the height of the 'Howard Years' (1996-2007)—a time when a cohesive collective Australian identity appeared to face attacks on multiple fronts.[8] During this time the 'History Wars' had been somewhat successful in destabilising the defensive stories of our nation's history that shored up somewhat tenuous claims to nationhood and belonging.[9] However, John Howard claimed victory in the Culture Wars, rejecting the political correctness of the Keating era, sceptical of what he saw as the excesses of multiculturalism, and critical of the "black armband" view of white Australia's relationship with Indigenous Australians (Gratton, 2006). Fed by global fear of terrorism after the attacks of 9/11, localised racial tensions escalated to boiling point and political rhetoric was dominated by an invigoration of "Australian Values" that were seen to be superior to

[8] From 1996-2007 John Howard's Australian Prime Ministership was a period characterised by social conservatisms manifest in racially discriminatory mechanisms of power made visible through changes to the immigration policy, a clamp down on asylum seekers, participation in the War and Terror, and downturn in Aboriginal relations culminating with the Northern Territory Emergency Response. This intensely problematic period in Australian history was one marked by moral panic and deeply parochial neo-colonialism.

[9] The History Wars was a debate over the accuracy of dominant versions of the history of British colonisation of Australia and the effects and responses of the Indigenous Aboriginal nations of Australia including acts of massacre and genocide and Aboriginal resistance. It sparked an examination of western methodologies that favoured historical documentary evidence over Aboriginal oral histories.

those deemed 'un-Australian'.[10] While not directly about the events of 9/11, *Grace* emerges at point in Australian history where national anxieties combined with the effects of global War on Terror impacted on national insularity to such an extent that, as Bhattacharyya suggests, the terms "belonging, legality and otherness" were remade (2008, p. 7).

The overriding theme of this novel is one of incursion of territory on multiple levels: personally, locally and globally. Drewe himself said that, "This is a novel about territory—having or not having your own, and invading others' territory" (Koval, 2005). Female protagonist, Grace Malloy, has spent the last three years living in fear. The novel follows Grace in her efforts to escape from an obsessed erotomaniac who incessantly invades her professional and personal territory. In an attempt to reclaim her life she abandons the city and her high profile job as a film reviewer and flees to the Kimberley in Western Australia where survival and territory have much wider implications. Her encounter with an escaped teenage detainee in a remote swamp off the far north/western coastline engages with War on Terror anxieties regarding race and border security, as reflected on a national level. The novel sketches Australia as country founded by invasion and migration and draws comparisons between the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers entering the country by boat and the multiple surges of migration that preceded them in order to explore the current unease.

In Drewe's novel the politically gendered body of Grace can read as allegorical of a post-9/11 Australia, "increasingly concerned about its borders and security" (Gelder & Salzman, 2009, p. 49) whilst paradoxically steeped in a violent history of colonial oppression and invasion. Historically women's bodies have operated as representations of nations—in that they embody national expectations, desires and anxieties. Nira Yuval-Davis posits in *Gender and Nation* (1997) that it is "women who reproduce nations biologically, culturally and symbolically" (1997, p. 2). Mapping the intersection of gender and nation she notes: nations are historical and constructed by different nationalist discourse and therefore women can also be understood with that context (p. 4). The construction of nations through its culture and citizenship as well as conflicts and wars, is achieved through the material and metaphorical use of women's bodies. Women's bodies then become markers for the construction and maintenance of what Benedict Anderson calls "imagined communities" (1983). The representation of 'woman as the nation' creates a framework of imagination where women's bodies appear literally as a map of the nation (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 47).[11] In *The Terror Dream* (2007) Susan Faudi

[10] Most notable was the 2005 Cronulla race riots in which over 5000 people assembled on Cronulla beach to protest the presence of Lebanese 'gangs' on what was marked as 'Aussies only' territory. For a full discussion on the riots see Gregory Noble (2009) *Lines in the Sand: The Cronulla Riots, Multiculturalism and National Belonging*.

[11] Traditionally women's bodies have appeared as iconic symbols of territory, globally as 'Mother Earth' and nationally as symbols of countries; for example, in the U.S. the female figure of the Statue of Liberty acts a cultural symbol of the nation and has historically marked a memorable entry point into the national

forcefully argues that the War on Terror was to a large part dominated by discourses that (re)produced certain types of active masculinities juxtaposed with passive femininities. Spatial connection was drawn between the female body and the territorial vulnerability of the national landmass that must be protected by the hyper-masculine figure of the solider as part of a global cultural hegemony, which became embedded into our everyday lives, experiences, and practices (Faludi, 2007, p. 9).

In Australia, gender has also been influential in the development of the archetypical Australian identity as white and male while also working to configure the nation as feminine. Graham Huggan argues that the kind of self-mythologising story-telling that invokes "national specificity" remains a feature of Australian literature and such literature has been foundational in the creation and preservation of what he terms the "Australian Legend" (2007, p. 1,55). Bound up in myths of mateship, triumph over the harsh and unforgiving landscape, and the quest for belonging, the "Australian Legend" has been instrumental in both defining and constructing our collective national identity as white, Anglo and male (Elder, 2007, pp. 6-8). On the other hand, the notion of a feminised nation has been mapped through literary tropes of the outback as *maîtresse,* a harsh, unforgiving, brooding and relentless environment, against which the masculine figure of the "Australian Legend" is measured. Both vulnerable and hostile, a woman's body has become a metaphor to signify the weak and terrible aspects of both the Australian landscape and nation. Kay Schaffer observes that the feminised "Australian landscape in the nationalist tradition is … a loathed and feared plain of exile, which threatens madness and defeat" (1988, p. 22). Throughout colonial occupation the feminised nation of Australia has been portrayed as vulnerable to invasion from the non-white other and therefore in need of protection from the masculine figure such as the "Australian Legend" (Elder, 2007, p. 120). In order to legitimate colonisation, mythologies of *terra nullius* imagined Australia as a landmass void of people and culture, a virginal sleeping beauty waiting to be woken by the white man's kiss.

In the same way that the female body, as a national space, becomes a site for colonization and invasion by the desiring masculine gaze, the particular stories of the protagonist in Robert Drewe's *Grace* become a much larger chronicle of the Australian nation. As suggested by Gelder & Salzman, throughout the novel the reader is continually invited to "think historically in order to make sense of the present" (2009, p. 38). To achieve this, the narrative continually shifts temporal planes and parallels the dreamtime with the contemporary: ironically interplaying two 'modern women', a prehistoric Grace with her contemporary counterpart. The novel's namesake, Grace, is the daughter of anthropologist, John Molloy, whose primary claim to fame is his "accidental" (Drewe, 2005, p. 97)[12] finding of

space, as well as the maternal descriptions of countries, such as Britain being Mother England.

[12] All future references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as a page number.

an 80,000-year-old skeleton in Western Australia.[13] Due to her "unexpected", civilising and "gracile" (pp. 104-5) form, John names the skeleton—and in later years also bizarrely names his daughter—"Grace". The frail and ancient skeleton who is deemed to have died as a young woman "in her late teens or early twenties" (p. 101) is "built like a ballerina" (p. 101) reminding John of a "wigless and frayed bride doll" (p. 101) from his childhood. Under the close scrutiny of the Malloy's modern male scientific-eye the skeleton is dubbed "*Salt End Woman. The First Modern Woman"* (p. 97). Despite her uncertain but doubtlessly violent conclusion the media endeavours to conform her skeletal remains to contemporary female stereotypes. In a strange mirroring of emancipated modern-day fashion models, the newspapers take great delight in dressing the image of the first modern woman for the "weekend feature pages" (p. 104), clothing her "in a bikini, a leotard, a miniskirt" (p. 104). The strange circumstances of a death and burial that have left the skull of ancient Grace (p. 97) shattered "into two hundred and twenty-one pieces" (p. 285) and the slender bones of her body charred, have chilling resonance for her modern counterpart. Following her ancient namesake, contemporary Grace becomes the modern representation of 80,000 years of violent patriarchy as her life becomes intimately bound with that of another female victim, the so-called "First Modern Woman". This is emphasised by her own father who fantasises about sexual liaisons with the pre-historic Grace and who argues that the human species appears to have benefited from history's successive waves of invasion and the violent rapes and inseminations that have accompanied them (p. 292-6).

Throughout the novel, two 'modern' women called Grace, become metonymic of the continuing and systematic misogyny that is demonstrated by the desire to control women bodies through scientific, legal, medical and cultural discourses. Further, Drewe's representation of the insistent and insidious hunting of Grace Malloy works to unsettle notions that contemporary Western women are free, rather it reveals a society that necessitates women's bodies be controlled, scrutinised, defended and kept under surveillance by men.

Grace Malloy is cast as an attractive, well-educated, intelligent, sexually active, successful, city dwelling, Australian, career woman that conforms to an "ideological reproduction" (Bhattacharyya, 2008, p. 24) of preferred Western female citizenship. Seemingly empowered, independent and free she nonetheless become the target of a personal war of terror—relentlessly stalked by a delusional erotomaniac who firmly believes that he is in a

[13] The story of John Malloy's discovery of "Salt End Woman" (and the later discovery of her male counterpart) along with the return of Grace's remains to the traditional landowners echo the real life discovery of skeletons at Mungo Lake in 1968 that 1968 revolutionised our understanding of the history of Aboriginal civilisation in Australia. Even though the age of the remains was uncertain, the specialists interpreting them realised they were old enough to radically re-cast earlier notions of the human history of the Australian continent.

relationship with her. In keeping with the novel's interest on the influence of prehistory and belonging, Grace's 'Australianness' is firmly grounded in her Anglo-heritage. Her father, John Malloy is cast as an English orphan sent to Australia as part of the post-war child migration scheme—a "child of the Empire" (p. 203) and her mother is a sixth generation resident of a small fishing village on a "protrusion of sand, mud and Hawkesbury sandstone" (p. 310) just north of Sydney. Grace's perception of herself as an Australian—universally white, without race—is reinforced by the way that her focalisation necessarily racialises other bodies. This racialisation is evidenced throughout the novel in her descriptions of a "beautiful Asian girl in flared pants" (p. 4) "the young aboriginal woman with crimson hair" (p. 5), "[t]wo giant Tongans" (p. 93), and "giggling Polynesian women" (p. 196).

As a signifier of both Western female freedom and institutionally privileged white women, Grace is cast as a minor celebrity figure: film reviewer for *Now* magazine. The magazine is "the epitome of celebrity worship" (p. 2), the type of magazine whose primary content of "breakdowns, drug arrests, boob and lip jobs or bulimia 'tragedies' is aimed at the 15-35-year-old female" (p. 74) demographic. Unlike her peers, who openly admit to being little more than "star-fuckers" (p. 72), Grace takes her job so seriously that she constantly defers to film to structure and interpret her life and ironically describes herself as being part of a society where the overtly sexualised body of "Lara Croft-Tomb Raider" is read as a post-feminist paradigm (p. 73). The disjuncture between sexual freedom and sexual objectification for Western women is further underscored when, after being driven from her position at *Now,* Grace takes on a job testing "porntracking" software where she discovers the "multibillion dollar business built on mud" of on-line pornography (p. 88):

> [Her] despair wasn't just that the violent international studs on the Mud Room terminal would shadow her, follow her home and invade her head, as of course they would. The horror was that now she felt stalked by all the average Joes around the world. (p. 89)

For Grace the "dully compliant eyes" and "brutal, stoned and numb souls" that "burst, tumble and pop onto the screen with such manic urgency", disturbingly reveal a society that "hated women and wished to degrade them" (pp. 87-88). Ironically named Carl 'Brand', the erotomaniac's depiction further suggests the pervasiveness of sex and porn culture and its links to capitalist consumption. In War on Terror discourse a typical refrain from Western politicians and their supporters is "Look at how they treat their women" when claiming the moral high ground that Western (and Australian) values are superior to others; while the reality is that acceptable treatment of women is the profit from and purchase of women's bodies by men.

So terrified is Grace of her stalker that she is unable to think or speak his name, so she dubs him 'the Icelander'. The Icelander is chillingly portrayed as having a "chemical smell", "pale and bony", with a "milky blue-white chest", "piercing eyes and white face waxy with sweat, even his hair … which stood up in ginger spikes, appeared urgent" (pp. 64-65). Pleading to

the court that Grace is "both [his] wife and mistress" (p. 65), and it is his "responsibility on this earth to watch over her" (p. 66), the sexually obsessed stalker becomes a terrifyingly visceral symbol of white Western patriarchy's desire to scrutinise and control the bodies of so-called 'liberated women'. The ambivalent position of Western women who are paradoxically both 'liberated' and 'contained' is expressed by the Icelander's confusion, as he attempts to label the unwilling object of his surveillance and desire: "How shall I address you? Grace Brand? Mrs Carl Brand? The adulterer? The whore? Or my wife?" (p. 403). Whether wife or whore, Grace is not seen here as a desiring subject in her own right but rather an erotised object of desire. As a "potent symbol" (Scott, 1999), of the national body, her refusal to be contained can be read as a "boundary transgression" (Pettman, 1996, p. 187) that must be contained. Grace's dis-located body becomes what Suvendrini Perera describes as a "multilayered, intersecting and contradictory space", an eroticised national border zone (2009, p. 57). In light of Australia's current obsession with border security and fear of racialised incursion both within and into the national space, the Icelander's obsession becomes a form of border security in which "the loved woman's body" becomes synonymous with "boundary defence" (Pettman, 1996, p. 187).

Mapping Fear and Desire

Even though foreign terrorists have not violated Australia's territorial borders since 9/11, there has been a sustained border panic surrounding the arrival of 'unauthorised' asylum seekers by boat. While the current invasion narrative sits within a wider history of white Australian paranoia regarding threatened incursion from the north (Elder, 2007, p. 120), since 9/11 this fear has been harnessed by the War on Terror discourse in order to exclude certain racialised bodies from the national space. Politicians' incessant calls to "Stop the Boats", help to define an Australian collective identity that is based on what one isn't, and whom one can hold back (Hage, 1998, p. 85). Refugees who travel to Australia, without prior authorisation in order to seek asylum, are not in violation of any domestic or international law but are mandatorily detained regardless. Asylum-seekers, as victims of unlawful detention, are dehumanised (by placing them in the same category as illegal imports) and criminalised (by situating them as threats to the order of Australia's nation-state), continually constructed as a group of queue jumpers, illegals or potential terrorist (Giannacopoulos, 2005, p. 29). Suvendrini Perera calls attention to such processes of disconnection by calling them "strategic acts of displacement" (2002, p. 16), whereby the result of the continual framing of the nation-state of Australia as under threat of non-white invasion is that the geographical space of the nation becomes a "map of fear" (Perera, 2009, p. 93).

Grace maps out such an Australia. Spatial-temporal shifts explore themes of dislocation and belonging as the novel draws links between the story of John Malloy's immigration as a British orphan, transported to Australia and kept in semi-custody in often abusive conditions, with the suffering and detention suffered by Indigenous Australians, those of contemporary

refugees and asylum seekers, and Grace's own experience of dislocation from urban Sydney as she is exiled to the wilderness. In her paradoxical role as metonym of a country obsessed with border control whilst struggling to deal with a past of violent colonial appropriation of land and dispossession of its Indigenous inhabitants, Grace is both invaded and invader. After attempting to escape the haunted terror of the city by fleeing to one of the remotest regions in Australia, Grace takes a job as an eco-tourist guide in Crocodile Garden's, an outback wildlife park filled with "indeterminate nocturnal menace" (p. 48). Not only does the erotomaniac succeed in locating her there but her stalker's unremitting behaviour is tacitly linked the with the prehistoric rapacity of the wildlife park's saltwater male crocodile whose "stare was primeval and infinitely patient. *Hey, meat. Its just a matter of time"* (p. 26). Her displaced body literally becomes a "map of fear", unable to escape male scrutiny and desire (Perera, 2009, p. 93).

Amidst the imagery of monstrous creatures "brown toothed and prehistoric, straight from the swamps of myth" (p. 26) in a "strategic displacement of violence" (Perera, 2002, p. 15), prey becomes predator—as Grace first rescues, and then takes sexual advantage of a young teenage Middle-Eastern asylum seeker on the run after escaping Baxter Detention Centre. His sudden appearance, in the middle of a mud-crab catching excursion, is narrated as both as thrillingly and as threateningly as an anxiously anticipated attack of a native crocodile:

> [A] mud-caked creature, panting shrilly, burst from the mangroves thicket and slid down the bank into their midst. At the hubbub of screams and gasps his bloodshot and swollen eyes roamed wildly about, skated over the astonished men, and fastened on the grey, grandmotherly head of Anne Mainbridge. (p. 133)

Potential danger turns to deference to Empire as "[w]ith a deep sigh, he slithered across the ooze to her … out of exhaustion or deference [he] remained on his knees by the English woman" (p. 133). Placed side by side these two actions create a sense of disjuncture for the reader that feed into the larger discontinuities in national discourse surrounding asylum seekers.

In a reversal of orthodox gender roles within War on Terror narratives, where white men liberate brown women, Grace envisions herself as the saviour of the "swarthy teenage boy" (p. 153). However the racialised dimensions of the emancipation narrative remain. Despite her own tenuous gender position as a woman—desired, objectified and hunted—Grace becomes complicit in desiring, objectifying and capturing the unnamed asylum seeker. Indicative of white assumptions of superiority over the racialised other, Grace's focalisation both objectifies and disempowers the young refugee as evidenced by her continual reference to him as "the boy" (p. 134, 217, 360, 367). What Jaspir Puar calls, "the Orientalist colonial fantasies of Muslim sexual deviance and corruption", resonate as the body of "the boy" is represented as the sexually abused. Disturbing descriptions of the detention camp bathrooms reveal "loitering men with busy eyes and undone flies" (p. 151). Grace's personal desire for freedom and agency

manifests itself as a desire to detain and disempower the racialised other. While "no longer in the detention camp" the young escapee is "still caged … locked behind another razor-wire fence … this time in a strange daydream where crocodiles and chattering children roam below" (p. 152). Rather than attaining freedom from detention and abuse, the young escapee is first held captive by Grace's good intentions then seduced by them.

An emotional scene in which the young asylum seeker describes the act of sewing his lips climaxes as Grace initiates an inappropriate sexual encounter. Grace attempts to disembody herself from the act, imagining herself as "an actress behaving in an inevitable manner"; predatorily she "slid" like a crocodile "across the tangerine bedspread that stunk of hot workmen" (p. 364). After the sexual act synonymous with border crossing, Grace's body becomes a corporeally anxious site of alien invasion as she abruptly rejects the boy: "She felt the beginnings of panic, however she couldn't just leave … but under no circumstances could she return to the bed" (p. 364). Reflective of the conflicting discourse surrounding asylum seekers, Grace's tone toward "the boy" is both paternalistic and threatened, as demonstrated in her description of him as an "intruder [who] stood before her in his Crocodile Gardens underpants" (p. 387). This creates an incongruous image of a body stripped of power, dressed in nothing but childlike underpants that nonetheless transmute the penis into a dangerous, and prehistoric threat. Grace's body becomes an allegory of contemporary Australia's border protection policies as she literally closes entry to her own borders, "press[ing] her knees together in a definite gesture" (p. 377). With both Grace and Australia now closed to him the boy is now spirited out of the country to a new life in New Zealand.
At the conclusion of the novel Grace Molloy does not see herself as a victim rather she believes she is a "WOTO" a "Woman Overcoming The Odds" (p. 49)—as the popular magazine she once worked for would have it. However, her once liberated body is in fact bought under control by the terror filled process in which her male stalker, and more implicitly her father work to discipline and control her. The novel closes with a final symbolic act by Grace in her role embodying the nation: pregnant with the child of the unassimilable asylum seeker, Grace dives into the watery borders that mark the porous territorial borderline in which the spurious foundations of white sovereign power are revealed (pp. 414-415). Under the watchful gaze of her father her body morphs the role of mother of a nation with a preference for cultural assimilation, or as her father would have it "for the importance of gene flow or the future of *Homo sapiens*" (p. 408).

Conclusion

In mapping the terror(torialisation) of Grace's body across temporal and spatial locations right up to its final submersion into Australia's watery borders this article has addressed how women's bodies have been (re)configured within the framework of the global War on Terror where post-feminist rhetoric paradoxically co-exists beside remobilised patriarchal, racialised and colonializing forms of power that reveal

themselves as a desire to control women's bodies. The connection between a historical event like 9/11 and a fictional narrative like *Grace*—that was created in its wake—cannot be underestimated. Mediated through the particular ideological discourses of the era of the War on Terror—to which this novel cannot help but be indebted and through which the reader works to make sense of the world—this text functions as a discursive reflection of post-9/11 Australia.

Grace offers a perspective of post-9/11 Australian society that effectively demonstrates the relationship between history and narrative while reframing and refocusing the meaning of the War on Terror and its continuing resonance in the lives of women. The representation of its protagonist reveals how the white Western female body is a site of multiple conflicts, as Grace becomes both sexual prey as woman and sexual predator as white, and where white paternalism struggles with the fear of alien invasion. This novel provides a vital counterpoint from which to fracture the limitations of normalizing identity categories that the War on Terror works to construct and incite a critical examination of ideas regarding race, freedom and women's bodies while also offering a means to contextualise contemporary hegemonic practices within a wider history of patriarchal oppression. Drewe's disruptive narrative works implicitly as a destabilising counter-narrative to current hegemonic readings of Australian national identity while demonstrating an ability to generate critical insight into the anxieties that have gripped the nation over the past decade.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: RACIALISING DESIRE

The lascivious Afghan and the threat of "brown babies"

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This paper analyses White Australian representations of Afghan sexuality in the late 19th to early 20th centuries as an expression of white fears regarding racial 'corruption', invasion and economic takeover. The seductive and dangerous (hyper)sexuality of the 'Afghan figure', created through media and literary portrayals, became the locus for these anxieties, as did the white, female body, representative of a vulnerable whiteness under threat of coercion, violation or seduction. Consequently, Afghan sexuality and white, female responses to it were highly scrutinised and policed in the media and actuality. Fictional representations of these fears produced dystopic visions of a 'piebald' Australia and the sexual usurpation of white men by an overpowering Afghan sexuality. Conversely, fictional texts that worked to quell such fears used Afghan sexuality, and the spectre of the erotic Orient, as a vehicle to mobilise white sexuality and romantic union, thus ensuring the continuing dominance and 'purity' of the white race.

Keywords: Afghan, Muslim, miscegenation, sexuality, whiteness, cameleer.

'Afghan' cameleers: a brief history

During the 1890s approximately 2,000-4,000 'Afghan' cameleers came to Australia as a part of the colonial effort to 'conquer' the Australian interior. The benefits of the cameleers' immigration to Australia were plentiful, as their skilful camel-handling enabled outback exploration and settlement, as well as the maintenance of various industries (Jones & Kenny, 2010; Kabir, 2004; Stevens, 1989). Camels and their handlers played an imperative role in several projects, among which were the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line, the Goldfields Water Supply and the Ghan railway. The transportation of supplies to outback towns, mines and stations, as well as the transportation of goods for export, such as wool, significantly contributed to the economic development of Australia for

which the outback posed serious logistical difficulties. Camel-handling remained the predominant role of 'Afghans', followed by hawking, while others found employment in areas such as mining, labouring and shop-keeping.

Although the term 'Afghan' was applied liberally it often included individuals from "Beluchistan, the Punjab, Kashmir and the Sindh province, areas that now straddle north India, Pakistan and Afghanistan" (Ganter, 2008, p. 487). As was characteristic of the time, generalities and misnomers were often used when referring to this diverse group of people. These terms included Asiatics, Orientals, Aliens, Mussulmen, "Sepoys, Indians, Hindoos, Jemadars, Malays, Arabs, Turks, Lascars, and Mohammedans" (Jones & Kenny, 2010, p. 22). Among these misnomers 'Afghan' was most commonly used, creating a shifting and contradictory figure that could at once be Asian and Arab, Muslim and Hindu, without regard to the actual nationality, race, or religion of the person in question.[1]

Despite their positive contribution, the experience of Muslim cameleers in Australia was marred by prejudice. 'Oriental' presence in Australia was already a contentious issue, with considerable protest against Chinese settlement in Australia and presence on the goldfields. Like the Chinese, Afghans were greatly resented for the economic threat that cheap, non-white labour was perceived to pose to white workers. This, in combination with significant anti-Afghan and anti-Islamic prejudice, meant that 'Afghans' were consistently derided in the press, socially ostracised and suffered discrimination under government legislation (Kabir, 2004, 2005; Jones & Kenny, 2010; Morgan & Poynting, 2009; Stevens, 1989). The media fed off these social and economic tensions, capitalising on the 'Afghan question' through sensationalist and pejorative news articles, opinion pieces, letters to the editor and fictional works. This widespread attention to Afghans in a racially charged atmosphere turned Afghans into a figure of fear and fascination, "exoticism and degeneracy" (Clark, 2003, p. 57), as local tensions and racial antipathy combined with the intrigue of Orientalist exotic mystique.

Seductive misogynists: A warning to white women

[1] Jones & Kenny warn against use of the term 'Afghan' as "[i]t carries the risk of romanticism and the inaccuracies of a superficial cliché" (2010). This article tacitly acknowledges that the term 'Afghan' reflects an essentialising myth of White Australia's making, which summarily denied the distinct and varying heritage of those who came to and settled in Australia as cameleers, hawkers, labourers, business owners, butchers, herbalists and so on. With this in mind, the term 'Afghan' is used critically and not without reservation. The deployment of the term 'Afghan' in this article intends not to perpetuate the reductive and essentialising discourse of 19th-20th century Australia but rather to illuminate it. Although the use of this generic term runs the risk of perpetuating the myth of singularity, this article's concern with the creation of an 'Afghan figure', or 'Afghan type' necessitates its use. When appropriate, however, other alternatives are used, such as 'cameleers', 'Muslim cameleers', or 'camel-handlers'.

Literary output from the 1890s began to feature Afghans as subjects of poems, short stories, plays and later, film. The 'Afghan figure' produced in these fictional texts, and in media portrayals, condensed racial and economic fears into a fantastical construction of Afghanness which at once acted out, and consequently justified, White Australian fears and prejudices. The 'Afghan figure' analysed in this article is treated similarly to that of Toni Morrison's (1993) 'Africanist', that is as a system of representation of the 'other' that reflects not an Afghan actuality but rather a spectre of Afghanness that through both its production and deployment is revelatory of the White Australian imaginary and conceptualisation of self.

In other words, the Afghan figure operates as a reflexive creation of a 'white' imagination which reveals itself in that which is imagined. While of course in Australia this system of Self reification and Other denigration was most avidly and destructively carried out in White Australia's relationship with Indigenous Australians, Afghans were conceived via a similar strategy of othering in the White Australian imaginary—their supposed barbarism, cruelty, and racial inferiority used to evidence white superiority. White Australia's anxieties about invasion, racial purity, and economic monopoly are most effectively gleaned in the construction of the Afghan figure's sexuality which, like the Afghan, was imagined as wild, barbaric, uncontrollable, and violent but also sensual, insatiable, erotic, and seductive.

The Afghan figure's libidinous nature, in conjunction with its misogyny, drew upon associations of the Orient with "sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, [and] deep generative energies" (Said, 2003, p. 188). Accordingly, Afghan sensuality was feared as a force of either seduction or coercion from which white women had to be protected by white men. Margaret Allen and David Walker have noted that in 19th century Australian society there was "a fear that the white woman could be a weak link in the struggle to maintain a White Australia" (Allen, 2009, p. 166) whether due to a lack of judgement, a lack of fortitude against 'Oriental' pressures and manipulations or the perceived weakness of feminine propensities towards sympathy with 'Asiatics'.

Media reports of 'lascivious', 'licentious' and 'lustful' Afghans threatening, assaulting, and intimidating women, to whom they continually posed the threat of rape, were also common: "[The Afghan camp] was a community of Afghans, negroes, other Mohammedans, and camels, and the orgies of that camp will long be remembered. It was a district to be avoided by women and children after nightfall, lest horrors untold should befall them" (The Afghan Horde, 1905, p. 9).

Reports from the ongoing Anglo-Afghan wars about the Afghan's 'natural cruelty' to women greatly contributed to this discourse, as did portrayals of Islam as misogynistic, perverted and barbaric:

> The Afghan regards a woman as the vast bulk of Mahommedans do, from the standpoint of her inferiority and the purely sensual office she has to serve…If the women here knew in what light Afghans looked upon them

> they would fear and loathe them with a degree of hatred which would render marriage a matter not worthy of consideration. (The Mixed-Marriage Curse, 1905, p. 45)[2]

Horror stories were frequently used to warn White Australian women of the perils that associating with Afghans posed to their safety and dignity. Marriages between Afghan men and European women were widely reported on as rife with sexual, physical, psychological, and emotional abuse (Kabir, 2007, pp. 150-3). Some newspapers even claimed that white women were under threat of being taken back to Afghanistan and sold into white slavery (The Ladies Column, 1901, p. 48).

In reaction to these fears, Afghan sexuality and intimacy was constantly policed, carried out in the name of preserving a 'White Australia'. Cameleers were forbidden from bringing their wives and families to Australia and their attempts to marry either white or Aboriginal women also faced considerable scrutiny and surveillance (Kabir, 2007; Rajkowski, 1995). White women who 'degraded' themselves by marrying Afghans elicited a mixture of pity and wrath, at once believed to be victims of a seductive Afghan sexuality but also accused of outraging their 'white' dignity and contributing to the racial and moral degeneration of Australia:

> every day we hear of young white women flying in the face of decency and wisdom by allying themselves with colored aliens. While we should stand, with eyes turned seaward, shouting, "A White Australia!" the unpatriotic female is busy in our midst tearing away the color line with both hands. (White Australia, 1910, p. 5)

The anxiety produced by Afghan sexuality played out in the policing not only of Afghans but also of the white, female body whose vulnerable, permeability became analogous to vulnerable, permeable Australian borders. Bagnall (2002) notes how a similar "sexual surveillance" of relationships between Chinese men and white Australian women was used to further white, male control over white female sexuality and mobility while maintaining social order and boundaries (pp. 9, 12).

Reports of inter-racial marriages and their inherent threat to "white male and imperial potency" (Bagnall, 2002, p. 9) were therefore often met with outraged calls to ban inter-racial marriage with the threat of imprisonment as a deterrent (Kabir, 2007, pp. 151-2; Rajkowski, 1995, p. 48) as well as legislative amendments designed to interfere with the parental rights of interracial couples (Allen, 2009). While interracial marriages remained legal in the strictest sense many women found themselves subjects of police intervention, detained in custody until they 'came to their senses' (A Female Vagrant, 1905, p. 4; A Life Tragedy, 1905, p. 9; Immigrant Woman and Afghan, 1910, p. 2; Kabir, 2007, pp. 150-2). Allen notes the case of Noab and Lillie Khan, a married couple who were subjected to public scrutiny, police investigation (in both Australia and India) and

[2] 'Mohammedan' (and its various spellings) was a term used to refer to Muslims, just as 'Mohammedanism' was used to refer to Islam. Said locates the origin of this terminology in the incorrect assumption that "Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity" (2003, p.60).

parliamentary debate when it was learnt that Lillie's white daughter from a previous marriage had travelled to India with Noab. Despite the extensive investigations of James Mackinon Fowler, a Perth representative in the Federal House of Representatives and "ideologue of White Australia" (Allen, 2009, p. 168), which produced nothing but positive reports and Fowler's own personal praise for the couple, Fowler nonetheless pushed for, and attained, amendments to the Emigration Act of 1910 to include restrictions on non-white parents taking white children overseas.

In another instance, the *Sunday Times* (who were also active spruikers against the Khans) ran a vigorous campaign against the marriage of Elizabeth Wolseley, an English woman, to Ameer Mahomet, an Afghan man, resulting in her forcible deportation from Australia back to England (The Case of Miss Wolseley, 1911, p. 17). Despite Miss Wolseley's protests, dismissed as the "stupid falsehoods of an hysterical young female … [a] foolish little chit" (Notes and Comments, 1911, p. 6), and media criticism in England, the *Sunday Times* unabashedly held their ground as the self-appointed 'protectors' of white women:

> 'Our' women—women of the British race, women who call themselves Australians—are joined in 'holy' matrimony to the unsavoury yellow agonies. There are broods of human beings starting on the pathway of life cursed with mongrel parentage … far too often—we get glimpses of the doings of colored satyrs who have made a raid upon Australia for the gratification of their unbridled lusts … The colored alien is here amongst us: he is building up his harem in our very midst and our white sisters … are filling his harem and catering to his sensuality. We talk of isolating the consumptives, of quarantining the plague, but this contagion of vice is apparently immune … Let our white sisters from youth upward be taught to have no dealings of any kind with the Asiatics, to shun them as they would the leper. (The Case of Lisa Singh, 1911, p. 3)

The hysteria surrounding Afghan-European marriages may partly have stemmed from sexual jealousy of these "young, handsome men, in the prime of their lives" (Deen, 2011, p. 2) who caused "many an Australian woman's heart to flutter" (p. 89). Australia had an atmosphere already rife with sexual competition: "the ratio of men to women in WA in 1897 was 10:1; in NSW, as late as 1938, there were four men to every woman and in rural areas the imbalance extended to 20:1" (p. 2). To choose an Afghan man over a white man (especially when so many were available) was inconceivable, if not insulting, to white men who considered themselves racially and morally superior. Mirroring the treatment of white women who married Chinese men (Bagnall, 2002), women who married Afghans were therefore often maligned, accused of alcoholism, criminality, or mental instability. Alternatively, blame was placed on the lack of viable white suitors or the failure of white men to protect 'their women'.

White portrayals of Afghan-Aboriginal relationships also provided an opportunity to perpetuate White Australian fantasies of white power and benevolence through the displacement of white crimes of sexual abuse against Aboriginal women and children onto 'Afghans' in both media and fiction. This disavowal ensured both the further demonisation of 'Afghans' as well as the primitivisation and infantilisation of Indigenous Australians,

as well as the sexual surveillance and abuse of Aboriginal women. While the in-depth analysis that such portrayals require is beyond the scope of this paper this is not to ignore the importance of 'Afghan'-Aboriginal relationships or their portrayals. Rather, this analysis constitutes a separate, ongoing project.

A Piebald Australia

Sexual violation or seduction of Australia's white 'daughters' also realised White Australia's greatest fears for the future, one in which white men were sexually, racially, and economically usurped by the 'lower races'. The utopian promise of a racially pure Australia, intended to provide both a 'haven' for the white man and proof of his superiority, was instead replaced by dystopian visions of a 'piebald' future where miscegenation proliferated and white men were cast aside. White fears of usurpation by 'coloured' men manifested in portrayals predicting Australia as a cuckolded nation.

A cartoon published in *The Bulletin* in 1902, 'Piebald Possibilities—A Little Australian Christmas Family Party of the Future' by Livingstone Hopkins (the chief cartoonist of the *Bulletin* from 1883 to 1913 [Bagnall, 2002, p.9]), is a gross portrayal of White Australia's 'nightmarish' vision of the future of Australian society, if racial inter-mixing should occur. The cartoon shows a multi-racial family of 11 sitting down to enjoy a Christmas dinner. All the non-white members of the family are grotesquely drawn as caricatures of various insulting racial archetypes.

The 'undesirability' of the scene lies in the suggested sexual coupling between white women and non-white men, most overtly illustrated through the white women themselves, one of whom nurses a non-white baby and the other who is suggestively touched by a black man in tribal paint on her left side, while a Chinese man on her right also looks towards her. A series of five paintings disparagingly depicting the 'Family Portraits' hangs on the wall behind the diners. The first, titled 'My Family Tree', depicts Adam refusing Eve's offer of the apple (again demonstrative of the weakness of women), whilst 'My Wife's Family Tree' depicts three monkeys in a tree. The third is titled 'My great great great great great great grandfather' and shows a caveman killing a mammoth, while the fourth, 'Son in law Achmed', is a portrait of an Arab man in white robes and an overly sized turban, staring fiercely out of the painting. The last is of a black man boiling a white man in a large cauldron and is labelled 'Cannibal relative by marriage'.

Clearly reflective of the racial hierarchy of social Darwinism, and the association of 'lower' races with primates, this cartoon envisages what was believed would be the inevitable devolution of the human species if the mixing of 'less evolved' people (non-whites) with 'more evolved' people (whites) were to occur. An 1893 article from the *Barrier Miner* states that Australians must be particularly wary of Afghans, Hindus and Syrians because they 'do not blend' into the British race, unlike "Germans, Danes, Scandinavians and the Latin races" who "blend imperceptibly, and in one

generation are merged in the British strain" (An Anti-Alien League, 1893, p. 3). The fear of 'corruption' of the white race in Australia was a salient feature of white-authored fictional works about 'Asiatics', seen in works such as the "enormously popular and anti-Japanese dystopia" novel by C. J. Kirmess, *The Australian Crisis* (1909):

> For the Australians, who keenly missed appropriate sex partnership of their own race, watched helplessly the rapid progress of the despised Asiatics from a mere horde of invading nomads into a settled nation bound to the conquered soil by the most sacred ties—by little brown babies quite unconscious of their own significance, all young Australians—Austral-Mongoloids. And the white heirs to the Continent had to stand by impassively, condemned to look on and to record the event. (p. 177)

Marozia (1908), a collection of short stories by A.G. Hales portrays a similar future for Australia. A.G. Hales was the author of the widely successful 'McGlusky' adventure stories, which reached approximately two million sales. Hales also started several newspapers and acted as a war correspondent during the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War from which he drew much of his material for his fictional works. In one of Hales' stories from *Marozia* (1908), 'A Coolgardie Idyll', racial miscegenation and the cuckolding of white men are dealt with in the form of a comical allegory warning against the evils of the importation of non-white (specifically Afghan) labour.

In this story Jepson, the white male protagonist, trades the virtue of his wife in exchange for the wealth of a local Afghan camel owner, Kurda Singh. As a result of his actions he ends up bankrupt, cuckolded and his genetic line is replaced with that of Kurda, who fathers a son with Jepson's wife—a surprising interracial consummation given the time of publication. In Hales' allegory Jepson is representative of those who seek to economically gain from non-white labour while his wife represents Australian virtue under threat. Kurda, as a wealthy Afghan camel and property owner, represents the 'coloured' races who would economically benefit from entering Australia and who would threaten the racial purity of the country.

The story's sensationalism allows it to flagrantly play into the reductive stereotype of the lascivious, wealthy Arab with an insatiable sexual appetite, chiefly for white women. Kurda's characterisation is dominated entirely by his sexuality, one which is so powerful as to transform him from a successful businessman into a "black fool" who unthinkingly gives Jepson money when under the spell of his own sexual impulses: "Then for the first time he saw Jepson's wife, and Jepson...saw the big black eyes change suddenly from soft slumbering tranquillity to blazing liquid light, and Jepson knew that he had the Oriental sybarite well within his reach" (Hales, 1908, p. 283). Kurda's rampant sexuality is excessive to the point of farce. He is literally unable to physically control himself when he is aroused by the mere sight of a woman: "the next moment she felt a breath upon her neck … She turned and saw the big Afghan. His breath came quick and sharp, with a half hiss between his teeth. There was a

dusky deep-red flush on his bronze cheeks, and the hand that touched hers trembled" (p. 285).

In order to successfully evoke fears of racial miscegenation and economic disadvantage, Hales intertwines depictions of Kurda's sexuality with his race and wealth. Kurda's darkness is emphasised upon the first mention of his overwhelming lust: "He had black hair, a black beard, and great sleepy black eyes, which when they rested on the face of a woman, could leap into fire and blaze like quartz crystals on a hot day" (Hales, 1908, p. 282). Similarly, the expression of wealth in his jewellery and clothing is both sensual and exotic:

> Green and gold was his turban, deep dark crimson his jacket, white as clouds at dawn his bernouse, and white his great wide trousers. Around his loins he wore a scarf of mingled green and gold, and crimson silk, and upon his fingers rings of great value and beauty…He had a low, round, soft, fat voice—he owned much money in cash, in camels and land. (p. 283)

A description of Kurda's teeth, "as white as the soul of a girl baby" (p. 283), vaguely constructs him as the devourer of white, female virtue and this is realised through his sexual union with Mrs Jepson who is then violated, racially shamed and genetically displaced by the birth of their distinctly Arab looking son: "it was as black as the inside of a fasting camel. The nose had the Semitic curve, and the eyes the Oriental lustre, and the lips the Eastern sensuality of a child of the sun. Of its mother the babe showed no trace, but the father—its real father—was stamped on every lineament" (p. 289). As all physical traits of Mrs Jepson are replaced by those of Kurda, the symbolic erasure of the white race is enacted.

Stories such as these acted as a call to white men to rise up, defend 'their women' and remain vigilant against the threat of the lascivious Afghan. The inaction of Jepson in 'A Coolgardie Idyll' and the frail, feminised depiction of the white men in the cartoon 'Piebald Possibilities' reveal the fear of white men doing nothing while Afghans insidiously take over Australia and destroy the dream of an Edenic whiteness it was supposed to represent.

'Afghan' sexuality for the white man

This call to action was responded to in other fictional texts through the appropriation of Afghan subjectivity and sexuality. Adventure romances such as Charles Chauvel's film *Uncivilised* (1936) and the serialised novel *Silent the Sahib* (1923a, 1923b, 1923c, 1924a, 1924b, 1924c, 1924d, 1924e) by C. E. Player use a sensual Afghan presence to augment the works' eroticism and facilitate a sexual union between their white protagonists. Through this appropriation Afghan sexuality is used in a way that supports, rather than usurps, the dream of a White Australia. Thus in these texts we see Afghan sexuality utilised as a vehicle for the expression of *white* sexuality and the mobilisation of white sexual unions.

On its most basic level the appropriation of a hypersexualised 'Afghan' subjectivity allowed white authors to enact a kind of vicarious sexuality that their white characters could not fully inhabit, but that the presence of the Afghan figure nonetheless introduced. By drawing upon deep-rooted associations between the Orient and licentious sex (Said, 2003; Teo, 2012), the thrill of erotic taboo could operate within these texts under the guise of racial cliché without causing outrage or bringing the sexual morality of whiteness into question. By using the supposed potency of Afghan sexuality to trigger white sexual couplings these texts appropriate the threat of Afghan sexuality and transform it into a prop to reinforce, and ensure the continuation of, whiteness.

This is most effectively gleaned in the creation of what is termed here as the 'fake Afghan'—a white character who is 'Orientalised' through his role as a cameleer or hawker, as well as his adoption of Afghan dress, language and custom, or even Arab 'race' through the use of blackface. Following on from the tradition of the 'white sheik' (such as Lawrence of Arabia) in which white men "are presented as 'better Arabs than the Arabs'" (Gagano cited in Teo, 2012, p. 91), the 'Fake Afghan' outperforms Afghans in all areas, including that of sex and romance. In both Chauvel's *Uncivilised* (1936) and Player's *Silent the Sahib* (1923-4) the 'Fake Afghan' character is used in order to propel the romantic plot and awaken the white, female protagonists' sexuality. Emphasis is also placed on the virility of white, male sexuality, which the adoption of 'Afghanness' seeks to augment, and thus belie "questions about the desirability of postwar Western men and Western masculinity in comparison to Arab men" (Teo, 2012, pp. 85-6). The Fake Afghan, at once Oriental and white, embodies the paradox of what Hsu-Ming Teo describes as the 'Arabian Nights' Orientalism of the popular desert or sheik romance fictions of the 1920s in the West which were at once preoccupied with "sexual titillation and romantic desires" in the figure of the Sheik yet also "obsessed with the spectre of miscegenation and … white women's responsibility to respect and uphold the boundaries of whiteness" (p. 6).

The hugely popular novel (Hull, 1919) and later film (Melford, 1921) *The Sheik* by E. M. Hull, gave rise to the popularity of this 'sheik fever' through its portrayal of the 'seduction by rape' of its white female lead by an Arab sheik (later revealed to be European), and likely influenced both Chauvel's and Player's 'Fake Afghan' creations. Despite many differences between these texts there remains a consistent appropriation and utilisation of Arab 'race', identity and sexuality by a white man to awaken and facilitate white, female sexuality. While the use of an 'Oriental' presence to trigger white, female sexuality accounts for much of the texts' sensational appeal it also signals anxieties regarding "the idea that Oriental men possessed a mysterious and fatal attraction" (Teo, 2012, p. 102) for white women and the inherent potential for miscegenation.[3]

[3] Set in the desert, both of these texts also enter into European traditions of imagining the supposed 'emptiness' of the desert as a stage for sexual freedom, romanticism and exoticism; a place where "the Romantic European ego can project itself" (Teo, 2012, pp. 73-4) and where fantastical creations are used to explore European preoccupations and anxieties regarding anything from

Player's *Silent the Sahib* (1923-4), for example, features a white, male cameleer who has been nicknamed 'The Sahib' by his Afghan counterparts. The serialised novel follows the adventures of the Sahib, primarily his involvement in foiling a major Afghan and Chinese run drug trafficking ring. The Sahib wears long, white, flowing robes, rides an Arab stallion and is the most successful cameleer in Australia, outstripping far more experienced Afghan camel-drivers in a mere couple of years. Although much trouble is taken to retain the Sahib's whiteness, his association with Afghans and his adoption of Afghanness, through his name and dress, appeal to the exotic and mystic romance associated with the Orient (Said, 2003, pp. 189-190).

Player evokes this idea of the Orient through his references to flowing robes, snake handling, rhythmic drum beating and the sexualised worship that the Afghan women bestow upon the Sahib, 'kissing the ground' where he walks. The Sahib's developing romance with the female protagonist Phyllis is partly attributed to this mysterious and intriguing association with Afghans, as well as his own exotic appearance. For example, upon hearing drumming in the Afghan camp both Phyllis and her cousin Gracie become visibly stirred, even aroused, by the music. This sexual excitement is then redirected towards the Sahib, particularly when he heroically saves the women from being savaged by the Afghan men:

> The woman felt herself catching some of her cousin's keen excitement. 'They must be dancing or something,' Gracie ran on wildly, 'because that music is blood stirring!' … Although Phyl would not admit it, even to herself, she wanted to see more of this man whom the Afghans and Hindoos called their Sahib. Her woman's curiosity was stirred—to her he was an unknown quantity and therefore of paramount interest. Besides, there was something unnaturally peculiar about the whole thing; she would like to puzzle it all out. (Player, 1923a, p. 726)

The appeal of the Sahib's Oriental connection is confirmed towards the end of the novel as Phyllis also calls him 'my Sahib':

> She swayed towards him, drawn by the hypnotic power of his enraptured eyes. His arm crept out and about her, while she snuggled ever closer to him, murmuring softly, voice pulsing with the depth of her great love: 'No—I love you; my Sahib! my Sahib!.' (Player, 1924e, p. 335)

The Sahib's hypnotic power, in combination with Phyllis's 'swaying' movement toward him suggests something of the Oriental snake charmer, particularly in light of the Sahib's previously demonstrated prowess at snake handling. The romantic and sexual interest of Phyllis is thus in part stirred by the Sahib's adopted Afghanness, yet without crossing racial boundaries and bearing out the 'threat' of racial miscegenation. The exotic appeal of the Orient therefore becomes a vehicle through which to deliver a consummated whiteness, while other non-white characters are relegated to subservient, marginal roles. Accordingly, Phyllis and the Sahib's union is

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industrialisation (p. 67) to the increasing independence of women (p. 75) and miscegenation (p. 79).

represented as a triumph over the 'barbaric' forces that surround them, including Indigenous Australians, Chinese, and Afghans.

A similar fantasy fulfilment is enacted in Charles Chauvel's *Uncivilised* (1936). *Uncivilised* was a widely popular and successful film in Australia and New Zealand, opening to "fanfare similar to that accorded a royal visit" and subsequently having a season in the USA (Hoorn, 2005, p. 41). The film follows the journey of a white female romance novelist, Beatrice, whose publisher sends her to find the 'white chief' of an Aboriginal community as inspiration for her next novel. The 'white chief', Mara, is the son of a Dutch family, who was adopted by an Aboriginal community after becoming lost in the bush. In his maturity Mara has become the 'chief' of that community—an ascension attributed purely to his 'racial superiority'. Before Beatrice can meet up with her policeman guide, Peter Radcliffe, she is kidnapped by an Afghan aided by a group of Indigenous Australians. This Afghan, Akbar Jhan, wishes to gift her to Mara in exchange for allowing him to trade the drug 'Pituri' in his territory.[4]

The romance that develops between Beatrice and Mara sets the stage for the formation of several sub-plots which further convolute the already fantastical plot. Akbar Jhan is revealed at the end of the film to be the white policeman, Peter Radcliffe, in disguise. Radcliffe uses this disguise of 'Akbar Jhan' to infiltrate the opium trading route in Australia by getting close to a man called Trask, who imports the drugs from China and whose presence signals another splintering of the plot. Trask, it is revealed, is trying to get close to Mara in order to steal the rubies that Mara has in his possession, which he apparently had on his person when he became lost as a child. In the midst of these storylines also run romantic rivalry, inter-tribal warfare and the murderous activities of an Aboriginal man named Moopil. The film ends with Radcliffe's revelation of his true, white identity, his successful arrest of Trask and the union of Beatrice and Mara who remain living in the Aboriginal community.

Themes of racial miscegenation and white superiority are rife in the film that propagates a view of Australia as a victim of racially degenerate forces. This victimhood is most powerfully symbolised in Beatrice who, surrounded by non-whites who continually try to kill her, is exemplary of the vulnerable female/national body. As various attempts are made upon her life, she is depicted as an increasingly vulnerable, isolated island of whiteness, lost amongst various groups of non-whites that seek to destroy and overwhelm her. Throughout the film, the threat of violence and sexual violence against Beatrice constantly lurks in the background. Attacks against her have distinctly sexual overtones, which are always linked to race—conflating anxieties of invasion and racial corruption with the threat of sexual violation. Beatrice's only chance for salvation (and therefore the salvation of White Australia) lies in her sexual coupling with Mara and their continuation of a whiteness that is victorious over the 'non-white threat'.

[4] Pituri was a drug traditionally used in some Aboriginal communities to help suppress appetite and increase endurance, but it is treated in the film as a degenerative drug akin to opium (Hoorn, 2005).

The role of Akbar Jhan, and therefore the role of Afghanness, is pivotal to Mara and Beatrice's romantic and sexual union. With the presence of Jhan come the expected Oriental references and clichés of the exotic, mysterious and sexual. Subplots of stolen rubies and drug trading, images of coiling snakes, palanquins and camels, are indiscriminately woven into the Australian landscape, enhancing the film's already sensational tone. Akbar Jhan, a white man literally inhabiting an imagined 'Afghan' identity, plays an unusual and contradictory role with regard to Beatrice's sexual safety and sexual awakening. He is first seen kidnapping Beatrice from her bed, aided by Aboriginal men, thus evoking the stereotype of the lascivious Arab with an insatiable sexual appetite for white women. Additionally, Jhan's willingness to trade Beatrice to Mara invokes the stereotype of Arab misogyny and disregard for women, as well as themes of sex slavery in the Orient.

Jhan also negotiates and facilitates the sexual relationship between Beatrice and Mara. Jhan warns Mara that he cannot rape Beatrice (a behaviour he associates with Aboriginality) and instead entices him to remember his 'whiteness' and explore consensual love with her. Although Mara begins to attack Beatrice his awakening 'whiteness' stops him, prompting Beatrice to write in her journal: "A seeming eternity passed last night, but one thing is clear—he is not all savage. Can I rely on his white instincts for protection…?" (author's transcription). Afghan sexuality, therefore, while used to trigger white sexuality, must also be re-imagined to suit an acceptable 'white morality'. Acts of restraint are fundamental to this re-imagining. While Afghans were believed to be incapable of controlling their sexual urges, the white men of *Uncivilised* (1936) and *Silent the Sahib* (1923-4) repeatedly fight their powerful, sexual urges towards their romantic interests. This restraint distinguishes white sexuality, characterising it as 'above' mere primal instinct.

In *Uncivilised* (1936) it is only once Mara exhibits this restraint (under the guidance of Jhan) that Beatrice begins to consider him romantically and sexually. Her awakening culminates in a scene where she swims naked, a particularly controversial scene for 1936. After her swim, Beatrice (under the influence of Pituri she unknowingly consumed) makes sexual advances towards Mara before fainting in his arms, her vulnerability complete and his restraint ultimately tested.[5] The pair's union at the end of the film is largely due to this pivotal moment where both pass the test by overcoming their base sexual desires. Jhan, as the one who introduced Pituri into the community, therefore acts as the indirect agent of Beatrice's sexual awakening, Mara's remembered 'whiteness' and their white romantic union. Rather than the mere culmination of the romantic plot, this union acts as the symbolic achievement of a whiteness that can overcome the forces of barbarism and perpetuate itself in an ever-strengthening trajectory:

[5] Pituri is misrepresented in the film as an opiate capable of inducing a sexual state, or "voluptuous condition" (Hoorn, 2005). Advertising for the film described Pituri as a sexual stimulant including the tag lines "Her emotions were stimulated by the love drug Pituri" and "Strangest of all love potions 'Pituri'".

> Together Mara and Beatrice offer the promise of establishing a new kingdom in which they will present them-selves as humane and beneficent rulers living in harmony with indigenous people in their jungle paradise. This is the narrative lure of *Uncivilised*—the impossible fantasy held out to white audiences who yearned to return to a lost Arcadian past that could ironically only exist in a pre-colonial world. (Hoorn, 2005, p. 44)

White sexuality is thus elevated from a natural instinct to a moral and righteous duty that white people hold for the continued betterment and evolution of mankind. Through this performance of triumphant whiteness, fears of white, male sexual inadequacy and the possibility of cuckolding and miscegenation are quelled. The white man emerges victorious, having absorbed enough of the 'Oriental' to make him stronger without making him any less white. The use of the 'fake Afghan' character, witnessed both in *Uncivilised* (1936) and *Silent the Sahib* (1923-4), therefore thwarts the dystopian visions of a racially mixed Australia offered by other texts by both taming and adopting Afghan sexuality to suit white, male purposes. By reshaping Afghan sexuality within the parameters of white desire that sexuality is made acceptable, moral and virtuous in its promise to continue the white race.

Conclusion

'Afghan' presence in Australia, although greatly resented by white Australians, provided White Australia with another discursive opportunity to support the colonial project and justify its racist practices through the fostered belief that it was a nation under threat. Narratives of failure and success in neutralising the 'Afghan threat' reveal a consistent, unwavering desire for the eventuation of a triumphant whiteness to dominate the Australian nation. The hypersexualisation of the Afghan figure worked consistently in favour of these goals for the whiteness that produced this fantastical figure.

Author Note

Erin Claringbold graduated with a PhD in English Literature from Macquarie University in 2013. Her thesis is entitled 'Representations of Arabs and Muslims in the outback in Australian literature and film: 1890-2011' and focuses largely on fictional portrayals of Muslim cameleers.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: RACIALISING DESIRE

Potatoes and Rice: Exploring the Racial Politics of Gay Asian and White Men's Desires and Desirability

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In this paper, I expand Adam Green's theory of 'erotic habitus' by thinking performatively about the racialised desires of Asian men who are attracted to white men, and vice versa. By using Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Green explains desires as the objectification of the social order forced into the unconscious. However, I argue that the theory simply attributes social structural forces as the cause of racialised desires but does not account for how racial identities and markers of racialised desires are constituted and constructed. By drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, I consider how race and racialised desires are produced through the repetition of acts drawn from Orientalism: a system of knowledge that delineates Asian men as the antithesis of white masculinity. Orientalism shapes erotic habitus, brought into consciousness in texts such as Daniel Gawthorp's The Rice Queen Diaries: A Memoir and personal ads from Toronto and Montreal's Craigslist. By analysing these texts, I argue that the repetition of norms associated with 'Asianness' and 'whiteness', as effects of Orientalism, produce subjects as 'Asian' or 'white', and 'potato queen' or 'rice queen'. These stereotypes are also displayed as erotic capital, a consequence of erotic habitus, to attract their objects of desire. I conclude this paper by reflecting on the possibility of considering 'self-Orientalisation' by Asian men as subversion: a means to contest norms about race and racialised desires by creatively and actively playing out stereotypes about them to undermine the rigidity of power relations often associated with Asian/white racialised desires.

Keywords: race, desire, gay, Asian, white, Orientalism.

Introduction

The theory of 'erotic habitus', adopted from Bourdieu, by Adam Green (2008) is one of the few that considers racialised desires as sociological phenomena. By using Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Green explains desires as the objectification of the social order forced into the unconscious. However, it is argued below that Green's theory is inadequate because it does not account for how racial identities and markers of racialised desires are constructed, constituted and function. In this paper, I attempt to address the problems inherent to Green's work by incorporating Judith Butler's (1990, 1993) theory of performativity to investigate racialised desires in gay communities in North America. In particular, I study the desires of 'potato queens' and 'rice queens'. As a discourse existent and utilised in gay communities, a potato queen is often understood as an Asian man who prefers or exclusively dates white men, while a rice queen is usually a Caucasian man who prefers or exclusively dates Asian men. My aim is to consider how these desires may be located within larger cultural discourses on race, particularly Orientalism, and how these discourses are embodied, performed and function as a consequence of erotic habitus. By analysing Daniel Gawthorp's (2005) *The Rice Queen Diaries: A Memoir* and personal ads from Craigslist, I argue that these racialised desire markers are discursively produced and performed, thereby: (1) constituting one's self not only as 'Asian' and 'white' but also as 'potato queen' and 'rice queen'; and (2) 'Asianness' and 'whiteness' are performed as erotic capitals to attract their objects of desire. I conclude this paper by reflecting on the possibility of considering 'self-Orientalisation' as subversion. The idea of self-Orientalisation is developed by Kondo (1997) and other fashion studies scholars (such as Leshkowich and Jones 2003) to mean 'autoexoticisation', where Asians incorporate stereotypes about them to reinscribe Orientalism. Through self-Orientalisation, some gay Asian men contest norms about race and racialised desires by creatively and actively playing out stereotypes about them to undermine the rigidity of power relations often associated with Asian/white racialised desires. In the next section, I discuss how Green theorises the emergence of racialised desires through Bourdieu's habitus and how might the theory of performativity supplement erotic habitus to provide a more exhaustive analysis of the dynamics of racialised desires among Asian and white gay men.

Theorising How Racialised Desires are Shaped

One of Bourdieu's most important contributions to sociology is the introduction of the concept of habitus, "the system of durable and transposable *dispositions* through which we perceive, judge, and act in the world" (Wacquant, 2006, p. 6; original emphasis). These dispositions are largely unconscious, acquired through exposure to "particular social conditions and conditionings, via the internalization of external constraints and possibilities" (p. 6). Habitus shapes and provides the ability to understand current practices and structures. Employing the concept of habitus to consider erotic desires as effects of social structural forces, Green introduces the term 'erotic habitus' to examine how "the social order and one's place within it have a somatic relationship with the unconscious … that orients the undifferentiated biological libido towards particular social

forms" (2008, p. 614). In other words, erotic habitus is the internalisation of a historically specific social order, investing erotic meanings to particular persons or objects, while rendering others as neutral. Racialised desires are said to be products of or fashioned from dominant classifications of race, shaping practices associated with these desires.

To illustrate this, Green analyses the works of African-American writer Gary Fisher and argues that Fisher's desires to be dominated by white men is a result of his encounter with the social order that delineates white men as dominant and Black men as inferior. However, I argue that the theory simply explains that social structural forces cause racialised desires but does not account for how racial identities and markers of racialised desires are constituted, constructed and function. Moreover, it does not address how racial and sexual fantasies are mutually constitutive, and how race intersects with class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. (Eng, 2001, p. 2). In this paper, rather than simply explaining why an Asian man is sexually aroused by white men's domination through the internalisation of external constraints, conditions and possibilities, I consider how both racial identities and markers of racialised desires are effects of repeated performances of certain cultural signs and conventions that are not only associated with race, but also gender, class and sexuality.

Drawing on Butler's (1990, 1993) theory of performativity, I supplement the theory of erotic habitus to consider racial identities and markers of racialised desires (such as potato queen and rice queen) as constructed and constituted through embodied actions, rooted from specific historical conditions and conditionings. For Butler, identities—such as gender or race—are constituted through a stylised repetition of acts that are "at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already established" (1990, p. 140). By adopting performativity, one can account for the production of race and markers of racialised desires as repeated acts, drawn from larger cultural discourses on race. I link the theories of performativity and erotic habitus together by configuring the display of erotic capital as performative. The performance of erotic capital is an effect of erotic habitus.

According to Bourdieu, habitus develops in response to a 'field', the setting in which an individual is located; and different fields value different 'capitals', the use of which is informed by the habitus (Seidman, 2004; Thorpe, 2009; Wacquant, 2006). Yet, Green does not synthesise these core concepts in his adaptation of habitus. To provide a more extensive analysis of the dynamics of racialised desires, I locate the display of erotic capital in the 'field of gay desire'. Dominant cultural representations on race and practices of racialised desires are located in this field, shaping erotic habitus and informing how erotic capital is played out. One 'becomes' Asian or white, and potato queen or rice queen through the performance of erotic capital. As Butler (1993, p. 95) argues, "repetition [as performativity] is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition of the subject". However, these repetitions or performances are neither simply imposed on the individual nor individually chosen because they are acted in a "culturally restricted corporeal space" and are confined by "already existing directives" (Butler, 1988, p. 526). These performances

are fashioned after idealisations or fantasies of what it means to be a racialised and desiring/desirable subject, embodied in dominant cultural representations and practices in the field of gay desire.

Dominant fantasies and idealisations about Asian men and women in the Western imagination cannot be separated from colonial discourses, shaping Asians as racial 'Others' and the antithesis of white masculinity. In Eng's (2001) analysis of the representation of Asian men in David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, he proposes that Asian American men are 'racially castrated' as white men are placed in the position of being more masculine by denying the existence of the Asian penis (Eng, 2001, p. 151). Similarly, in Richard Fung's (1991, p. 153) exploration of the portrayal of Asian men in gay pornography, he identifies that "Asian and anus are conflated" because they are portrayed as passive and are always seen being penetrated by white men. That is, Asian men are always represented as 'bottoms' and white men as 'tops'. For Han (2008), being 'top' or 'bottom' entails a relationship of power because bottoming is associated with powerlessness, submissiveness, and passiveness. However, there are disagreements among some scholars about the power dynamics in top/bottom sexual positions. For instance, Califia-Rice (2000) argues that practitioners of sadomasochism do not interpret these dynamics with being dominant or submissive. Rather, they see it as more egalitarian. I also consider the subversion of these power relations later in this paper.

Asian men are not only feminised but are also portrayed as youthful and have lesser economic power. As Hamamatoa (cited in Han, 2008, p. 233) explains, Asian men in gay pornography are often represented as youthful "meek houseboys, asexual deviants, or domestic servants who fill 'female' roles when women are scarce," mirroring one prominent stereotyping of Asian men in Western popular culture. These stereotypes have negative consequences for gay Asian men's desirability and desires. As Caluya (2006) discusses, Asian men in the gay scene often face sexual discrimination because white men consider them undesirable. They only become objects of desire for white men because they are thought to be passive, submissive, exotic and mysterious. In short, they are relegated to be feminine. Therefore, Asian men become vessels of white men's fantasies of domination.

The feminisation and racial castration of Asian men in dominant gay cultural representations and practices can be explained as effects of Orientalism. According to Edward Said (1977, p. 7-8), Orientalism is a "system of knowledge about the Orient," largely produced by Europeans. This system of knowledge constructs the 'West' as dominant and superior, while the 'East' is considered inferior and weak. Furthermore, vastly different cultural groups are aggregated and essentialised under the umbrella of 'Oriental' or 'Asian', considered as an exotic race to be known, disciplined and governed. The knowledge constructed about Orientals is generated out of European strength. As Said proposes, "[a] certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery" in ways that the Orient cannot speak about the West nor even for itself (Said, 1977, p.

44). In this sense, the East is rendered weak, passive and feminine as it is penetrable while the West constructs itself to be masculine and the one who penetrates the Orient. Orientalism then shapes ideas about what it means to be Asian or white, through which the performance of race, gender, sexuality and racialised desires are fashioned after.

The performativity of race and racialised desires can be analysed through erotic works. According to Green (2008, p. 615), "the structure of the erotic habitus reveals itself in the patterning of sexual desires, brought to consciousness via the *erotic work*" (original emphasis). Erotic work is "the process whereby internalized schemes and dispositions of erotic habitus are transformed into sexual scripts". In this paper, I closely analyse Gawthorp's *The Rice Queen Diaries* to understand how patters of rice queens' sexual desires emerge. I chose this book because it is the only book of its kind, written specifically by someone who identifies himself as a rice queen. I also examine personal ads posted by gay and other homosexually active men from Toronto and Montreal's Craigslist, gathered over a period of six months. I investigate how sexual desires and desirability are brought into consciousness through personal ads, reflecting the dynamics of desires among gay and other homosexually active men. I utilise critical discourse analysis (CDA) in my analysis to understand the ways in which "social power, abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted" through these types of erotic works (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). In the next section, I propose that racialised discourses, rooted from Orientalism, are inculcated in the erotic habitus of rice queens and also potato queens. Sexual desires are brought into consciousness through sexual scripts, such as Gawthorp's memoirs and some personal ads posted by gay and other homosexually active men online.

Erotic Habitus and The Performativity of Race and Markers of Racialised Desires in White Men's Desires for Asian men (or Rice Queens)

The inscription of Orientalism on gay Asian men's bodies is apparent in Gawthorp's memoirs. Tracing where, how and why his desires for Asian men started, Gawthorp begins his story in Vancouver when, in grade nine, he witnessed a 'ritual' of torture carried out by a group of grade twelves to an Asian boy named Jackson. Gawthorp recounts that "the purpose of the ritual became clear: the Grade Twelves, all four of them upper-middle class Wasps [*sic*], wanted to see what hot, dripping candle wax looked like on Chinese balls" (Gawthorp, 2005, p. 37). Upon witnessing this ritual, he begins to acknowledge his desires, not only for men in general, but for Asian men in particular. He writes:

> Until Jackson's hazing, I had never seen ethnicity treated as an altar at which to worship—or, from Jackson's point of view, be *worshipped*. But that's exactly what happened that night, when the subject of an ostensibly demeaning ritual was transformed from victim into angel. Jackson's difference—his *Chinese*-ness—had at first been an object of teasing. But that same difference, revealed under candlelight, became so powerful in its naked beauty that not even the prefects—hot blooded, macho jocks that they were—could deny it. (Gawthorp, 2005, p. 41; original emphasis)

From this quote, it appears that Gawthorp's racial and sexual fantasies for Asian men were instigated by a hazing ritual of torture exercised by a group of white boys over Jackson. This ritual cannot be simply and innocently regarded as a 'boys will be boys' behaviour; rather, it should be perceived as an exercise of power informed by Orientalism. As Said (1979, p. 207) elaborates, Orientals are seen as "problems to be solved or confined or—as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory—taken over". Thus, this ritual demonstrates the subjugation of the Asian body. As Asians are seen to be weaker, the white boys drip hot candle wax over Jackson's body to display and confirm that "the Oriental [is] a member of a subject race" (p. 207). This act effectively marks the Asian body as the white boys' territory and property. It is also performative because it constitutes the white boys as white while co-constituting Jackson as Asian. Through the hazing ritual, the white boys enact their masculinity as aggressive, violent and in control of the weaker and feminised Asian boy. The ritual demonstrates that Gawthorp's desires for Asian men are fashioned after idealisations of what it means to be white, which are simultaneously integrated with fantasies about Asian men. These idealisations and fantasies are a feature of the social order, internalised in his erotic habitus, shaping his sexual practices.

It can also be suggested that the ritual transformed Jackson and, to an extent, Asian men into a fetish. For Gawthorp, Jackson's body is a mysterious and powerful *object* bearing familiar racialised discourses, constructing Asian men in particular ways. As he further writes:

> Pondering the reasons for [why I am more attracted to Asians], I came up with the usual checklist of fetishes: smooth skin, 'almond' eyes, shiny black hair, sleek bodies, and youthfulness. But it was more than just physical. My desires were motivated as much by a need for knowledge as a need for release. I wanted to understand my lovers—if only to learn about myself. What I knew so far was that the factor of youthfulness in East Asian guys awakened memories of Jackson, which in turn reminded me of my own arrested development and how I both resented and worshipped Jackson for his beauty. So all that smooth brown skin, all those firm round buns and boyish faces, had become a potent elixir of nostalgic eroticism and wish fulfilment fantasies. All that other stuff—the stereotypes of passivity, good manners, traditional values, inscrutability—was merely a challenge, an invitation to strip away layers. (Gawthorp, 2005, p. 56)

Here, the fetishisation of Asian male bodies emphasises the mutual constitution of racial and sexual fantasies as stereotypes about Asian men—having smooth body and skin, almond-shaped eyes, shiny black hair and youthfulness—have become a source of sexual excitement for Gawthorp. Furthermore, his sexual encounters with Asian men are a nostalgic experience, taking Gawthorp back to Jackson's ritualistic torture. His erotic desires for Asian men can be said to be shaped by a longing to re-experience what he felt upon witnessing Jackson's torture, which can be described as aggression, violence, control and power. These attributes are associated with what it means to be white and masculine. Thus, it is possible to argue that Gawthorp's erotic habitus is shaped by Orientalism.

Gawthorp's desires for Asian men are also performative of his whiteness. As evident in the passage above, sleeping and being with Asian men is a way for Gawthorp to know more about himself. The desire to know the white self through the 'Other' is eloquently linked by Gosine (2007) to Orientalism. As he argues, "through the production of Orientalism, non-white subjects are characterized as a function of the white subject and are allowed no autonomy, and purpose except as a means of knowing the white self" (p. 139). For Said (1979, p. 32), knowledge and power are intrinsically linked because having knowledge of something "is to dominate it, to have authority over it". To that extent, Gawthorp's rice queen-ness is equated with domination and authority because, for him, knowledge and the 'need for release' are inseparable.

However, not all Asian men are desirable for Gawthorp. As he writes, "East Asian men who had integrated into Western ways were often less attractive than those who hadn't … For me, it was far more exciting to watch a Chinese boy strip off his thong if he still regarded queerness as a cultural taboo" (2005, p. 56). Thus, we can see that Asian men's 'Otherness' is embodied in his erotic habitus. For him, Asians who have integrated into the Canadian (or Western) society are no longer 'primitive' or 'authentic' because they have come to accept their 'queerness'. In other words, 'queer Asians' no longer bear familiar discourses drawn from Orientalism, rendering them undesirable.

Attention should also be paid towards his description of his desire: "[f]or me, it was far more exciting to watch a Chinese boy strip off his thong" (p. 56). It is evident here that Gawthorp performs his identity as a rice queen by constituting himself as 'white', a 'man' and 'queer'. He also effectively delineates and co-constitutes Asians as 'Chinese' and 'boys', suggesting youthfulness, whose erotic capital (or desirability) is derived from their ability to perform submissiveness, i.e. to be *passively* consumed, by stripping for Gawthorp who considers himself as the *active* consumer. Therefore, Asian men are seen to exist solely for white men's pleasure.

The inculcation of Orientalism in the erotic habitus of some rice queens is also evident in the personal ads on Craigslist. It should be noted, however, that not everyone (in fact, not any one) of these posters identify themselves as rice queens. As McCaskell (1998, p. 45) argues, rice queen is "not a nice category. It's not said with pride. Not an honour. Not a badge to be worn proudly". There is a stigma attached to this label in gay communities because it is usually associated with 'UFOs': ugly, fat, and old (Gawthorp, 2005, p. 11). Thus, this label is used cautiously. While this may be considered essentialist and controversial, I follow the use in the literature and gay vernacular for the purposes of this paper. The category rice queen is performed through the subject's constitution of himself as white by citing and repeating performances of white masculinity while also fabricating his objects of desire as Asian. Let us consider this personal ad posted by a 51 year old white man from Montreal:

> *For boys who prefer older man—51 (Montreal)*
> Glk [good-looking] white horny mature masculine man searching for cute young bottom boy who is into & like to please older man. You are from 18

> to 30 y/o, cute; slim; hairless; Asian; little format; effeminate are welcome, too! Open for regular meetings if we click. No commercial! Serious replies only![1]

From this example, it can be said that the poster's display of erotic capital and expression of desire for Asian men effectively marks him as a rice queen. The use of erotic capitals to attract his objects of desire, informed by his erotic habitus, can be suggested to be shaped by Orientalism because his whiteness is equated with masculinity. White masculinity is also positioned to be dominant and top as the poster specifically searches for a 'bottom boy' who likes to please older men. This personal ad confirms the conflation of Asian and anus (Fung, 1991), regulating young gay Asian men's sexuality through the perspective of white men, whose pleasure is all that matters. Simultaneously, Asian men are co-constituted to bear familiar discourses based on Orientalism. That is, Asian men are identified as slim, cute, young, effeminate, bottom and have smooth bodies. This post demonstrates the feminisation of Asian men not only because they are considered to fulfil the role of being a bottom, but they also exist solely to be penetrated by and for the pleasure of white masculine men.

Erotic Habitus and The Performativity of Race and Markers of Racialised Desires in Asian Men's Desires for White Men (or Potato Queens)

Noticeably absent from the discussions so far is gay Asian men's desires for white men in the Western context, where they live as a member of a marginalised group in a white society. According to Phua and Kaufman's (2003) analysis of personal ads online, racialised gay and other homosexually active men prefer white men over non-white men. Han (2006, p. 6) attributes this to social systems already in place, "which prepossess the capital of desire for queer white men". Similarly, McBride confirms the desirability and centrality of whiteness in the gay marketplace of desires, where:

> [a] white man … who is 'very good-looking,' with 'a large penis,' a 'hot tight body,' and a masculine affect … represents the ideal type, the sexy and desirable man that we should all want in the personals world. (2005, p. 117)

Although McBride's work refers specifically to gay African-American men's desires and desirability, his description of the ideal man in the American gay marketplace of desire is arguably applicable in most Western countries, where whiteness is regarded the most desirable. Consequently, Asian men's sexual day dreams are populated by white, masculine and muscular men (Han, 2007). Phua (2007, p. 915) punctuates these findings in his study of gay Asian men's relationship with white masculinity, where "some gay Asian American men's preference for masculinity relates only to White American men but rarely other racial groups". While these scholars engage in explaining how gay men who are members of marginalised

[1] References to personal advertisements quoted in this article have been withheld to protect anonymity of the posters.

groups desire white men, we are left wondering how Asian men are also active desiring subjects rather than simply passively desired (especially by white men). In this section, I demonstrate how Asian men 'self-Orientalise' by incorporating stereotypes associated with them in their display of erotic capital to attract their objects of desire or even for their own pleasure.

It is possible to suggest that some Asian men's desires for white men are part and parcel of what it means to be Asian, drawn from the field of gay desire in societies where white is dominant. Representations and idealisations of Asianness are internalised by gay Asian men in their erotic habitus, actively brought into consciousness in personal ads. Gay Asian men self-Orientalise to attract their objects of desire (who are usually white men). This is evident in the personal ads posted by some Asian men through the use of descriptions such as: "submissive Asian looking to service a nice cock" or, "slim fit Asian bttm [bottom]". Asian men use stereotypes associated with them as their erotic capital to make themselves valuable and desirable for white men because the 'value' of being Asian is conceived and regulated through how rice queens co-constitute them. However, while Han (2000, p. 207) claims that "Asian American men's bodies are portrayed as small, unattractive, effeminate, and wimpy", it is possible to argue that the Asian men in these personal ads may not necessarily understand their bodies as unattractive. Rather, they actively and creatively play these stereotypes out as erotic capital.

Potato queen-ness may also be considered performative, rooted from Asian men's erotic habitus. Consider this personal ad by a 27 year old Asian who lives in downtown Toronto:

> *VGL [Very Good Looking] Asian Hottie looking for Masculine TOP - 27 (Downtown)*
> Swimmers Built Very lean, smooth and toned. 5'6 140 lbs. smooth bubble butt looking for a HOT White Masculine Top to play and possibly cuddle after. Safe sex only. Please reply with stat and pics.
> looking for tonite [*sic*] and tomorrow.

In this example, the production of Asianness and potato queen-ness through self-Orientalisation can be extrapolated through the repetition and performance of stereotypes associated with Asian male bodies, that is: 'very lean, smooth, and toned'. While not explicitly identifying himself as 'bottom', he communicates this by underscoring the fact that he has a 'smooth bubble butt'. He also presents himself as a potato queen, by explicitly pronouncing his desire for 'hot white masculine top', thereby constituting rice queens as such and excluding non-white, effeminate, bottom, and 'unattractive' men, reflecting some of the characteristics of the field of gay desire described by some scholars (Han, 2006, 2007; McBride, 2005; Phua, 2007).

Not only do Asian men draw on Orientalism to constitute themselves as Asians in these personal ads. Orientalism is also featured in their co-constitution of white men as their objects of desire by attributing and conflating masculinity and dominance with whiteness. Let us consider the following example:

> *Any white guys at [name of university omitted] want an asian boy???—19 (name of university omitted)*
> I'm a young asian boy. I want to find a white guy to boss/bully me around on a regular basis. Not looking to do anything sexual right away, but I'm definitely open to it should there be chemistry ;) I'm open to other ideas as well. I'm on campus everyday so I'm pretty flexible. Hope to hear from you!!! Reply to this ad and I'll tell you more about myself :)
> Another thing. I'm around 5'10 so I hope you're my height or taller LOL. But I'm slim …

In this particular ad, this poster performatively downplays his status as a 'man' by defining himself as a 'boy', thereby reinscribing youthfulness as part and parcel of what it means for him to be Asian. He further constitutes himself as such by reiterating norms associated with gay Asian masculinity, that is being passive and slim. To be an 'Asian boy' is to be 'bossed' and 'bullied' around by a 'real man' who is, and should be, a white man. Evidently, in these personal ads both potato queens and rice queens unconsciously co-constitute each other and, at the same time, providing cues about the erotic capitals that they most value from each other.

The cases presented suggest that racial identities and markers of racialised desires are produced through the repetition of norms associated with Asianness or whiteness, and what it means to be potato queen or rice queen. The process of 'becoming' racial subjects or subjects of racialised desires, however, "cannot rightfully said to originate or end" because performativity is "an ongoing discursive practice [that] is open to intervention and resignification" (Butler, 1990, p. 33). The subject, as an effect of performativity, is never complete and must constantly repeat the norms in order for him/her to have a coherent identity. However, the very process of repeatability exposes the instability of these norms. As Butler (1993, p. 213) argues, "identity can become a site of contest and revision". As such, the power dynamics associated with racialised identities and markers of racialised desires are open to contestation. That is, Asian men's position of submissiveness and vulnerability can be creatively and actively played out to undermine the rigidity of power relations. For example, it is possible that Asian men constitute themselves to be submissive, passive and bottom for their own pleasure and not necessarily for the pleasure of white men. The use of these stereotypes as erotic capital can also be configured as subversive because it is precisely through self-Orientalisation that Asian men become valuable in the field of gay desire, where they are regarded as undesirable.

In some other cases, it may be possible that Asian and white men threaten the perceived stability of race, gender, class, and sexuality associated with both. Indeed, there may be cases where Asian men are older, masculine, muscular, dominant, and top whose objects of desire are white men who are younger, effeminate, slim, submissive, and bottom: a complete opposite of the stereotypical rice queen/potato queen relations, demonstrating the instability of power relations. Some men in white/Asian relationships may also consider that unequal power relations do not exist, citing romantic love as the great equaliser (see Sudarto, 2008). Some Asian men may also strategically reject any advances from white men by

exclusively preferring or dating other Asian men (in gay slang, 'sticky rice'). These instances suggest that racialised desires are a complex phenomenon but do not exist outside of established meanings about race, where whiteness is culturally hegemonic. The fact of the matter is that Asian men and white men have to navigate and continually negotiate around the centrality of whiteness and the discourses of Orientalism, whether they consider themselves rice queens, potato queens, or sticky rice.

Conclusion

This paper presents a way of thinking performatively about the racialised desires of Asian men who are attracted to white men, and vice versa. By fusing together Green's theory of erotic habitus and Butler's performativity, I was able to consider how racialised desires are shaped through the internalisation of racial discourses and taxonomies based on Orientalism: a system of knowledge that delineates Asian men as passive, submissive, slim, smooth, and feminine; while white men are produced as aggressive, strong, and masculine, thereby shaping their erotic habitus. This theory, however, is unable to account for how subjectivities emerge through the display of erotic capital, a consequence of erotic habitus. By using performativity, I was able to consider the displays of racial norms as productive of subjectivities. The repetitions of norms not only produce subjects as 'Asian' and 'white' and/or 'potato queen' and 'rice queen', but these stereotypes are also displayed as erotic capital to attract their objects of desire.

By considering that racialised desires are not only discursive but are also material, rooted from racial, gender, sexual, and economic inequalities, we cannot ignore the fact that our sexual desires may have political consequences. As bell hooks (1992: 39) argues, "[a]cknowledging ways the desire for pleasure, and that includes erotic longings, informs our politics, our understanding of difference, we may know better how desire disrupts, subverts, and makes resistance possible". Thus, acknowledging that our desires are more than just a product of our fantasies and tastes and that they have, in fact, real political implications we may be able to use our desires as sites or place of power.

Author Note

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BOOK REVIEW

Alison Ravenscroft
The Postcolonial Eye: White Australian Desire and the Visual Field of Race
Surrey, Ashgate 2012
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Reading this book was an intense and intimate experience for me. This is an effect of Alison Ravenscroft's beautiful writing as well as the deeply personal, while at the same time urgently public, matters that she discusses. The book is about reading, and seeing, and writing, in the context of Australian (post)colonial relations. "How can a white subject read and write her other so as to refuse the call to perfect whiteness, so as not to repeat again whiteness in its old forms: whiteness as trespass and possession, as refusing others' sovereignty, their difference?" Ravenscroft asks (p. 27). The book is particularly about how white Australians read what Ravenscroft describes as "Indigenous-signed texts" (p. 15).

There is no essential white subject for Ravenscroft. Following James Baldwin, Judith Butler and Ghassan Hage, she writes "there are only subjects who fantasise themselves as being there" (p. 25). A subject can only approximate whiteness, can only ever hope to pass as white (p. 25).

Notwithstanding this status of whiteness as a fantasy, Ravenscroft is committed to the existence of radical difference between white and Indigenous subjectivities. Fantasies are inextricable from materiality and she extends incommensurability to bodies and country. In this way she goes further than theoretical positions that insist on the variability of bodily habits and meanings across cultural contexts. She argues that "the very substance of bodies is not universal but is made differently in different places, and that country, too, is made differently in relation to different bodies" (p. 39).

Ravenscroft's questions about reading and seeing build on the assumption that a subject's embodiment is always implicated in what she can and cannot see. She draws from psychoanalytic theory—Parveen Adams, Joan Copjec, Jacques Lacan—to make the point that the subject does not exist before the visual field (or the text) but is always part of the scene. A range of critical race, postcolonial and feminist theorists, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian writers, are also drawn from and critically engaged with, as are historians and literary critics. She returns several times to Lacan's theory of anamorphosis, illustrated by the black urn on a white background that, from another position, is clearly two faces in profile. It is not possible to see both images at the same time. In a discussion of Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* that leads to consideration of Indigenous Law, for example, she writes that "Indigenous-signed literary figuring of Indigenous Law presents a white reader with an anamorphotic form" (p. 78).

The book proceeds via discussion of various texts. Chapters engage with Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise* and *Carpentaria*, Kim Scott's *Benang*, and some smaller stories told by Indigenous people. The critical reception of these texts is put under analysis. Visual and literary texts by white authors produced over the last century or so, the straightforwardly colonial as well as recent academic work that seeks to challenge racism and colonialism, are also considered. These include photographs and series of photographs, accounts of white archival material from *Auntie Rita*, and white feminist history. There are some strong confrontations with other white academic writers in the field (for example, Inga Clendinnen) as well as some more collegial but also challenging engagements (for example, with David Roediger, Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs, and feminist historians). The question of how to represent suffering is threaded through the book. Unreflective white-authored documentary representations of white cruelty to Aboriginal people are engaged, so too are the fictional (?) representations of such cruelty in *Benang*.

I had read some but not of all of the Indigenous-signed texts Ravenscroft writes about/with. I have some familiarity with the psychoanalytic theory. Literary scholars and psychoanalytic scholars may read differently to me. But there is an openness about the writing that allows everyone in. There is plenty here that is relevant, challenging and inspiring to those who wish to consider the questions Ravenscroft poses. The book is a resource that offers comment on a range of issues. I have already quoted from it in my undergraduate teaching. But be warned: the book repeatedly confronts white readers with the gaping holes in our best efforts to understand ourselves in this country and understand how various Indigenous others might see us. It dwells on our discomfort in encountering that which is not available to be understood. This discomfort, to put it mildly, is a problem returned to again and again. In response Ravenscroft argues for "the silence into which things must fall, the places of unknowability … a reading practice that works generatively with doubt" (p. 18). Her reading and writing practice favours "the fragment over the whole, unsettlement over certainty" (p. 15). In this

context the book ends abruptly. I had recalled that it ended in anger, with frustration that a terrible story about a boy that surfaces a few times in *Benang* has escaped critical notice, or any kind of attention, from white readers. But going back to check the last page I found a compelling set of questions, as *Benang* pushes Ravenscroft, and she her reader, to keep going, to recognise that the perversity of white readers' and writers' pleasures must be seen, to find the Australian history "in which that boy has a place" (p. 160).

The book is not at all without hope for change. As a book about reading, writing and seeing, it dwells in the world of subjective change. It urges movement *towards* Indigenous "culture, art and law" but through a journey that is about understanding not arrival (p. 78). Ravenscroft outlines a process of re-subjectification which is "the best we can hope for, and the only ethical goal" (p. 24).

Ravenscroft returns repeatedly to the word "bear". This word has two related meanings—bearing as the work of carrying a weight and bearing as the affective quality of ability to experience (often in relation to pain or discomfort). She writes of her own anxiety that reading an Indigenous-signed text will be unbearable—"that faced with a strange and incomprehensible text, *I* will be undone" (p. 19, original emphasis). Gaps in knowledge that confront a white reader before an Indigenous-signed text might become unbearable (p. 56). The question of reading is "how to bear such partial vision" (p. 74, also p. 80). Her reading of Ken Gelder's and Jane Jacob's *Uncanny Australia* concludes that "Indigenous claims to country—the claims of sovereignty—are as unbearable to these authors" as they are to more conventional colonialist authors (p. 88). After a difficult discussion of a photograph taken at Cherbourg mission in 1937 on Christmas Day—a day of perverse cruelty particularly to children—she poses two kinds of unbearability. Being seen by the two Aboriginal men and one woman, a young Rita Huggins, who stare steadily out from the photograph is unbearable. But so is not being seen for herself by the whites in the photograph, not being able to imagine a relationship to them that will give her a place as a white woman—"for who could see *me* in a scene such as this", she asks (p. 128, original emphasis). The white *I* and the *me* are at stake in this book, they are visibly, viscerally, *under strain*.

By dwelling on this unbearability Ravenscroft lets her reader know that she too is filled with the anxieties of whiteness. The architecture of her reading position may not be enough to carry the weight of what needs to be known, including that she (we) cannot know everything as we might fantasise and desire. She fears that she may collapse emotionally under this weight—and so may choose not to bear it. This choice is, after all, a privilege and indeed well-worn path of whiteness in Australia. In the final chapter of the book she writes that "In the white Australian literary scene, a willingness to work with ideas of radical and irrecoverable loss, and to do this work at the level of form, is exceedingly rare" (p. 155). On the other hand "it seems that many

Indigenous writers are able to bear the unknown and unknowable" (p. 155). These are aesthetic differences and clearly politically significant.
On the one hand unbearability seems to be a bad thing—bearing loss and facing the unknown is what is needed. On the other hand, Ravenscroft's hope is that white readers will become different, will occupy different positions, *will* become undone. So the collapse of one position is precisely what is required, or to be hoped for. Unbearability is the way forward when it involves a move into the unknown, not something those who occupy white subject positions are tuned to or for. But this is the ethical imperative of the book.

The intimacy I experienced reading this book was not through any self-disclosure on the author's part. She has no truck with claims to make apparent the author's position or standpoint (p. 77). I can only think that it is an intimacy that comes from the book's opening of a textual undoing of the white subject—the intensified experience of knowing oneself as one falls into something unknown.

Author Note

Barbara Baird works in the discipline of Women's Studies at Flinders University, an institution built on the land of the Kaurna people. Her research focuses on histories and cultural politics of sexuality, gender and reproduction in Australian contexts, with an emphasis on their constitution through discourses of race and national identity. She is currently investigating the last twenty years of abortion service provision in Australia.