



## **ACRAWSA E-JOURNAL**

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### **QUEER RACE**

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#### **'DREAMING ACROSS THE SEA': QUEER POSTCOLONIAL BELONGINGS IN SHANI MOOTOO'S NOVELS**

DONNA MCCORMACK

This article explores the potentiality of queer and postcolonial theories to imagine non-violent ways of belonging. Focusing on Shani Mootoo's novels, *Cereus Blooms at Night* and *He Drown She in the Sea*, it suggests that the process of imagining relationships beside the demands of the colonial and heterosexual nation is a politically imperative project. This work is located at the intersections of queer and postcolonial theories in an attempt to, like Mootoo's novels, render intelligible those bodies and histories that come into being outside of existing norms. In this sense, it suggests that by existing beside norms we can begin to reformulate, revisit and recreate boundaries of existence and belonging. Moreover, it argues that these actions are constantly in process and always coming into being, thus demanding perpetual critique and responsibility as political necessities. Finally, it suggests that there is a need to work with our own vulnerabilities rather than representing the human as a contained, coherent, invincible being. Through this idea of the vulnerable, articulated in Mootoo's texts, we begin to see non-violent belonging as becoming imaginable.

## **THE (GAY) SCENE OF RACISM: FACE, SHAME AND GAY ASIAN MALES**

GILBERT CALUYA

As adept as we have become in tracing the discursive and institutional contours of contemporary Australian racisms, such a focus sometimes shifts attention away from the 'lived experience' of racism, in Fanon's sense. What does it mean to face racism? What does it mean for gay Asian men to face racism on the gay scene? How is it *possible* to face racism? Indeed, do we face racism or does racism 'face' us? Drawing on autoethnographic research, this essay focuses on the lived experience of anti-Asian racism on the gay scene. It analyses cultural examples of racial wounding on the gay scene to tease out the constitutive role of shame for gay Asian men's racial-sexual subjectivities.

## **WHAT A DRAG! FILIPINA/WHITE AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS IN *THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT***

ELAINE LAFORTEZA

This paper tracks the ways in which the deployment of Orientalist logic (in)forms the Australian film *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (1994) and responses to the film. I argue that Orientalism within *Priscilla* privileges a white hegemony that denies the potentialities of queer as destabilising normative coherence. I focus on the white protagonists' relationship with Cynthia, the Filipina character, in order to interrogate how whiteness and Orientalism (in)forms their contact with one another, and I process queer (to a heterosexist social order) characters as normative protagonists because of their whiteness. Here, I insinuate my own readings of the film to show that while Orientalist whiteness shapes the film, it also produces and is produced by perceptual practices that deploy investments in and/or resignify the scope of white Orientalism. I track this simultaneous affirmation and reconceptualisation of normative structures through the characters' use of drag. Such impermanence maintains whiteness as the speaking/subject position. Consequently, queer potentialities for extending the scope of white Orientalism cannot eventuate. This paper pushes towards recognising whiteness and Orientalism as integral facets of queerness within *Priscilla* and through responses to the film. With this, the multiple ways in which queer identities are experienced can be addressed.

## ***I THINK YOU'RE THE SMARTEST RACE I'VE EVER MET: RACIALISED ECONOMIES OF QUEER MALE DESIRE***

ALAN HAN

This paper explores how queer white men become both the desiring subjects and desirable objects of the queer male gaze. By analysing the personal experiences of queer Asian men, this paper argues that queer white men claim possession of desire as capital through racialised economies of queer male desire. These economies privilege queer white men by racialising queer Asian men and other non-white queer men, and ascribes them desirability according to the queer white male gaze. By racialising non-white queer men, queer white men's whiteness is unracialised, and so, conceals their possession of desire as a white possession. I argue that it is only by exploring how queer white men claim possession of desire as capital within these racialised economies of queer male desire, that we can consider how they dominate the queer male gaze.

## ***"THE EARTH'S REVENGE": NATURE, DIASPORA, AND TRANSFEMINISM IN LARISSA LAI'S SALT FISH GIRL***

NICHOLAS BIRNS

The Chinese Canadian writer Larissa Lai's futuristic novel *Salt Fish Girl* imagines a mythic femininity that persists even amid its attempted suppression by transnational globalisation. Lai uses myth as a redemptive layer of experience, but does not do so in a modernist way that would elevate absolutes. She uses myth in a critical way that accepts the epigenous as equally a part of the texture as the original. In this way, Lai's novel is relevant to discourses of transfeminism, and can liberate transfeminism from just being a term that literally denotes transsexual identity politics, to a broader spectrum of discourse in which the experience of transgendered people can inform feminism generally. Applying a transfeminist analysis to the novel also elucidates how Lai makes connections between Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian experience that bridge longstanding differences in a common stand against transnational exploitation.