

EDITORIAL: MARKING RACE AND WHITENESS IN ITS DIVERSE LOCATIONS

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The collection of essays brought together in this general issue of the *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies e-journal* foreground the multiple ways in which race is historically, politically and culturally constructed whilst simultaneously showing how race marks bodies in particular, and unequal, ways. The embodied effects of race are examined through a range of spacial and textual practices including: photographic and video art, memorial museums and exhibitions, and everyday conversations about how people belong, are welcomed to or excluded from the nation. These examinations emerge from such varied disciplines as cultural studies, visual arts, human geography and sociology. The essays employ a variety of historical, philosophical and theoretical approaches as well as utilising key thinkers in the field of critical race and whiteness studies. This diversity speaks to the critical purchase race and whiteness studies has made on academic scholarship and the ongoing need to investigate and expose the racialised ways of thinking, acting and being that structure our social and cultural relations with each other. In order to unpack and make visible these relations, the essays in this collection follow the task of critical race and whiteness studies in critically interrogating the role of whiteness as a discursive and bodily norm in structuring race relations. In this respect, the collection continues the political and cultural work of challenging the presumptive normalcy of whiteness through a careful and rigorous engagement with the construction of

race in its diverse historical, cultural and geographic locations.

Race marks bodies in particular ways according to the dominant social and political norms of a culture but the lived materiality of those bodies attest to the constructed-ness and instability of racial signifiers. The first essay in this collection by Erin M. Schwartz engages with the work of Kenyan-German artist Ingrid Mwangi who “performs her identity by presenting her own body as a work of discourse” (1). Mwangi’s Kenyan-German heritage is the focus of a series of photographic and video works which disrupt and challenge the national and racial categories used to construct her identity. In works such as *Static Drift* (2001) and *Coloured* (2001), Mwangi draws attention to her Kenyan heritage and the colonial history of Germany in Africa. Schwartz traces this history and shows how Germany’s brief colonial rule in East Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries played a role in buttressing the later development of Nazi ideals of racial purity and superiority. At the same time, *If* (2003) draws attention to the complexities of the artist’s European heritage and what, if any, complicity this heritage might mean for the artist in relation to German white nationalism. For Schwartz, the difficulties of pinning down any stable or straightforward readings of race and nationality in Mwangi’s work ultimately “questions the foundation of” whiteness as a discursive and bodily norm because Mwangi offers “her own body and skin as a stage upon which the complex references of these racial signifiers are enacted” and problematised (9).

The next two essays analyse the ways race and whiteness structure everyday conversations about Australian citizenship and the nation in two different ethnographic based research projects. The first, by Michele Lobo, draws on interviews with long-term residents and recent settlers living in the City of Greater Dandenong, suburban Melbourne. Lobo argues that whilst the values and behaviours of Anglo or white Australian citizens comprise the norm against which non-white migrants are compared to and judged, the narratives of welcoming and hospitality expressed by her interviewees open up a space where citizenship can be conceived as inclusive rather than exclusive. In this sense, the "reiterative everyday practices" of hospitality and neighbourly care expressed by her interviewees towards new migrants "makes place a site of transformative social change where white privilege can be questioned and difference welcomed" (1). At the same time however, Lobo points out that "non-normative reiterations and gestures that shift the boundaries of white privilege are limited in decentring whiteness" if "there is no discussion or acknowledgement of indigenous dispossession" (3).

Catherine Koerner examines the links between whiteness, Orientalism and Indigenous dispossession in discussions about asylum seekers conducted with people who identified as "white Australian" in rural South Australia in 2003. This empirical study took place during the time of the former John Howard led Coalition government's policies of border control and mandatory detention of asylum seekers. Koerner points out that there was very little public debate in media or political discourse about alternative methods of processing asylum seekers, which led many of her interviewees to accept the government's justifications for its harsh

detention policies and sometimes violent border control practices. The former government's principle rationale for these policies centred on the discursive framing of asylum seekers as "illegal immigrants" and their actions as "criminal". Using the work of Edward Said, Koerner argues that this framing is achieved by an Orientalist construction of asylum seekers as "middle eastern" and therefore potential terrorists. The concerns expressed by interviewees about border control and the possibility of over-population centre on the positioning of non-white migrants as "threats" to the cultural homogeneity of the nation, which is implicitly coded as white. As Koerner notes, the positioning of a white Australian subjectivity as non-migrant masks over Indigenous dispossession and the migrant status of white Australians. In this way, the "racialised privilege in discourses used by the interviewees about asylum seekers" is "gained through the assertion of 'white patriarchal sovereignty' (Moreton-Robinson 2004)" which normalises white Australians as non-migrant by negating Indigenous sovereignties (1).

The final two essays in this collection turn to an analysis of whiteness and its link to American nationalism in the United States. Melanie E. L. Bush traces the development of American nationalism and its historical connections to whiteness in legal and political definitions of citizenship from the eighteenth century onwards. This racialised history of American nationalism means that contemporary narratives of "exceptionalism and superiority" (1) are underpinned by white, Eurocentric ideals and values. Although no longer explicitly linked to whiteness, American citizenship is nevertheless linked to an implicitly white, European subjectivity which constructs Asian or black Americans as "different". Like the construction of a "native"

Australian subject position analysed in Lobo's and Koerner's papers, the normalisation of a white, European subject position as American both relies on and ignores the colonial dispossession and genocide of First Nation peoples. Bush then asks whether American nationalism or ideas about the nation can be spoken about as if they are "a 'neutral' form of community" given that nation is "by definition imbued with relationships of power and dominance and shaped by global racial history" (10).

The racialised historical connections between American nationalism and whiteness make any attempt to endow this nationalism with universal and inclusive values politically problematic. Justine Toh examines the complexities and contradictions of memorialising the September 11, 2001, terrorists through the figure of the fireman. Toh looks specifically at the St. Paul's Chapel exhibition *Unwavering Spirit: Hope and Healing at Ground Zero*, and *Mural with Silos* by Jonathan Hyman, which is part of a photographic commemoration of September 11. Both of these exhibitions centre on the figure of the fireman as a representation of the American heartland, which in turn evokes notions of goodness and innocence. These notions are not only racialised as white in terms of the almost exclusive focus on white, masculine firemen and rescue workers from the Ground Zero site in Manhattan, New York, but also because of the broader historical genealogy of American nationalism and its connections to whiteness.

Toh is careful to point out that "it is nothing less than an honourable, courageous act when emergency personnel run into burning, unstable, and/or toppling buildings in order to rescue others" (2). The problem Toh argues, with memorial practices that focus on the fireman as a symbol of

heroism and goodness in the context of national narratives of exceptionalism is that they preclude a focus on the ethnically diverse nature of American society and ignore the racially exclusive notions of white superiority that have historically shaped the values of American exceptionalism and goodness. Such practices work to rejuvenate "white exceptionalist narratives" that construct the American nation as somehow produced out of goodness and virtue as opposed to colonialism (1). More importantly, the use of "the sentimental signifier of the American heartland in 9/11 memorial culture" functions as a "reaffirmation of the goodness of the United States that effectively does away with the need to interrogate possible reasons why the 9/11 attacks occurred" (1).

I hope the collection of essays presented in this general issue stimulates interest and debate in the ongoing critical work of race and whiteness studies in both Australian and international settings.

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WHITE WORLD SUPREMACY AND THE CREATION OF NATION: “AMERICAN DREAM” OR GLOBAL NIGHTMARE?

MELANIE E. L. BUSH

Abstract¹

Despite stories told throughout the nation's history, the United States began not as a nation of immigrants, but as a settler colony: British North America. The U.S. nation emerged and developed through the rise of pan-European domination involving the enslavement and exploitation of foreign labour, a process of imperial conquest (Mexico, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, etc.), a neocolonial policy of domination of the Americas (the Monroe Doctrine) and increasingly frequent interventions around the globe. White supremacy, both as an ideology and a system, formed the foundational anchor for the development of this nation and the historical capitalist world system. In this context, this article explores the meaning of nation, race and belonging.

“America” the Beautiful? The Development of Nationhood

Portrayed as the perfect democracy, what is the origin and development narrative of this nation and empire? Does the story represent “truth,” myth or

something in between? Bacon's Rebellion (1676), the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Constitution (1787), the institution of slavery (1619-1866), legislations such the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo (1848), People versus Hall (1854), the Dred Scott decision (1857), Jim Crow laws (1876 and 1965), and the ruling in Brown vs. The Board Education (1954) each mark the history of nation-building that intrinsically linked white supremacy and empire to the development of the United States.²

The story of America is entrenched with and built upon tales of exceptionalism and superiority. From the early years of European conquest, enslavement and expansion, the “nation” has been portrayed as white, contradicting earlier notions of enlightenment, common-unity, and belonging. “All” never meant ALL, “men” never meant “human,” and “equal” never really meant equal opportunity, treatment, and outcome. The equation of nation and white supremacy formed the foundational justification for trespass, genocide, domination, exploitation, and presumed entitlements of land, labour, and wealth. As the colonies and then the nation were established, struggles occurred about whose interests would be served and who could claim what rights. However contested, the nation and its laws were established with clear ideas

¹ This article is a reprint with revisions from Bush, M.E.L. 2008. “American Dream” or Global Nightmare?” *Journal of Global Initiatives* Adebayo, Akanmu and Olutayo Adesina. Editors. Kennesaw, GA: Kennesaw State University. Volume 3. Number 2. 135-149 and draws from previous writings such as: Bush, M.E.L. 2004. *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

² Briefly stated, each of these provided a line of demarcation between different groups continuously creating, reproducing and reinforcing the notion of race. (See Bush 2004: 14-24; Zinn 1995)

about who should and would be protected.

The controversy over belonging and inclusion was embedded in the Declaration of Independence when the very idea that all men are created equal demanded an explanation for why some are not. This challenge was posed by numerous people for example in deciding how enslaved people were to be designated in the Constitution and throughout the early years of the United States. It was raised in the eloquent speech, "What to the Slave Is Your Fourth of July?" by Frederick Douglass (Douglass 1970: 349) and in a discussion by Harriet Jacobs (1861) of the annual practice of "muster," a time when armed whites terrorised the enslaved population in anticipation of revolts. Jacobs suggested that this institution served to unite whites across class lines (Roediger 1998: 336) and by doing so also defined the parameters of citizenship. By that time the indigenous populations had been the first victims of colonial expansion. The advancing frontier, so celebrated in North American folklore, is predicated upon the dispossession of Native land and the elimination of the Native Peoples themselves.

"'During America's colonial era the ideal of white identity was male, English, Protestant, and privileged' (Babb 1998). Over time this ideal evolved into free, white, male, Christian, propertied and franchised. These characteristics developed into a norm that subsequently became synonymous with American" (Davis 2005: 155). This identity was also intertwined with notions of freedom, thereby reinforcing the relationship between whiteness and American-ness (Davis 2005: 155). As an outcome of the institution of slavery, "there were perfectly strategic reasons to allow the identity of American to evolve in opposition to blackness—

exploitation, appropriation and subordination of Blacks and Black labor" (Davis 2005: 156).

National identification in the United States has always been inherently tied to racial status. Racism was implemented as a means of control to establish and then maintain the structure of social organisation in the "new" world. Racial domination was encoded in the process of nation-state building for the United States as "Blacks were sold out to encourage white unity and nationalist loyalty to the state" (Marx 1998: 267). Slavery, therefore, played a critical role in providing a justification for the unification of whites racially as a nation (Marx 1998: 267), a pattern that continues to impact national identity, notions of whiteness, and formulations of race and nation in U.S. society today. The message has been conveyed that whiteness renders one "superior," and to maintain this status, allegiances must be placed with those in power who have the resources and can divvy up benefits.

While typically applied and understood as a black-white polarisation, the ideological formulation of race was also flexible. A stigma of racial inferiority could be invoked as needed to maintain divisions and enforce a social hierarchy. This stigma was applied to native and Mexican peoples who were characterised as savages, unfit to own and govern their land "coincidentally" at the time that those lands were desired by the wealthy elite. The "Trail of Tears" (1838) and the annexation of one-third of Mexican land (1848) are brutal testaments to this history of internal colonisation, land appropriation, and genocide. During the mid-19th century, Chinese workers were used as the primary labour force in building California's railroads. Their subsequent brutalisation, subjugation, and exclusion were framed and justified

overwhelmingly in racial terms (Smedley 1993: 268).

Throughout the 18th and the early 19th centuries the formation and consolidation of working-class whiteness (Roediger 1999: 14) and "American" identity was founded not just on economic exploitation but also on racial folklore (Du Bois 1970). Du Bois describes this dynamic eloquently:

It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them (Du Bois 1979: 700—701).

This centring and privileging of the European (and male) experience has been endemic—"not just a by-product of white supremacy but an imperative of racial domination" (Roediger 1998: 6). The new nation of the United States was built using the labour of Africans, Chinese, and a large number of immigrants, exploiting the land and natural resources of indigenous peoples and Mexican territories, simultaneously excluding most of these groups from citizenship and the benefits of "belonging." By the mid-19th century the arbitrary ranking of peoples and racial ideology had diffused around much of the world (Smedley 1998: 695) and infused into emerging notions of who was "American." At the 1903 "World's

Fair," being "American" and being "white" were explicitly viewed as superior in stark contrast to the colonised world of those considered lesser beings, for example Filipinos and Africans. The legitimacy of the racial order was thereby validated and inscribed in "science" and social practice that reinforced the concepts of race, hierarchy, and nation (Adelman et al. 2003).

This was a central component of the incorporation of the Americas that was the constitutive act of the formation of the modern world-system as a capitalist world-economy. It involved first the subordination of the Americas as a periphery to the Western European core states, and then the political subordination of additional peripheries including the colonisation of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific, and finally the incorporation of East Asia.

In the later part of the 19th century, upon arrival, immigrants from Europe were integrated into the expanding industrial economy in positions where there was opportunity for upward mobility. By the turn of the 20th century, the demand was made of European immigrants to become like "us"; like it or not, but for peoples from other parts of the globe it was that you will never be like "us" (Smedley 1993: 32). Following the pattern established early on, distinctions were made between who was deemed as belonging and who did not, who was "same" and who was "different," "civil," and "savage," who could own land, who could read, who could be in charge of and exploit other people's labour and who could not. These questions were resolved in naturalised hierarchies of race, language, culture, gender, and through an ambiguous concept of national belonging, whereby core values such as "democracy," "equality," "freedom," and "justice"

were evoked on behalf of "all" and implemented on behalf of "some."

Another dimension that came to define belonging was the emergence of "American English" during the early part of the 19th century. "When the new nation formed, British culture was still dominant, and it was not yet clear what it meant to be American. Noah Webster thought it was vital to shake off 'foreign manners' and build an independent national culture ... Webster's other political purpose in writing his dictionaries was promoting national unity ... He believed that a 'federal language' could be a 'band of national union'" (Cohen 2006: 4). Certainly, this played a significant role in the much later emergence of the "English-only" movement and the depiction of those speaking languages other than English as less "American," and worthy.

In this context, it is notable that in the beginning of the 20th century many symbols of U.S. patriotism emerged. Like the idea of the American Dream and democracy, the American flag has come to signify the elevated status of the United States in the global order. The flag's symbolic meaning has been traced initially to the period after the First Reconstruction and through World War I (O'Leary 1999: 7-9) with many legal and political struggles over the definitions of loyal or disloyal citizens. During the period of 1870-1920, there was disagreement and conflict over which icons, heroes, events, and identities constituted the national memory and the historical narrative. The "Pledge of Allegiance" was written in 1891, the "Star-Spangled Banner" was taken as the national anthem in 1931 with points of contradiction, and ambivalence about American ideals throughout this period (O'Leary 1999).

The turn of the century marked a period of contestation about who was to be

designated "white," as a huge influx of immigrants from Europe and other parts of the globe tested the boundaries of citizenry and racial identity. European immigrants worked primarily within the modern industrial sector that strategically provided them with opportunities for upward mobility (Blauner 1972: 62). This reality challenges the popular notion that "all Americans 'start at the bottom'" and work their way up the ladder. The racial labour principle designated a different bottom for different groups (Blauner 1972: 62-63). The slogan, "nation of immigrants" therefore describes most predominantly the European experience despite the fact that Jews, Italians, and Irish, were not fully accepted as whites. Over time however, European Americans were transformed into a panethnicity that represented the distancing of individuals from their national origin, heritage, and language, and being grouped as "white" (Alba 1990: 312). For this group, becoming "white" was clearly linked to becoming "American". Policies and programs of the early 20th century such as the G.I. bill³ and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans provided further opportunities for upward mobility for peoples of European descent, enlisting them in a panethnic racial "club" so that they "became party to strategies of social closure that maintained others' exclusion" (Waldinger 2001: 20).

The ideological and institutional framework of white supremacy set the parameters for the development of the United States and the modern world system. It ultimately led to the expansion of U.S. global hegemony and empire resulting in tentative positioning of all non-Europeans both domestically and internationally (Bush 1999).

³ G.I Bill stands for Government Issue Veterans benefits, mainly educational.

Being “American”⁴

Who IS an American? Someone born in the United States ... a citizen ... someone who believes in the “American” dream? Canadians? Mexicans? For most people of European descent there is no question about what it means to be “American,” they just “are.” Similar to being white, being American and a U.S. citizen is an assumed state of being from which all “others” depart. This status can be bestowed by birth, through inheritance or naturalisation, by association, or through a belief system, but it can also be retracted, especially for people of colour.

In particular,

Black incorporation is difficult because the dominant culture relies on a narrow conception of who is and can be “American.” Black people are considered unfit for membership because cultural representations of American identity have been shaped and defined as not-Black. In this way, American identity is directly associated with whiteness ...

The value-laden identities of American and Black are crucial mechanisms in the apparatus of white supremacy, and are used relentlessly to maintain white cultural hegemony in America (Davis 2005: 154).

In this way, “science”, institutional structures and individual attitudes produce and reproduce systemic patterns of white hegemony.

Similarly, in *Asian American Dreams* (2000: ix—x) Helen Zia asks:

What does it take to become American? The spirit of the question is not about the mechanics of becoming American, a process with which we are familiar: involving ourselves in our communities, gaining citizenship, participating in the political process by getting the vote out, running for office and yes donating to campaigns. Nor is it about getting acculturated—most of us have been Americans plenty long enough to walk the talk and traverse the nuances of the rhyme, rhythm and soul of this culture. What we’ve really been wanting to know is how to become accepted as Americans. For if baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and Chevrolet were enough for us to gain acceptance as Americans, then there would be no periodic refrain about alien Asian spies, no persistent bewilderment toward us as “strange and exotic” characters, no cries of foul play by Asian Americans.

Zia speaks of Asian Americans alternately being reminded of the 19th century congressional hearings debating whether Asians were too corrupt, untrustworthy, and uncouth to be Americans and then in the next decade, upholding Asians as model citizens. The reality is that regardless of the mechanics, degree of assimilation or cultural habits, distinctions are made between images of “true Americans” and people whose status is considered questionable by ambiguous borders and margins at which they are positioned. Thus, native-born people of Asian descent are still asked where they come from or complimented on their ability to speak English, as Mia Tuan says—caught between being forever foreigner and honorary whites (1998).

This ambiguous nature of being “American” means that the label may refer to someone with citizenship, nationality, residency or a quality related to a sense of belonging or even “... a

⁴ Quote marks signify the critical view of the equation of American with someone from the United States.

belief system; the way you act and think toward other people" (Keri, Black quoted in Bush 2004: 107). In this way the meaning of being American shifts between something tangible (naturalisation and citizenship), something unambiguous (bestowed by birth), something ambiguous (a belief system), and something transitory (a combination of any of these).

Martinez writes,

Today's origin myth and the resulting definition of national identity make for an intellectual prison where it is dangerous to ask big questions, moral questions, about this society's superiority; where otherwise decent people are trapped in a desire not to feel guilty, which then necessitates self-deception ... When together we cease equating whiteness with "Americanness," a new day can dawn (1996: 24).

Even whites who say they never think about being American expect a range of privileges as part and parcel of their birthright, including the "psychological wage" of a belief that "we are the best" and the material goods that accompany being located in the homeland of the world elite. "[The United States] has no collective identity except as the best, the greatest country, superior to all others and the acknowledged model for the world" (Hobsbawm 2003: B8).

The concepts of "America" and "Las Americas" have been rendered irrelevant and nonexistent, as the United States has defined these terms solely in relation to itself. Martinez speaks of this when she says, "If ever there was a time for people in this white-dominated super-power to reject its racist contempt for 20 other American countries that happen to be of color, it is right now as Bush charges from one racist war to another" (2003: 69-72). There have been

calls for U.S. national identity to be redefined for example as "United Statesian"; however, this too is a contested label as other nations also have "united states" or "America" as part of their official name (e.g. Estados Unidos Mexicanos). Perhaps U.S. American is most appropriate. Confusion also exists about distinctions between nation, state, and country.

In "Don't Call This Country 'America': How the Name Was Hijacked and Why It Matters Today More than Ever," Martinez discusses the relationship between the appropriation of this label and the U.S. history and worldview. She argues that while there are more than 20 countries within the continents of North and South America, it is the policy of manifest destiny to deny their existence, thereby equating "American" with someone of European descent. "In most U.S. eyes, the norm for American remains white—whether we admit it or not ... In unthinking self-defense, we unite with a name that reflects a worldview both imperialist and racist" (Martinez 2003: 3). This articulates a presumption of U.S. dominance such that there is no consideration of a broader "American" world.

Another component of this presumed exceptionalism is expressed through the idea that "God blessed this country." What does this mean when there are as many gods as there are religions, and when most of the world's people do not subscribe to a religion that believes in a Judeo-Christian "God"?⁵ Why bless our

⁵ In an article entitled "Oh, Gods," Toby Lester points out that new religions are born all the time. He quotes David B. Barrett, author of the World Christian Encyclopedia: "We have identified nine thousand and nine hundred distinct and separate religions in the world, increasing by two or three new religions every day" (2002: 41). Furthermore, 67 percent of the world's people are non-Christian (www.adherents.com 2003).

country (5 percent of the global population) and not someone else's? This notion reinforces national pride and asserts a sense of superiority and specialness.

What determines someone's identity and status, as well as self-determined roles versus those set by state and legal systems? Does national identity necessarily mean citizenship; what does national loyalty require? It appears to depend on whether one has the power to assert judgment. Being white, one is generally provided options to be patriotic and nationalistic, or not, and to decide the terms on which one's identities are negotiated. You can decide to think about being American, or not. You can choose one identity one day, and another on a different day. A person of colour, however, as described above, does not have that privilege. One's identity is selected for you, like an arranged marriage with legal mandate.

Democracy, Freedom, Equality and Justice in Everyday Life

Deeply rooted in the concept of American identity is the notion of uniquely democratic values, idealised principles of freedom, equality and individualism, and the belief that nowhere around the globe do people care so much about justice. Popular discourse conveys implicit beliefs and contradictory interpretation of these ideals. For example, democracy is often taken to mean very ordinary things, for example being able to "say what you want to say, when you want to say it". Evidence of governmental surveillance outside legal constraints lays this commonplace "truth" to rest. Similarly, a recent *New York Times* article posed, "Is Freedom Just Another Word for Many Things to Buy? That depends on your class status" (Schwartz et al. 2006: 14). For millions of Americans without health

insurance, jobs or housing, freedom means being free to be sick, unemployed, or homeless.

The United States is believed to be unique—built on a democratic foundation and supported with inspirational mottos such as "all men are created equal" and "for the people, by the people." The *New York Times* asserts that "American Idealism ... has always existed in a paradoxical linkage with greed, an alarming tolerance for social injustices and the racial blindness that allowed the same mind that shaped the Declaration of Independence to condone slavery" (1999).

Founded as it was by people fleeing religious and political persecution, the Bill of Rights explicitly stands for freedom of speech, including the right to dissent. Despite this, such rights have been parcelled out to those considered "deserving," in contrast to those who are not, throughout U.S. history. "'Us versus them' thinking easily becomes a general call for American supremacy, the humiliation of 'the other'" (Nussbaum 2001: 11). After September 11th, those who called for historical analysis were labelled by some as seditious anti-American traitors.⁶

In *An American Dilemma*, Gunnar Myrdal articulated the moral contradiction whereby the United States professes an allegiance to democratic and egalitarian ideals while allowing the reality of racial discrimination to exist within its boundaries (1964 [1944]). This contradiction points to who is considered deserving, who counts, who belongs, who is visible, who matters, and through whose eyes policy is set. In the current era, tax rebates to the rich occur

⁶ For example, faculty who raised questions about the historical role of U.S. foreign policy at a teach-in post 9/11 were labelled "seditious" (Perez and Barrera 2001: 2).

simultaneously with budget cuts to education, health, and welfare. This reality speaks to the way that concentrations of whites and of people of colour at different locations within the spectrum of economic well-being are demonstrations of the racial order and how it is embedded in the national policy. As the majority of whites in the United States deny the existence of racial inequality and uphold the idea of the nation as a meritocracy (Bush 2004), it is most often they who support the status quo by accepting dominant explanations for poverty as being culturally based rather than structural and systemic. Nation and empire built upon white supremacy are thereby sheltered from scrutiny. When one considers these ideological frames in a global context, the imperial mission is simultaneously protected. Immigration patterns are portrayed as proof that the United States is "God blessed" (why else would so many people migrate there?); rarely is the question discussed: how has wealth come to be accumulated in that part of the world? The "hidden" history of imperialism is not part of the national psyche despite over 100 interventions in the last century.

In this context it is important to note that contrary to the popular notion of 1960s only as period for revolution, the shift to the right we have and continue to experience (notwithstanding Obama's election) took root during this time. This trend included the consolidation of a conservative agenda articulated politically by the Project for a New American Century and economically evidenced in the polarisation of wealth worldwide. The foundation and legitimacy of anti-immigration legislations throughout the country during the Bush era emanates from this ideological perspective. The U.S. nation should be protected for those who "belong," especially its wealth. While the mobilisation of marginalised and

underrepresented populations both nationally and globally in the 1960s Civil Rights, feminist, Black and Chicano power, students and Gay Rights movements represented and accomplished significant changes in the national psyche and structure of society, these changes tell only part of the story.

The painful irony is that for many immigrants, particularly from Latin and South America, their journeys have been precipitated by U.S. intervention and destabilisation within their nations of origin (Gonzalez 2000). Similarly, the existence of minutemen, established "to bring national awareness to the illegal alien invasion of the United States" with the justification that "There are two common ways to seize a country: by military invasion with bayonets fixed and guns blazing, or by incrementally transferring an aggressor nation's population into the target nation, thereby overwhelming the host country by sheer numbers. The United States is the victim of the latter method" (Gilchrest 2009), provides harsh reminder of the hypocrisy in protecting Mexican land from Mexicans.

In U.S. elections prior to 2008, aside from the issue of alleged election fraud, roughly 40 percent of the eligible population did not vote; of those who voted, just 51 percent supported the winning candidate (United States Election Project 2004). Between 1970 and 2000 the number of 18 to 29 year-olds who voted in presidential elections dropped from about one-half to one-third, and from one-third to less than one-fifth for congressional elections (Galston 2001: B16). Furthermore, the United States ranks 139th internationally in voter turnout in national elections since 1945. In the 2000 presidential election, less than 50 percent of the voting-age population voted (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) with 38

percent of U.S. voting age citizens who had not completed high school voting compared to 77 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher (Livingston et al. 2003: VI). It is also significant that nearly a third of the members of the House and Senate, but only one percent of the population they represent, are millionaires (Sklar 2003: 58).

Furthermore, there are significant racial disparities between the percent of people in the armed forces compared to the civilian population. African-Americans, who are roughly 13 percent of the population overall, account for 22 percent of the armed forces. The Defense Department acknowledges that recruits are drawn "primarily from families in the middle and lower-middle socioeconomic strata" (Dickinson 2005). It then comes as little surprise that the policies government endorses do not correspond to the needs, concerns and dreams of the average American despite the demand for national allegiance even from those people who are rendered "disposable." Government policies resulting in massive displacement of people from the U.S. Gulf Coast region post-Katrina serve as yet another vivid and painful example of the gap between rhetoric of nation, belonging, and citizenship, and the lived reality of these principles.⁷

That the general public knows so little about the structure and status of nations, peoples, and societies outside of the United States further reinforces the sense of exceptionalism (Schwalbe 2006: 603-05). This imparts the sense of being special and different, and the need to protect the treasured commodity of

"American" democracy and the benevolent image of the United States. The government directs, the police protect, the schools educate, and individuals are responsible for the course of their lives. If one is not successful it is due to lack of motivation or hard work, an explanation reminiscent of the culture-of-poverty framework so often called upon to justify the disproportionate concentrations of poverty within certain populations, in particular communities of colour. This rhetoric is replicated in relationship to the analysis of nations, such that the institutions and structures that have led to the concentration of power and wealth in the United States are denied and the consequences are viewed as natural, based on a presumption of superior intellect and culture. "Ours is a society that routinely generates destitution—and then, perversely, relieves its conscience by vilifying the destitute" (Ehrenreich 2002: 9).

This raises the overall question of the purpose and function of nationalism. In his famous work, *Imagined Communities* (2000), Benedict Anderson locates the rise of "nations" as corresponding to the development of industrial capitalism, a historically contextualised concept, and asserts that once the printing press opened the possibilities of communication across territories, it became necessary to consolidate identity within communities. Nation and nationalism have come to mean something very different.

There is a need for deeper understanding of global and local concerns as individuals, as a society, as a nation, and as members of the broadest all-encompassing community of humanity in the 21st century. It is in this context that the question of nation, national pride, and empire must be analysed. Why would qualities of cooperation and caring being

⁷ From the media images that portrayed whites as finding food and Blacks as looting, to the disproportionate storm damage and slow response, race and class played a significant role before, during and after the hurricane.

presented as “American” as opposed to “human” nature? How could it be true that only “Americans” can lay claim to generosity, democratic ideals, the striving for freedom, and the passion for equality?

Hope ultimately resides in the ability of the peoples of the United States to reckon with the interconnectedness of all humanity, to conceive of ourselves as members of a global society, rather than as “Americans”—all the while taking responsibility for the actions taken in “our” name, and with our taxes. This is similar to considering oneself as part of the human community, positioned and allied with the world's majority, yet recognising the social, economic, and political realities of racism. Therein lies the particular responsibilities of peoples of European ancestry within the United States who specifically and especially benefit from the presumption of white superiority asserted upon communities of colour within the nation and upon nations around the globe as an expression of their imperial obligation.

The nationalism of those in positions of dominance, like whiteness, is a fabrication with real social consequence constructed solely to bestow value upon its owners. It is, as the “Race Traitors” describe whiteness, like royalty—an identity propped up to render some people more worthy and righteous than others (Ignatiev and Garvey 1996).

Is not nationalism—that devotion to a flag, an anthem, a boundary so fierce it engenders mass murder—one of the great evils of our time, along with racism, along with religious hatred? These ways of thinking—cultivated, nurtured, indoctrinated from childhood on—have been useful to those in power and deadly for those out of power ... in a nation like ours—huge, possessing thousands of weapons of

mass destruction—what might have been harmless pride becomes an arrogant nationalism dangerous to others and to ourselves (Zinn 2005).

This question is of particular relevance given the history and development of the United States. Nation, therefore, in the belly of the beast sounds and acts a lot like empire. It is time to reconcile that reality and consider alternatives. As Andrea Smith said at the United States Social Forum in 2007, “Another World is Possible, Another United States is Necessary,” but is it? What is the purpose of nation? Can nation be a “neutral” form of community or is it by definition imbued with relationships of power and dominance and shaped by global racial history?

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WHOSE SECURITY? HOW WHITE POSSESSION IS REINFORCED IN EVERYDAY SPEECH ABOUT ASYLUM SEEKERS

CATHERINE KOERNER

Abstract

The national narratives that construct asylum seekers as illegal immigrants in Australia were protected and contested during the term of the former Howard Liberal government. This paper explores how white possession is reinforced in everyday speech about asylum seekers. To do this, it draws upon an empirical study conducted in rural South Australia with people who identified as "white Australian". The study consists of 28 in depth semi-structured interviews conducted in 2003. The paper will firstly locate the interviews in the socio-political context of the former Howard Liberal government's policies and key events such as the *Tampa* incident. In doing so, the paper adds to the small body of Australian sociological empirical research that investigates everyday practices of whiteness. The paper identifies discourses about refugees, border security and the "war on terror" that reinforce Australian discourses of white possession. The paper critiques the racialised privilege in discourses used by the interviewees about asylum seekers and argues this privilege is gained through the assertion of "white patriarchal sovereignty" (Moreton-Robinson 2004a) in everyday speech. This privilege simultaneously disavows Indigenous sovereignty and reasserts white national sovereignty through the raced exclusion of Middle Eastern and/or Muslim peoples who are located as illegal immigrants in everyday white discourses about asylum seekers.

Introduction

... Aboriginal Peoples have never been accepted in this land, even though it is OUR land. We have never been treated as equals. I will finish by reminding everyone that this is not John Howard's country, it has been stolen. It was taken over by the first fleet of illegal boat people (Wadjularbinna 2002: 2, capitalisation in original).

Like Wadjularbinna above, a number of scholars in Australia have critiqued the link between governmental violence on refugee bodies and the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty (see Giannacopoulos 2006a, 2006b; Perera 2006; Pugliese 2006; Watson 2006), and the link between paranoia and colonialism (Hage 2003; Moran 2009). This paper will examine how white possession is reinforced in everyday speech about asylum seekers. The declaration of white patriarchal sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson 2004a) is summed up most succinctly in the words of former Australian Prime Minister John Howard: "*We decide who comes into this country and the circumstances in which they come here*" (Clarke 2001). Howard made this comment to justify the violent measures of border control used to protect "the Australian way of life" from people seeking asylum on Australian shores. The following section will briefly outline some key events including the *Tampa* incident, mandatory detention centres and "lip sewing" in order to provide a background to the events discussed by the respondents in this study.

In August 2001, a Norwegian freighter, the *MV Tampa*, responded to a vessel in distress carrying 433 asylum seekers within Australian waters. The Australian government refused the *Tampa's* request to land the asylum seekers on Christmas Island. This is known as the "*Tampa* incident" in Australian public discourse. After eight days of political wrestling, the asylum seekers (predominantly Afghan) were transferred to Nauru via an Australian navy vessel, along with another 200 (mainly Iraqi) asylum seekers from another boat (Hatton and Lim 2005). This incident became part of the "Pacific Solution". Over the following four weeks there were a further six boats, some of which the government ordered pushed back out to sea by the Australian navy. One of these vessels, the *Siev X* sank, killing 353 people (Taylor and Forbes 2002; Perera 2004). The then Prime Minister, John Howard, also claimed that asylum seekers had thrown their children overboard in an attempt to pressure the government to allow them onto Australian shores. The government misled the Australian public, who were not informed for some time that the boat was sinking, and the asylum seekers were trying to safely pass children and babies from the doomed vessel to people already in the water. This became known as "the children overboard" incident. These incidents and the narratives about terrorists and national security were intimately tied to the Howard government's campaign for re-election in the federal election of 2001 (Osuri and Banerjee 2004).

Mandatory detention was legislated in May 1992 by the Keating Labor government in order to secure Australian national borders against so-called "illegal immigrants". The legislation was altered in 1994 to allow detention for an unspecified time for those deemed to have arrived in Australia without prior

authorisation. One person was detained for seven years (Amnesty International 2009). Key events that shaped the Australian national imagery about asylum seekers included the much-publicised incidents of violence and self-harm by asylum seekers held in mandatory detention centres including acts of protest like "lip sewing". There were several incidents of violent protest in detention centres from 2000-2002 (Hoenig 2009). Two of the detention centres were located in South Australia. One of the detention centres, Woomera Detention Centre, was closed in April 2003 due to public pressure regarding the inhumane conditions that detainees were subjected to. It was originally built for 400 "unauthorised arrivals"; the centre imprisoned 1500 people, including children, at the time of its closure. Eighty percent of the detainee's were found to be genuine refugees. The centre was closed just four weeks prior to the interviews in this paper (Whitmont 2003). The Baxter Detention Centre was opened in 2002 and closed in 2007 (Harmsen 2007).

This paper will examine how white possession is reinforced in everyday speech about asylum seekers in the qualitative interviews that the author conducted with people who identified as white Australians in rural South Australia in 2003. As we will see in the discussion, there is a discursive conflation of refugees as a security threat to the nation and as potential terrorists. The key argument underpinning this discursive conflation is that it is the government's responsibility to do what is necessary to protect its citizens from risks to national security, such as keeping perceived threats out of Australia. This discourse of national security constructs the category of "citizen" in particular ways (Imtoul 2007). The above argument is followed up by another popular sentiment (at the time) which states that on the off

chance that any refugees make it to Australian waters or beaches, they should be sent back to their homeland or sent somewhere else.¹

A related discourse often presented in Australian political and media culture is the notion that there are too many refugees for Australia to absorb. Some of the interviewee's presented this idea through words such as "swamped". This is an extension of the myth about being swamped by "Asians" promulgated by Pauline Hanson in her maiden speech in Australian federal parliament (Hanson 1996: para 19). The paranoia that built up around this myth is in stark contrast to those who drowned when the *SIEV X* sank with delayed assistance from the Australian government in 2001 (Stratton 2007: 184-85). The Australian national imaginary surrounding the idea of vulnerable borders creates a fear and anxiety about who may or may not cross them (Hage 2003; Stratton 2007). Supporters of the argument of "being swamped" expressed anger and indignation that refugees have "jumped the queue", an accusation first made by former Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke (Manne 2004: 5).

The critical literature that has emerged in response to dominant discourses about asylum seekers converges upon a number of key points. One of these is to locate contemporary Australian responses to migration laws and national borders in the socio-political history of the modern liberal-democratic nation state and its relation to histories of colonisation (Harris 1993; Churchill 1997; Lui 2002; Moreton-Robinson 2004a; Davis and Watson 2006; Giannacopoulos

2006a). A second and related critique unpacks the Orientalist nature of how asylum seekers and refugees were and are represented in popular culture and news media (Osuri and Banerjee 2004; Imtoul 2007; Hoenig 2009). This important critique shows how the process of reinforcing Australian border security is a racialised one, which leaves "Third world" and "Middle Eastern" asylum seekers stateless, non-citizens and non-people (Perera 2006) and thus maintains white possession of Australian national space (Hage 2003). A third area of criticism is the criminalisation of the "Oriental" as refugee, and the technologies of surveillance and control, including racial profiling by the government (Pugliese 2006).

Some critics argue that the violence of white sovereignty exercised through technologies of racial profiling and hyper-surveillance have always been strategies of terror used by local, state and federal Australian governments and related institutions, against Indigenous peoples (Davis and Watson 2006; Watson 2006). Further, Irene Watson (2000) strongly contests the Australian state's claim to sovereignty by demonstrating that Indigenous peoples have never ceded sovereignty. Thus, the state's race-based policies and practices are acts of terror against Indigenous people. This body of literature informs the interview analysis in this paper because it outlines the race-based national narratives and practices that have historically reinforced white possession in everyday speech in Australia.

Finally, there is also a small and growing body of Australian empirical interview-based social research that critically examines the social construction of race, identities and nation in Australia. The studies vary in their focus and include an examination of whiteness in

¹ See James Jupp (2003), for a historical overview of the role that race plays in Australian immigration policy, and Robert Manne (2004), for an excellent political history of the management of refugees in Australian politics.

dominant settler Australian identities (Schech and Haggis 2000a, 2001) and the identities of British migrants who live in Australia (Schech and Haggis 2004). Other research explores the impact of race and racism on young Muslim Australian women's identities (Imtoul 2007). Another body examines how white Australians construct their identities and maintain racialised privilege (Moreton-Robinson 2000), how everyday Australians think about politics (Brett and Moran 2006), how white Australians conceptualise Aboriginal people (Moran 2009) and how Australians who volunteered to work in support of refugees in Australia understood their racialised position and national identity (Tascon 2008).

The following section outlines the research methods used by this study. The paper will then move on to discuss how Orientalist discourses inform everyday speech (at the time of the interviews) about asylum seekers in Australia.

The Study

This paper draws upon the author's doctoral research project in rural South Australia. The paper will analyse the narratives of race and cultural difference in the establishment of white, Australian born identities. The narratives of race and cultural difference used by the interviewees are contextualised within social and political moments of Australian histories of race and identity. The research project explores identity as a dynamic web of relations that are localised in social, political and geographical history within the hegemonic white Australian society. Therefore this paper will focus on the ways white possession is reinforced in everyday speech about asylum seekers, and is one aspect of a larger analytical

project of inquiry (Koerner unpublished thesis).

As a white, middle class woman researcher, this project is heavily influenced by the work of Ruth Frankenberg (1993). The approach of this paper foregrounds the role of power and discourse in the construction of the "other" (Schech and Haggis 2000b). The analysis aims to allow the multiple formations of whiteness to be viewed and critiqued as social constructions of cultural practice whilst at the same time addressing the issue of whiteness in the Orientalist construction of the asylum seeker.

The study identifies common themes emerging from the empirical experiences of the 28 respondents as they relate to every day public discourses about asylum seekers. The interviews establish the basis of this paper and are strategically directed to draw out "lived experiences" of race. In the tradition of grounded theory, the narratives that come out of the interviewee's responses direct the themes for the analysis and also produce more questions. The respondents self-identified as meeting the criteria of "white Australian" and the life history of the participants is used as a resource for analysing white Australian society in a localised context.

Most interviews were conducted over two hours in a single session. One pair was interviewed together (Phyllis and Louis) and three friends (Penny, Tracy and Joan: Joan arrived toward the end of the interview) were interviewed together. These interviews were about three hours in length. In each location a purposeful sampling strategy (Patton 1990) was applied and the researcher extended the number of participants through the snowball method of obtaining respondents from the

interviewees. The interviewees were each asked to supply a "code name" to provide anonymity for the purpose of the thesis and any future publications arising out of the research. Likewise, any information that may reveal an interviewee's identity has been altered and the names of towns and regions where the interviews occurred have also been changed.

The author conducted the interviews in rural South Australia. All of the interviews and the narratives articulated by the participants express social and political histories. The following section will commence the analysis of the interview material to examine the role Orientalism plays in everyday speech about asylum seekers.

Contemporary Orientalism in Australia

Edward Said's theory of Orientalism argues that "the Orient" is constructed through narratives and representations deployed by the West to achieve cultural superiority (the West, as a dominant discourse also constructs itself). These constructions therefore, are also linked to the political realities of imperialism for the colonised and the coloniser (Said 1978; Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 1999). In this section, the paper will draw out the Orientalist discourses which underpin discussions about asylum seekers and how Australian narratives about border control conflate refugee issues with national security issues.

Two powerful themes of Orientalism can be seen in the following two excerpts from the semi-structured interviews with Jenny and Mary. The first hour of these interviews covered the personal histories of the interviewees (including Jenny, Mary, Agnes, Shamus, Louis, Phyllis,

Louise, Penny, Tracy and Joan whose excerpts appear in this paper) to map the complex relations of class, race, gender and colonialism from childhood narratives. The second hour covered contemporary issues, including the respondents' views (at that time) on refugees, migration and their relationship with Indigenous sovereignty. The following conversations about refugees occurred after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the bombing of the Sari club in Kuta Beach in Bali on October 12, 2002, which killed a significant number of Australians and Balinese civilians. These events formed a backdrop to the Orientalist construction of people of "Middle Eastern appearance" by the interviewees.

Jenny is divorced, in her 70's and was interviewed in July 2003. During her interview she was asked how she felt about the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Interviewer: What about the twin towers in New York, September 11, how did that impact on you as an Australian?

Jenny: I look twice at anybody that looks Middle Eastern. I still firmly believe that these refugees – so-called refugees – many of them are infiltrators – Muslim infiltrators ... they are weapons of mass destruction.

In this comment, Jenny demonstrates a biological racism by racially profiling as criminal, anyone of "Middle Eastern appearance". Moreover, as Hage (1998) argues, Jenny enacts a white nationalist practice of placing herself in a position of governance over the national space, which she feels needs to be protected from the Middle Eastern or Muslim other. Jenny conflates people who look Middle Eastern with being Muslim, "Muslim infiltrators" and terrorists. For Jenny, Muslims themselves are "weapons of mass destruction". Farid

Farid (2006) argues that the embodied result of these discursive confluences for people of "Middle Eastern appearance" is a clear message of non-belonging, regardless of their citizenship status. Whiteness maintains the cultural power of Western civilisation to which the Middle Eastern subject position does not belong and is excluded (Hoh 2002). For Farid, the Australian government's policies and practices have been underpinned by "a broadly Orientalist ideology that assumes an essential difference between Arab and Muslim Australians from other Australian citizens and frames such a difference as a distance from and a lack of whiteness" (Farid 2006: 1). The Orientalist practice of essentialising Arab and Muslim people (or Middle Eastern "looking" people) was also documented in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) report as the following two quotes illustrate:

Before September 11th I have lived here and had a normal life ... now ... [t]hey will not just tell you that you sound differently, they will not look at you like you are a human. They look at you like all the Muslims are involved with it [i.e. terrorism] (HREOC 2004: 44, italics in original).

After September 11, Bali and the Iraq war we are treated like terrorists ... Even Muslims who have been part of this country for many years all of a sudden were no longer treated as part of this country ... (HREOC 2004: 45, italics in original).

The Orientalist representations of Muslims and Arabs in popular media and by Australian governments are implicated in the framing of refugees as potential terrorists in Jenny's statement and result in experiences like those of the two interviewees quoted above in the HREOC report.

Mary, also interviewed in July 2003, is in her late 40's. She is married with five school-aged children. She is tertiary educated in Art History. During a semi-structured discussion about Australia's relationship with its northern neighbours, Mary made the following observation about migration and refugees:

Interviewer: How do you see Australia's position in the world now?

Mary: ... It's all shifting and changing, thanks to Bali bombings and all this sort of thing ... it's very good politics to keep friendly with all our nearest neighbours because let's face it, they out-wipe us in population and it's just a matter of time if we're ever going to be taken over ... It really disturbs me, the fact that there's all these billions spilling out into the sea in China and all these Asian countries, and India, and we're supposedly this little pink blot empty, waiting for all these people to fill us up.

Mary's excerpt shows the Orientalist white anxiety that is represented in discourses about being "swamped" with Asians and in the concern about who has the right to be in Australia. These two discourses are repeated in many of the interviews. Interestingly, her last comment is about international communities perceiving Australia as an empty pink blot on the world map waiting to be filled (pink is also the colour of the British Commonwealth in colonial maps from the early twentieth century). Perhaps this fear is generated from the unsettling knowledge that there were (and still are) people in Australian territories who have a prior claim to the land before the invasion and subsequent settlement of Australia. In this discourse of being swamped, the settler society re-invents itself as being the "native born" rather than invaders or migrants. Those who were "born and bred" in Australia, with Anglo roots,

claim the status of native. This does not apply to multi-generation Chinese (see Ang 2001), Afghan or other non-white families born in Australia. It is a discourse that privileges and protects white possession by excluding the "Oriental" or not-white person from the narrative of being "born and bred" in Australia. This discourse of belonging works to reinforce the claims of white people to the status of "first Australian". This status masks their history of migrancy (see Moreton-Robinson 2003: 24-25), which in turn disavows Indigenous presence and reinforces white possession in everyday narratives about belonging in Australia.

Orientalism enables white Australian narratives to cast Asian and Middle Eastern citizens in the subject position of "Other", against whom the "native born" must protect their imagined sovereign claim. The Middle Eastern and Asian other are represented in the terms "billions", "masses" and "hoards" with the associated imagery of "spilling out into the sea" because of a fear of overpopulation in "their" own homelands. Mary fears that the "Oriental" will see Australia as an empty landscape, in comparison to their country of origin. She expresses anxiety that the "pink" blot of the former British Commonwealth, represented on the world map as far away from other "white" countries, is in danger of being over run by the Oriental invasion from the north.

Similarly, Agnes, in her early 60's said:

... we should have conditions ... if they choose to come here ... they don't have to forget their homelands, but they should adopt our laws and ways of living and please don't bring your ethnic problems with you ... they should be screened rigorously, why isn't there a restriction on these people? I don't like it. I think it is unfair. We didn't have it, we don't want it and if you choose to come here, you leave it

behind. If you can't abide by the conditions well go home really.

Jenny, Mary and Agnes draw upon an Orientalist discourse which, as stated by Farid, creates the belief that there is an essential difference between white Australians and the "Oriental" refugees in the detention centres; be they from China, India or Afghanistan.

Shamus is on an army pension and is aged in his early 30s. His father was a labourer and he grew up in poverty. Shamus thought that Australia used to be a white country, but that it is now multicultural. He believes that being multicultural means keeping one's heritage but that Australia:

... has the ability to absorb every other nationality and become an identity as an Australian. When I say white Australian, I mean, we also have like our black Australians and our Chinese Australians but we're all Australians. You've got to abide by the rules of Australia. You can't say "I'm Asian so I can go around doing whatever I want". I've lived through all these race wars in Sydney.² We used to see lots of fighting and people wouldn't change their heritage. They'll say, "we're Arabs" and that was it. Women have their place. I mean in Australia women are allowed to drive ... they should have the ability to get out and do these things. I hate that people don't have a chance. In Australia everyone can learn, but in Sydney they're very racist [sic].

The excerpt from Shamus has the expectation of assimilation through the idea that Australia absorbs different cultural heritages and that regardless of a person's background, everyone shares an underlying Australian identity. He

² Note: this interview took place prior to the race-based violence in Cronulla in South Sydney, 2005.

holds contradictory ideas about multiculturalism. On the one hand, he says that multiculturalism means people can keep their cultural heritage. On the other hand, he has an expectation that migrants ought to align with white Australian values and cultural practices. Interestingly, Shamus talks about the category of white Australian being more than merely white, in that there are black Australians and Chinese Australians. There is a slippery slope in the category of Australian-ness however, depending on how people abide by "Australian rules". For Shamus, "Arabs" refuse to change their cultural heritage and therefore refuse the possibility of being "Australian". Shamus also represents Arabs as refusing values typically associated with Western modernity, such as equality and freedom, which are exercised through specific cultural practices (e.g. women driving a car). It is his belief that Arab communities cause racial tensions because they refuse to be absorbed by the wider Australian culture, which is coded as "white". In the following section, the paper will outline how this difference from Australian culture is not only coded through Orientalist discourse as racially different but criminalised in the case of refugees.

Orientalism and the criminalisation of the refugee

Although white possession of the Australian nation underpinned the interviewee's discussions of asylum seekers, not all of the interviewees agreed with incarceration of asylum seekers. While the dominant discourses used by the interviewees did conflate refugees with breaking the law, many were not comfortable with the conditions of incarceration in the detention centres. Phyllis and Louis are in their 40's, are married and were

interviewed together. They were both born in Australia and are the children of migrants.

Louis: Surely there has got to be a better way of handling this process. I would hate – okay they have done the dirty, they have jumped on ships that could sink two km out of their shores or whatever but surely there has got to be a better way than locking up people and having them sitting there and all these atrocities that do take place in these places. What is the answer? Don't ask me because it is sad.

Phyllis: It is sad that they are prisoners where they thought they had come somewhere to be free.

Louis: Because it is not only happening here. Phyllis' grandmother from her dad's side, part of Turkey. A lot of Turkey was Greek back at the turn of the century and they had the big push and got rid of all of them out of Turkey in the early '20s. So they went to Greece okay. They were still Greeks and so forth. Now you have the Albanians that are jumping the border and going over there. It happens in a lot of countries but there has got to be a better way. The Albanians that jump the country and go to Greece don't get put in pens. It's really sad turning on the telly and watching people behind cages.

Phyllis and Louis opposed any form of incarceration as government policy for processing asylum seekers. The other interviewees who supported mandatory detention relied on public media and government statements to understand the issues surrounding asylum seeker applications. A recurring theme in all interviews was a strong discomfort about the length of imprisonment for refugees in detention centres. One alternative offered by the interviewees was to send refugees back to their country of origin

as quickly as possible. Another argument was a reasoned, though still uncomfortable answer, that it must be necessary to imprison refugees whilst their applications for asylum are processed. There was so little public debate about processing asylum seeker applications in comparison to European and other non-settler societies that the interviewee's knowledge of alternative entry practices was limited.

For example, Louise is a primary school teacher in her 50's. She grew up on fruit farms and her husband also runs a fruit farm. She thought:

... The issue with refugees is a difficult one. I still don't know what to think. I can feel sympathy for the people who want to find a better life. I can feel concerned for a country that can't just accept unlimited numbers of people, it would be nice to be able to offer refuge to whoever needs it, but in reality can you do that? I don't think you probably can. It is awful that they are locked up in places where they are so unhappy when they get here even. But then there must be channels that they could go through and do it the right way. It doesn't seem fair that some try and do it the right way and don't get accepted and then the others choose to do it the wrong way and then they expect to have the things that they want out of it. I don't know.

Louise was genuinely concerned about the welfare of the refugees living in the detention centres whilst their applications for asylum were processed. The issue is that their arrival to Australia in predominantly unseaworthy vessels (as discussed earlier in the paper) was construed by the government and the media as illegal. The focus on the method of arrival was used to argue that refugees have no right to be on Australian soil, and places Louise in the un-settling liberalist position of wanting

Australia to be a refuge for those who flee for their lives, whilst believing that their act of seeking refuge on Australian soil via uncertified boats makes their actions criminal. Louise said that she did not follow the events in detail, but drew on the Howard government's version of events, talk back radio, mainstream newspapers and commercial television news programs and current affairs programs for her information. This illustrates the complex relationship between the dominant discourses as represented by the government and media, the refugee "crisis" in Australia, and the lived experience of refugees, white Australians and Indigenous Australians. The security of the nation is drawn against and at the cost of asylum seekers' lives, as it has been at the cost of the lives of Indigenous Australians since invasion.

Likewise, Penny and Joan are two women who were interviewed together. They are close friends, in their late 40's /early 50's and are from working class families. They were asked how the Tampa crisis and the subsequent events surrounding refugees made them feel as Australians:

Interviewer: Did that have any impact on how you saw yourself as an Australian?

Penny: I think it's the Australian thing that you give people a fair go but you wait your turn. These people are queue jumping and that's what we don't like. It's not that they were from any particular background or anything like that but stand in line and wait your turn. It does amuse me a little when they go on about the conditions of living there [in the detention centres]. They are awful and fenced in and that but the actual conditions are not bad compared to what some of them – a true refugee, would have come from. It shouldn't happen – being

locked up like that but you know what I'm trying to say?

Joan: Yes I do. But we've signed an agreement with Britain or something to say that we will take refugees. That's where we have got ourselves in trouble; we shouldn't have signed it in the first place. I don't think we should let them stay here, just send them home.

The discourse of an Australian "fair go" versus "waiting your turn" is present in the interviews with Mary, Louise, Joan, Penny, and Jenny. This discourse is used to construct refugees as "illegal immigrants" who take advantage of the Australian public's goodwill by gaining access to something that can be "applied for" through the "correct channels" in their country of origin. However, in a war-torn country such as Afghanistan or Iraq, there may not be an Australian embassy at which to line up to apply for asylum or to emigrate. Such information was lacking in public debates about the methods of arrival of asylum seekers (see Docker 2002), particularly in the rural towns near the location of the detention centres.

The following excerpt is from an interview segment with Jenny, which again reproduces the discourse of the "illegal migrant".

Interviewer: How do you see the current migration laws?

Jenny: Well, I feel very strongly about the illegal immigrants who come here – the boat people. Because there is a way for them to get into Australia and if they can't abide by those rules I don't want to see them here. It has shown up in the way that they reacted in those detention camps, let's face it, they're not the sort of people that Australia needs or wants. We need workers, people who are prepared to put in their sixpence worth of work

to make it a better country ... I reckon many of them that come from the Middle Eastern countries are Saddam Hussein's and Osama Bin Laden's weapons of mass destruction. They are infiltrating this country and trying to do damage ... If they were the right sort of people they would have been model citizens and have waited patiently.

Jenny's argument draws on the former Howard government's promotion of refugees as being "illegal immigrants" (Manne 2004). The excerpt also indicates the limited space that oppositional voices concerning asylum seeker issues had in the mainstream media and the restriction of any information about the way that other non-settler nations manage refugees (Manne 2003).

Jenny's excerpt also essentialises refugees as being incapable of being good citizens. The discourse of the "deserving citizen" against the "non-deserving non-citizen" is linked tightly to discourses of white possession. Jenny conflates the refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran as "weapons of mass destruction" in opposition to an implicitly civilised West (in this case Australia). In another statement, she refers to the refugees as terrorists and as spies for Osama Bin Laden. The crime is that of appearing to be Middle Eastern (see Pugliese 2006). The discourse of the "illegal immigrant" made this criminalisation of refugees possible and thereby protects white possession in everyday speech about asylum seekers.

The interviews cited in this paper show how Australian national narratives constructed asylum seekers as illegal immigrants. The paper traced the way that national narratives about the *Tampa* incident, the "children overboard" and the subsequent sinking of the *SIEV X*, and the previous Howard

Liberal Australian government's "Pacific Solution" re-constructed asylum seekers as "illegal immigrants". The paper argued that the former Australian government used the narrative of the "illegal immigrant" to justify mandatory detention and the "Pacific Solution" which placed asylum seekers in detention centres. One result was that the subject position of "asylum seeker" or "refugee" became synonymous with being a criminal.

Conclusion

This paper drew upon an empirical study with people who identified as "white Australians". The researcher conducted the in-depth semi-structured interviews in rural South Australia. The interviews were placed in the socio-political context of the former Howard Liberal government and the key events and policy responses to asylum seekers outlined above. The analysis identified two key themes in the national narratives that the interviewees either drew upon or countered in their everyday speech about asylum seekers.

First, the paper found contemporary expressions of Orientalism in the participant's descriptions of asylum seekers. Examples include the Orientalist construction of people with "Middle Eastern" appearance that essentialised people who "look" Middle Eastern as terrorists or potential terrorists. This practice constructed the "Middle Eastern Other" as a threat to the security of the white nation. The national narratives about Australian borders maintain the white privilege to manage national space by excluding this "Middle Eastern" security threat (Hage 1998). Thus, a related sentiment held by some of the interviewees was that asylum seekers should be sent back to their country of origin.

The second theme evident in the interviews was the Orientalist fantasy of Australia being "swamped" by Asians and refugees. The Australian national imaginary fears that the territory connected to the Australian nation has vulnerable borders that need to be protected from large numbers of "Orientals". This discourse is wielded to argue that "real" asylum seekers would apply for asylum through the "proper" channels. This narrative positions anyone arriving by boat as "jumping the queue", who therefore should be sent back to wait their turn. These discourses deny the migratory history of the speakers based on the normative construction of white or Anglo Australians as "native", a subject position predicated on Indigenous dispossession.

In conclusion, the narrative of the "illegal immigrant" enabled a discursive conflation of the subject position "asylum seeker" and "refugee" with that of "potential terrorist". Furthermore, the paper showed that the Orientalist national narratives about asylum seekers, border security and the "war on terror" reinforce white privilege through the raced exclusion of Middle Eastern and/or Muslim peoples who are located within and outside of the national discourses of borders as "illegal immigrants". The discourses assert the fantasy of white Australian sovereignty at the expense of Indigenous sovereignty. Thus, the Orientalist national narratives reinforce white possession of the Australian nation in everyday speech about asylum seekers.

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RE-IMAGINING CITIZENSHIP IN SUBURBAN AUSTRALIA

MICHELE LOBO

Abstract

Formal citizenship focuses on the provision of rights and responsibilities by the nation state. Such an understanding of democratic citizenship, however, is limited in providing social inclusion in everyday life, if cultural practices privilege whiteness. Although this paper draws attention to such practices that mark the ethnic Other, it also demonstrates the potential that exists to shift the boundaries of white privilege and negotiate dominant narratives of citizenship. Using a theoretical and methodological approach that focuses on poststructural and feminist ideas, I argue that the ways in which place is produced through reiterative everyday practices, makes place a site of transformative social change where white privilege can be questioned and difference welcomed. I draw on 54 in-depth semi-structured interviews with people who live and/or work in the City of Greater Dandenong, suburban Melbourne, Australia to make visible these everyday reiterative practices, and illustrate how they can be conceptualised as acts of responsibility, rather than just repetitive acts of hostility and suspicion. From my intersecting and shifting subject positions as a woman, a resident, ethnic, migrant, and Indian, the visibility of such practices makes it possible to re-imagine citizenship in the local neighbourhood, the city as well as the nation.

Introduction

The interdisciplinary field of citizenship studies emerged in the 1990s with the

aim of producing analytical and theoretical tools to address social and cultural injustices, make these injustices visible in the public sphere, enable marginalised groups to make claims for recognition, and bring about social change through enacting national and transnational laws and practices (Young 1990, 1996, 2000; Leca 1992; Mouffe 1992). Within this field, emerging research adopts a critical approach to understand the lived experience of citizenship and the politics of belonging in local places that often draws on whiteness studies (Hage 1997, 1998, 2003; Kobayashi and Ray 2000; Amin 2002; Dunn 2005; Yuval-Davis 2006; Isin and Nielsen 2008). Such a focus on whiteness is justifiable because it functions as a normative ethnicity, a racial norm, a European attribute, hegemonic process, and a set of cultural practices that fixes identities, provides symbolic and material benefits, disciplines place, and regulates the social and cultural norms of inclusion (Morrison 1991; Frankenberg 1993, 1997; Hage, 1998; Wander, Martin and Nakayama 1999; Dwyer and Jones III 2000; Pulido 2000; Bonnett 2002; Moreton-Robinson 2006). The outcome is non-white subjects and the places where they live are marked, stigmatised and excluded.

Stories of cultural Othering are important in demonstrating the marginalisation of non-white subjects. Research within this field that is underpinned by "strong" theory, however valuable in demonstrating the politics of belonging, merely deepens our knowledge of what we already know; it is limited in making us aware of incremental change that is

part of the lived experience of citizenship (Gibson-Graham 2006; Hall and Back 2009). "Weak" theory, on the other hand, that is motivated by a feminist politics of possibility helps us see openings, find happiness and see places of freedom in the world (Gibson-Graham 2006). In the context of understanding the lived experience of citizenship, this paper therefore moves beyond an illustration of whiteness which causes oppression, marginalisation and exclusion and denies residents the symbolic and material privileges of citizenship. Instead it shows that academic practices underpinned by "weak theory" enables us to imagine citizenship as always in the process of becoming through encounters that welcome difference.

In this paper, I explore how everyday cultural practices interrogate the dominance of whiteness and shift the boundaries of white privilege. Amin (2002: 977) argues that although there is a consensus that the daily negotiation of difference in the city is crucial in understanding citizenship in "ways that have nothing to do with whiteness", the analysis of the kinds and outcomes of such engagement is limited and difficult. In thinking about the future agenda for citizenship studies, Isin and Turner (2007: 16) also underline the unfortunately limited empirical research on the "humdrum politics of everyday life" that demonstrates an openness to cultural difference. Therefore, instead of limiting my discussion of the lived experience of citizenship to highlighting the contradictions and tensions that arise in negotiating dominant social and cultural norms that privilege whiteness, I also focus on descriptive stories of responsibility and neighbourly care that shift the boundaries of white privilege. In adopting this theoretical and methodological approach, the paper aims to build on the interdisciplinary literature on whiteness and citizenship.

I argue that understandings of place produced through reiterative everyday practices have the potential to become sites of transformative social change where white privilege is questioned and difference is welcomed. Following Butler (2001; Butler and Salih 2004) and Levinas (1987), I conceptualise these practices as spontaneous and reiterative acts in local places that produce subjects, unsettle white privilege, and reconfigure dominant local and national narratives of the lived experience of citizenship. These acts are "fundamental ways of being with others" (Isin and Nielsen 2008: 3) that involve creativity, answerability, responsibility and openness in encounters with Otherness. Such thinking draws on poststructuralist and feminist ideas and is relevant to ethical visions of citizenship and the engendering of hope rather than just fear, anxiety and suspicion in the face of Otherness.

This paper draws on my doctoral research in the City of Greater Dandenong in suburban Melbourne, Australia that focused on exploring the role of cultural practices in understanding the constitution and negotiation of ethnicity, and the outcomes these practices have in confronting and destabilising dominant national narratives and institutions of citizenship. The first section of the paper provides a brief historical and social background of Dandenong, a socially disadvantaged and culturally diverse suburban area that attracts several new migrants. This is a place where I lived when I arrived in Australia in July 2000, and where I became aware of the cultural practices that privileged whiteness and marked me as an ethnic Other. As an ethnic, migrant, Indian woman and resident of Dandenong I was motivated to engage in this research to interrogate and unsettle dominant meanings that identified me

and the place I lived in as Other. The empirical analysis draws on excerpts from 54 in-depth interviews with people who live and/or work in Dandenong that I conducted in 2003. This section illustrates how the norms of inclusion and exclusion are not only marked, but also negotiated and transformed through narratives of neighbourhood character, Australianness and belonging.

I acknowledge however that non-normative reiterations and gestures that shift the boundaries of white privilege are limited in decentring whiteness because there is no discussion or acknowledgement of indigenous dispossession. In fact, only two participants referred to such dispossession, mainly to disavow Anglo-Australians rather than register their own connection to indigenous dispossession. For example, Vikram, a medium-term resident and shopkeeper identified Anglo-Australians as “pocket *maar* [petty criminals], mining *chor* [thieves who stole indigenous land for mining], small convicts, and prostitutes from London”. Although Anglo-Australians and ethnic minority residents are aware of indigenous dispossession, silence or responses like Vikram’s, can be interpreted as either complicity in practices that perpetuate and keep intact the binary of whiteness and indigeneity, or affective ties to the nation that are not yet strong enough to engender shame about a shared “negative past history” (Hage 2003: 106; Moreton-Robinson: 2006).

Dandenong

The City of Greater Dandenong is a local government area in south-eastern metropolitan Melbourne. Historical narratives of Dandenong usually trace the growth of the settlement with the arrival of white settlers from England, Ireland, and Scotland in the 1830s and

the indigenous occupation of this place is not well documented. This site named Tanjenong by indigenous people was subsequently transformed post-settlement into a squatter settlement, then market town to an industrial city in the 1960s (Uhl 1963; Ferguson 1986; Alves 1992; Tonta and Alves 1992). Residents, who were often workers in these factories, were primarily migrants from Britain and southern Europe. Following the abolition of the White Australia policy in 1972, migrants from South-east Asia, and more recently Southern Asia, the Middle East, and Africa have settled in Dandenong. This gradual change in the composition of the population was accompanied by significant economic shifts from the 1970s onwards when several factories closed down or relocated to other parts of Australia and overseas.

Today, government reports identify Dandenong as a working class area that is one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse areas in Victoria and Australia (City of Greater Dandenong 2003, 2005, 2007; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, 2009). In addition, local and metropolitan newspapers draw attention to Dandenong as an area of interethnic tension and conflict. It is described as a former “Anglo suburb” that faces the “hazards of multiculturalism” (Bolt 2002: 19), where ethnic “cultures crash” (Mann 2006: 1) and residents “looking to kill blacks” (Hagan 2009: 3) murder Sudanese youth. As a resident and recent migrant from India, such official and popular understandings of Dandenong have prompted me to explore and question the norms of inclusion that are accepted as normal or natural, but mark and exclude non-white ethnic minorities like me who live in socio-economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse suburbs like Dandenong.

To gain an insight into prevailing cultural practices that privilege whiteness, I interviewed a broad cross-section of participants including residents, elected local councillors, local and state council officers, representatives from business and industry, retailers, the police and community workers. I selected residents depending on their length of stay, and through the course of the research it became evident that those who had lived in Dandenong for more than fifteen years, were older and more likely to be Anglo and/or Christian. On the other hand, recent residents were often migrants born overseas of a minority ethnicity, spoke a range of languages other than English, and practised religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

I contacted participants using a snowball sampling approach that involved identifying and contacting a few participants in the research process, and then using their social networks to contact others. Since I wanted to gain an insight into prevailing cultural practices, the interview schedule consisted of some key open-ended questions that I asked all participants. Common themes within these semi-structured interviews were conversations about work, shopping, leisure, housing, public spaces, and recent redevelopment plans for Dandenong. The interview process stressed what Minichiello et al. (1995) describe as a recursive model, where participants were encouraged to share their feelings and voice their opinions about changes in the neighbourhood. Such feelings usually reflected their understanding of who was included and excluded in Dandenong.

I analysed the interviews using discourse and narrative analysis. Narratives are stories that help people make sense of their social world and the constitution of

their social identities (Somers 1997; Fincher and Costello 2005). The analysis of such stories provides insights into dominant social and cultural norms that constrain, but also enable negotiations of cultural difference. This paper shows that such analysis is powerful because it makes visible reiterative practices that have the capacity to inform as well as alter fixed beliefs, attitudes and evaluative statements and judgements, and stimulate “new ways of talking about self and society” (Abell et al. 2000: xiii; Denzin 2000). Such ways of talking about everyday life are signs of a rupture of dominant social and cultural norms; a “passive revolution” (Hall and Back 2009: 680) that shows incremental and cumulative change in the way we negotiate the common space we share as citizens. The next section demonstrates that such negotiations involve the marking as well as the shifting of the boundaries of white privilege.

Marking and shifting the boundaries of white privilege

In interviews with people who live and/or work in Dandenong, white privilege is exercised through strategies and techniques of surveillance that name, mark and marginalise subjects with reference to norms that are accepted but rarely acknowledged. For non-whites who experience the effects of white privilege, it is difficult to write about whiteness, but nevertheless important because the effects of such privilege can be made “visible in a different way” (Ahmed 2004: para 2). From my position as an ethnic, migrant, Indian and resident of Dandenong, I draw attention to such narratives that mark but also shift the boundaries of white privilege in Dandenong.

Narratives of Neighbourhood character

Several participants articulated stories of socio-economic disadvantage and cultural diversity that marked "ethnics" and the neighbourhood character of Dandenong. For example, Harry, an Anglo-Australian man, local councillor, and long term resident was worried that Dandenong, this place he loved, was changing with the arrival of new settlers. Dandenong, he stated was once a place with "good quality homes and good quality people" but had now become stigmatised as a "shit hole" with "second class citizens". Harry identified such citizens as "ethnics", settlers who continued to arrive in Dandenong. As a consequence, Anglo-Australian residents like Harry expressed sentiments of loss, because the arrival of migrants had meant the neighbourhood had "gone downhill".

In Dandenong narratives of alienation and exclusion were underlined particularly by recent migrants who were not white in contrast with the medium and long term residents who were less vocal. Some of these latter residents negotiated exclusion by adhering to dominant social and cultural norms that reproduced white privilege. Recent settlers, on the other hand, spoke of a "subtle racist trend", "aggressive behaviour" in encounters with fellow students and neighbours, and feelings of being "crucified by the media" for being assertive within the sphere of local governance. Several residents also felt they were negatively judged and their capability was questioned because of phenotype or English skills, and spoke of feelings of prejudice and antagonism when searching for jobs and interacting with real estate agents, government officers, community leaders and the police.

Examining the politics of inclusion in Australia, Hage (1998) argues that ethnic people of a non-English speaking

background (NESB) and "Third World-looking" (TWLP) migrants are positioned as "outsiders" who are often tolerated in the neighbourhood. Such tolerance, however, disguises the power that whiteness exercises in marking ethnic minorities as passive objects who can be included or excluded within the nation. Hage suggests that perhaps one of the main ways ethnic minorities negotiate such exclusion is through accumulating whiteness by acquiring the values and cultural practices of a dominant Anglo culture. Such practices, however, "sediment" the norms of inclusion in the neighbourhood and the nation, and reproduce rather than unsettle white privilege. Dunn (2005) in a study of the local politics of mosque development in Sydney, attributes the sedimentation of such norms to neoconservative right-wing approaches to citizenship that underline the assimilation of migrants and ethnic minorities to Anglo-Celtic Christian norms in everyday life.

Warren, a local planner and an Anglo-Australian man was aware of how whiteness and western culture regulated views of Dandenong and unintentionally marked "ethnic" residents:

Warren: People want to protect what they think they have as opposed to knowledge that the world is changing. If you're in your 60s to 90s and you are white and have lived in this area all your life, you used to know the neighbours. Some people from Sudan move in next door, then you are going to be suspicious because it's not what it is [sic] used to be. They may be some of the friendliest people in the world.

Warren, a mature aged Anglo-Australian man feels that it is mainly elderly white residents who find it difficult to accept neighbourhood change and view new settlers with suspicion. In contrast, Warren's interactions with recent settlers through his work, motivates him to think

of recent migrants differently and suggest that recent settlers from Sudan are perhaps very friendly. Moreton-Robinson (2006: 248) in her discussion of whiteness points out that it is only through questioning "the power of white Western knowledge" in everyday practices that other ways of knowing can be appreciated rather than silenced or dismissed. Warren acknowledges the limits of his knowledge and shifts the boundaries of white privilege by demonstrating an openness in thinking about recent migrants from Sudan and their effect on the neighbourhood's character. Thus although Warren acknowledges that place may be a site of difference and interethnic tension where reiterative practices mark Otherness, it is also a site that is produced through practices that defer judgment of the Other (Levinas 1987; Butler 2001).

Butler (2001) draws on the work of Levinas to argue that it is only through the decentred nature of subjectivity and the acceptance of the limits of self knowledge that responsibility towards the Other emerges. Butler posits that it is this incoherent nature of subjectivity that is enabling; it recognises the opacity of the Self and in doing so defers the judgement of the Other as visible and knowable. . This deferral means that the subject then has the capacity to become the site for the emergence of the ethical Self; an ethical Self that welcomes difference. Butler and Levinas' research, however, takes for granted the importance of place in understanding the emergence of the ethical Self. Geographers, on the other hand, conceptualise place as a material and discursive site produced through everyday cultural practices that have the potential to bring about transformative social change (Cresswell 2002, 2004; Massey 2005). Place is both a material and political site, where differences and tensions of

encountering the Other exist, but also a place of possibility that is open, where the Self and Other are always in the process of becoming through encounters across difference. It is this theoretical understanding of place, as always open, produced through reiterative everyday practices that provide the potential to see local places as political sites, where white privilege is questioned rather than reproduced, and a minority ethnicity is not merely marked but begins to be welcomed. Such questioning is important in contesting the codes and norms of a Judaeo-Christian belief system that defines Australianness.

Narratives of Australianness

Several residents in Dandenong confused morality with the codes and norms of a Judaeo-Christian belief system and excluded ethnic subjects who practised religions other than Christianity as immoral and un-Australian. In Dandenong, privileged understandings of morality meant that recent settlers, many of whom were non-white, humanitarian migrants and/or Muslim were viewed with fear and suspicion and therefore were difficult to accept as good citizens. Hage (1998, 2003, 2006) and Moreton-Robinson (2006), however, argue that it is only through seeing the nation as a white possession that non-white others are seen as threatening and less committed or opposed to the core values of the nation. In a conversation with Zournazi, Hage (2002) uses the metaphor of a dinner party and the guest-/host relationship to understand the politics of national belonging in Australia. He argues that a guest at a dinner party who is welcomed by the host begins to feel so comfortable, often showing a reluctance to leave. In other words, the guest outstays his welcome. In the same way migrants, guests who assert their

difference, are seen as threatening because they cease to have a dependent relationship with the host. Hage (2003: 66) argues that this "White paranoia" in Australia stems from the fear of losing the privileged access to national belonging that comes from being constructed as European, Anglo and white. Lionel, a mature aged long term Anglo-Australian resident and local councillor, however, shifts the boundaries of white privilege by feeling more comfortable with difference.

Lionel: I mean, I know this is probably, in one way a bad thing, but I was talking to an Australian of "Skippy" background, I'm "Skippy" obviously and he was saying...

Me: Who is "Skippy"? I haven't come across that.

Lionel: "Skippy" the Bush Kangaroo, yes. "Skippy" being the traditional white-Anglo-Saxon groups, and he was saying, "We seem to have nicer Asians now than we did eight to ten years ago". Well I think the Asians are saying, you know, in say Springvale, that, "Hey, we live here. This is our area and we feel comfortable and so we feel happy. We're not on the defensive. We're not guarding against this overwhelming, you know, 'Skippy' culture. We're here and we have the same rights as anyone else to be here".

Lionel starts his story by admitting a sense of discomfort in using racial categories. In using these categories, however, he also recognises that Australians are of different ethnic backgrounds. Unlike his friend, who reproduces "white hospitality" (Kelly 2006: 467) by extending his invitation to "nicer Asians", Lionel recognises that Asians have a right to the city and the nation even though they may not conform to norms privileged by Anglo-Saxons. Perhaps Lionel feels more

comfortable with difference and this prompts him to say:

Lionel: You know, my kids are now in secondary and primary [school] and there are kids from everywhere. I mean one of my kid's best mates was the son of the local Turkish hodga, and he came as a house guest to us. Obviously he has an Islamic background and we had a lovely time, and we were just friends rather than anything.

At this moment, Lionel does not negatively stereotype or judge clerics of an Islamic background as fundamentalist or "bad Muslims", as illustrated in contemporary literature on ethno-religious minorities (Dunn 2005; Dunn et al. 2007). Instead, Lionel is more comfortable with difference, and it is this openness in the presence of the Other that shifts the boundaries of white privilege in understanding the lived experience of citizenship.

In drawing attention to non-normative reiterations or statements this paper demonstrates the potential for critical subversion in everyday social interactions (Butler and Salih 2004; Dunn 2005). Therefore, although norms that privilege whiteness often regulate the boundaries and meanings of ethnicity, it is the social and temporal contingency of these norms that shift the boundaries of white privilege. I conceptualise such non-normative reiterations as acts of responsibility that contest "commonsense" categories such as migrants, ethnics, NESBs, multicultural people and dichotomies such as white/ethnic and Australian/un-Australian that became evident through fieldwork in Dandenong. Such reiterations provide the possibility to think how place produced through reiterative everyday practices can become a site of transformative social change where difference is welcomed.

Narratives of belonging

Perhaps such “acts of citizenship” (Isin and Nielsen 2008: 1) and welcome had an impact on experiences of happiness and inclusion experienced by residents. This feeling of being welcome in a new country is made more explicit by Sabiha, a young single mother with two children who arrived in Australia from Afghanistan in 2001 through the Humanitarian Program. Sabiha had no relatives and friends in Melbourne, but soon developed relationships with neighbours in the block of 20 flats where she lived. She knew many of the residents and conversations were at first, about where they were from and how much rent they were paying. Regular conversations influenced the ways that Sabiha described her neighbours:

Sabiha: Before, I have an Australian friend, neighbour, she was very good. She was very nice, especially when I came first here, she helped me a lot. After that Sri Lankan, and they also were good people. They were just living [here] for one and half years, then they went. Then come from Yugoslavia, they come and they went. Again come from Yugoslavia, they also moved. Now it's [someone] come from India. The Indian neighbour is always quiet, they didn't talk. Husband is okay but the lady is [a] very quiet person. Maybe it's because she is new one. Because for one week they are living here. But my neighbours they are very good.

As a new settler Sabiha experiences the support of neighbours and is eager to communicate with them even though they come from a range of countries and do not speak Dari, the language that Sabiha speaks at home. She told me that in her interactions with others, differences in religion, dress, language and country of origin could sometimes be obstacles to communication. Sabiha, however, underlined that the

teachings of Islam enabled her to value goodness or what she called the “good heart” of people who did not necessarily practice the same religion. Although Sabiha shows care in her interactions with neighbours, she privileges a normative whiteness in understanding Australianess and neighbourliness. For example, she unconsciously privileges whiteness when she describes her Anglo-Australian neighbour as “very good”, helpful and “very nice” which has the effect of disavowing indigeneity. Similarly, despite her openness, she appears to be less generous in her description about neighbours that have just arrived from Sri Lanka, the former Yugoslavia and India. Therefore, although Sabiha experiences a sense of inclusion through everyday interactions in the neighbourhood, the regulatory norms of whiteness are shifted rather than decentred. Perhaps it is difficult to decentre whiteness because Sabiha is very grateful to the Australian government for the rental assistance, healthcare, and educational benefits she receives as a single mother and desires to express happiness rather than discontent or disappointment. Although she has pleasant memories of a peaceful Afghanistan, painful memories of her husband killed in a civil war engender feelings of indebtedness to Australia, a country that she feels has welcomed her family. The outcome is that Sabiha is less assertive in claiming her rights as a citizen and refrains from adopting a critical relationship to the norms that exclude indigeneity and regulate entry for asylum seekers and refugees, lest she be seen as ungrateful.

Atu and James are humanitarian migrants from Sudan, young single men who receive the same social security benefits as Sabiha, but are critical of institutional norms that privilege whiteness and make access to employment, housing, and everyday

living very difficult. Atu expresses his feelings of exclusion:

Atu: But what are the people's needs, do they enjoy it all of them. The education here is good but what are the qualifications when they bring it here and then let them work in factories. They can't do anything in their field. If somebody comes here and finish all the qualification and not recognised, how can he feel. You finished everything and then you are told start studies again from zero. When you come and you have been placed here and you don't have anything to do. These are the things people feel disgusted about. People are just going on outside the core thing, the main thing, they are just talking, people they know the reality of what is going on. Someone never think to ask, "Who is a citizen of Australia?"

Atu is very open in expressing his feelings of disgust with life in Australia, a place where his sense of self worth and self determination are undermined. Unlike Sabiha, however, he asserts his rights to the symbolic and material benefits of Australian citizenship, and is discontented with being unemployed and dependent on social security benefits. Despite such feelings of exclusion, Atu and James welcome recent migrants from overseas to live in their small flat. They share a cramped two bedroom rented flat with others and must pool their social welfare payments to pay the rent and everyday expenses. Although Atu and James face difficulties as new settlers, they use the little leisure time they have to welcome and help not just relatives or friends, but recent migrants from countries in Africa. They argue that such migrants often find it hard to get access to housing because of long public housing waiting lists and limited opportunities in the private rental market that they attribute to the lack of tenancy history, a secure job and steady income. To alleviate such hardship, Atu

and James spoke of how they often arranged accommodation for new settlers before they arrived, and often travelled to the airport to receive them. In the following excerpt James explains how he negotiates the difficulties of arranging accommodation for new settlers from countries in Africa, who speak different languages and have customs that real estate agents are not familiar with:

James: Last September we have a family coming from overseas, a family of about nine members and we accommodate them with us here in that room, and that time we looking for rental housing here but we didn't get it.

Me: There are four of you living in this two bedroom flat, nine members came and stayed here?

James: Yeah, for about two weeks.

I was surprised to hear that James welcomed a family of nine people to live in a small flat. As a tenant myself, such surprise may be attributed to my awareness of the regulations that are part of a tenancy agreement in Australia that restrict the accommodation of visitors. Although I was also conscious of the inconvenience such accommodation can sometimes cause, it is quite normal in India rather than Australia, to accept this inconvenience if family or friends arrive on holiday and spend a couple of weeks in a small flat in the city. But what I think I found really surprising was that James and Atu did not accommodate family and friends, but people they scarcely knew, from any African country rather than just Sudan. Also, in recounting this story James can scarcely remember the risks and inconvenience that such hospitality caused. In fact, he refers to this gesture as something that is quite normal.

Such gestures of hospitality that are less invitational and are relatively unanticipated are temporal moments that “restore a sense of agency” (Barnett 2005: 20) and contest dominant understandings of refugees as marginalised subjects (Kelly 2006). When power is visualised as positive and productive, and responsibility is conceptualised as a virtue that can be assumed temporally by even those who are marginalised, the norms of whiteness that regulate inclusion can be shifted by “diasporic sentiment” (Keith 2009: 548) which demonstrates interdependence and goes beyond the boundaries of the nation state. Such subversion does not provide freedom from these norms, but rather it is the social, temporal and spatial contingency of these norms that destabilise the relationship between whiteness, white privilege and citizenship. These are “practices of resubjection” (Gibson-Graham 2002: 30) or practices through which citizens experience a sense of capacity to see themselves and others in different and more empowering ways. Such everyday reiterative practices can be conceptualised as productive moments that shift the dominant norms of inclusion which privilege whiteness and have the potential to engender a strong sense of belonging to the city, nation, and the wider world.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to augment the interdisciplinary literature on whiteness and citizenship by engaging with poststructural and feminist ideas. The paper has drawn attention to narratives of neighbourhood character, Australianness and belonging to demonstrate how white privilege is marked and shifted through everyday practices. I have argued that place produced through reiterative everyday practices has the potential to become a

site of transformative social change where white privilege is questioned and difference is welcomed. I have demonstrated that non-normative reiterations and gestures, which welcome difference, reflect moments of ethical responsibility. Such “spatially extensive connections of interdependence” (Lawson 2007: 1) are important in moving beyond critique and thinking more productively about the affective dimension of the lived experience of citizenship. Although the affective dimension of everyday life produces conflict and feelings of exclusion, it produces emotional relations that prompted participants to say, “For me [Dandenong] is good” and “Dandenong is the best place to live”. These are spatial-temporal moments when life in Dandenong encapsulates feelings of inclusion that stimulates love and pride that shifts the norms of inclusion. The outcome is that Dandenong becomes a place where residents can *continue* to feel included if they are long-term settlers, or *begin* to feel included if they are new settlers.

By drawing attention to Dandenong, a specific place in Australian suburbia, this research makes a contribution to the contemporary literature on whiteness and citizenship by illustrating that place matters in ethical visions of citizenship. This spatial turn has the potential to destabilise existing binaries of the Self and Other and enable us to see ethnically diverse suburbs as spaces of hope rather than just marginalised places of interethnic tension where whiteness is privileged. Gleeson (2006: 186) in a discussion of social difference in Australian suburbia, describes suburbs as “heartlands”, once places of hope that have today become culturally segregated, where fear, uncertainty and insecurity exists. Although Gleeson points out that it is within suburbia that citizenship is enacted, he regrets that lives of ordinary citizens are excluded

from media reports and scholarly analysis. In drawing attention to the lives of ordinary citizens this paper has shown that small, sometimes seemingly inconsequential social interactions shape everyday experiences of citizenship in ways that shift the boundaries of white privilege, and contribute to political subjectivities that have the capacity to empower us as local and global citizens.

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INGRID MWANGI: ENACTING THE BODY AS STAGE

ERIN M. SCHWARTZ

Abstract

The artist Ingrid Mwangi was born to a Kenyan father and a German mother and has lived in both Africa and Europe. Identifying herself as a "hyphenated person" and displaying the inherent problematics of racially based notions of national identity, Mwangi presents her own body as the troubled unity of both subject and object in her art. Michael J. C. Echeruo (1999: 10) maintains that choosing a subjective identity is absurd, for identity is constructed from the subject but is also everything the subject is not. It is through this approach to identity as construct that Ingrid Mwangi performs her identity by creating herself as a site of discourse. When she says in a commentary on her 2001 work *Coloured*, "I am the stage," she posits her own body as the location of a discourse that is dependant on the confused racial signifiers of skin colour. The body politics of cultural framing are enacted in her works, denying any sense of stability or unity. She confronts the viewer's understanding of racial categories through the constant affirmation/denial of her bodily self. In this paper, I examine Mwangi's performance and installation works as critiques on the placement/role of the physical body in identity discourse.

Introduction

Michael J. C. Echeruo (1999: 10) maintains that choosing a subjective identity is absurd, for identity is constructed from the subject but also from everything the subject is not. This distinction is important, for it immediately

posits that for every One, there must be an Other. It immediately posits an internal/external dichotomy through which one's subjective understanding of identity is mirrored (perhaps in a Lacanian sense) or countered by those who are not in the subject's place. Subjective identity, therefore, is always objectified, and I would argue, embodied. It is in this framework that the artist, Ingrid Mwangi performs her identity by presenting her own body as a work of discourse. When she says in a commentary on her 2001 work *Coloured*, "I am the stage," she posits her own body as the site of discourse. A discourse dependant on the confused racial signifiers of skin colour (see Figure 1). The body politics of cultural framing is enacted in her works and used to deny any sense of stability or unity for the viewer. She confronts the viewer's understanding of racial categories through the constant affirmation and denial of herself in autobiographical journeys of self-reflective African and European lenses (Fitzgerald 2003: 27). In this paper, a few of Mwangi's photographic, performance and installations works will be examined as critiques on the placement/role of the physical body in identity discourse.¹

¹ My exclusive focus on Ingrid Mwangi in this paper should not be taken to mean that she is the only artist dealing with these issues in her work. On the contrary, many artists across the globe examine and question the role of race and nationality in identity formation. (Lorna Simpson, Antonio Dias, Destiny Deacon, Berni Searle, Minnette Vari, Adrian Piper are a representative list.) My focus on Mwangi is to examine the specific challenge she makes to traditional binary



Figure 1: Coloured, 2001. Photograph © 2001 IngridMwangiRobertHutter.

The artist Ingrid Mwangi was born to a Kenyan father and a German mother and has lived in both Africa and Europe. Her works often invoke her status as someone in-between, too white to be Kenyan, and too black to be German; someone left out of conventional binary discourses of race and national identity. Through her performances, Mwangi identifies herself as a "hyphenated person" (Afro-German or German-Kenyan, etc.) displaying the inherent instabilities of racial-national identity and the dualities of interior/exterior, other/self, African/European. Okwui Enwezor (2003: 53) describes modern art as an internalised awareness of hierarchy and contemporary art as an "evisceration of the idea of the authority of originality and the aura of the image." Ingrid Mwangi performs such an "evisceration" through citation of her own body as the troubled unity of both subject and object. I will examine selected works by Mwangi, in collaboration with her husband and fellow artist Robert Hutter, to show how she uses her pieces to display a subjective cultural framing which places the crux of discourse on the body itself, and not on its origin or culture. In so

opposition of European and African in the German-Kenyan context.

doing, she undermines any conception of the authority of origins as the standard for identification. She also implicates the viewers of her works and their own assumed racial and cultural understanding of the identities of themselves and of others.

German Colonialism in Africa and Ingrid Mwangi's Commentary on Racial Identity

Many of Mwangi's works operate specifically within the historical framework of German-African colonialism and post-colonialism. In the first part of this paper, I will explore the colonial history of Germany and Kenya and how this complex history serves as a foundation for the language of Mwangi's pieces. This is seen particularly in her 2001 piece *Static Drift* (see Figure 2). It is in this work that Mwangi's skin becomes the medium through which cultural and national signifiers of identity are revealed. The first (left) image shows the viewer a portion of Mwangi's torso with the silhouette of Africa presented as an area of skin lighter in tone than the rest of the body with the words "Bright Dark Continent" arched across it. The second image shows the same torso but now the silhouette is of Germany, removed from the continent of Europe in a darker shade of skin than the body with the lighter text reading "Burn Out Country." In a comparison of these images, Germany is presented as larger than the continent of Africa, as Germany seems to stretch out in all directions across the skin, even breaking the top border of the image. The image of Africa on the other hand seems confined and smaller, not threatening to overcome the body onto which it has been etched. This seems to reference the complicated history of German colonial involvement in Africa.

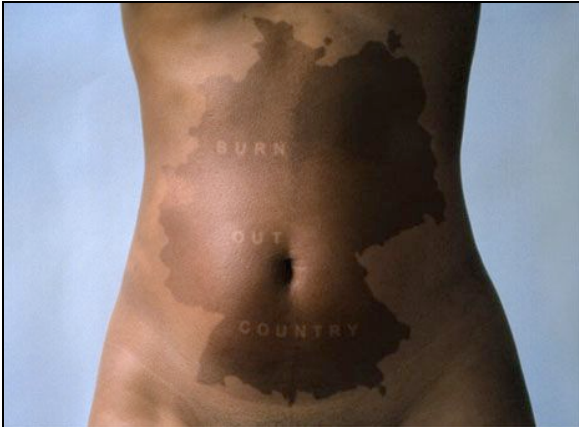


Figure 2: *Static Drift*, 2001. Photograph © 2001 IngridMwangiRobertHutter.

Despite its brief rule in Africa, Germany colonised an area roughly four times larger than Germany proper (von Joeden-Forgey 2005: 167). Eventually the budding empire founded German East Africa (including parts of modern Tanzania, Kenya, and Rwanda) by the 1880s. The short rule of this area was especially violent. A series of bloody revolts included the 1905-7 “Maji Maji” revolts where an estimated 75,000 to 100,000 Africans were killed. Despite harsh resistance, Germans used an integrated army for colonial warfare, but finally yielded their East African territories to the British on 25 November 1918 (Friedrichsmeyer 1998: 12-15). Since the loss of its colonies until the end of World War II, German imperial fantasies formed much of its cultural mythology surrounding the glory and prosperity that might-have-been. Germany’s colonial empire was brief with only few African migrants coming “in” when compared to France or Britain.² However, the ferocity of German activity in Africa is often cited as a precursor to its later totalitarian regimes. The German mass-

murder of the Herero and Nama in German South West Africa (1904-7) is often referred to by historians as the precursor to the Holocaust (Jefferies 2008: 176-7). Of course, there were those in the German public sphere who steadfastly protested their government’s treatment of Africans. Interestingly, even those defending the rights of Africans used the common rhetoric employed by parliamentarians describing acts of indigenous savagery and drumming up fears of miscegenation (Smith 1998: 108). In *Static Drift*, Mwangi recalls fears of “race-mixing” through the switched signifiers of skin colour, where Germany is “dark” and Africa is “light.” This switch also invokes the horrors of colonialism where German “darkness” is visited on Africa through its colonial savagery, a savagery historically associated with dark skin.

The text of the two images taken together read “Bright Dark Continent; Burn Out Country.” Here Mwangi disrupts one’s sense of the authority of origins as it relates to European history. Europe casts Africa as the Dark Continent, an area upon which the values of the Enlightenment must be shone. Europe’s colonising mission was idealistically a mission of Enlightenment. Mwangi literally and problematically embodies the Enlightenment by lightening her own skin, thus making her whiter to illustrate, like a scar or birthmark, the ramifications of colonisation on the colonised; but this reading is troublesome. She is both Kenyan and German. Her own skin, darker than “typical” German skin, is an outward signifier of her status as an artist in the diaspora, someone outside German culture. She challenges the notion of diaspora, loosely defined as a type of exile by Michael Echeruo (1999: 9). The second image and phrase, “Burn Out Country,” gestures to her German side. Germany lost its colonial territories

² Here the term “in” is used from the point of view of Germany, where the European power is seen as the centre of civilisation and Africa as the periphery. It is exactly this sort of dichotomy which Mwangi is challenging.

after World War I as it ripped itself and much of Europe apart during the Second World War and only began a process of re-assembly after the unification of 1989. Germany is a country lacking a historic continuity of national identity. From Empire to Republic to Third Reich to division to unification, the only consistent thread in the complex weave of German self-identification has been a concept of its people, *Volk*, as a group transcending historic and political specificity. That it is this self-same group, abstractly speaking, that has repeatedly "burned out" Germany, is a confrontation to the myth of the authority of German origins. Mwangi's invocation of Germany on her skin points to her mother's heritage, confounding the traditional patriarchal structure of German citizenship; while she simultaneously presents German identity itself as a birthmark (or scar) that transforms the skin, marking the body as the signifier of being, in her work.

Throughout the colonial period and after, and especially during the Third Reich, images of African "otherness" commonly appeared in popular culture and film. In 1939, German films had the typical Hollywood archetypes of Africa as the "dark continent" open for adventure and conquest. By 1941, films began to legitimise German territorial expansion using Africa as a backdrop, pitting German humanitarianism against British exploitation (Hake 1998: 164). In many instances, Africans were depicted as disease carriers, as in films like the 1943 *Germanin*, directed by Max Kimmich, who was Joseph Goebbels' brother-in-law. The depiction of Africans as similar to vermin echoes the cinematic treatment of Jews in films such as *Der ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*) from 1940. The important difference between depictions of Jewish and African archetypes in the cinema was that Jews were depicted as conspiratorial and deserving of their

suffering, whereas Africans were passive, innocent sufferers in need of a cultural guiding force to save them (Hake 1998: 164).

Sabine Hake (1998: 177) describes the complexity of signifiers at work in Nazi films where there were more representations of blackness than Jewish-ness. This sets up a series of polemics: Europe versus Africa, which contains within it, Germany versus England, which implies the German *Volk* versus the British subjects, wherein the British people are equated with the characteristics of Jewish-ness, and indeed any other nation of people opposing Germany was seen as Jewish. Thus the African became a passive signifier for the confrontation with the British as the other colonial power and equivalent to Jews.

Mwangi and her husband, fellow artist Robert Hutter, refer specifically to this conflation of African and Jewish identification in German history in their 2003 photographic series *If* (see Figure 3). The crowded scene features Hutter as Adolf Hitler surrounded by dark-skinned women, who are duplicated Mwangis, leaning into his space paying rapt attention to the Führer, whose gaze is fixed on the camera. The staging of the photo is based on actual photographs of Hitler surrounded by soon-to-be-exiled women, displaying the apparent magnetism of Hitler as a leader. Mwangi describes the purpose of the scene, here quoted at length:

The fact is: German history is part of my heritage. And if in art I have begun to use my identity to ask questions about individual responsibility, then I cannot stop at my African identity. I must go all the way. This is the starting point for a new series of artistic investigations. In previous works I have been discussing the concept, history and reality of Blackness, beginning with

my personal story, and going beyond that into further identification with what it must mean to be discriminated, exploited and violated, by the mere fact of dark skin [. . .] My artistic strategy became increasingly one of identification; to take the place of the other, in order to feel, to understand. In *If* I take a similar approach of putting myself in place of the other, but resulting in a different outcome *for the viewer will not as willingly accept my identification with the white, as he does with the black*. In this case "the Other" are those who should have known, who knew and who benefited (Mwangi and Hutter 2003: n.p.) (my emphasis).

In this statement Mwangi also describes an interest in complicating the idea of diaspora. Who is the Other, the exile? Is it a white face in a crowd of dark skin; a leader amongst followers; the viewer compositionally drawn into the crowd, staring at the face, the embodiment of twentieth-century atrocity? Who has a right to claim what racial identity? A few faces in the crowd look fleetingly at the viewer as well, not seemingly in confrontation but in acknowledgement. "You're here too," their glances seem to indicate, "with us, one of us." This demands the viewer take a position of identification: victim or violator; one who should have known. In these works, Mwangi questions what it is to be German or by extension, European in relation to being African, thus destabilising the historically normalised identity of whiteness. The position of an entirely female audience around Hutter-as-Hitler also invokes a dichotomy in which the historically defined irrationality of Africans has been described as weak or feminine. This is complicated by European colonial fears of black masculinity and sexuality. In *If* the white, patriarchal order is maintained through the absence of the black male. The black female is left entirely subject to the unquestioned sexual authority of the

white man. Hutter's gaze to the viewer implies the same sexual and social dominance of this man, Hitler, over the spectator. The role of audience (and the male gaze typically associated with spectatorship in art) is debased through the figure of Hitler and the crowd of women seems to encompass the viewer into the passive sphere of objectification. He is literally the "centre" and they, the "periphery."



Figure 3: *If*, 2003. Photograph © 2003 IngridMwangiRobertHutter.

The German Africa Show (*Deutsche Afrika-Schau*) was a travelling exhibition put on by the National Socialists (NSDAP) employing blacks living in Germany. The Show ran from 1934-1940 and was first organized by black performers themselves, but was quickly taken over by the Ministry of Propaganda. Most of the performers were German citizens. The show enacted a variety of racial/tribal stereotypes and appealed to a common colonial nostalgia. Fears about race mixing eventually brought the show to an end (von Joeden-Forgey 2005: 171).

In the 1930s there were a growing number of people of African descent living in Germany, which resulted in the newly empowered NSDAP deciding how best to manage their residence and citizenship in Germany. Under the initial

racial purifying laws instituted by the Nazis, blacks and those of mixed race were not sterilised, as many mentally-ill persons were. They were segregated from white society, but in the early days of the Third Reich, otherwise left alone due to the idea that these German educated Africans could be instrumental in the Third Reich's planned re-colonisation of Africa (Campt, et al. 1998: 215). After the war, between 1945 and 1955, approximately 4,800 children were born in West Germany fathered by African American soldiers. By 1952 the first wave of mixed-race children were entering public school, causing parliamentary debates on how to treat and classify these "Black Germans." Popular consciousness of the recent past meant that significant pressure was placed on lawmakers to advocate equality between the races (Campt, et al. 1998: 223-4).

Throughout the 1950s there was public debate on Afro-Germans, centring on what their role in society should be. There was significant public focus on using Afro-Germans as symbols of cultural healing and some programs were even initiated encouraging voluntary immigration to Africa. All mention of Afro-Germans in legal and popular circles was of "them" as blacks, there was no discussion of "them" as Germans (Campt, et al. 1998: 228). In the 1960s thorough the 1980s many Germans were freely travelling to Kenya. Autobiographies of Kenyan-German relationships as well as fictionalised romance novels about African-German relationships became immensely popular in Germany in the late 1990s and early 2000s, regularly staying at the top of the best sellers lists (Berman 2005: 209). Autobiographies of Africans living in Germany described a sense of being fragmented, never at home, always outside even after decades of living in the country. Even blacks born in Germany describe moments from

childhood when they were forced to confront their status as an outsider (Nganang 2005: 233).

Mwangi, in *Coloured*, brings this positioning of being black in Germany as an outsider to the fore (see Figure 1). The performance/installation features several monitors surrounding a central stage and a large projection screen. The monitors display images of Mwangi's head, torso, legs and feet, each monitor's image altered so that the feet appear very dark and the face very light with a gradation of tone going up the body. The projection is a loop of Mwangi's performance where she gesticulates, slaps her thighs and arms and crawls on the ground while making odd, undulating noises. Drawing an emphasis to her skin above all else, she is displayed at once fragmented and whole. She becomes unified in the performed confrontation of her own body, she remains fragmented in the disjointed body parts categorised sequentially as white to black. Her body, in the installation, remains on the periphery. She surrounds the viewer, but does not physically occupy the same space. She projects her body as a site of conflict to the viewer. She states in her description of the work, "I lie and listen. Slowly groaning, grating noises. Muttering, gasping, moaning, sighing, sniffing. Shaking, cursing, screaming. Hit the stage. Play it. I am the stage. In between quiet, listening" (Mwangi 2003: 12). The sounds she makes are almost pre-linguistic, raw and indicative of discomfort or suffering or perhaps even a rage beyond words. The audience is denied a conversation with the performer and placed in the position of taking her on in a wordless realm where the sounds become an extension of the physical body. In *Coloured* Mwangi places her body as the stage upon which racial signifiers are played. The stage is hit, the floor of it by Mwangi's hands as well as her own body by her

hands. Hit, struck, like an act of violence, performed against herself where she is always outside, beyond the space of the viewer. The centrality of the viewer places one in the position of having to identify oneself with or against the fragmented image of Mwangi. The materiality of her body in the piece immediately places the viewer in a state of awareness about his/her own body. Empathy, rejection, categorisation and identification are all ideas presented to the viewer in a way that makes one question one's own centrality and position.

Racial "Othering" in Mwangi's Work

Judith Butler (1993: 115) maintains that identity is constructed through a process of opposition and rejection. According to Theodor Adorno (1973: 23), turning a group into an "other" is a predatory instinct in which the predator must find an instinctive rage to direct against his prey. He states, "A mind that discards rationalization- its own spell- ceases by its self-reflection to be the radical evil that irks it in another." In Mwangi's 2000 performance piece, *Neger—Don't Call Me* she engages the audience in a constant dialogue about authenticity, other-ness and individuality (see Figure 4) (Mwangi 2003: 9). In this piece, Mwangi uses her own body as a source of knowledge where knowledge is defined as a unification of mental and physical selves (Gerhard 2003: 33). In an Adornian dialectic manner she presents the viewer with a rationalised enactment of his/her irrational and historically bound tropes of identity. In this performance, a screen has multiple images of Mwangi's face, who has arranged her dreadlocked hair into various mask-like shapes and forms. She tosses her hair back and forth, obscuring and revealing her face amidst grunting and groaning noises. She describes the intention of the performance to be

threatening or perhaps exotic. She uses the German word "*Neger*" with its racist connotations as a reference to her coming to Germany from Kenya and being confronted with racial stereotypes (Mwangi 2003: 9).



Figure 4: *Neger-- Don't Call Me*, 2003.
 Photograph © 2003
 IngridMwangiRobertHutter.

Stuart Hall (1996: 203) notes that discourse can become ideology as language is used to describe "facts," determining what is true and false. "*Neger*," the word, through its citation becomes reified as truth through racial discourse. The racial signification of the word becomes reality for those like Mwangi who are caught under its classification. *Neger-Don't Call Me* presents to the audience a viewer-less space; the chairs in the installation remain empty, containing the speakers projecting the sounds of the performance. Thus the dialectics of classification are revealed. Mwangi performs "threatening" or "exotic" other-ness which is defined by the absent observers, undermining their authority of representation by denying them the space to be the originators of truth. The demand of the title not to be classified as "*Neger*" also deconstructs the authority of origination of the audience to define the meaning of art. The absent space of the chairs is the place

where Mwangi's voice emanates; thus she takes control of the spectatorship, inverting it, asking, in fact, who in the installation is being called the derogatory name.

In *Static Drift*, Mwangi uses skin itself to undermine national and cultural classifications of identity. Simultaneously, she invokes the colonial history of Germany and her own personal history as a hyphenated person to suggest the embodied enactment of identity as something different from history, something literally etched onto the skin. She questions the role of skin colour in determining identity, bringing to the fore how the metaphors of "light" and "dark" are frequently in flux, with one undermining the other, as each is historically presented as a unified collective. Both Africans and Europeans are "Others", each with their own tragic histories of collapse and conquest. This is not to suggest that Mwangi wishes to equate the histories or identities of Africans and Germans, rather it is to say that she undermines cultural and national specificity, indicating that identity is more frequently denoted by the signification of skin colour and not the myth of national origin.

In the work *If*, the viewer and the status of objective spectatorship is destabilised as Mwangi and Hutter pull the viewer into a confrontation of his/her own process of identification and empathy. At once both inviting and repulsing, *If* sutures the viewer into a discourse of subjugation, gender and race where the viewer is denied any easy, emotional distance for reflection. The viewer is made conscious of his/her own body, its gender and its race and how these signifiers of identity come to be inscribed, defined and challenged by the implications of the scene presented.

In *Coloured*, the inside/outside dichotomy is revealed through the use

of bodily fragmentation and metaphoric placement. The "darkest" body parts, the feet, are the closest to the ground, to practicality and earthiness. The lighter-toned head and shoulders reflect European colonial tropes of the centrality of rationalised discourse. In this piece, she is both white and black, though not quite at the same time. The placement of the body outside the space of the viewer, but surrounding the viewer, places Mwangi's body in an untouchable but touched (fragmented) space wherein the viewer is implicated by his or her presence and gaze in the process of fragmentation, though the viewer is perhaps not as bodily aware of his or her own identities as in *If*.

Neger- Don't Call Me brings the inevitable dialectics of identity to the fore through the use and deconstruction of Mwangi's self-defined signifiers of otherness and exotic-ness. Her title is a demand, but also an accusation. Who is being called *Neger*? The audience again is implicated as one who either uses this term or have been marked by its usage. The one cannot exist without the other and in such an invocation Mwangi brings awareness to the embodied identity of the viewer who becomes both the object of violation and of power. This identity, as Mwangi's, is constructed bodily through the acute awareness of one's own ethnic signifiers of individuality.

Conclusion

In the works discussed here, I have illustrated how Ingrid Mwangi challenges any clear-cut notion of identity based on a racialised concept of origin or nationality. Identity in her works is evidently and predominately focused on the signifier of skin colour, although this too is a weak signification as black or dark skin is historically defined as Other only in relation to the normative

standards of whiteness. Mwangi questions the foundation of this normalisation by offering her own body and skin as a stage upon which the complex references of these racial signifiers are enacted, exposing the inherent weakness of any sense of the authority of origins. Identity, for Mwangi, is first and foremost embodied in the flesh. Her body is the stage where the dichotomies of objective/subjective, internal/external are played, questioned and deconstructed.

Author Note

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THE WHITE FIREMAN AND THE AMERICAN HEARTLAND IN THE MEMORY OF 9/11

JUSTINE TOH

Abstract

Memorial efforts commemorating the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) frequently pay tribute to the fireman and his courageous actions on that day and in its aftermath. This article is interested in the pairing of the fireman (and his associated iconography) with the sentimental signifier of the American heartland in 9/11 memorial culture. It argues that this combination is a potent reaffirmation of the goodness of the United States that effectively does away with the need to interrogate possible reasons why the 9/11 attacks occurred. Through an analysis of heartland imagery, I explore the co-articulation of whiteness and American innocence that characterises the memorial culture of 9/11. First, the article explores how the American heartland is used to signify goodness and innocence, and how such qualities are linked with whiteness. It then explores how the heroism, decency, and integrity of the (white) fireman is used as a cipher for national goodness and wholesomeness in two memorials: the St. Paul's Chapel exhibition *Unwavering Spirit: Hope and Healing at Ground Zero*, and *Mural with Silos*, a photograph by Jonathan Hyman. Finally, the article tracks how the pairing of the fireman with the heartland rejuvenates white exceptionalist narratives by producing both the American nation, and its protector-heroes, as white.

Introduction



Figure 1. T.C.'s back, Manhattan, New York. Photograph © 2003 Jonathan Hyman.

Jonathan Hyman's photograph *T.C.'s back* (Figure 1) depicts a memorial tattoo that commemorates the sacrifice of fire fighters who died in the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11). Written on the body of New York City (NYC) fire fighter T.C. Cassidy, the tattoo is an elaborate, graphic, highly saturated depiction of the burning World Trade Centre (WTC) towers. A banner, held above the orange torch of the Statue of Liberty by two angels and (presumably) bearing the names of fallen comrades, turns T.C.'s skin into a living memorial upon which to commemorate the dead. The tattoo embodies the injunction to "Never Forget"—a slogan that frequently accompanies memorials to 9/11. While unspecific, given that is often paired with tributes honouring

members of the fire and police departments, and is a post-9/11 addition to the sides of ambulances and fire trucks in New York City, the slogan is likely in reference to the heroic efforts of fire fighters and police officers during 9/11 and in its aftermath. T.C. stands with his back to the camera, bowing to uniformed images on the wall in front of him—perhaps the portraits of the individuals listed on his back. We see nothing of T.C.'s face, just his muscular build and short, cropped hair. He is an anonymous figure of grief whose body anchors themes and values key to the memorialisation of 9/11: heroism, sacrifice, patriotism, masculinity, and whiteness.

The first two themes of heroism and sacrifice are plainly seen, and recur across a range of 9/11 memorials—from the 56-foot-long bronze relief memorial wall at Engine 10 (a fire station opposite Ground Zero), to Fire Department of New York (FDNY) trinkets and souvenirs available for purchase at the Ground Zero site, to those discussed in this paper. It is nothing less than an honourable, courageous act when emergency personnel run into burning, unstable, and/or toppling buildings in order to rescue others, and T.C.'s memorial tattoo embodies the heroism and sacrifice often associated with the dangerous work of fire-fighting.

I will discuss patriotism and masculinity in further detail soon, but here I want to draw attention to whiteness because it plays a critical role in efforts at national healing in the aftermath of the traumatic 9/11 attacks. In this article I discuss two examples of 9/11 memory: Jonathan Hyman's photograph *Mural with Silos* and *Unwavering Spirit: Hope and Healing at Ground Zero*, the commemorative exhibition at St. Paul's Chapel in NYC. Their pairing of the 9/11 firemen with heartland imagery suggests that firemen not only protect and rescue

people from burning buildings, but also safeguard a way of life that is encapsulated in the American heartland. Focusing on the deployment of the white fireman in the memorialisation of the 9/11 attacks, I explore how his individual virtue, borne out through his sacrificial heroism, is used to confirm the integrity of the nation-at-large. In other words, the white fireman is used as a cipher for national goodness and wholesomeness. My interest lies in how such use of the fireman mobilises white narratives of American exceptionalism that characterise the cultural memory of 9/11. In each example, race, gender, nation, and patriotism intersect with foundational American narratives to produce the American nation, and its protector-heroes, as white.

The heartland in American culture

However, before I discuss my examples, a word about my use of "white". Joseph Pugliese has argued that treating whiteness as an ahistorical and homogeneous category without reference to the "specificities of ethnicity and geo-politically situated subjects" reproduces the universalising effects of whiteness that are supposedly under critique (2002: 150). As such, this section contextualises whiteness as it has been articulated through the American heartland, linking the signifier to the nation's Puritan beginnings and its doctrine of exceptionalism.

As a term, "heartland" is often used in reference to the territorial Midwest—the geographic middle of America comprising the states North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio, Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Missouri. At the same time as referring to these states, "heartland" is also used metaphorically to represent the "real" America. James

R. Shortridge calls the heartland the "most American part of America", locating in it small town America, rural farmland, Main Street, and the home of the average American (1984: 213-4; Shortridge 1985; Shortridge 1989). As a symbol of authentic American-ness, the heartland evokes the emotional and spiritual core of American identity, which is why thinking about the heartland in relation to 9/11 helps us understand how this signifier is used to represent the nation to itself, particularly in times of national crisis (Knepper and Lawrence 2006).

An Anheuser-Busch advertisement for Budweiser Beer that aired during the 2002 Super Bowl, not six months after the 9/11 attacks, alerts us to how the heartland may be used in such a context.¹ In its depiction of an essentially wholesome American nature, the Budweiser advertisement captures the spirit of 9/11 memorials that employ heartland imagery—of which more in my next section. The Anheuser-Busch commercial showed eight Clydesdale horses being hitched to a Budweiser wagon in a wintry, rural landscape before depicting their journey to Lower Manhattan through small town America. Upon confronting the absence of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in the skyline, the Clydesdales genuflect, the trumpet—a key instrument of the funeral march—sounds out in tribute, and the Budweiser logo appears on screen. Anheuser-Busch used the advertisement to honour the victims of 9/11 while at the same portraying itself as a grieving corporate citizen—chiefly through heartland imagery.²

In its depiction of a barn, frolicking horses in a pastoral landscape, Main Street of small town America, a barber wearing an old-fashioned smock gazing out at the passing Clydesdales, the advertisement presented images of rural and small town America that harked back to an earlier time in the nation's history. An earlier time in which life moved at a slower pace, where things were done the "old way", where life, it seems, was more innocent. Anheuser-Busch mobilised this set of images to portray (and identify with) the "real" America that was attacked on 9/11, and the "real" America that would provide solace in the attacks' traumatic aftermath. In so doing, the advertisement de-emphasised the attacks as a military, political, and economic event; instead portraying them as an assault upon American identity and the values with which the heartland is typically associated: humility, tradition, ordinariness, decency, innocence and simplicity (Shortridge 1984: 215). Such values characterise the American heartland and its inhabitants as essentially good, which constitutes the 9/11 attacks as a desecration of American wholesomeness and innocence.

Whiteness is critical to the heartland, as both a racial marker and a collection of shared values and beliefs that reinforces the assumption of essential American goodness. Though the Budweiser advertisement features no one save the white barber, we can turn to the work of celebrated American artist Norman Rockwell, whose paintings exemplify this dual sense of whiteness. His depictions of the lives of "everyday" Americans are deeply nostalgic, featuring happy (white) families, apple-cheeked, cherub-like children, the local milk bar, small town existence—representations of wholesomeness that implicitly shore up white, heterosexual, anti-urban, politically conservative values that are

¹ This advertisement can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zXZX2sXHYI>

² See Christopher Campbell (2003) for a thorough deconstruction of the advertisement's politics.

identified as and with the “real” America. And if Rockwell’s mid-twentieth century art seems passé, consider how in the aftermath of 9/11 *The New York Times* chose to advertise itself as a trusted news source through which traumatised Americans could “make sense of [the] times”: by publishing a series of photo-shopped Rockwell paintings whose all-white, familial subjects stood in for the threatened American public—of which more later (Frascina 2005).

Rockwell’s vision of American life—its ethnic and racial homogeneity, its domesticity, its sentimentality and, above all, its *ordinariness*—provide clues to its appeal. According to one critic, “to enjoy [Rockwell’s] unique genius, all you have to do is relax”—comments that suggest that Rockwell’s work is familiar and reassuring (Rosenblum 1999, quoted in Frascina 2005: 83). That Rockwell’s art is pleasurable to consume because of its comforting depiction of ordinary American life should give us pause, because Rockwell’s art shares with the heartland features that are also a source of comfort, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11: belief in the goodness and wholesomeness of the American people.³ The reassuring nature of Rockwell’s work suggests that both his art and representations of the heartland provide comfort because they both summarise and provide direct access to the soul of the nation and its people—who are overwhelmingly white. Recent Hollywood and television portrayals of the heartland also configure it as a comforting, nostalgic space populated by (mostly) white people. *Saving Private*

Ryan (1998), *A History of Violence* (2005), the lowan origins of Superman in *Superman Returns* (2006) and James T. Spock in J.J. Abrams’ *Star Trek* (2009), the U.S. version of the reality-TV show *The Farmer Wants a Wife* (2008): all portray a rural, small town existence where virtually everyone is white, humble, and leading an earthy, wholesome existence.

In these examples, whiteness is indelibly paired with moral purity and goodness—though such an equation is deconstructed in *A History of Violence*.⁴ Indeed Ruth Frankenberg notes that in “the national origin narratives” of the U.S., the nation “is always self-styled as innocent” and that “whiteness, American style (and for that matter Americanness, white style) is inherently connected, in its own view, with narratives of innocence, goodness, Godliness and strength” (2005: 559). Frankenberg identifies the powerful co-articulation of whiteness and innocence that is a staple of American identity, and that is derived from the nation’s Puritan history as well as the doctrine of American exceptionalism—the “national origin narratives” to which Frankenberg refers. And so given this context, my use of “white” refers not only to a racial category but also to the Puritan (Judeo-Christian) values and assumptions that, together with the discourse of American exceptionalism, characterise the United States (and by extension, its people) as fundamentally good and innocent.⁵

³ See Marita Sturken (2007) for an account of the comfort culture of 9/11 concerning the consumerism of kitsch souvenirs of the event, and how such consumerism enacts a “tourism of history” that substitutes feelings of sympathy for the innocent victims of the event for critical engagement with the social and political context of the attacks.

⁴ David Cronenberg’s *A History of Violence*, a film about a killer who starts his life anew in a small town and with a new identity, demonstrates the impossibility of escaping a violent past. The film also comments upon the violence underwriting the supposedly peaceful and wholesome existence of small town America.

⁵ For more on American origin narratives of exceptionalism and their connections to white racial history see Bush (2010) this issue.

Though Frankenberg does not specifically mention the role of the heartland in her analysis, the addition of the heartland to this co-articulation of whiteness and innocence forms a formidable trio from which proceed deeply held beliefs and values about American identity and purpose. Puritan values and assumptions positioned the colonists as good, humble and innocent—virtues that courted divine favour and uniquely qualified them to establish a “city on a hill” that would provide an education to the rest of the world (Winthrop [1630] 1838: online). And even if the heartland’s rural associations disqualified it as a “city on a hill”, Roderick Nash notes that in the Puritan effort to found an ideal community, these early settlers “hardly needed reminding that Eden had been a garden” and that consequently the pastoral condition provided the route to paradise (1967: 31). In turn, this sense of Puritan election, of chosen-ness for a special destiny, also resonates with exceptionalist discourse that locates in the U.S. an exceptional model of liberty worth emulation—given its successful establishment of republican government in contrast to failed attempts in Europe (de Tocqueville 1848).

The idealisation of the heartland also emerges from assumptions of exceptionalism, most notably in Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration of Independence, champion of exceptionalist rhetoric, and third President of the newly established nation. Jefferson was instrumental in articulating agrarian activity as fundamentally virtuous, writing in his “Notes on the State of Virginia”:

Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue (Jefferson [1781-5] 1943: 678).

Jefferson goes on to say that the nature of agricultural toil would produce good, moral, citizens that would form the basis of the new American republic. So very early on in the nation’s formation, Jefferson established a link between goodness and wholesomeness, agrarian activity, and the authentic American citizen, which explains why these three notions are treated as virtually interchangeable in representations of the heartland. And Jefferson’s example demonstrates how the cultural narrative of the heartland (innocence and goodness) overlaps and is interwoven with the territorial heartland (the site of primarily rural activity, the geographic Midwest).

Whiteness, the heartland, and the assumption of innocence and wholesomeness: this cluster of associations finds unique expression in the cultural memory of 9/11. In particular, it is the heartland as the romantic construction of the (white) American experience in which I am most interested, and Jonathan Hyman’s photograph *Mural with Silos* (Figure 2) shows how this sentimental imagination of the heartland is deployed, in the context of 9/11, to reaffirm the goodness and innocence of the United States.

Mural with Silos and Thomas Franklin’s photograph

The photograph in Figure 2 was chosen as the cover of the catalogue for *9/11 and the American Landscape*, the first exhibition of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum.⁶ In the foreword to the exhibition catalogue, Memorial

⁶ The official premises of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum are currently under construction at the Ground Zero site, with the institution due to open in 2011.

Museum director Alice Greenwald wrote that Jonathan Hyman had “journeyed into the *heartland* of American grief” to document public art after September 11 (my emphasis 2006: 4). Hyman travelled into the territorial heartland, the Midwest, to photograph some 15,000 memorial responses to 9/11, but also covered states not conventionally thought part of that heartland—the Mid-Atlantic states and New England. Greenwald’s language indicates that the experience of personal and national grief brought on by 9/11, expressed in the unofficial (and privately funded) memorials scattered over diverse areas, creates a figurative heartland that transcends the territorial heartland. And so in referring to a metaphorical “heartland of grief”, Greenwald suggests that the attacks of 9/11 struck at the spiritual core of American identity. While Hyman’s archive includes numerous photographs of urban environments, Greenwald’s language emphasises the rural articulations of 9/11 memory.



Figure 2. Mural with Silos, Warwick, New York. Photograph © 2001 Jonathan Hyman.

Mural with Silos is one such example. It depicts a pastoral scene: green grass, two silos, trees in the background, and a shed featuring a mural of Thomas E. Franklin’s Pulitzer prize-winning photograph of three firemen raising an

American flag on the rubble of Ground Zero (Figure 3).⁷ Hyman (2007) found that this iconic image was frequently used in the memorials he documented. Franklin’s photograph was widely reproduced on postcards, stamps, posters and key rings; popular for its depiction of hope and resilience in the face of national tragedy, and for its canonisation of firemen, who emerged as key heroes during 9/11 and in its aftermath. And, undoubtedly, due to its iconographic similarity to Joe Rosenthal’s image of U.S. marines raising a flag upon Iwo Jima during World War II, a photograph that also won Rosenthal a Pulitzer Prize. Franklin’s photograph, then, through its intertextual connection to Rosenthal’s earlier photograph, effectively nationalises firemen, articulating them as civil soldiers united against a common enemy—terror—and standing strong in the midst of disaster as they raise the American flag. The patriotic and soldierly meanings evident in the Rosenthal photograph are taken up and applied to firemen in Franklin’s photograph, casting them as the first line of national defence, and transforming the destroyed WTC site into a battlefield.

I deliberately gender the fire fighter since none of the 343 fire fighters who died on 9/11 were female.⁸ Male fire fighters vastly outnumber female fire

⁷ For copyright reasons this photograph is unable to be published in this article, but it can be viewed at: <http://www.september11news.com/AAAFirefighters-flag-2-320.jpg>.

⁸ This is not to say that there were no female fire fighters (or policewomen or female EMTs) active on 9/11 and during its aftermath. But female fire fighters make up less than 0.3 percent of New York’s fire fighting brigades, compared to a national fire fighter percentage of roughly two percent (Crary 2002: online). Also see Faludi for a discussion of how the contribution of female first responders was sidelined during 9/11 (2007: 79-88).

fighters, and there is such a preponderance of masculine meanings around fire fighting that terms like “brotherhood” and its variants—like FDNY “brothers”—are virtually universal when referring to the culture of fire fighting. The apparent ubiquity of male fire fighters, together with their association with the American flag in 9/11 memorial culture, encourages the view that firemen are supreme models of patriotic masculinity. Yet there is more to these images than identifying and praising the standout individual members of the national body. Rebecca Adelman notes that “as we look at soldiering masculinities, masculinity is soldered back together” (2009: 279). She argues that as the 9/11 attacks were experienced as a national wounding and castration, viewing photographs of manly men—particularly those of the U.S. Coalition’s male soldiers—helps to “remember, reconstitute, and reaffirm” American masculinity, and consequently that of the nation (263).

The reaffirmation of American masculinity is key to Franklin’s photograph; however, also significant is the whiteness of these male heroes. Indeed, their whiteness is non-negotiable—revealed when a sculptor proposed to build a commemorative statue of the figures in Franklin’s photograph, but to change the ethnicity of the firemen so that one was white, another was African-American, and the last Hispanic. This offer was made in the spirit of unity, and meant to honour all those who had died, regardless of race; however it was rejected, as fire fighting is very much the preserve of white, Irish-Catholic, working-class men in New York City (Flynn 2002: 21). Though a clumsy attempt at political correctness (that in its attempt at inclusivity, excluded women and people of other ethnicities), the incident acknowledged that portraying only white men risked

narrowly defining heroism (and the at-risk nation) in the context of 9/11.⁹

Returning to *Mural with Silos*, given the presence of the Franklin mural, the two identical grain silos intertextually evoke the twin towers of the WTC. The memorial’s agrarian versions of the twin towers suggest that though the nation has moved away from a predominantly agricultural economy, the soul of the United States, its essential identity, is still found in that rural existence. As such, the way of life symbolised by that pastoral lifestyle, the heartland, can comfort people in mourning after the attacks. In the mural, the three firemen stand atop the rubble of Ground Zero, looking up toward the American flag they have just raised. The addition of a physical American flag to the shed depicted in *Mural with Silos* symbolically transforms the rubble upon which the firemen stand into the landscape depicted in the photograph. Effectively, the rubble of the World Trade Centre and the grass of this rural landscape are made equivalent, suggesting that the 9/11 attacks not only assaulted the WTC but American values, identity, and the landscape itself. The correspondence established here between the rubble and the rural de-emphasises the attacks as assaults upon U.S. economic

⁹ The centrality of white heroism to the exclusion of other ethnicities is also evident in the case of Private Jessica Lynch, who was captured in Iraq in March 2003 and subsequently retrieved by American soldiers in a staged rescue. The media interest in Lynch—who went on to appear on talk shows, had a television movie made about her rescue, and received a book deal—was staggering in comparison to other female American soldiers: Shoshana Johnson, an African-American taken captive in Iraq and held for just over three weeks, and Lori Piestewa, a Hopi Indian from Arizona who was the first Native American woman to die in combat while serving in the U.S. Military. Piestewa was also in the ambush that resulted in Lynch’s capture.

practices (as the attacks otherwise suggest, given their choice of target) and articulates the attacks as an unconscionable violation of American innocence and goodness—a practice also evident in the Budweiser advertisement to which I earlier referred.

The heartland is not the only signifier of innocence in *Mural with Silos*. The White firemen depicted in the mural (as in the original Franklin photograph) are also called upon to signify moral virtue. Robyn Cooper (1995) argues that in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain the fireman was the exemplar of “immaculate manhood”, celebrated for his physical strength, virility, and acts of everyday heroism that were popularly represented as involving the rescue of women and children. Such acts of heroism not only emphasised the manliness of firemen but the weakness and dependence of women and infants on men (155-6). This chivalric dimension of fire fighting is invested with gendered discourses of protection where men are protectors and women are the protected—more on this soon in my discussion of St. Paul's Chapel.

In the case of *Mural with Silos*, however, the white firemen of the mural enact what John Shelton Lawrence refers to as a “transfusion of innocence” where those who suffer or die on behalf of the nation transfer the innocence of their suffering/death to the nation that will have to respond to their loss (Lawrence 2005: 37). Such figures, whether the prisoner of war as in Lawrence's example, or the fireman in the context of 9/11, supply “the lifeline back to America's moral innocence” and thus the prerogative to avenge both the individual deaths sustained and the nation imbued with the narrative of victimhood (Lawrence 2005: 41). Effectively, the fireman's moral courage, his self-sacrificing nature, and his

individual virtue become an individual exemplar of national wholesomeness.

Yet even if the virtue of the individual firemen is beyond reproach, the assumption of national wholesomeness and innocence is problematic and unsustainable. Memorials to victims of the 9/11 attacks that use the heartland to signify (white) American innocence mourn a way of life built upon suppressed histories of violence. Though the heartland is a powerful signifier of whiteness and innocence (and, for that matter, white innocence), portrayals of the heartland frequently and ritually deny the violence and bloodshed of the early nation through which land became available for “civilisation” and, by extension, agriculture—referred to in exceptionalist rhetoric as the “manifest destiny” of the United States (O'Sullivan 1845: 5). This project also extends from Puritan conceptions of their “errand into the wilderness” that necessitated characterising the Native American occupants of the land as both uncivilised (which implicitly framed the white, Puritan settlers as “civilised” in contrast) and hostile in order to justify territorial conquest and genocide (O'Sullivan 1845; Miller 1956; Nash 1967; Slotkin 1992, 2000). Recognition of the treatment of Native Americans, as well as the practice of African slavery, is often completely elided in the nostalgic signifier—and must be if the heartland is to signify moral purity. Effectively, the use of the heartland in the memory of 9/11 scrubs the past violence of these spaces, and in place of these ghosts of history substitutes a victimised (white) American identity, under assault from new “savages” in the form of Al Qaeda operatives at the behest of Osama bin Laden.

I turn now to an analysis of the commemorative exhibition *Unwavering Spirit: Hope and Healing at Ground Zero* at St. Paul's Chapel in New York City. If

the fireman is part of a "brotherhood" whose job it is to save and protect women and children, the artefacts of this exhibition mobilise discourses that conceive the nation as a domestic space (the "home-nation") that in turn articulates the fireman as the "brother" who takes care of the American "national family".

St. Paul's Chapel and the articulation of the home-nation

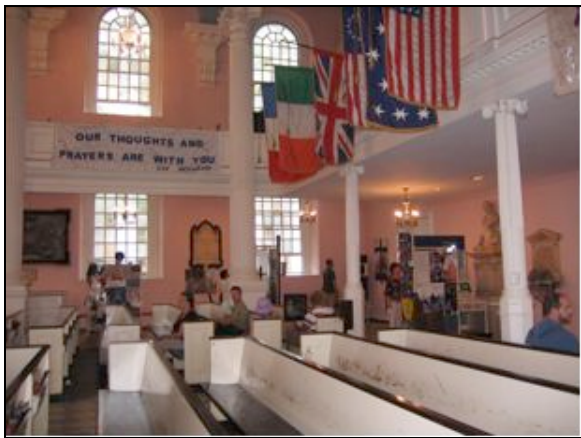


Figure 4. St. Paul's Chapel, New York City.
© Justine Toh, 2006.

St. Paul's Chapel (Figure 4) stands directly across the street from the WTC. Although debris from the destruction hurtled across the road on 9/11, the Chapel escaped destruction, and became a respite centre for rescue and recovery workers during the eight months it took to recover remains of victims and sort through the rubble of Ground Zero. The work exposed workers to toxins in a dangerous and unstable environment, and was frequently traumatic given the scale of the destruction and the scarcity of identifiable human remains. During that time, the spontaneous memorials that sprang up on Manhattan avenues similarly proliferated on the gates of the Chapel, banners of support draped the building, and the interior of the church

was lined with cots to receive weary workers—police officers, firemen, construction workers, civil engineers—as they exited their shifts at Ground Zero.

During the recovery effort, St. Paul's became an impromptu medical centre that treated wounded workers for various injuries sustained during their work at Ground Zero. Podiatrists treated recovery workers whose feet were scalded through the soles of their boots from the fires that burned under the rubble for a month after the towers fell. Masseuses were on hand round-the-clock to give massages to the workers. Meals were provided. St. Paul's also doubled as a kind of bunkhouse where workers could sleep between shifts. Too tired to remove their tool belts before resting, the workers left rough scratches on the pews where they slept. At the conclusion of the recovery effort, the decision was made not to repair the pews, so these marks have become a kind of scarification of sacrifice indicating where the workers once slept (Figure 5).

As the Chapel carried out its mission of providing a place for workers to rest and recover, St. Paul's acquired both a religious and frontier description, with recovery workers calling the Chapel an "outpost of heaven" and "an oasis in the midst of hell" (Exhibition text, St. Paul's Chapel). These descriptions, along with the scarification of sacrifice indicated in these marked pews, acquire significance in a church setting given the Christian belief in the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ, its central figure. The "doubting Thomas" episode in John's gospel recounts the need for Thomas to "see the nail marks in [Jesus'] hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side" for him (Thomas) to believe in Christ's resurrection (John 20:25). In that case, Thomas requires proof of resurrection; at St. Paul's the visitor can

trace their fingers along the scarred pews and see and feel evidence of the sacrifices of recovery workers. As such, the recovery workers are positioned as Christ-like figures: people who suffer (read: descend repeatedly into the "hell" of Ground Zero) on behalf of others (to recover victims' remains to give back to their families) to effect restoration (return the site to normality).



Figure 5. Marked pews at St. Paul's Chapel, New York City.
© Justine Toh, 2006.

This presentation appears to position rescue workers as Christ-like figures. Given the enormity of their sacrifices, and the toll these sacrifices clearly took upon these workers, this articulation is not inappropriate. However, this characterisation is problematic inasmuch as it appears to confirm dominant discourses of national innocence by providing as proof of American virtue a scarred, heroic, masculine body—and of course, associating this body with the sacrificial figure of Christ. Given the nationalisation of firemen and their articulation as soldiers in the aftermath of 9/11 (particularly in the Franklin photograph), it is practically impossible to pay tribute to the heroic efforts of these individuals *without* treating their work as reflective or indicative of national character. That is, the memorial culture of 9/11 cannot simply represent the fireman as merely a heroic individual, but must treat him as a figure of national goodness. The

commemorative practices at St. Paul's—that mobilise discourses of masculinity, protection, and sacrifice—are one node in a network of 9/11 memorial texts that slip between paying tribute to heroic individuals and endowing their sacrifices with national meaning. And the meanings of such practices work to reinvigorate exceptionalist assumptions about American innocence.

Another consequence of seeming to characterise the rescue workers as Christ-like, sacrificial figures is the de-emphasising of 9/11's significance in the world of the everyday—the attacks as an event bound up with U.S. politics, conflicts in the Middle-East, and global economic practices. Instead, such positioning resituates the attacks and their recovery effort on a spiritual plane concerned with notions of absolute "good" and "evil". The emotive language associated with St. Paul's recovery effort—"heaven" as opposed to the "hell" of Ground Zero—implicitly characterises the recovery workers as sacrificial and morally pure like Christ, given their unflagging commitment to often harrowing work. Consequently, the perpetrators of the attacks are implicitly cast as villains in this exhibition, those who brought "hell" to New York City on 9/11, and with whom the recovery workers are engaged in a kind of spiritual warfare.

In the St. Paul's exhibition, the innocence and goodness that characterises the individual recovery worker is also evoked in the exhibition's heartland imagery. To take an example: the banner from Oklahoma (Figure 6) does more than express support from one American community to another, as do most of the other banners on display. As I earlier discussed, in American culture the heartland is envisioned as the innocent, moral centre of the United States. Oklahoma may have already been considered innocent given its

heartland location, but the experience of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building reinforced this designation. As Edward T. Linenthal recounts, newspaper stories on the bombing ran with headlines like, "Myth of Midwest safety shattered" and "American innocence buried in Oklahoma" (2001: 16).



Figure 6. Oklahoma banner, St. Paul's Chapel, New York City.
© Justine Toh, 2006.

If the firemen and other emergency service personnel are the saviours of 9/11 and the figureheads of national character, the reference to the Oklahoma bombing inadvertently hints at the demon of this imagination—Timothy McVeigh. While the destruction of the Alfred P. Murrah building was immediately blamed on Muslim extremists, it was due to the actions of McVeigh and his lesser known accomplice Terry Nichols—two white, "home-grown" Americans. McVeigh in particular was notable for his "boy next door" quality and the fact that, according to a CNN report published the day of his execution, he:

spent his early years in surroundings straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting. In many ways, McVeigh had a typical middle-class American upbringing in the rural New York towns of Pendleton and Lockport,

outside of Buffalo. The main pastimes were church bingo games, bowling and football (CNN 2001: online).

The CNN article implies that before his murderous actions, McVeigh was an ordinary American with a "typical American upbringing" that, while not in the geographic heartland, was characterised by heartland, small town values ("the main pastimes were church bingo games, bowling and football"). The Norman Rockwell reference reinforces this notion that McVeigh was so insistently American.

There is a contradiction, then, between McVeigh's orchestration of the bombing and his upbringing—that would create expectations he would become the kind of man who would honourably save women and children rather than dismissing their deaths as "collateral damage". The kind of man, that is, like the fireman. McVeigh's ghostly presence at St. Paul's through reference to the Oklahoma bombing interrupts the pro-heartland, pro-protective masculinity otherwise displayed at the Chapel's exhibition. His noticeable absence reveals the kinds of masculinities, both reviled and revered, produced by the American body politic. There is the fireman whose ideal masculinity is allied to notions of protection, valour and sacrifice and who becomes the guardian of cherished values encapsulated in the heartland. And then there is the firebrand, the gun-toting extremist disillusioned with his government and willing to commit murder on principle. This latter subject offends heartland values of wholesomeness and innocence, but he also stages a critique of the heartland—a signifier that typically resists critical analysis—by revealing that the heartland does not necessarily produce the wholesome citizens of Jefferson's agrarian vision. But even if McVeigh, as the spectre of domestic terrorism, is

invoked by the heartland imagery of St. Paul's, he is just as summarily exorcised through emphasis upon the ideal masculinity of the 9/11 fireman—whose charge it now is to protect Americans from internal (McVeigh as disavowed American masculinity) as well as external threats (Muslim extremism).

Returning to the exhibition, the banner depicted in Figure 6 represents Oklahoma City as a collective group of survivors of the 1995 bombing, reaching out in fellowship to survivors and rescue workers of the 9/11 attacks. Such a gesture from the Midwest heartland of America, from a community that has also suffered loss through terrorist violence, also has the effect of bestowing upon cosmopolitan New York the distinction of shared victimhood. In this vein, we might consider the items that adorn the cots of recovery workers (Figure 7). Hand-knitted blankets, donated pillows, stuffed animals, children's cards: these are artefacts of domesticity, of childhood, and of craft—more traditionally associated with the humble heartland rather than cosmopolitan, upwardly mobile New York.

These artefacts evoke Kaplan's discussion of the term "homeland"—in widespread use after 9/11, particularly in the creation of the Department of *Homeland Security*. The term, Kaplan argues, unites the home and nation, conceiving the nation as a domestic space "imbued with a sense of at-homeness" in implicit opposition to "an external world perceived as alien and threatening" (1998: 581-2). She notes that the term "has a decidedly anti-urban and anti-cosmopolitan ring to it" in its evocation of the past, native origins, common bonds, birthplace, and ancestry (2003: 84-8). These associations implicitly appeal to notions of ethnic and racial homogeneity (whiteness) that project difference (connoted as hostile,

foreign) beyond the bounds of the safe (domestic) space of the nation.¹⁰ The culturally homogeneous nature of American life promoted by the imagery of the home-nation is inconsistent with other portrayals of America, most notably in the claim that the United States is a "nation of immigrants". As Kaplan argues:

Where is there room for immigrants in the space of the homeland as a site of native origins, ethnic homogeneity, and rootedness in common place and past? How could immigrants possibly find inclusion in the homeland? (2003: 87).

The rhetoric of the homeland, in its appeal to a "rootedness in common place and past" also obscures the fact that the Puritan colonisers were themselves immigrants seeking their Promised Land in the so-called "New World"—and the fact that their new home was made possible through the dispossession of Native American peoples.

At St. Paul's, the gendered production of the handmade artefacts—traditionally associated with female arts and crafts—articulate the home front. They establish American women as the "national allies" of American men who together produce the (white) American nation as home (Kaplan 1998: 582). Through their imagery of innocence and wholesomeness, these artefacts—of the heartland, domesticity, childhood, and care—connote innocent victims who

¹⁰ Racial and ethnic otherness is not the only kind of difference positioned as beyond the nation. Linenthal notes that rhetoric surrounding McVeigh and Nichols consistently positioned them as "'in' but not 'of' America", which meant that their actions were read as aberrant and thus precluded further examination of their actions and their motives for them (2001: 19-21).

may require future protection. These symbols of heartland America are more than the paraphernalia of support, care, and comfort. They derive their symbolic power through the way they make sense of exceptionalist assumptions about American innocence—and the necessity of protecting that innocence. The artefacts can also work to rationalise in other contexts the barricading of the American community from a hostile exterior. As signifiers of the faithful wife and family waiting to welcome their weary soldier-husbands and fathers home, these artefacts connote an at-risk population along racial (white), heterosexual, and familial (the nuclear family) lines—also performed by the publication of the photo-shopped World War Two-era Rockwell paintings by *The New York Times* to which I earlier referred.



Figure 7. Recovery worker cot, St. Paul's Chapel, New York City.
© Justine Toh, 2006.

Such artefacts demonstrate Susan Faludi's thesis that the post-9/11 landscape is one of "neofifties nuclear family 'togetherness,' redomesticated femininity, and reconstituted Cold Warrior manhood"; characterised by a renewed appetite for conservative gender roles—for men as hero-protectors and women as comforters and keepers of the hearth (2007: 3-4). As Faludi comments:

The myth of American invincibility required the mirage of womanly dependency, the illusion of a helpless family circle in need of protection from a menacing world. Without that show of feminine frailty, the culture could not sustain the other figment vital to the myth, of a nesting America shielded by the virile and vigilant guardians of its frontier (2007:144).

Faludi thus connects the conservative gender politics implicit in the memorialisation of 9/11 with foundational U.S. narratives of exceptionalism and its attendant enthusiasm for "errand[s] into the wilderness" in order to establish that innocent "city on a hill". At St. Paul's, artefacts of domesticity and childhood are imbued with heartland values of innocence and wholesomeness. They imply that the defence of the national family is at stake, and that the (male) recovery workers are the ones charged with (and capable of) protecting the helpless home-nation. This "reconstituted, reaffirmed" (Adelman 2009: 263) American masculinity rebuffs claims that late-century (white) masculinity is in "crisis" due to advances of minority groups and post-industrial restructuring of the labour force (Kennedy 1996; Faludi 1999; Schlesinger [1958] 2007), as well as a general malaise brought on by excessive Western consumption—as portrayed in films like *Fight Club* (1999) and *American Beauty* (1999). Faludi notes that the courageous acts of both the firemen and the "white-collar men of Flight 93... assur[ed] their brethren that the 'feminised society' wasn't irreversible, after all" (2007: 61).

Indeed, the courageous acts of manly, white men authorises their status as protectors—the heroes of Elisabeth Anker's "melodramatic mode" where presentations of 9/11 are characterised by dramatic polarisations of good and

evil, and filled with stock characters of the ruthless villain, the suffering, innocent victim, and the heroic saviour (2005: 24-5). The moral economy of melodrama, argues Anker, is unambiguous—the suffering of victims justifies heroic action against villains (24-5). Deployed in the context of 9/11, the melodramatic mode empowers the U.S. (or other heroic agent) to take action against an evil villain (“terrorists”) on behalf of the suffering victim. This melodramatic mode also implicitly assumes American innocence, which does away with the need to interrogate possible reasons why the 9/11 attacks occurred.

By focusing on the desecration of the known and familiar—the *American response* to the attacks in the recovery workers, the *American response* to the recovery workers in the volunteers, and the various comforts of banners, teddy bears, blankets and cards that flowed in from around the country and world—St. Paul’s exhibition retreats to familiar stories in the nation’s mythos through the sentimental signifier of the heartland. These stories are potentially problematic in that they proclaim the fundamental goodness and decency of the nation and its people which, in extolling a particularly American articulation of innocence, works to reinforce the perception that whatever is outside the nation, or those who are excluded from those national stories, are threats. In this way, the exhibition conforms to the melodramatic mode that Anker describes by re-circulating exceptionalist assumptions about American wholesomeness.

Conclusion

Both St. Paul’s chapel and *Mural with Silos* enshrine the innocence and moral purity of the assaulted American national community, using not only the signifier of the heartland but also the

icon of the white fireman to underscore the nation’s virtue, and those of its individual members. In doing so, these memorial practices implicitly authorise the defence of wounded innocence—in real terms, the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both memorial expressions implicitly suggest the home front and, effectively, the values and investments of the national community. Such investments were mobilised in the justifications for the “War on Terror”—that include the reinvigoration of conservative gender roles where “men [wear] all the badges and women [wield] all the roasting pans” (Faludi 2007: 139). St. Paul’s exhibition and *Mural with Silos* employ memorial practices that rely on the same homeland and heartland imagery presented as under threat in the “War on Terror”—the humble, wholesome way of life depicted in these memorials.

Remembering 9/11 in these romantic terms negates any question of U.S. culpability regarding the nation’s foreign policy, economic practices, and military actions—activities and policies that may help explain why the attacks occurred, and that are documented in the work of Chalmers Johnson (2004), Noam Chomsky (2001, 2006), and Arundhati Roy (2001, 2004), among others. Memorial efforts offered by St. Paul’s Chapel and *Mural with Silos*, in other words, displace interrogation of the event in favour of its uncritical memorialisation. The co-articulation of whiteness and American innocence enacted in these memorials makes possible the emphatic resistance to critical interpretation of 9/11 and the labelling of those who engage in such debate—like the critics named above—as “un-American”. By representing the nation in such nostalgic terms, these memorial practices perpetuate an exceptionalist fantasy—to which whiteness and its associations of wholesomeness and innocence are

vital. This fantasy is what it is crucial to "Never Forget".

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A History of Violence. Directed by David Cronenberg, New Line Productions, 2005.

American Beauty. Directed by Sam Mendes, DreamWorks SKG, 1999.

Fight Club. Directed by David Fincher, Fox 2000 Pictures, 1999.

The Farmer Wants a Wife. Produced by Chris Carlson, Fremantle Media North America, 2008.

Saving Private Ryan. Directed by Steven Spielberg, Amblin Entertainment, 1998.

Star Trek. Directed by J.J. Abrams, Paramount Pictures, 2009.

Superman Returns. Directed by Bryan Singer, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2006.

BOOK REVIEW

INDIGO WILLIAMS WILLING

SUSAN D. HARNESS. (2008). *MIXING CULTURAL IDENTITIES THROUGH TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION: OUTCOMES OF THE INDIAN ADOPTION PROJECT (1958-1967)*. LEWISTON, NEW YORK: EDWIN MELLEN PRESS

Transracial adoption refers to the practice of placing an adoptable child or "orphan" into the permanent care of parents of different "racial" backgrounds. The practice almost always involves the moving of children from Non-White backgrounds into the care of White adopters, raising them in predominantly White middle-class neighbourhoods where often, little if any contact is maintained with surviving birth relatives and people from the adopted child's original communities.

In Australia, the damaging effects of such practices was made painfully clear in the testimonials of Aboriginal peoples now known as the Stolen Generations (HREOC 2000). In 2008, the Australian government finally made a formal apology to the Stolen Generations. However, as debates in recent issues of the *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies e-Journal* illustrate, the Stolen Generations have many victims, untold stories and no easy path for reparation lies at hand for the many lives involved (see Riggs 2008, and rejoinder by Cuthbert 2008).

Across the Pacific, the book *Mixing Cultural Identities through Transracial Adoption: Outcomes of the Indian Adoption Project (1958-1967)* explores the outcomes of transracial adoptions of

Indigenous children in the United States. The author Susan Harness is an anthropologist who also identifies as an American Indian transracial adoptee. Thus, her study is not only informed by her professional training but also by her own personal insights. The end-result is a rich experience for readers.

In her introduction, Harness sheds light on the complex outcomes that her own adoption has had on her sense of identity and belonging. While growing up she was classified by White peers as being "racially" different, which conflicted with her own sense of sameness she developed from having a White adoptive family and cultural upbringing. In adulthood she was then confronted by questions about her "authenticity" as an American Indian when meeting non-adopted American Indians. This led her to developing research questions around why transracial American Indian adoptees feel they do not belong "anywhere, meaning in any ethnic group? And why are [their] claims to American Indian identity questioned and disregarded?" (Harness 2008: 3).

Harness then provides a concise historical overview of various colonialist projects that attempted to "civilise" American Indian populations, from the emergence of reservations to Christian schooling where Indigenous languages and cultural practices were discouraged. From reading this overview, it is clear that the Indian Adoption Project was an extension of such colonial violence. Harness (2008: 19) explains for example that the adoptions were, "embedded with the

belief that children could be made to accept as their own, or adopt, the values and beliefs of the dominant society, fully exchanging them for values and beliefs known to them before entering the dominant society".

Harness then reviews literature on adoption and identifies a significant gap in anthropological studies of American Indian transracial adoptees. She then outlines the theoretical framework she chose to study this overlooked population. Resisting essentialist notions of "race", culture and ethnicity, she draws on scholars such as Fredrick Barth, Pierre Bourdieu, Alejandro Portes and Aihwa Ong to focus on the ways issues of "boundaries", and "social and cultural capital" shape adoptee identities.

Using interviews and life history narratives, Harness then sheds light on the experiences of twenty-five American Indian adoptees that were adopted into White families. She reveals that many grew up feeling White but were marked as "racially" different, with the assumption by White others and themselves that this made them inferior. Compounding their sense of exclusion, many of the informants were also rejected by American Indians for being "too White" or, as one informant explains, an "apple" who was "red on the outside, white on the inside" (quoted in Harness 2008: 115). Thus, one of the outcomes of their being born into one "racial" group and adopted into another, was that the adoptees were unable to accumulate sufficient social and cultural capital to be completely accepted into either.

One of the main achievements of Harness's study is that it balances the difficult task of giving a voice to her cohorts while analysing their experiences within a sophisticated theoretical framework and through rigorous

research. One weakness is the absence of any engagement with whiteness theory, which would have added invaluable insights into the dynamics of racial privilege and issues of complicity and resistance that many of the informants negotiate as adoptees with White families. It would have also been fruitful for Harness to engage with the growing body of literature by other researchers from various nations who are also transracial adoptees (see Trenka et al. 2006).

Nonetheless, Harness's book is an accomplished anthropological study of transracial American Indian adoptees, with the additional importance of being written by someone who was transracially adopted herself. There is also much to be gained from the hard lessons and painful insights that her informants make visible as the practice of transracial adoption remains popular today. It is essential reading for anyone with a professional or general interest in transracial adoption, American Indian studies, cultural anthropology and related disciplines.

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