

WHITENESS & THE HORIZONS OF RACE

MARYROSE CASEY

The ACRAWSA Journal is a forum for the growing network of researchers who, as the ACRAWSA website states:

'recognise that whiteness operates through institutions, ideology and identity formation to secure political, legal and economic privileges for white people as a collective leaving many Indigenous and other people racialised as 'non white' collectively disadvantaged and dispossessed of material, cultural and intellectual resources'.

This whiteness is the invisible norm that is implicit in constructions of identities, representations, subjectivities nationalisms and legal systems (Allen 1994; Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993). The scholarship supported and promoted by ACRAWSA focuses on a number of key elements. These include recognition and respect for the existence and continuing rights derived from indigenous sovereignties in Australia and elsewhere, and the task of critically investigating, exposing and challenging the construction and maintenance of hierarchies of race through the practices of white privilege.

As Aileen Moreton-Robinson has argued so persuasively, the focus of Australian critical race and whiteness studies extends the critical engagement practiced in British and American studies (viii). In America, critical race and whiteness scholarship effectively locates the field primarily in relation to the development and practices of the enslavement of Africans within the American continent and to a lesser extent with immigration of different ethnic groups. The dispossession of Native Americans and the practices of colonisation tend to be uninterro-

gated. In Britain critical race and whiteness studies are primarily focused on postcolonial migrations to Britain particularly the reaction to, and the framing of, immigration by those from former colonies not usually included within the designation 'white'. In Australia, critical writings engage with migration, Indigenous dispossession and whiteness. The acts of colonisation and dispossession and their traces in the present are a primary focus of the research and scholarship.

The first issue of this journal produced by ACRAWSA in 2005 featured important and well-known contributors to the field of critical race and whiteness studies. The current issue is focused on new and emerging voices in the field of critical race and whiteness studies. The essays are drawn from papers presented at the Whiteness and the Horizons of Race conference in Brisbane in December 2005.

Moreton-Robinson, as convener of the conference, put out a call for papers arguing that

'an academic conference on the historical, social, political, cultural, economic and discursive construction of race and whiteness can make an important contribution to broader public debates, providing the opportunity to examine popular understandings of race and whiteness evaluating the ways in which current and historical debates are and have taken shape' (Horizons of Race 2005a).

This call was in the context of her argument that the discourses of Race and Whiteness are:

inextricably connected to the formation and politics of modern nation states and the communities which inhabit their territories shaping identity, representation, subjectivity, nationalism and institutions such as the law.

As Moreton-Robinson and the organising committee, including Fiona Nicoll and myself hoped, the conference was an interdisciplinary project with contributions from sociologists, social anthropologists, political scientists, psychologists, economists, literary scholars, legal scholars, media scholars, philosophers, historians, and scholars from wide ranging fields such as performance, feminist, Indigenous, multicultural, Australian and cultural studies. The keynote speakers were Professor David Roediger, Dr Wendy Brady, Dr Suvendrini Perera and Professor Marilyn Lake. The numerous panel sessions included explorations of the dynamic relationship between whiteness and the law, the politics of performativity, the boundaries of tolerance, history and historiography, fictional narratives, multiculturalism, the framing of the domestic, terrorism and the war on terror, religion and compassion, the visual and performing arts (Horizons of Race 2005b).

The conference was remarkable for a number of reasons. Not the least of which were the range of disciplines engaged in direct dialogue and exchange. Another remarkable feature of the conference was the supportive and open atmosphere that gave the proceedings a sense of community and freedom that supported social and cultural exchange as well as academic argument and debate. Another striking feature of the conference was the high level of involvement from post-graduate students and early career researchers. In some ways the involvement of such high numbers of new and emerging scholars reflects the increasing intellectual space for research and scholarship in critical

race and whiteness studies being actively created within academia.

The number of publications engaging with whiteness in Australia is growing, led by publications such as Moreton-Robinson's monograph *Talkin' Up to the White Woman* (2000) and her edited collection of essays from a range of academics in the field, *Whitening Race* (2004). Other publications over the last few of years include books such Warwick Anderson's *The Cultivation of Whiteness: science, health and racial destiny in Australia* (MUP, 2005), Tanya Dalziel's *Settler Romances and the Australian Girl* (UWA Press, 2004). There are also multiple examples of essays by Australians engaging in whiteness studies included in international publications such as *Changing Law: rights regulation and reconciliation* (Ashgate, 2005) and *Critics and Writers Speak: revisioning post-colonial studies* (Lexington Books, 2006). Further extending the field are forthcoming books, such as Damien Riggs' *Taking up the Challenge: critical whiteness studies and indigenous Sovereignty*, and Aileen Moreton-Robinson's collection on Indigenous sovereignty. Supporting these there are journals such as the ACRAWA Journal and *Borderlands*.

Conferences are also playing an important role in developing and supporting the field with published outcomes of conference proceedings such as *Placing Race and Localising Whiteness* (Flinders University, 2004) edited by Susanne Schech and Ben Wadham.

The number of conferences and seminars focused on whiteness studies is increasing. This year there are a number of conferences focusing on the critical framework of whiteness including the *Borderpolitics of Whiteness Conference* to be held in Sydney, December 11-13, and *Historicising Whiteness*, to be held in

Melbourne, November 22-24. The *Borderpolitics of Whiteness Conference* is an ACRAWSA event. The keynote speakers will include Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Professor of Indigenous Studies at Queensland University of Technology, Professor David Theo Goldberg, Director, University of California Humanities Research Institute, Professor Cheryl Harris, Law, University of California, Los Angeles and Associate Professor Joseph Pugliese, Critical and Cultural Studies, Macquarie University.

Further developing and supporting the growing interest in whiteness studies there are courses at universities that focus on critical race and whiteness studies such as those taught by Damien Riggs at the University of South Australia and Jane Carey at the University of Melbourne.

In 2003 'whiteness' as a study had begun to achieve sufficient profile to the extent that it was acknowledged in the popular press with quotes from academics such as Ghassan Hage under titles such as 'Middle class blanches at white studies growth' (Lane 3). At the same time the all too prevalent misreadings of whiteness studies as propagating a white ethnicity was mocked in the press by journalists who played on the word whiteness and the potential meanings of its critique (Anonymous; Lane). As the war on terror continues to escalate, it is interesting that at present there are no such popular acknowledgements or engagements with critical race and whiteness theory, however negatively.

Within a country deeply implicated in the global war on terror and with internal policies and practices that isolate and vilify 'non-white' refugees and Indigenous Australians, a journal such as the ACRAWSA journal is a potential forum to document and interrogate the implications and premises of practices

that strengthen and maintain whitenesses as a justification for colonising and racist actions. Fiona Nicoll in her editorial of the inaugural issue of the ACRAWSA journal identified a challenge facing Australian critics. She wrote that "we need to register an important shift in the meanings attached to 'whiteness', 'race' and 'racism' under John Howard's prime ministership" (1) This is a challenge with which many of the essays in this issue directly engage. The contributors essays engage with both the broader issues of whiteness historically and the immediate shifts in the recent past whilst focusing on specific expressions and practices of whiteness.

Satoshi Mizutani is an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Language and Culture, Doshisha University (Kyoto, Japan). Mizutani is currently rewriting his doctoral dissertation into a book, provisionally titled *Boundaries of Whiteness: Racial and Class Ambiguities in Late British India, 1858-1930* for Oxford University Press. Drawing on and extending the research for his dissertation and book interrogating whiteness in the practices of late Colonial India, his essay explores the problems posed to the British administration of India by European and Euro-Asian pauperism. Mizutani breaks new ground with this work by examining the hierarchies of whiteness within colonial Indian society and the steps taken to negotiate and camouflage types of whiteness that weaken the imperial myths.

Based on archival research and framed by critical theories of colonialism and whiteness, he demonstrates how a "domiciled" class of working class whites and Europeans with Asian heritage persistently unsettled the ideological work of British colonialism by countering the mythical ideal of bourgeois white masculinity. The visible presence of these people outside the desired stereotype called into question the myths of Euro-

pean “civilisation” and “progress” through which the British justified their presence and rule in India. After investigating laws, institutions and practices developed to manage the “problem” of European pauperism, the paper concludes with reflections on how the history of this minority within British and post-colonial India complicates ahistorical accounts of social and psychological liminality as well as post-colonial theories of hybridity reliant on an analytical distinction between a metropolitan centre and a colonised periphery.

The next essay by Victoria Sentas, a PhD candidate in the Department of Criminology at Monash University, engages with the present in her examination of counter terrorism policing and the ways in which this policing is part of a long term investment in the racial/colonial state. In the process, her article ‘Counter Terrorism Policing - Investing in the Racial State’ offers an important theoretical and political analysis of current Australian policing strategies in the ‘war against terror’.

In ‘White Spaces’, Kathleen Connellan investigates the colour ‘white’ within the visual arts and the architecture and design within the built environment. Connellan, a Lecturer in design, craft and art history and theory at the South Australian School of Art at the University of South Australia, explores the ‘invisible’, unacknowledged prevalence of whiteness in public and private space exposing implications and implicit beliefs.

White walls, white surfaces and white expanses are designed to place all other colours into sharp contrast. The smoothness of these white surfaces also shows up texture and variation; the sameness of white in design is positioned as a basis for designed interiors. White in this sense becomes the one upright against which all else is peripheral’.

Connellan describes and analyses specific architectural spaces offering insights into how the problematic conflation between whiteness and light and its associated mythologies of goodness and cleanliness is part of the construction and maintenance of white privilege.

In the fourth essay, Rob Garbutt engages with the foundational and always problematic issue in Australia of being local, of belonging. Garbutt is a PhD candidate with the Centre for Cultural Diversity and Social Justice at Southern Cross University in Lismore, New South Wales. In ‘White “Autochthony”’, Garbutt examines western conceptualisations of autochthony, the classic Greek concept ‘of being born of the earth itself’. He argues that this concept is a useful frame for understanding aspects of the settler Australian idea of “being a local”. Garbutt persuasively demonstrates the implicit violence both literal and epistemic that is the corollary of unifying myths of autochthony and plots the specific and unusual path of white settlers claiming ‘native’ status that has been part of Australian colonial history. His discussion and conclusions are particularly important in the context of scenes such as those that surrounded the Cronulla riots with banners and T-shirts proclaiming ‘respect locals or piss off’.

In an exploration of the transitions and deployments of different types of masculinity, Katherine Bode interrogates the myths of Anglo-Celtic Australian masculinity from a different perspective in her essay ‘Aussie Battler in Crisis? Shifting Constructions of White Australian Masculinity and National Identity’. Katherine Bode completed her PhD in 2005 and will take up the Colin and Margaret Roderick Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at James Cook University in 2007. After documenting ‘the manifestation of the ‘man in crisis’ in current political and

popular debates', Bode considers the ways in which these debates are expressed, affirmed and sometimes transformed within contemporary Australian women's fiction. She argues that in 'the popular and political arenas, the identities of the Aussie battler and the man in crisis currently exist in tension'. However, despite these tensions and the reconfigurings of Australian masculine identities within these tensions, she concludes that 'contemporary Australian women's fictions continue to imagine Australian identity in terms of whiteness'.

Holly Randell-Moon engages specifically with Howard's rhetoric as she argues that "the articulation of whiteness as a moral homogeneity comprising 'common' Judeo-Christian values has contributed to the formation and representation of Australian national identity as unproblematically Anglo-Celtic". Randell-Moon is a Doctoral candidate in Critical and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney. In 'Common values': whiteness, Christianity, asylum seekers and the Howard government', Randell-Moon examines the ways in which Howard's repeated framing of a set of so-called Christian values as universal and Australian reproduces and protects white privilege and hegemony while it reproduces the illusion of a racially unmarked subject through the disassociation from the specific context. She examines government responses to media reports of asylum seekers converting to Christianity and demonstrates how the 'discursive association between whiteness and Australianness is produced as a naturalised norm'.

Randell-Moon traces the ways in which by aligning these so called Australian and Christian values with a discourse of secular, Western nations, the Howard Government 'makes invisible a religiously inflected cultural agenda that presents Australian values as 'broad' and inclu-

sive but underpinned by an adherence to a teleology of Australian nationality that is Anglocentric in its outlook'. She provides a revealing analysis of media reports and government commentary, of the ways in which religion is embedded in the purported secular discourse of Australian national identity which further entrenches the racialised nature of 'Australia' as 'white'.

Farid Farid engages with contemporary Australian political rhetoric from a different perspective as he seeks to trace the manner in which whiteness attempts to define 'Arab' and Muslim subjects, and allow or disallow voice and rights to these subjects in the context of the post-September 11 'war against terrorism'. Drawing on Said's call to 'let the Egyptian speak for himself' Farid details the experiences of those of 'Middle Eastern appearance' and how they came to be signified as the latest others along the continuum of cultural and racial demonisations that have been inherent in Australia's racial history'. Farid Farid is a PhD candidate with the Centre for Cultural Research, at the University of Western Sydney. Using Said's critique of orientalism as the point of comparison, Farid argues that the 'discursive and political stratification of racialised others is not a new phenomenon and is certainly not unique in the Australian context of state multiculturalism'.

Events such as the Tampa affair, the 'War on Terror' and the incarceration of Cornelia Rau set the context for Jeanette Krongold's argument that

a breach of trust has occurred within Australian society between the stakeholders of multiculturalism, whereby the rhetoric and cultural politics of the government of the day have promoted emphasis on a nationalism that is antithetical to the pluralistic dynamics of a multicultural society, and foster intolerance.

Krongold approaches the discourse on Australian multiculturalism at the turn of the twenty-first century as conflicted, and analyses how this conflict might be resolved. In 'A Breach of Trust: The Vitiating Discourse of Multiculturalism at The Turn of the Twenty-First Century', Krongold, a PhD candidate with the Department of History at the University of Melbourne, explores

the argument between those that adhere to a core/periphery functionally assimilationist definition of multiculturalism (emphasising otherness) and those that urge a re-definition of the term to emphasise notions of alterity (de-emphasising otherness) and hybridity through some recent historical metaphors of cultural racism.

She concludes by suggesting that what is needed is 'public policy with a code of ethics or politics of civility to facilitate a hybridising society'.

These essays interrogate the meanings, implications and histories of discriminatory practices that depend on the normativity of whiteness to maintain their legitimacy. Each voice in this issue is

relatively new to the academy but they are already contributing in an important way.

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