Brogan writes that his recent works on paper have become the extension of an ongoing dialogue he has orchestrated between himself and an invisible art audience or general public who might just walk in off the street into the gallery. However, his concerns with both the medium and the subject matter are focused on the here, now and immediate future (Brogan 2013).

This particular body of work is in transition … a body of work in progress that has been fast tracked on account of a number of factors beyond his control. Most people familiar with his work will recognise that the Mock Turtle series is about returning to the nature of things … Michael’s inspiration ‘comes from many points of reference to do with cinema, music, art and literature, as each have a tendency to evoke an image, concept or effect to most of the artwork I produce – however, nature being the most immediate’ (Brogan 2013).

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Social Alternatives analyses, critiques and reviews contemporary social issues and problems. The journal seeks to generate insight, knowledge and understanding of our contemporary circumstances in order to determine local, national and global implications. We are committed to the principles of social justice and to creating spaces of dialogue intended to stimulate social alternatives to current conditions. Social Alternatives values the capacity of intellectual and artistic endeavour to prompt imaginative solutions and alternatives and publishes refereed articles, review essays, commentaries and book reviews as well as short stories, poems, images and cartoons.

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- copyright release form
- title page listing contributing authors, contact details, affiliation and short bio of approximately 80 words
- abstract should be a maximum of 150 words
- three - five keywords.

Please use Australian/English spelling and follow Harvard referencing. Submit tables, graphs, pictures and diagrams on separate pages. Remove in-text references identifying authors and replace with [name removed for the review process].

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Frantz Fanon concluded his groundbreaking work, *Black Skin White Masks*, with the edifying words, ‘oh lord, let me be a man that questions’ (Fanon 1986). This is a key tenet for the theoretical purposes of philosophy, but has a haunting urgency for those working in the area of critical philosophy of race. Philosophy struggles with dark ‘otherness’ and struggles with gender. This is because the spaces of philosophy are both colonised and epistemically violent to those outside the realm of the Western canon, while also perverting those who are within it with the consequence of uncritically replicating coloniality and misogyny. A further consequence is that whiteness, maleness and coloniality structure philosophical thought and practice at a fundamental, and universal, level.

The question, or questioning, is not merely a philosophical game of intellectual acrobatics; nor an endeavour to display who is most clever; or Foucault's (1982) reading of Hegel tea mea tea mea, but rather those who generally seek to ask the question: how can we change our world for the better? That is, philosophy itself should be a mode of change, for change: it is only through performative theory and practice, which disrupts the racial and gendered assumptions of philosophy that those traditionally outside of philosophy can take ownership of philosophical space. This disruption is imperative, whether it is welcomed or not.

How can the existence of folk of colour be a less perilous place? How can folk of colour refuse to give up space to nihilism, hegemony or coloniality? To create places/spaces where we can see our own epistemologies amid the plethora of others taught to our children in our universities; to create alternative ways to think, practice, teach, embody and understand philosophy; from the perspective of many different thinkers, and from various points of view. How can philosophy help constitute communities where young natives and people of colour have a better chance of getting a job, practising culture and lore, going to university rather than going to gaol. Where they have the opportunity to outlive their youth, freely to go to another country as a valued migrant and human, and not be seen as an exhibit in a museum, or just out there in the desert. We seek to practise decoloniality: in the face of the continued machine of colonisation, we seek a creolised, comprehensive and real view of our world.

The wonderful thing about starting to talk about race and racism is the extent to which you can touch, see and evoke for change, both covertly and in plain sight. The essays offered here offer the prospect of pushing boundaries further, so they transgress what is believed to be known and introduce an activist mode, speaking directly to issues that face communities and the individuals that comprise them. We no longer just talk about the dark and native other, we talk about everything that restrains and oppresses them. We acknowledge that the present is a problematic, contested space, where problems have not been solved, merely reiterated. It is the fundamental difference between what we consider good work in the philosophy of race (that serves a purpose in research and career, and talks about the fetishised) and utilitarian work, which does not.

While some work in the area endeavours to discuss what race is, the modern genesis of race (Du Bois 1903, Taylor 2013, Gordon 1995) and earlier accounts, this collection seeks to discuss a contemporary critique of what we live with as raced human beings in highly contested spaces and highly contested times, to create philosophical spaces that are without coloniality and without misogyny. We are seeing a Fauludian style backlash to the anti-racism of the last twenty or so years in many parts of the world. To the extent that for some it is worse to be called a racist than to be one. A perverse regression indeed. Foucault is right about how power works. This is the examination of the examination in which we seek to analyse and understand, or at least better understand, the phenomena of our being in our world.

This issue brings together scholars from philosophy, but also researchers invested in interrogating existences of race from fields such as feminist theory, history, linguistics, documentary film making and art. By doing this, we hope to further expand the limits of ‘philosophy’, and undertake an operational resistance to what Lewis Gordon called *Disciplinary Decadence* (2006). These essays engage...
with vigorously contested spaces, and aim to collaborate in the creation of truly decolonised, transgressive space in the creolised environments many of us find ourselves in. Ultimately these essays ask how to be epistemically disobedient (Mignolo 2009) and transgressive in the service of change for humans and their communities.

Like many fields of protectionist inquiry, philosophy is perhaps the most at risk of further decay, perhaps even disappearance, given the attack on the humanities in many Western countries (Australia certainly). One only has to look at philosophy departments throughout the West to become discouraged about expectations in this field. Many of our friends and colleagues around the world have struggled within the discipline of philosophy itself. I often feel like she is the husband that beats and abuses me, but I still return to my lover for all the wonderful things she is, gifts me with and has opened me to. I want a philosophy of the world: one that looks like all of us. One that treats us all like a loving and respectful mate, who is open to debate, without abuse and the annihilation of invisibility. Despite this, it is a discipline that we think has hope, to fulfil its promise. For us, and our colleagues, defence of philosophy is singularly important.

Editor Danielle Davis opens with a critical examination of Black Existentialism and racist violence on Black being, particularly focusing on anti-black racism/anti-indigenous racism. Davis argues for strategies of both resistance and anti-racism, but also searches for spaces of transgression in which we can self-identify, be ourselves and be in better human relations. Continuing on this theme, Anisha Gautam, PhD candidate, utilises the theory of Gordon on monsters to justify the monstrosity visited upon Indigenous Australians in a discussion of the anti-black racism directed at the footballer Adam Goodes. Here, Gautam deconstructs and demystifies the so-called monstrousness of blackness and unveils the real monstrosity at the root of Australia's national white identity and its failure to deal with ongoing coloniality.

Similarly, the political theorist Yassir Morsi writes about the experience in living with the pressure of Western ideas of being a 'good Muslim'. Morsi writes of the pressure to police his 'otherness' to make white Western liberal academics comfortable with who, and what, he is as a human and a scholar. International scholar and linguist Finex Ndhllovu systematically takes apart the anti-black and colonial structures of the Australian English language test to reveal the continued practice of a coloniality that assumes itself to be neutral, impartial, and fair, but which in fact perpetuates the ongoing global coloniality of bias against those it does not wish to see.

Michael Brogan considers the collusion between anthropological film making and education policy, uncovering the relationship between anthropologic and ethnographic frames of 'a dying race'. He argues that the use of anthropological frameworks in framing assimilist education policies, with outcomes then and now, are beyond monstrous. Philosopher and hip-hop artist Devon Johnson argues for a maturation of both hip hop and 'black men', arguing that immaturity is a function of anti-black racism's desire to keep adult African-American men as 'boys'.

Western fragility is in anxious fragmentation, according to Maori philosopher and director of Global Studies at University of Waikato, Carl Mika. He argues from a Maori philosophical position of rangaihua that not only points out that Western fragility is born of anxiety, but also constitutes an affliction in Maoris themselves.

Finally, Eliza Kent, early modern historian and editor, closes the themed edition with a balanced piece of narrative, experience and theory, to challenge the soft positionality and fragility of white racism, and its amnesiac coloniality. Kent challenges colonisers to face up to their own, ongoing coloniality, with its monstrous outcomes for non-white peoples.

References

Author
Davis's current research area is in Black Existentialism and philosophy of race. She is also interested in animal ethics and justice. Active in the Caribbean Philosophical Association, she is the co-convenor of the ongoing symposium series, Sth Critical Philosophy of Race and Decoloniality. Davis recently published an edited collection with Rowman & Littlefield on Black Existentialism (2019), focusing on the work of Lewis R. Gordon.
Fanon, Violence, Racism and Embodiment: Making raced bodies and practising a new dialogue of raced bodies in situation?

DANIELLE DAVIS

In this paper I critically examine Black Existentialism and racist violence on Black being, particularly focusing on anti-black racism/anti-indigenous racism (which I argue is a peculiar and particular kind of racism) in an Australian context. Following Fanon, I argue for strategies of both resistance and anti-racism, but also search for spaces of transgression in which we can practise being better for ourselves and being better human relations. I problematise this with a critical eye from the philosophy of Fanon and Noel A. Cazenave’s The Many Fergusons: Kill Lines – the Will, the Right and the Need to Kill. Are these spaces possible and can an indigenised and creolised stratagem of resistance and transgressive practices make lives matter and defendable in, as Lewis Gordon’s term, ‘trying times’?

‘Superiority? Inferiority? Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?’
— Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks

Black Indigenous bodies don’t matter. Black bodies across the globe don’t matter. These are the urgent circumstances which, to one degree or another, Black and Indigenous bodies and bodies of colour universally must face every day of our lives. By matter, I must be clear. Black bodies don’t matter in our social world, which reads them every day, every movement and every breath in an antiblack world as less than meaningful compared to white bodies. Even to the extent that sometimes they don’t matter to the very people that embody them. Using Lewis Gordon and Fanon’s concepts of the antiblack world, I will argue that they must be forced to matter in a necessary action that needs to be attended to on Foucault’s micro- and macro- practical levels – that is, all aspects of our lives, all the time, on all sites of our existence. Further I argue that we must note some limitations to Gordon’s theory and ask, what can be married to this to enrich and help address some limitations that Gordon’s work may have.

The interrogation of the Black Indigenous body began in 2004 as a response to the death of a young boy that lived in my former neighbourhood in Redfern in Sydney, who was mistaken for another Indigenous Black ‘suspect’.

Firstly, let me define the context of Black and Indigenous from my historical, community and cultural context.

Black, or my preference, ‘Blackfulla’, has often been used to ascribe cultural and an embodied context to Native Australian peoples. I don’t argue or subscribe to this, hence my usage of context and ascribe not prescribe. Nevertheless, as a Black Existentialist, it is important to make this a clear embodied, cultural and particularly contextual stipulative definition and lived experience. Following my own familial and cultural existence, and more expansively, to a more Pan-Indigeneity adopted by many Black Indigenous activists in the 1960s, 70s and 80s in Australia (see especially Professor Gary Foley and Dennis Walker, amongst others) does not necessarily mean that I am embodied in all contexts in the lived world as Black. In fact, far from it. I am often mistaken for Spanish, Greek, North African, New Zealand Maori and Indigenous/Koori Australian in what I call fluid or passing moments of existence. In the stopping existence (in Black Existentialism: Essays on the Transformative Thought of Lewis R. Gordon (davis 2019), one’s full intersubjective, embodied experience can be unveiled. I am Koori - a Black Australian. I subscribe myself, though not in an enclosed manner, in relation to my positionality and lived experience and heritage. Others also subscribe to this understanding (for example see Lewis Gordon, 2000, 2009, 2018).

The last point is to also explain a part of a very peculiar understanding of Indigenous. Many years ago I conducted an interview with Lewis Gordon on the subject of mixed identity (davis 2008 in CLR James Journal, 2008). One important point discussed was the concept of Black Power. Gordon asserted, correctly, that these
utterances are often made only when there is an absence of power. For me, this led to my understanding of what I think is an important and untouched idea. You are only Indigenous, Native, Aboriginal etc., when you don’t have sovereignty of your native land. The assertion is only relevant to the lacking of sovereignty as it is to power. This of course draws on Hegel’s and Fanon’s concepts of ‘being for the other’ in the context of racist colonial power (Fanon, 1967). What do you call a native French person? French, yes?

For contextual reference, I will briefly provide an analysis of Redfern. The ‘fern’, Redfern was once a suburb of Indigenous people from local and national areas; a kind of cosmopolitanisms of Indigeneity. It has been an area of focus in the political, artistic, social, health and cultural movements. Redfern and specifically an area known as ‘The Block’, historically has been an area of poverty, crime and the over-surveillance by police, particularly over the last 30 years with the onset of ‘white gentrification’ on highly valued inner city land. Indigenous peoples and their right to live in Redfern have come under enormous political and economic attack to make way for various state government developments and commercial gentrification, or what might be better described as forced removal (for a slightly dated, but excellent interrogation of this, see ABC-Four Corners, ‘The Block’ ABC).

Whilst this story of T. J. Hickey, detailed below, and what happened to him in Redfern is still the inspiration for this paper, I want to further theorise and examine more broadly how we find ourselves in threatening times in an antiblack world as Black and Indigenous peoples, but also as non-Indigenous people too. This is not using a boy’s tragic death for ‘abstract’ theory. If you don’t understand Black Existential experience and the extrapolation from scholars and activists of colour, Indigeneity and Blackness, this lack of scholarly and historical knowledge is on you.¹

A Child’s Death

The child Hickey died violently after being chased by police. On his bicycle at the time, his 17 year old, slight neck was impaled on a cast iron spike used in a fence on a public housing estate in the Redfern/Waterloo area. He died at the scene. A so called ‘riot’ followed (Australian Broadcasting Corporation).

The child had an outstanding warrant at the time, but was confused for another ‘suspect’. Redfern Police contested that they were not in pursuit of him.

My response to this statement is: does it really matter if there was a physical chase in progress? Much information has come to light in the inquest into the child Hickey’s death in Redfern, which casts doubt on some of the initial police statements given at the time of his death. Certainly no-one can deny the importance of knowing what happened that day but I want to discuss something else. I want to shift the focus of discussion and offer an examination of the material conditions of his existence and how it made the child’s flight and death an awful tragedy, but not a surprising one. In particular I want to examine what happens on a daily basis to Black and Indigenous bodies.

In doing so I outline the perspectives of Fanon and how they pertain to embodiment and help us think through and explore the ways in which we might exceed or transgress body limits. For other work in this area see Oliver (2004). For my purposes, body limits are ones in which historio-racial, psychological and physical responses are restricted and perverted by Hegel’s master/slave concepts. As Fanon further developed the master/slave dichotomy we are, in his broad terms, trapped in this cycle of colonial/native, black/white neurotic relationship. Neither being free, but rather neutered and bound by these as chains (Fanon 1967). One simply cannot be free if one is programmed, as it were, to respond in these ways without critical reflection and critique of how we behave in relation to each other and our embodiment. Without this, we merely become reflexive responders (living in a mirror of how those who oppress us want us to respond).

Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others. Their attention was a liberation, running over my body suddenly abraded into nonbeing, endowing me once more with an agility that I had thought lost, and by taking me out of the world, restoring me to it. But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self (Fanon 1967: 82).

Fanon, a trained medical doctor and psychiatrist, diagnosed the notion of being trapped in the sickness of our bodily relations and our historio-racial schema as one that continues to be relevant. Fanon literally diagnoses these relationships and constructions as illnesses – diseased bodies and not merely an existential one, but rather one that sees this as whole to the human. This is his famous claim of bodily secretions. That is, the Black and colonised body under White supremacy are inherently stressed in order to cope and adjust to the imposition that racism places upon them. This is accumulative stress of white racism on the Black body that creates the stress levels indicative of illness (Fanon 1967).
According to Fanon, these instances of racism for Blacks under colonisation are so embedded and common that their actual bodily fluids would be indicative of this stress. So the sickness that Fanon writes about in his paper regarding African immigrants in France, is actually the result of racism as it is in the example above. Their bodies have been made sick because of the devaluation of their bodies in a racist society. This is not difficult to believe. With statistics of Indigenous health in Australia at third world standards, not all of which can be accounted for by standard sticks of measurement, for example, remoteness, diet etc. Fanon's argument does not seem so farfetched. Oppression and racism then can be seen as a cause of illness and this may go towards explaining why health is such a tenacious opponent in the lives of Indigenous people (Irving 2017).

Much evidence over the last 30 years has given Fanon's theory scientific weight. For example, the study of Black women in America still suffering from illnesses which are usually associated with ‘low income’ such as, short life expectancy, underweight babies, heart disease, are still prevalent in Black women with higher incomes and education. Class analysis should indicate the opposite (Geronimus et al. 2010).

I will lay out two different dialogues. One is the dialogue that hegemonically operates between Black bodies and the white bodies that are familiar in the everyday experience. The other, is an alternative and perhaps at times, an exception, to most interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and perhaps more broadly to the context of Fanon and Gordon's work. Note here, that Indigenous bodies within the realm of the Black Indigenous sphere, merge as both simultaneously. It is these exceptions on which we draw in imagining the different ways our bodies might meet. Imagination is often cast aside as a means of transforming societal urgencies. My stipulative definition here is the social urgency needed to attend to both the crisis of conditions under which groups of people within environments are forced to live. One could think of humanitarian refugee crises, radically shortened life expectancy, environmental degradation, forced migration and so forth. Clearly these are often, if not always interconnected.

These corruptions of bodies are also conceptual. These are the conceptual frameworks through which we have imagined, theorised and practised. Thus, if the problem is at least in part conceptual, so it too must at least be part the solution. As Okri (1997) counsels us, if we can imagine such corruption then we must be able to ‘imagine new stories’. The title of Okri’s book itself urges us to imagine practices of freedom in ways that may help create, imagine, continue, rediscover, honour ancestors and epistemologies to look at a world which, Gordon argues, ‘we might not even know yet’ (Gordon 2018: 12) Fanon take this up further when he says:

As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others ... for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man (Fanon 1967: 77).

Here, Fanon argues that the Black man’s idea of who he is and how others perceive him is through, and because of, his black body within the context of existing white racial domination. This devalued body, devalued because it is both black and not white, is constructed for him by the white racist in relation to the white bodies.

For me, Fanon's point also raises the problematics of Indigeneity itself. Indigeneity only makes sense in relation to colonisation. Can you have a real double consciousness as Asante argues, or is it the confusion of what Fanon refers to as rather the fractured consciousness living in a gaze, as Foucault argues, or is it similar? Is it a literal fractured consciousness, or rather that as a lived experience it does feel as though one is living under two separate and distinct conscious ways of being and responding, behaving in the world in relation to white racism and racist structures.

**The Racist Gaze, Fractured Consciousness**

‘Dirty Nigger!’ ‘Look, A Negro!’ Look an Abbo

According to Foucault we must think of the gaze as both reflexive on the subject and instilled to discipline the subject to behave in ways that are both appropriate and self-censured.

The other’s gaze is upon me, projecting a particular objectivity upon me and in turn, I find myself acting or behaving according to that objectivity/subjectivity of that gaze. Prior to Foucault’s explanation, we see Du Bois and Fanon articulate this form of gaze with deliberate interpellation, that is one of the raced subject to colonisation. Can you have a real double consciousness as Asante argues, or is it the confusion of what Fanon refers to as rather the fractured consciousness living in a gaze, as Foucault argues, or is it similar? Is it a literal fractured consciousness, or rather that as a lived experience it does feel as though one is living under two separate and distinct conscious ways of being and responding, behaving in the world in relation to white racism and racist structures.

It is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior through and through. And racism is only the emotional, affective, sometimes intellectual explanation of this inferiorisation.

The racist in a culture with racism is therefore normal. (Fanon 1967)

Hence why the gaze cannot always be returned or fractures as Fanon and Hall explain.
This is dependent upon particular colonial texts where land, resources and labour is exacted by force at difference locations and technologies. Australia, for example, is often misread as a conquest of land only, whereas the reality shows that forced labour and theft of wages was instrumental in building infrastructure such as schools, hospitals roads etc., (better known as nation building). All while under the literal and existential racist gaze. Surveillance cameras are excessively used in Black areas, such as Redfern.

Fanon says: ‘Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseeching to others ... I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together by another self’ (Fanon 2008: 109).

Given this account of the racist gaze and the construction of identity and our bodily relations how can we relate this to T. J. Hickey and what responsibility does it have for his death?

'It's got to stop, the way they treat our kids, they treat our kids like dogs...they manhandle them' Gail Hickey – T. J.'s mum (Sydney Morning Herald 2004).

'I'd bring the bulldozers in and level the block’ John Brogden- then New South Wales state opposition leader.

Brogden's ‘solution’ to a young boy’s death is to eradicate 'The Block'; an area in which the child did not even live!

'If he wasn't guilty why'd he run?...he must've done somethin' White Redfern commuter.

'Chased or not, T. J. had reasons to run' (Sydney Morning Herald Feb 17, 2004).

When a tragedy erupts the communities and victims of violence are blamed as if they are the monstrous others. If Eric Garner wasn't selling illegal cigarettes or if the child Hickey didn’t run - tea mea, tea mea. Even when the victim cannot possibly be seen to have any accountability in their death or brutalisation somehow it can be related to 'Black Danger'. The murder of Treyvon Martin Chen (2014), is an example of this. The 'innocent victim' is still part of the whole Black monster. Yes, the law in Texas supported and endorsed his murder: the stand your ground law, that allows you to defend your home. However this law is not new and obvious – though we are weary of doing so.

There have been variations of these statements, on the news and in the streets. What it demonstrates is a particular non-Indigenous reaction to Black Indigenous Redfern bodies. A Black Indigenous body in Redfern is not merely a description of epidermis. But rather how these bodies are read and misinterpreted by others and therefore lived in relation to a particular way, as danger, pity, the damned of the earth (in their own country). Gordon argues that this is the existentialist term of 'spirit of seriousness.'(Gordon 2000: 69). By this Gordon argues something alarming happens with a collapse of the sign and the signer in relation to black. To take a step back to see a Black body as a sign of danger for example, is problematic enough. Why should this marked body alarm another in this way is of course relational to an antiblack world. It is so because of white domination of white supremacy. However there is arguable space in which one can move, disrupt and transform. We have some capacity and agency in this equation. When this however is collapsed from meaning to value, then the subject becomes danger (Gordon 2000: 69).

Let me offer an example of what Gordon means by the collapse of the sign and signer. A white woman walks to her car in the evening from a bar. The streets are busy and there are folk about. She sees two dark bodies, standing next to her car on the footpath. One is laughing and gesturing, the other more quiet and focussed with his head down. The white woman’s immediate bodily gestation is to halt, tense up even, perhaps not consciously aware that she is. Her immediate reaction, upon sight, is that those bodies are dangerous, not that they represent danger to her. Being the good white liberal that she is, she forces herself to continue to her car, to discover the chap with his head down is relieving himself while his companion chats away. She has experienced fear. Fear for her bodily safety and released the stress hormones associated with it in her body without any real evidence to do so. Why?

The analysis that needs to be made is that of recognition. Visual cues are first and foremost: of the Black Male bodies. The White women anticipates violence and this drives fear. The sight of the two Black bodies is alone enough to induce fear. Recognition is first and foremost visual. The White woman anticipates violence, and the anticipation propels fear. She anticipates violence upon seeing two Black people. The first signal is the sight of two Black people that is the crucial element.

Well, one could say, 'well she is a woman', a comment frequently deployed by white/non-Indigenous women hiding behind their racism behind their gender. The Black men (here we can also induce rape for the feminist horizon as well.) were near her car, it was dark and so on and so forth. But what I want to propose, and many people of colour will attest to the fact, that it is because the
perception of their bodies are danger to non-Black people this poses a problem for Black people. Clearly the problem needing to be solved here is not the Black male bodies.

In a bustling city, with a myriad of people passing, going, stopping, leaning and all manner of bodily habits, why does this particular body signal danger? It could have been, but not for the reasons the initial gestation of fear sets in.

Rationality was taken over by the irrationality of fear of a Black body. I am always reminded of Public Enemy's seminal album, Fear of a Black Planet here (1990). How right Chuck D was/is.

Now as readers we might conclude that the white woman was stressed and now she is relieved. She can go away and return to her bodily sense of safety, stability and wellbeing in the world. As Gordon and Fanon point out though, she is caught in that insidious relationship too though and her likely responses will be the same if she encounters the situation again. But, unfortunately, for the Black chaps, with their experience of historical racism, with layer upon layer of so many before it and, sadly, many more to come, has a critical, existential effect on them. They remain stressed, scarred with the damage caused, that their body in the world experiences. However, this lends credence to Gordon's claim of both being unfree in this diseased and racist relationship. However, one certainly holds a more advantageous position than the other. Whiteness also provides further privileges of resilience and return to the refuge of 'normalcy'.

A response to these racist constructions might be to argue a move away from using race as a way of relating to others (see K. Anthony Appiah) and to ourselves. I want to argue that the problem is not with living race in this way but rather the way we as human beings conceptualise different bodies.

The construction of these bodily relations is what makes Black bodies, and plausibly made TJ run, anxious and fearful. Fanon's research on African immigrants in France complaining of symptoms of illness for which doctors could not find any cause, is illustrative of bodily fluids (Fanon 1967). This bodily racism, according to Fanon, is manifest in the Black person being 'I was responsible at the same time for my body, my race, for my ancestors' (Fanon 1967: 116). Stress is causation of heart disease, mental health, importantly depression and anxiety, a weak immune system, being accident prone and the list goes on many health conditions of varying seriousness (Gordon 2000: 69). One cannot underestimate the effect of simply feeling well in their world, and feeling that your existence matters and is treated as meaningful.

So what is the scenario which would create the bodily stress reaction that would make T. J. Hickey run from the police that day in Redfern? Certainly, language is not needed. Indeed, the unspoken has already dictated the outcome. In the logic of the encounter that Fanon suggests, T. J., the lone seventeen year old, the Black Indigenous body, is already responsible for his entire race. Or as Lewis Gordon contends, 'the black individual is merely an extension, an arm or a leg on the whole black race (body)' (Gordon 1995). Further, Gordon and Gordon point out in Of Divine Warning: We are literally the BIG BLACK MONSTER. How can we then understand Fanon's idea of bodily excretions? Does he mean, for example, that biologically black people are made up of different chemicals than whites? Fanon doesn't think that this is determined but that it is certainly part of the social sickness of colonisation and racism. An illustration of racism and bodily fluids is in the Ivan Sen film, 'Beneath Clouds'. The two young protagonists hitch hike and catch a ride with a wealthy grazier in his Mercedes Benz. While driving through the quiet country a police car appears behind them. The wealthy white grazier notes the car but continues on relaxed and confident softly, very softly holding his steering wheel, smiling. Later the two hitch a ride with a black family in an old beaten up car. The group are laughing and talking when again a police car appears behind them, but this time the bodily gestations in the scene is quite different. The Black Indigenous man behind the wheel tenses, his hands grasping the wheel tightly-wrenching it. The group members are now tense, the smiles are gone and their bodies are taught and anxious. For Black men a history of being harassed, beaten and profiled because of their body and its devaluation precipitates the behaviour before it has happened. The police do pull them over and a scene of castrating racism is played out where the large, tough-looking black man, because of the power imbalance and real possibility of danger, is forced to be neutered and made to be the subjugated boy. It is a theoretical form of the first part of lynching—castration. He knows, and the white policeman knows, that they are there because of their respective bodies and power relations.

The racist construction through bodily relations and reactions of the Redfern Black is that of criminal, drug addicted, prostituted, and dangerous; a mass body with different meaning and different value to that of the white body this is all tied up in the epidermis. So if the police officer sees a Black child body- s/he doesn't see a child body- this is all tied up in the epidermis. But rather everything that their race has inherited from their skin’s and the social meaning attached to it. Gordon argues that, as Black folk and folk of Colour, and I would include Natives without sovereignty, are not a singular identity judged on our crimes here and now, rather we are part of a whole Black body of criminality, danger, licentiousness, violence and ignorance (not forgetting good at sport, dancing and rapping) (Gordon 2000).
For Merleau-Ponty, our identity is derived from our relationship with others and gives us meaning and a sense of ourselves (2005). For example, my identity as a tutor only makes sense if students sit and listen to my tutorial, allow me to run the tutorial. The Black Redfern body, under this interpretation, would get a sense of itself in relation to authority, in this case the police, from how the logic of that social situation operates.

In contrast, if we think about the white, middle or upper class body in the form of a child in an affluent suburb, the child would have a very different understanding of themselves in relation to the police. In fact one might argue that they would not even have an understanding of themselves in relation to the police. If the Rose Bay (an affluent suburb in Sydney) child sees the police, because their relationship to the police, or lack thereof, their reaction would be to not even notice them, or if stopped be curious as to why, but probably not frightened. The Black Redfern child is likely to have a very different reaction. As Ms Hickey pointed out, they are physically rough with the kids. Police are seen to occupy Indigenous territory when they patrol the Block and other Indigenous areas in Redfern. If stopped by police they are anticipating this kind of behaviour through experience. They know they are being stopped not because they have necessarily done something, but the police think they have done something because their body fits the profile of a criminal. They can expect, through prior experience, familial and communal experience, to get bashed or locked up. The consequences of this for the police’s behaviour is usually nothing. When the Black body runs from police it can be tied to the social meaning of the situation which militates that it is the logical thing to do. If you run, you won’t get hurt, even if you did do something or are accused of something you didn’t do.

This is what Fanon calls the Black man trapped inside his construction, the white man trapped inside his, each in a neurosis of the other’s behaviour’ (Fanon, 1967). What Fanon is saying, is because of these racist constructions we are all trapped in a sickness of our bodies and our bodily relations, Fanon argues that the black body threatens ‘the white bodies allusion of stability and unity’. This makes us ‘anxious’ about our own identity because the difference is not idealised as the white is. Body stability relies on the theory that others do not have an effect on our personal identity and it is unified and that it is static, not open to change and different situations.

The question then I think is how do we escape/transgress this? 'Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are.'
— Foucault

Consider this dialogue. Redfern post office- Black bodies (Bb) enter with beer in hand to pay rent.
Bb- ‘g’day boss, how ya goin?’
White bodied Post office worker- ‘flat out today’.
Bb- ‘gotta pay some rent-don’t like partin with the money’.
wbpw- ‘don’t blame ya, it hurts doesn’t it?’

There is a warm chuckle between the actors.
What we can’t see is the body relations towards one another. The postal worker is leaning forward, a gesture towards the other, in response the Koori man mirrors his position. The faces are warm, smiling and there is no behaviour that indicates fear or myths or degradation. The interaction between the two parties is one of basic respect.

Let me give you another picture. Three young Kooris and one poor white boy are driving at night in a rural town in Australia. It’s a small car and therefore loaded. The male Koori driver is laughing with everyone and the rap music is blaring. There is a wheel alignment problem, but to give everyone a laugh, he yanks it back and forth for comic exaggeration. Police lights flash and on a dark road near train lines, the car pulls over. The young Koori lad and the young white boy in the backseat jump out and run. Koori driver and Koori girl passenger remain. Police approach the car – one young white officer and an old white one.

Old copper: ‘Your car is swerving’.
Koori driver: ‘I know, it has a bad wheel alignment problem.’
Old copper: ‘Okay, but you need to get that fixed.’
Old copper leans on the roof of the offending car and writes a ticket.
Old copper: ‘You far from home?’
KD: ‘No, my brother lives out near the airport close by.’
OC: ‘Ok, drive it home slowly and get it fixed tomorrow.’
KM: ‘No worries. Would’ve before, but just had no money.’
OC: ‘Yup. Drive carefully.’
KD: ‘I will.’
KD & KG: ‘Fuck, why can’t all coppers be like that?’
Laugh loudly.

We drive it to my other brother’s house, slowly and carefully. Over the years I have thought about that young, white copper and hoped that he learned from that old copper. That's all it takes.
Imagine how different; yet still imperfect; but transformative, it would be if this was the standard M.O.—only stopped when you do something wrong; and, where not serious, police use their discretionary powers to let it go; do your job and get out of there.

*We all go home.*

It is difficult to objectify or articulate exactly why or how this has happened. We might say we have had a Foucault/Merleau-Ponty moment.

The point is there are examples of this kind of meeting of different bodies and that we should attempt to draw on them in order to reformulate our current relations. What is sure is that there is an exceeding of *expected* bodily interactions. It isn’t only on a grand meta scale, but rather on a Foucauldian micropractical level, which is one of power. But then again, is that not where we exist at a daily operational level and where most of our existential grievances and ontological violence emerge from?

For those of us who are however vehemently entrenched in bad faith and antiblack racism or those that simply do not have to put a stake in; I’m not sure where this approach is apt. We simply have to fight and surveil ourselves for our own trespasses.

So how can we as human beings engaged in the project of antiblack racism and anti-humanisation make this kind of move, if we want to and I acknowledge that if people don’t want to then we are at a standstill?

One thing we can do, is to think about these situations, if we have been in them, and explore what was going on at the time. So perhaps there is a period of waiting to see how the situation might unfold? If we have that inkling of racism bubbling up in us, can this be transgressed?

However, given the account how we can affect one another through body intercourse, we might suggest that firstly perhaps our bodies might be openly generous towards one another, like the post office example. If we see another body tensing and recoiling from the sight of us that in turn makes our bodies and behaviour react in a particular way. So through our bodily gestures and behaviour we might actually make the myth of fear come true, so it might not necessarily have unfolded like that.

One thing is certain; fear and racism will make the outcome predetermined and true.

Lewis Gordon talks about this in terms of stating a reality, for example a conservative statement about welfare and Blacks and then taking away resources like education that in turn makes the statement, which was formally untrue, true.

**Trust as Telos**

On fear and trust

Improper fear—Leads to improper mistrust

Fear is a rational and utilitarian emotion (see for example: Faulkner 2007: 305). It keeps us safe and wary of harm. In this argument though it is both improper and phobic, causing actors not to possess rationality and reason, but reactionary, phobic fear. One cannot have any freedom nor will when one acts in a manner that abandons reason.

Moreover, this causes actual harm to those, like the boy child Hickey, Treyvon Martin, Doomagee3, Ms Dhu (*The Guardian* 2017) and many other Black peoples on varying scales of ontological violence to actual death. So it must be clear then that this is an urgency for the so called ‘Other’, rather than moral good for the perpetrator. This leads to what could be considered the motivation for the racist to act ‘otherly’. Why change? What is the ‘nature’ of the human that perpetuates this?

Philosophy of trust and fear is a much trodden terrain and the notion of human nature is at the nub of these questions. Fear is a rational and utilitarian emotion (see for example: Faulkner 2007).

For the purposes of this paper, the question of good disposition is a particularly important one. For the practice of this we must assume that all racists are not necessarily evil and that racists have the capacity to transgress, regress and reformulate behaviour in an afterthought to offer a glimpse of their humanity. This must be understood as not a static state of progression, but one which is subject to contexts and circumstances that render reactions not always reliable or ‘progressive’. For example, I ate healthy all week, but binged on chocolate all weekend. Our more sophisticated behaviours too are subject to gains, losses, forgettings and deliberated actions contrary to best laid plans. But that can be a telos. The best of us?

Where motivation cannot be ascertained, then a political move is needed. It is problematic to call for state intervention for those who transgress – on the lives of others, when the state itself is culpable of perpetuating racist violence. Sociologist Noel Cazenave’s poignant, moving and urgent piece on the phenomena of what happened in Ferguson, USA4, argues that in the example of police violence upon black bodies they ‘do it because they can’. The treatment of Black people in the United
States has fostered this belief, and propelled actors to participate in ensuring this outcome.

He traces several cases where cop killings of Black folk are simply not prosecuted, thereby giving police carte blanche on lives that don’t matter. As he argues, ‘the kill line and the right to kill’ (Cazenave 2014). Experience tells perpetrators that there will be no punishment for their crimes.

The will to kill line - based on highly racialized [sic] and genderized [sic] emotions of anger and hatred; the right to kill line - what that person can reasonably expect to get away with based on existing norms, laws, policies and practices, and their enforcement, and the need to kill line - rooted in a threat to that person’s life or the lives of others. In brief, the will to kill and the right to kill are the necessary and sufficient conditions for such killings. There need not be an actual need to kill (Cazenave 2014).

Cazenave’s point, is that real action would curb this choice of crime and recognise these crimes for what they are – the new lynchings. In Plato’s Republic, Glaucous’s position is that fear of apprehension for transgression of laws is a deterrent to commit these crimes. As we have discussed, not only do we have a problem of culpable parties going undetected and unpunished, much more fundamentally problematic is that the crime itself is not acknowledged as a crime.

There seems to be a war raging in the United States for which there is no end in sight. A war, the outcome of which may well determine whether many African-American children will live to reach adulthood. More precisely, what is happening looks and feels like a race war that pits the right of African-Americans to have their young people live with dignity against the right of angry white policemen and vigilantes with guns to kill them. (Cazenave 2014).

Alternatively, perhaps even in addition, we can persuade, educate and ‘civilise’ for humane treatment. This cannot be underestimated nor mythologised as there are clear experiences in human history when this has occurred. Gordon argues similarly to Fanon that if we are trapped in the neurotic slave master, white/black, colonised/coloniser dichotomy, then neither the victim nor the perpetrator can be free (Gordon 1997). However, one is certainly freer than the other, furthermore there is a much more fundamental problem with Gordon’s argument.

In order for racism to fulfil its objective, we need the racist to recognise that particular understanding and agreement of freedom. Freedom is a difficult and slippery enough term and ideology with people who have roughly similar projects, positions and ideologies. One only needs to look at eruptions and contentions within the same political parties to know this is a fairly easy case to make. A prime example of this is the recent contestations within the same parties in the Australian Federal Parliament on support for Same Sex Marriage.5

Gordon is therefore arguing for a universal meaning of freedom that is in itself highly problematic. One could argue, well let’s call treating humans as humans a concept of freedom that we can all agree on. White supremacists, the upper caste system in India and its hierarchy that emanates from the Brahmin conception of caste, which is consistent with light skin and Aryan facial features that involve indigeneity (mining rights for example), class, gender and sexuality don’t have that agenda. Gordon is correct in his assertion when he notes that they are operating under bad faith and under bad faith they are unfree, but he cannot for my mind, explain how this imposes lack of freedom on those that oppress. ‘Oppressors’ would have to have agreement on fundamental readings of all human beings and they simply don’t.

Therefore they are not really impinging upon their own freedoms unless it is the Satrean/Fanonian stipulative definition of bad faith and freedom, but rather are propelling and perpetuating their own advantage and prosperity. This is something that oppression and advantage rely on and it benefits those who are able to wield it most of the time, most dominantly.

What I can agree on with Gordon is there are parts of the community that can transgress because there is a possibility that they arrive at moment of enlightenment (I argue this can always be subject to regressions, backlashes, but also constant evolvement and transgressions), when they will have to understand that racists are wrong. But racists will have to know other ways are right and accept that.

This is one of the most important parts of Gordon’s work. What he does most beautifully, and skillfully, is to issue challenges in his work that make us think there could be another way or ways. Through his challenging work in Disciplinary Decadence, Gordon suggests that we bury the ideas that one form of disciplinary thought can provide us with the tools and answers to the most urgent of traumas we find ourselves in. This for any transformative thinker is the most golden of threads that can weave through their work. A radical, yet simple challenge at times. Gordon asks the question, what would the world and our existence in it be like if we treated other human beings with respect? I would further add, what would it
be like if we extended this to non-human animals and the environment in which we are all integrated and connected to? A different world indeed.

**Stopping in the moment**

As Cazenave colourfully paraphrases Frederick Douglas, when the oppressor’s foot is on our neck, he won’t take it off until you make him. This can be seen as a response to Gordon’s theory when all else fails, because I think Gordon’s argument is a good (true) one up until the point of dealing with the people I mentioned in the above.

This statement offers us a problem when arguing for a thought action or performative theory of trust and stopping. It assumes that actors in the scene want to be good actors – that they have good dispositions for good intentions and at the least have the possibility for transgression and I think even some racists can do that.

The racist, scared cop, the self-appointed neighbourhood ‘security guard’ with no authority, who shoots a child because he refused to stop; the reactionary phobic of the irrational does not, and in fact might indeed choose to try and will against it’s ‘good’ intentions. In fact, a racist’s conception of good may actually be carried out in their violent behaviour. Their act of murder was righteous, standing their ground and defending goodness against the literal embodied darkness. Yes, Gordon and Gordon are correct (2009), the monster that is omnipotent, dangerous, and irrational. The monster by definition is not human. To slay a monster is to be the hero in the story and the defender of the fair and good folk of the community. Legal scholar Devon Carbado argues, that in fact despite the portrayal of such police brutality, murder and over surveillance as rogue or bad apple in the bunch is both constitutional and legal.

**Doing Imagined Spaces**

Cazenave’s urgent call is that the immediate fear and concern of many African American mothers and their family is ‘will my child see adulthood’?! This is not from starvation, Ebola, third world aids or civil war as is imagined in the west. But rather a ‘civil’ and violent war waged by police and vigilantes against the Black body/ Black bodies to the extent of annihilation at times. So returning to Glaucon, we must make it in the perpetrators’ self-interest not to commit those crimes against Black bodies. These measures can be and should be many and varied according to the particular operations of power that might be most effective at the time. The law can be one-protest another, some may suggest as Malcolm X and Fanon did, any means necessary (which includes violence, revolution), civil actions that results in financial restitution from perpetrators (this is probably one of the more effective). As Cazenave argues, we must make them though and this includes trying to effective changes to laws (see Devon Carbado), adhere to laws and bringing out a will of pressure to ensure this happens.

**Let us imagine what happens if we stop**

I am fighting with a loved one. What I think they did makes me so angry I can feel my body shake; my head getting hotter and hotter, pounding and racing faster and faster; my voice breaks, shakes to shriek – I hate them! I stop.

Similarly, what happens when we enter an intersection of road that literally has a stop sign on it? In the improper and phobic state of the racist we plough through the intersection. In the case of one not be reactionary, we stop. Look to see if there is traffic, evaluate the speed, distance and safety of other drivers and then only make a decision how to proceed. This is a potentially life threatening scene. Experience tells Blacks not to trust – perversion is that whites are the ones who don’t trust Blacks. Thus the white antiblack trust, is therefore both perverse and highly improper (logically speaking).

This is not abstract thought, nor a frivolous and shallow approach. Some critics might interject here and say that we are just playing with abstract thoughts that actually have no concrete foundations or relations to any real change. I would have to challenge that on the basic premise that it is the way we think about different marked bodies that gets us into the stench of racism and oppression. If we make changes and as Gordon suggests, ‘changing things is what philosophy should be about’, then we can take the radical steps to disrupt and reconceptualise the way we think, and thus see and treat one another. If thought has the power to develop a complete knowledge system based on racism and white superiority, then it should be possible to develop a (many) counter system (s) where non-whites are not depredated as has been the case. It may be possible, sometimes, in some spaces, to engage in the practice of doing new spaces, new bodily relations that exceed the limits of that the racist dichotomy cast (castes) us in.

I contend that Gordon’s work is about building systems of knowledge and reason that shifts away from canons of oppressions that give rise to many of what I have talked about. In his words, ‘a community of learning’. (2018) Gordon’s power is not only in his thought (as this is important), but also like Fanon and Said, how we perform this to build and sustain a world where as people of colour and Indigenous people, our knowledges and epistemologies matter (not ‘myths’); our institutions are worth building and maintaining matter, and most importantly our very lives matter. Further to this, we must value ourselves and our communities as having value in and of its self. Gordon tells a very moving and poignant
story of Frederick Douglas’ mother at several Caribbean Philosophical Association (CPA) Meetings in a concluding address that beautifully illustrates this. Douglas’ mother, a slave separated from her child as was the practice, would steal away under the freedom of darkness to ensure that she visited her son and continued to develop their mother/child relationship. Gordon argues that this would not have been a transgressive relationship, or one of value and meaning if the child Douglas did not himself value it. When collections of human being value ourselves as ourselves, and most importantly value our epistemologies, practices of decoloniality and freedom are truly possible. It is in this story that crystallizes what we as communities of colour, Black and Indigeneity must do. When I first began studying philosophy, I could never have imagined being part of a philosophical association like the Caribbean Philosophical Association, or that one like it could even exist! This is true transgressive institution, epistemic and community building in performative action.

This paper has argued that Gordon’s work is urgent to the unjust existence that many historically marginalised people must live under. This paper has also been critical of limitations and breaking points, within this theory. However, if one were to presume that Gordon was able to provide all the answers, all of the time, then one would be presented with a theory of power of his devising, which is that of disciplinary decadence. Thought and action would only decay and regress ask and answer to the myriad of injustices that people in the world face. Gordon himself would not want that even if I am wrong.

Gordon in his writings and his performative theory leads us by doing it.

If we do see the way our interplay of bodies and consequently lived bodies as currently undesirable then we do have to look at the diseased relationships our bodies have. In order to avoid nihilism, it is a method to try to exercise some freedom from this limitation. For those of us who believe then we too have to jump on the shoulders of those who are working now and those who have come before us to continue developing ways of being free.

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End Notes

1. This is in reference to a review of this paper delivered at a conference, by a white audience member. This person was more than happy to know all about the child, through mainstream media, but not from a Koori woman, who was concerned about the abuse of the boy’s body and the larger ‘Black Indigenous Body’, by structural and interpersonal racism perpetuated by the police. I still find this reading, aggravating, privileged and rife with white possession, as Yancy and Moreton-Robinson argue, of Indigenous and/or Black Existentialism.

2. Gordon’s italics.


4. The shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed black young person by police in Ferguson Missouri USA, that erupted in community outcry and violence. See ibid, Cazenave, 2014.

Author
davis's current research area is in Black Existentialism and philosophy of race. She is also interested in animal ethics and justice. Active in the Caribbean Philosophical Association, she is the co-convenor of the ongoing symposium series, Sth Critical Philosophy of Race and Decoloniality. davis recently published an edited collection with Rowman & Littlefield on Black Existentialism (2019), focusing on the work of Lewis R Gordon.

Daffodils

Whenever I return
to the subject of daffodils
my mind wanders
to the famous poem,
I once learned as punishment.
I read, only later, that Wordsworth’s
loneliness was, for the most part,
metaphorical, unless, perhaps,
in a more crowded age,
fourty metres counted
for solitude.
In the months that followed

Wordsworth preferred long
silences (lit by daffodils)
to the company of others.
He claimed these silences
made him cheery
while lounging on the couch.

This might have been trying
for Dorothy who was probably
loading the dishwasher.
So it seems to love daffodils
is to hate other people.
I have long suspected this.

AIDAN COLEMAN,
ADELAIDE, SA

Pirouette

She hears her grandfather in the patio
tuning the strings of the oud with delicate focus,
then, outstretching his fingers to form chords
across the wooden neckboard, their shapes
resembling patterns
in the dot-to-dot colouring-in books
she spends her afternoons on,
connecting lines toward the direction of each number;
felt-tip pen in hand, the gradual reveal
of a puzzle on its way to completion.

For her grandfather, the oud
is an atlas.
Not just an instrument,
but a map to the resolution of chord progressions,
harmonic destinatoins
form his tonal homes.
Out in the garden, his granddaughter spins
in time with the music,
the dead eucalyptus leaves falling
in the dry heat of the air.

In a crowded bazaar
On the other side of the world,
a tan-lined tourist shakes a snowglobe
purchased from a souvenir stall.
The glittery snow behind the glass
falls like dried eucalyptus leaves
pirouetting down from the thirsty trees.

BRIDGET THOMAS,
GOLD COAST, QLD

THIS POEM WAS HIGHLY COMMENDED IN THE 2019 BR4R
(BALLINA REGION FOR REFUGEES) ‘SEEKING ASYLUM’
POETRY PRIZE, PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY.
A white settler colonial nation, founded through the dispossession of the original inhabitants of the land, and its white identity further protected through the strict racial policing of its external boundaries, Australia is no stranger to racism. In fact, one could argue that given such circumstances, racism is foundational to Australia’s national identity. Racism in Australia is quotidian; so much so that according to the Australian Human Rights Commission (2017), two separate surveys in 2017 found that 59% of Indigenous respondents and 54% of African respondents, to provide just two examples, have experienced racism on a daily basis.

While much of this racism goes unremarked, once in a while the nation is confronted with events that require it, finally, to notice and to come to terms with its own racial prejudices. To put it another way, sometimes Australians find themselves forced to see exactly how racist we are and, in the aftermath of the initial reaction, think about what this means for our sense of self as individual Australians and as a national collective.

On 17 April 1993, Indigenous Australian Rules footballer Nicky Winmar made history by standing up against years of on-field racial abuse by both players and spectators. In what is now an iconic moment, Winmar faced the hostile crowd of opposition supporters who had taunted him throughout the contentious match, pulled up his shirt, pointed to his chest and declared: “I’m black and I’m proud to be black.”

Only two out of a caucus of press photographers, Wayne Ludbey and John Feder, captured the moment. Published the next day, the photos of Winmar’s gesture sparked an intense public and media debate about the culture of racism that saturated not only the Australian Football League, but also Australian society at large (Klugman and Osmond 2013). Reeling from this public relations fallout, the Australian Football League would over the next 25 years attempt to resuscitate its image and standing in the Australian community by adopting an ‘enlightened stance’ towards race relations (Hallinan and Judd 2009: 1221). Investing heavily in programs designed to recruit and subsequently develop Indigenous talent, the AFL was able to increase the number of Indigenous players in its league until by 2009, Indigenous players made up 10% of all AFL players (as compared to 2% of the population) (Hallinan and Judd 2009: 1225). The result of these efforts of the AFL was its emergence within the national media as ‘the national game’ and a ‘pioneer and frontrunner in race relations’ (Hallinan and Judd 2009: 1221).

Yet, the image portrayed by the AFL of Australian reconciliation, with itself in the centre as an important influence, was soon to be severely challenged. On 24 May 2013, Adnyamathanha man Adam Goodes, ‘the most highly decorated Aboriginal man to play the sport at the highest level’ (Judd and Butcher 2016: 1), kicked the ball to the boundary. Upon running to retrieve it, Goodes heard himself called ‘ape’ by a spectator from the opposing Collingwood team; a spectator who would later be revealed to be a 13-year-old girl. Deciding at that moment ‘to stand up for myself’ because racism ‘has no place in our industry, it has no place in our society’ (Goodes 2013), Goodes pointed her out to security and requested that she be removed from the ground; a request that was in line with the Melbourne Cricket Ground’s policy of ejecting individuals for anti-social behaviour. At a press conference the following day, Goodes (2013) spoke to the media about the incident,
about the pain and humiliation it had caused him, and named the 13-year-old girl the face of Australian racism.

There was much support for Goodes, particularly from the AFL, immediately following the incident. Eddie McGuire, the president of the Collingwood Football Club, as well as its coach Nathan Buckley, immediately apologised to Goodes and expressed disgust at his racial vilification. Goodes was also publicly offered support by several prominent past and present AFL players. A few days later, Andrew Demetriou (2013), then CEO of the AFL, wrote a letter in support of Goodes, calling his decision ‘courageous and timely’.

This outpouring of support, however, was drowned out by criticisms of Goodes by the conservative section of the media and by a large section of the population. Goodes, despite his clarification that he had not known at the time that the perpetrator was a 13-year-old girl, was accused of picking on a defenceless child (Bolt 2013). The public also accused Goodes, across countless media platforms, of ‘playing the race card’ and of being a ‘sook’, a ‘cry baby’, a ‘whinger’.

By 2015, the year of his retirement, Goodes had been persistently booed at almost every game he played. The Goodes ‘saga’, proved to be a revealing moment in the history of Australia’s race-relations. Significantly, it worked to reveal political underpinnings of Australian national discourses of ‘reconciliation’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. What was revealed, in effect, was that Australia celebrates Black Australia, but only on White Australia’s terms.

For Indigenous subjects like Goodes, this means embodying an Indigeneity whose terms are circumscribed by white Australia. This sentiment was expressed explicitly in 1993 – over 25 years ago, and yet still relevant – when Collingwood club president, Allan McAlister attempted to explain the racist abuse of Indigenous players by Collingwood fans by saying: ‘As long as they conduct themselves like white people, well, off the field, everyone will admire and respect them.’ When asked to explain what he meant, McAlister made his position even clearer: ‘As long as they conduct themselves like human beings, they will be all right’ (Klugman and Osmond 2013: 161).

What Happened?

As Judd and Butcher (2016) argued, the public backlash against Goodes, or at least the intensity of it, had to do with more than just anti-Indigenous racism. Rather, the intensity of public reaction was the result of what Goodes was attempting to achieve. He was attempting, argue Judd and Butcher (2016) to ‘shift the paradigm of Aboriginal struggle beyond the sympathetic notions of racism and equal treatment to issues of historical fact that imply First Nations rights associated with cultural practice.’ That is, through his political activism Goodes insisted on being recognised for his Indigeneity, as a distinct and different mode of being.

In order to understand public reaction to Adam Goodes it is imperative to understand the historical forces that have shaped the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. What the Goodes saga reveals is not that the oppressed cannot speak, but that when they do speak, they are often misheard. In the case of Indigenous Australians, this mishearing is fundamentally related to the myth that the white Australian nation tells itself about its emergence and existence as a nation. Specifically, the British Crown claimed the Australian continent on the basis that it was terra nullius; that it was, in effect, empty, uninhabited wilderness.

Yet, Australia was not an empty land when the British arrived; it was home to a vast and varied Indigenous population, with a multitude of cultures and languages, institutions and laws. In fact, argues Carole Pateman (2007: 809), the problem for colonists was that lands without inhabitants were ‘very few indeed’.

Ontologically erased, an impossible subject, Goodes emerges within the national space as a monster. Monsters, argue Jane Gordon and Lewis Gordon (2009), have troubled humans for millennia, provoking us to face all that we disavow. Once, monsters were understood to be warnings from the Gods, ‘signs that something has gone wrong’ in our communities (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 3). More importantly, their emergence was seen as a sign that such communities could, by facing the questions monsters posed, restore their own health.

The nature of monsters and monstrosity, and the role they play within society, has evolved with the retreat of religion, and the rise of ‘naturalistic rationalization’ (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 3). Monsters are no longer seen as signs distinct from the disaster they warn of, and thus cannot serve their proper role as provocation to avert its arrival. Rather, they emerge as its ‘sign continua’ – marked beings that, rather than portending disaster, embody it instead (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 2). Devoid of their purpose, monsters emerge as ‘natural deviants’ whose presence, instead of precipitating the search for what has gone amiss, precipitates instead ‘crises of values and the threat of nihilism’ (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 3).

If they are no longer what they used to be, it is because today monsters are also a product of modern colonialism, a system supported by a specific dynamic of racism – anti-
black racism' (Gordon 2007: 10). Within an anti-black world, argues Gordon (1997: 95), human existence is divided into 'extreme poles of possibility' with 'whiteness' at one end and 'blackness' at the other. Associated with positivity, identity and agency – in short, humanity – ‘whiteness’ comes to stand as the desired ideal. As its obverse, ‘blackness’ is associated with traits such as irrationality and inhumanity. What this creates, in effect, is a ‘racial continuum’ within which ‘raced’ subjects are placed (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 13). All that is required is for one group to claim ‘whiteness’ and this becomes the zero point of ostensible purity from which all other races are judged to be more or less black, more or less human (Gordon 1995: 95). By this logic, to be ‘blackened’ is to emerge as the ultimate and ‘primary sign of disaster,’ one of a group of contemporary monstrous people (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 13).

Jasbir Puar has astutely explored this phenomenon in the context of America’s ‘war on terror’. Through an analysis of contemporary American social and political rhetoric on Islam and homosexuality, Puar (2007: 2) shows how the figure of the ‘monster-terrorist-fag’ is positioned against the ostensibly white, rational, Christian subject of the United States, as the ultimate embodiment of disaster.

Non-Indigenous Australia’s unwillingness to see Goodes as a subject, or to hear his demands for self-respect, is deeply existential. If, as Pateman has suggested, the erasure of Indigenous Australians was fundamental to establishment of first, white Australian identity and then, later, a broader non-Indigenous Australian identity, then their continued presence with the national space poses a significant existential threat. Ordinarily, it would have been possible to erase this threat by simply refusing to see that which threatens. As Gordon and Gordon argue, a sign can only emerge as a sign if it is acknowledged as such. If it is not seen, it fails to signify: ‘[n]ot being seen, it cannot be read’ (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 9).

Despite all such attempts to the contrary, however, such subjects cannot be rendered invisible. If their presence cannot be erased, nor yet must they be allowed to stand in silence, for silence is, as Gordon and Gordon (2009: 81) note, a ‘disturbingly neutral act’. In silence there is no dissent, however, neither is there support for the system. More importantly, the language of multicultural inclusion cannot refuse to let such subjects speak without exposing their subjectivities having already been circumscribed by anti-black racism, what ultimately emerges is not speech: ‘Instead, other forms of expression surface – those saturated by emotion and others blocked by inscrutability’ (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 81). Monstrous creatures, it is assumed, cannot be rational because they are mired in their own subjectivity. As Lewis Gordon notes, ‘blackness’ has become so irredeemably associated with experience and emotion that any attempts made by post-colonial subjects to speak of racism are often dismissed as utterances borne of ‘oversensitivity’ (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 81). For example, attempts by marginalised others to highlight instances of structural oppression and violence are often met with an insistent scepticism of the validity of such claims:

How often are patterns of antiblack racism characterized as ‘feelings’ of discrimination? What happens to the legitimacy of protest when injustice is presented as ‘perceived’, ‘believed’, or ‘felt’? (Hellish Zone 6)

Worse, lost in the dense discourse of colonial racism, such utterances are not heard at all. In an anti-black world the black body is always-already spoken for so that it becomes the symbol for a ‘truth’ that escapes its existential truth. As Frantz Fanon observes, such subjects are presumed to be always-already ‘guilty of something’ (Gordon and Gordon 2009: 80).

If, as Stella Coram and Chris Hallinan (2017: 1) argue, the racial vilification of Adam Goodes is ‘unprecedented’ amongst public figures who have spoken out against racism in recent years, it is because he is rendered monstrous by a public unwilling to see him. Recasting his words, as well as his actions, as those of an emotional man effectively voids them of their political nature and reduces them to irrational acts motivated by personal factors. His words/actions were not heard for what they were; instead they emerge as evidence of his monstrousity. His Black Indigenous body, seen through an affective economy that aligned such bodies with fear and threat, made it impossible for the population to hear his protest as anything other than as acts of criminality.
The black accused needs only be ‘seen’ to be guilty of prior offence. His color is the evidence. He is guilty of blackness (Gordon 1995: 102).

What this reveals is that the oppression of Indigenous Australians extends beyond, and goes deeper than, the structures of the national legal and political system. As Henry Reynolds (Ritter 1996: 30) argues in this critique of the celebratory tone taken by the legal establishment for its own work overturning the doctrine of terra nullius in Mabo — the idea that once it had been ‘judicially recognised that Australia was not uninhhabited at the time of colonisation then the rights of Aboriginal peoples [would be] assured,’ had always been ‘an overly simplistic analysis of the causes and resolution of the conflict between Aboriginal peoples and colonising peoples’.

For Reynolds, as for David Ritter (1996: 30), the Supreme Court’s rejection of terra nullius ‘was a symbolic legitimation ritual’ that nonetheless failed to address what remained at the heart of Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations: the continued existential erasure of the former established at the very foundation of the nation.

Conclusion

Adam Goodes’s vilification by the Australian public and the media raised and, in fact, rendered hyper-visible the often-unacknowledged spectre of anti-black racism in Australia. In so doing, it provides an opportunity, albeit at the expense of the footballer and the Indigenous community at large, for an opportunity for non-Indigenous Australians to recognise anti-black racism, and its obverse, white normativity, as structures that are neither universal nor inescapable. Rather, they continue to define our world because of our complicity in upholding their racist tenets. It further provides us with an opportunity, to develop a double consciousness, and to see beyond the discourses that essentialise raced subjects and to realise that those designated under such categories ‘transcend them with their humanity’ (Gordon 2013: 4).

The continued hostility towards Goodes displayed by segments of the community, however, evidenced in the comments sections of recent online and social media articles on the footballer, suggests that many Australians are still unwilling to face the problem of racism in this country. Rather than responding ethically with a willingness to address the many issues faced by Indigenous Australians this segment of the community has chosen to retreat into a false posture of self-righteous victimhood. It is they, we are told, rather than Goodes, who are the victims, not of racism but of political correctness.

Ultimately, however, just as society shapes subjects, so the subject creates the world around her. This means that each one of us, individually, has the responsibility to intervene in the world in order to bring about the world that we want to see: ‘The social world holds out its outstretched arms and beckons us to reach into its bosom in which there continues to be a proliferation of meanings that promise a new humanity’ (Gordon 2006: 244). Until we are all willing to take responsibility for the racism that continues to infect this nation, we will continue to be haunted by the spectre of the abjected Other, capable of speech but incapable of being heard.

References


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Running a Tab

They push and enter, desperate to fill and be filled up.
Nobody takes their order. Family conflicts spill over, raining down on dining tables. Nobody wipes them up.
They hop up on tabletops in baggy pyjamas and paper crowns to catch forbidden stories in styrofoam cups.
Officials come wielding appointments. Compulsory modifiers swipe through their bodies like peeling credit cards – haltingly – they transmit data to the edges of embodiment where doors slam to the beat of paintings falling out of the sky.
Occupied, occluded by tranquility, they are wired to explode, then slowly reassemble.

A painting really fell on Daisy’s head. Gold splashes with colour everywhere – a swollen language stitching together symptoms of – symbols of – symbiosis is a relationship between proximity and heartbreak, extracted from – injected with – she presents with bittersweet talk, difficult to infiltrate, wrapped in gold splashes with colour everywhere

Fleur BeAupert, Surry Hills, NSW

Lost and Found

A wedding dress in a pickle jar.
A baby’s cry in a crowded bar.
A birthday cake in a biscuit tin.
A little boy’s shoes on a tidal whim.
Did you learn to swim on the outstretched hands of a motherland?
A toothbrush on a sailing ship.
A photo in a rubbish tip.
A lipstick shade in a harsher light.
A word that slipped during the night.
Does thunder crack your bones into a jigsaw map?
Pallet strapping in a bird’s nest.
A broken heart in a treasure chest.
A deserted dessert in a desert.
A desert girt by sea.
Does the sun rise in the east or west?
Do you need some rest?
Rest and lay your weary head on the pillow of words you thought were dead.
Rest and wipe your teary eyes on the fabric of our human lives.
Rest and plant your broken dreams in soils fertile of communal means.
Rest and spread your sacred wings and fear not for what tomorrow brings.

Rebecca Sargeant, Bangalow, NSW

‘Lost and Found’, is the winner of the the 2019 BR4R (Ballina Region For Refugees) ‘Seeking Asylum’ Poetry Prize, proudly supported by Southern Cross University. Rebecca Sargeant has formerly worked as a tax lawyer, and is currently pursuing an Associate Degree of Creative Writing at Southern Cross University while raising three kids and embracing community life in Bangalow.
On (un)Doing Race in Australian Academia

YASSIR MORSI

I seek to explore my experiences dealing with the scientific, normative and aesthetic pressures that shape my self-narrating about my research on race and Islamophobia, especially when I am on the conference floor. When discussing racism, I often feel a compulsion to confess to being a “good Muslim”. This is compounded as an academic working in the field. A pressure to police my otherness translates into me having a monologue with a watching “them” in my own head, I feel a need to perform a particular type of scholarship and to show measure in the way I do my research. An existing post-racial climate compels me as a Muslim to tell the story of the self in a particularly appealing and controlled way, and as I speak, I must tell of my journey towards a liberal arrival, which includes a series of safe criticism about racism. And, liberalism as the main aesthetic of the westernese space, with all its sweetly sounding claims to freedom and equality, provides a political imagery to this appeal of my arrival.

In my undergrad years, I attended a Muslim leadership program aimed to train us to become the next generation of community leaders. I hated the experience. It was demeaning, paternalistic and it taught me how racists can perform their racism through the best of intentions. But I recall the program and begin my paper with it using/reflecting on one incident that best summarises my argument. During the program, a white Catholic priest visited us to talk about the importance of interfaith dialogue. He began with a smile. He stared at twenty-odd young Muslims and then asked us to share our stories of how we arrived in Australia. I was last to respond and felt an unescapable need to disrupt his sense of ownership over the country. Instead of answering, I asked him how he arrived in Australia since he was not Indigenous? He felt confused at my hostility and explained how his family had been here for generations. But it’s what happened next that makes me remember that day.

The priest sensed some discomfort in his Muslim audience after our exchange. To make things better, he smiled again, then extended his hand out towards us and told us he loves us all. He followed this by answering his own question: ‘Do you know why I love you all? Because Jesus lives inside you all’.

Introduction: On Navigating an Internal ‘Them’

My paper is about the unsaid pressure to confess to being a ‘good Muslim’ in the academic space. It is about seeking love by confessing to having beneath my brown exterior the academic equivalent to Jesus inside me, the rational Cartesian ‘I’. For always, when standing in a fictional dock, in one of society’s many Islamophobic trials, like on a conference floor, before an onlooking white gaze, I must answer an unstated question. Should I lessen their anxiety about my otherness through performing a banal sameness?

But let me begin my paper’s pursuit of this question by once again succumbing to the pressure of confessing, by throwing my sin as their Other onto page, and placing it as my article’s principal answer and its starting point, I admit that in my less than belligerent moments I find myself giving into ‘them’. For an exhaustion at the level of just being, which is hard to overturn, comes with enduring and fighting racism, a level that leads me to answer my aforementioned question by exploring how an unstated ‘them’ ultimately works.

I used the word confession for a reason, albeit not for the best of reasons. It came to me partly as a result of conversations with other Muslims, and it would be insincere for me to assume this idea just simply popped into my head, but it also came by following a brief (mis) reading of Foucault (1998). One afternoon in a library, a few of us sat trying to articulate the compulsion we feel to play normal, play Australian, the compulsion we feel to tell everyone around us that inside us all, beyond the black and brown difference resides a commonality.

In that library conversation, I came to understand it was Foucault who suggested that our incitement to confession ‘constitutes an immense labour to which the west has submitted generations in order to produce ...’ (Foucault 1998: 60). For, such incitement relies on our
assumption of freeing what remains concealed within, and thus he famously claims that Western man ‘has become a confessing animal’ (59).

This Western animal has learned to release inner crimes, sins, thoughts and desires, or anxieties through that release. And, I have also come to suspect (or twist what I want from Foucault) that one of Western society’s vital racist rituals is not only having us Others declare we share core similarities, but also provoking the very act of confessions from the racial Other, to help free us from our exterior otherness, to have us admit that within us all is normalcy, to also be a Western animal. In doing so, and when I have done so, I feel I become less ‘us’ and more ‘them’, I purge myself from the scourge of carrying a thick and impregnable otherness. For the logic is that by confessing all that is within, all that is hidden, all that we can know about ourselves, the raced Other delivers a deeper sense of a universal Western self that hides within us all.

When we confess, we also place ourselves before society so we can be forgiven, counselled, judged, or corrected. Confession becomes more about a hierarchy of priest and sinner, white and other. What is of most interest to me is how we take an active role in our own surveillance and become at once the priest and the sinner. And, it is here my paper stops to pause and examine how I govern myself on behalf of ‘them’.

This ‘auto-ethnography’ thus aims to explore my internal monologue and how I battle internally with a ‘them’, how I empower ‘them’, give them the power of being someone like a big Other, an authoritative figure like a priest who seeks my salvation through my confession. They, them, the fictional priest are always existing outside me but also within me, which is me, but does not belong to me. They are an Islamophobe who lives permanently in my own head, sometimes with my permission, always demanding I give them what they want, give them a confession on how I am normal, not violent, a lover of what they love, a desirer of their desires, a neighbour.

A quick note on my methodology may be needed here. This paper contains somewhat scattered stories and memories entangled with bits and pieces of theory here and there. For, in doing an ‘auto-ethnography’, the hope is to add to existing studies debating the social effects of racism, which together attempt to come to terms with, make visible and contest racism’s social complexity and how it overlaps with impacting psychologies. I reject any hard-bound distinctions between the micro analysis of the ways racism harms an individual and the macro analysis of how racism built society as a whole. There is a space in between, and it is here I found auto-ethnography so useful.

As Francoise Lionnet mentions (1990), autoethnography “opens up a space of resistance between the individual (auto) and the collective (-ethno-) where the writing (-graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed” (391).

In short, I believe “auto-ethnography” helps me work through how I write, think, and conceptualise racism, it helps me think about how one’s place, one’s being, one’s identity entangles with a “them”; it’s a different type of confession, one that confesses to confessing.

**Sultan of Science**

I visited an exhibition in Singapore titled the ‘Sultans of Science’ a few years ago. It was a celebration of the Islam’s golden age. There were displays on Muslim innovations in mathematics, astronomy, navigation and medicine, but it was a life-sized mannequin of twelfth century Islamic thinker Ghazali that caught my attention. In a long white tunic, with turban and a synthetic beard, the mannequin stood in a dimly lit room celebrating Muslim philosophy. On the hour, a spotlight shone onto the mannequin and a pre-recorded message in English, with an Arabic accent, read passages from Ghazali’s famous autobiography *Deliverance From Error*. The recording ended with a sentence about his discovery of truth ‘without seeking the help of a master and teacher’.

The exhibit hid the speakers within the mannequin’s hollowed body. The light and the recording gave the effect that Ghazali had come to life, as the audio echoed as if it was coming from within the mannequin’s body. With an uncanny feel to its wording, listening to the recording, I could not help but feel that Islam’s most famous philosopher was promoting the most stereotypical of Western ideals of individualism, independence and a secular exit from religious dogma. Resulting from the selectivity of the message’s chosen passage, Ghazali admonishes religious teachers that turn believers into docile followers and condemns the guardians of his own unenlightened times. It echoed so much of Immanuel Kant’s essay *What is the Enlightenment*.

In his answer to what constitutes the fundamental feature of Europe’s shift into the age of Enlightenment, Kant writes to condemn the guardians of society – the leaders who assume supervision over others. Guardians, he says, who turn humans into domestic livestock – as dumb and docile creatures. The Enlightenment marks the breaking of their tutelage and the liberating of man who now dares to reason (Kant 1995).

In a global world of blurred borders, however, Islamophobia also appropriates a supposedly opposing *Islamophilia*, which is the genesis of Andrew Shryock’s argument.
(2010), the common stereotype of the Muslim figure as a threatening Other that proliferates numerous representations of its inversion: the image of the ‘good’ Muslim as ‘friend’. Similarly, Mahmood Mamdani (2004) made popular the image of the good Muslim characterised as a familiar democratic figure who has no major political or cultural grievances with the West's liberalism.

The good and bad Muslim stereotype reflects how in key political debates about Islam, the Muslim as a subject of Islamophobia offers various public voices a constitutively antagonistic dialogue about contemporary politics. The Muslim functions here as a nodal point bringing together an internal contest about the meaning of the West in relationship to its key signifiers, democracy, liberalism, multiculturalism and the nation-state. Together, these contests have the effect of reducing the Muslim figure to a hollowed mannequin, who as a subject simply serves as the body that inscribes the messages and echoes through a debate its nature – the multiple voices of competing political messages.

It is why I often return to the Sultan of Science exhibit, for I suggest that the exhibition’s spotlight shone not on a celebrated Muslim of history but rather upon the subject of Islamophobia: a hollowed object. The timely use of the spotlight on the mannequin, who ‘comes to life’, provides me with a way to explain my argument further. Prior to the light, beyond Islamophobic discourses, the silent mannequin in a dark room represents the Muslim of the ‘real’. It has no assumed definite features and dwells in non-history. It is what remains unseen by the Islamophobic gaze. Outside of its worldliness, its own history, the reality of Muslims for Islamophobia is a pre-discursive, unknown, strange, blurry unarticulated and irrelevant thing of the dark.

In this intermediate space, the Muslim is a silent and hollow object that passively awaits an ambassador or an Islamophobe to give it meaning and thus a subjectivity. Once the Islamophobic voice or its opposite, names and speaks for the Muslim, it brings the object in from the dark, in from the absence of history, functioning analogously like a spotlight and recorded voice, the ‘Muslim’ comes into visible existence as a subject who is seen and spoken for by the Islamophobic gaze.

The Conference and His PowerPoint

I remember a conference two years ago in Sydney on Islamophobia because of one talk in particular. A professor pointed to a bolded sentence on his PowerPoint. It told the audience how only 6% of Muslims surveyed felt they did not belong to Australia. The numerical figure did not bother me so much. It was the meaning he took out of it. It was his confident strut and his delighted tone that irritated me. Although I ought to admit I do not know what his methodology fully entailed or what it captured other than a few circles on a Likert scale. But I did feel the statistic for him became a remedy for any anxiety we may have about Australia’s racism. He presented it as if it had a special therapeutic quality – as if it were a pin pulled to allow a release of air.

I remember staring at the ground, trying to find a way to not cuss and to hold my breath, so not to be caught at cussing. I remember looking away. My eyes searched for someone who might understand me. I wanted to fight but then again, I really cannot be bothered. What for? I asked myself. They will do what they always do, police my tone, hint that I am too invested or politely talk through me to others, talk straight through me like I am a ghost and not in the room.

Perhaps that’s why I eventually mentally tapped out of the conference. I just sat there as if I really didn’t exist. Perhaps that’s also why, forgive my rudeness, two other presenters that day almost sent me to sleep. Their presentations on Islamophobia bored me at the deepest existential level. I am sincere here. I am not trying to be harsh and am somewhat confident that my readers have all experienced and lost the fight with heavy eyelids before. I tried to be respectful, but I had flown in and slept little. The presenters did not help. They read from a paper in a dull low pitch. A shortage of pauses squashed their papers’ finding, their points needed more air, all of which they gave in a passive voice. And, they poisoned their reports with gratuitous liberal jargon about agency and equality. Their argument hardly excited either. Actually, I am not certain what their arguments were. But, one of the PowerPoint’s slides fascinated me. A bizarre and banal mix of the colour plum with dashing lines decorated the researcher’s conclusions. Some may accuse me of being a bit pedantic. But I shook my head with disapproval. Perhaps it was all that my body could muster as resistance in this space. Although it is worth noting, purple triangular bullet points listed the ways Muslims suffer in the War on Terror.

I should concede something else. My annoyance or my politics could be the result of me not feeling at ease in Australia. Being a % or saying I belong or do not belong is a story, a detailed narrative, not a stat. It needs space. It needs air. It needs a full and moral obligation by both speaker and listener to engage with one another. There is so much to say, about me, us, them, the nation. An entire story (and storyteller) hides in that circling of a number on a Likert scale, hides in a loaded question about whether I belong. Hence, much of this autoethnography is on how, as a Muslim Arab academic, I deal with the reductive ways we study and talk about Muslims in academic spaces.
In all, I mention this conference because I walked away feeling so much injustice was done to me by me, by me on my own, by me fighting my body's will to first talk back to 'them', and then fighting its will to fall asleep. I just sat there and took it. And, I have wondered why since. For even then, in a conference on Islamophobia, the research community instrumentalised Muslims into a single digit, categorised pain in plum bullet points. The Muslim became an empty thing, a spectral thing rather than a life, a thing talked about that denies us a way to talk about the proper magnitude of the ways we embody those dots points.

Growing Up in the War on Terror

Growing up in the decades after 9/11, shadowed by the War on Terror, subjected to its cold persistent scrutiny, at key moments in my public life I became a reluctant 'good Muslim'. Better stated, I was pressured by the public discourse about the threat of Islam into playing the opposite of the terrorist, I played the role of a well-integrated and rational-minded moderate.

I start with this admission because it testifies to the pressure that I feel to gag my rage as a racialised Muslim of the West. But, I also use the word reluctant because I am aware of what I am doing, I am aware of the 'arsenal of complexes' that Fanon speaks of, an arsenal produced by colonialism that drives me to bitterly acknowledge (self-diagnosis) my own neurosis and double-consciousness, by which I mean, there is me, and then there is their version of what they want me to be (Fanon 1994: 26).

The 'good' moderate Muslim as mentioned is a friendly voice of pragmatism and concession, speaking within the co-ordinates of respectability and criticising society only through mimicking safe intellectual and democratic ideas. I have long come to accept that paradoxically my own neurosis and double-consciousness, by which I mean, there is me, and then there is their version of what they want me to be (Fanon 1994: 26).

As Ramon Grosfoguel argues, political and economic racism is far more recognisable despite epistemic racism being their foundations (Grosfoguel 2014). The white man's claim to be an all-seeing eye that transcends above us grounds the foundations of our Cartesian I and much of our early humanities. It grounds the essentialist idea that reason and philosophy correlate with justice and the European eye/I. Non-rational thinking thus belongs elsewhere, and their irrational politics remains outside as part of the 'rest' (Grosfoguel 2014).

On this point, Bernal and Villalpando (2010) argue an 'apartheid of knowledge exists in academia'. They use the word apartheid firstly because it has a particular historical echo and recalls the violence of racism. But, also, it helps them describe the racial divisions that remain unseen in academia. A divide exists between dominant Eurocentric epistemologies and other epistemologies. The apartheid not only separates the amount of unpaid and emotional labour we must do to navigate racism, but also 'legitimate' from 'illegitimate' forms of knowledge (2010).

In the Western academy, legitimate knowledge is still the scientific discourse of 'objectivity'. It appeals to 'neutrality' which hides the 'locus of enunciation' of the speaker (Grosfoguel 2014). That is to say, traditionally, it still hides the identity of those who speak, unless you're not white. It hides them from the epistemic white-body-politics of knowledge they speak from. It hides the existing power relations that came to be through colonialism. Through the myth, truth always speaks through a 'Western' male body. Critical voices dealing with their own 'minority' struggles come from individuals and groups marginalised by this hegemonic epistemic racism. It too often discards them as particularistic.

As a result, I have always felt that being an academic means I must perform this myth at choice moments. I must work to show I too am a knowing subject who has a distant investment in my topic, and that my work is for the discipline, is disincorporated. I must perform to show that I am untouched (or less touched) by the geopolitical configuration of the War on Terror in which I inhabit. The Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez (2007) describes this detached and neutral point of observation as the 'hubris of the zero point' (See also Mignolo 2010). This point works as a reference for others who are racially ranked and configured as overly invested. My point in this article is to show how the context of the War on Terror impacts on a Muslim speaker. I am the body, the voice, and the existence marked by the event and its policing of Muslim excesses. And, the last decade-and-a-half shaped my being a Muslim and destroyed any ability to carry out a scholarly restraint. For instance, I always know of the effect of my body when I am preparing for a conference.

Conclusion. 'Them' as Coercing Confession

Language matters in the War on Terror, indeed it is one of the many frontiers in which Islam is fought, and when Muslims only ever speak through a vocabulary shaped by terrorism, we have to ask what really can be said about Islam in this current climate? For effectively, no matter how complex Islam is, we commonly find ourselves saying nothing much other than the word 'not'. We are not terrorists, this is not Jihad, this is not the Sharia, this is not Islam. Islam becomes simply defined through a string of negations. For the radical bad Muslim, Islam is
a negation of the West, while for moderate good Muslims, Islam is a negation of the radical’s negation. A spiral of ‘norts’ string together our public speeches, which says nothing about the religion other than what it opposes. In this spiral, everyday Muslims occupy a burden to confess where they as citizens of the West are situated in this radical-moderate line.

Throughout the years of the War on Terror, the debate’s separation of good Muslims versus bad Muslims is an oft repeated argument. Nevertheless, despite the common recognition that not all Muslims are terrorist, there remains the ritual practice of having Muslims prove it. This reflects how many Muslims feel an unfair pressure for them to speak only after saying ‘sorry’ for crimes they have neither committed nor supported. In these politically charged times, as a Muslim in the West one feels the impulse openly to confess our ‘inner’ self and thoughts on Islamic State, to condemn the barbarity of their violence and to confess my love for adopted liberal democracy.

Many of my day-to-day conversations too are inflected with subtle tones of someone’s invitation, under the guise of curious questions, for me to step forward and clear my name by airing my moderate views, revealing my base humanity, and admitting that my community’s first step is for us to recognise its problem with radicalisation. But this ritual is Islamophobia’s Trojan horse. It initially comes to us as a gift, an opportunity to set the record straight and allow us to clarify our stance as good citizens ought to do, but in the long term it solidifies our position in the dock.

The demand conceals what resides in its belly: ‘hidden’ in the invitation for Muslims to demonstrate their bona fides as good citizens of the West is the Islamophobic caricature of Muslims as a threat. The act of requiring us to confess our loyalty, in the midst of current fear, only reaffirms the anatomy of the racial Other who is imagined much like, well, a Trojan horse: the benign ethnic who lives in multicultural suburbs who is concealing a violent streak. If do not turn ourselves inside-out, the logic goes, we ought to remain citizens only provisionally – only ever in scare quotes, as ‘Australians’, ‘Americans’, ‘British’.

What is most obscene about this ritual of extracting confession, however, is that it curtails political discussion, and reaffirms the ‘us and them’ binary it hopes to deny. Undoubtedly anti-Western sentiments do, of course, exist within the Muslim community after decades of Western intervention and support for Israel, as well as historical colonial legacies, political instability and divergent religious interpretations. But I have often wondered the extent to which the perennial debates over the place Muslims in the West – which is so insulting, which constantly questions our basic humanity, which is steeped in the language of surveillance – have elicited from ‘within’ our youth these more aggressive expressions of defiance against a ‘them’.

And on this point, I have to be honest. I am only half sure what I mean by the ‘them’ who I confess to. Who are they? If I push myself to answer and think about it long enough, I guess ‘them’ is but an articulation of an ever-present, rarely visible, white judge that looks me up and down. Or maybe ‘them’ is less about an external stare than it is about the internal conditioning that comes with being raced. A condition, in which I feel I must respond to a question, ‘what do they want from me?’ All I can say is as a Muslim Arab male of ‘military age’, living through the War on Terror and navigating a racial narrative that saturates my symbolic existence, I very often feel a lingering and inner compulsion to admit to white audiences that I too possess a banal ordinarness, and that am I just like them. I am ‘another human being’.

My paper is about this pressure, not a real ‘them’, the pressure I feel to publicly confess that I am a ‘good Muslim’ and explore the ways I grapple and speculate with the conflicting impulses racism produces within me, impulses to obey and resist, to survive or fight. It explores the ways racism assemblies expectations within my head and the ways it forms the psychic register that creates or destroys an ideation of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

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Author
Dr Yassir Morsi is a Political Theorist who looks at contemporary liberal thought and its relationship with racism. His research engaged with a broad range of critical race theorists. Dr. Morsi is author of Radical Skin, Moderate Masks, and is currently a lecturer at La Trobe University Politics, Media and Philosophy department, teaching in the Gender, Sexuality and Diversity program.
Language and Citizenship Tests: Unsettling the habitus of trickster global coloniality

Finex Ndhlovu

Over the last 500 years, the project of global coloniality has manifested in various forms: overt, subtle, discursive, patrimonial, violent, nativist, culturally chauvinistic, jingoistic, patronising and exploitative. At other times, it has proceeded through elaborate processes seeking to invisibilise, marginalise and ultimately erase the cultural and ontological density of the non-desired other. These mutations are still ongoing today with language and citizenship testing regimes for migrants and refugees being the latest and most widely used technology for actuating global coloniality especially in Western liberal democracies such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Netherlands, Britain and the United States. In this article, I draw attention to the subtle forms of global coloniality that are hidden behind the language of scientific ‘objectivity’, ‘impartiality’, and ‘fairness’ used to justify standardised language and citizenship testing for immigrants and prospective citizens. The argument is that although language proficiency tests are to a degree useful in informing measurement and assessment in a range of social and educational contexts, they do have a dark side that betrays hallmarks of coloniality of power. The conclusion is that language testing regimes emerged out of and are sustained by racio-linguistic ideologies that undergird the body-politic of contemporary Western societies such as Australia.

Introduction

Australia’s immigration policies have always been an unsettled area subject to political disputation since the promulgation of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cth), which was part of the ‘White Australia’ policy. White Australia policy was designed to place certain restrictions on intending immigrants perceived to be a threat to Australian interests (Tavan 2005). The policy imposed limited acceptance of immigrants from other parts of the world and favoured applicants from selected European countries. Asian racial groups were the main target of this legislation. Although it was amended 14 times before its abolition in 1958, the Immigration Restriction Act remained the guiding principle for Australian immigration policy for the period 1901 to 1958 (York 1992; Hollinsworth 1998; Lake 2005; Ndhlovu 2008). Section 3(a) of the Act prohibited immigration into Australia by any persons who failed to write out a dictation test of 50 words in any European language prescribed by an immigration officer. Far from being an objective assessment of language proficiency skills, the dictation test was a discursive construct ostensibly designed to be failed and to exclude people whose political and racial affiliations were considered undesirable. Language and citizenship tests that started during the formative years of a federated Australia have continued to feature prominently in political and public debates on Australia’s citizenship and immigration laws. They are part of the ongoing global project on the superiority of whiteness and the triumph of Euro-North American coloniality that hides and reveals its trickster machinations – in equal measure.

The history of testing regimes shows language tests were introduced in pre-modern times (in 210 BC to be precise) to enable political, social and educational control, particularly the desire to improve standards and equity (McNamara and Roever 2006). Prior to the introduction of tests, access to opportunities was pre-eminently ascribed and not achieved. Shohamy (2001: 26) explains the distinction between ascribed and achieved societies in the following terms:

In ascribed societies the roles and functions of the citizens are predetermined, while in achieved societies individuals have rights and opportunities to find their places in the society regardless of their backgrounds and affiliations. Ascribed systems are often based on ‘selection’, thus operating on the assumptions that societies need to provide opportunities to those most ‘deserving’ them, which is often based on their backgrounds and social affiliation. Achieved systems, on the
other hand, are based on democratization and operate on the assumption that everyone is given opportunities for access.

Tests were introduced as part of mechanisms to open up, democratise and monitor social systems to overcome the ascribed principles reliant on connections, class and background. However, far from being such a perfect, democratic and flawless system that they are perceived to be, tests have become surrogate instruments for perpetuating and legitimating unfair discrimination and exclusion in many societies (Ndhlovu 2014; McNamara and Shohamy 2008). Madaus et al. (2002) argue that tests are susceptible to abuse and manipulation because too often people fail to question whether the domain is the correct one for the uses to which the test will be put. Thus, ‘the question “Does this test cover the domain I am really interested in?” is central to proper test use’ (Madaus et al. 2002: 115). In addition, the connotative power of the name given to the domain of a particular test is a major issue. Names of tests can carry powerful cultural and political meanings, which can blur the way people use, interpret, and understand test performance. A test domain’s name may sometimes fail to convey the uncertainty or the incompleteness of people’s different conceptualisations of the test.

Therefore, even when the definition of the test domain is appropriate for a given evaluation purpose, the name of the test may still shape the way results are interpreted by various evaluation audiences as well as the test takers themselves. What does it mean for instance, to be tested on Australian values and history after 10 or 15 years as an Australian permanent resident? What political meanings can be read into Australian citizenship and Australian values, particularly when considered within the context of a test? How do different people interpret the notion of being conferred citizenship based on a test whose domain is narrowly defined – both in terms of the medium (exclusively in English language) and content (limited to a set of perceived Australian values, whatever they are)?

This article examines the use and abuse of language testing regimes as technology for racial and political exclusion in Australia since 1901. It argues that contrary to claims made about their objectivity, fairness and impartiality, language and citizenship tests are, in fact, exclusionary and subjective. They are intricately connected to the broader political project of global coloniality – the obsession with creating hierarchies of humanity. The focus is on how language ideologies (in the form of language citizenship tests) are used as gatekeeping mechanisms and weapons for normalising diverse racial groups to some imagined subjective Australian national linguistic and cultural norms that are part of the global project of coloniality. In this sense, global coloniality assumes the form of the proverbial trickster character that is hidden behind the supposedly objective and beneficial instrument of a test. Yet, this is essentially a project that seeks to subject non-desired racial groups to the global power spread of dominant Anglo-Saxon linguistic and cultural norms.

Through a close analysis of the dictation test (1901) and the Australian values and history test (2007/2017), the article extends into new directions the notion of race and racism in Australia. It brings to spotlight subtle and overt forms of discrimination hidden under the fissures and fault lines of liberalism discourses such as ‘migrant integration’, ‘social inclusion’ and a range of other immigration-related measures. Another important discussion point is one around the persistence of the nationalist imaginary of Australia as a country that is perceived as having its own ‘foundational myth’ into which all new waves of migrants and refugees must ‘integrate’. Problematic concepts such as ‘migrant integration’, ‘Australian way of life’; ‘un-Australian’ – among others – are interrogated to illustrate the particular point about how they do not sit well within the multiplicity of cultures and traditions of people who call Australia home.

Trickster Habitus and Global Coloniality

The analytical toolkit for this article rests on the three concepts of global coloniality, trickster discourse, and habitus. The concept of ‘coloniality’ originates from the work of decolonial theorists such as Mignolo (2000, 2002, and 2011); Quijano (1998, 2000); Grosfoguel (2005, 2006); Ndlouv-Gatsheni (2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015), among others. ‘Global coloniality’ is an enduring colonial project tied to the spread of Euro-North American modernity, the international world order and the contemporary capitalist system. According to Ndlouv-Gatsheni (2013a: 6) ‘[t]he concept of global coloniality is useful in teasing out the mythology of a decolonized world as well as unravelling the rhetoric of modernity’. He goes on to identify those specific factors that have ensured that non-desired racial groups from the Global South and other peripheral zones of the world remain under colonial situation long after the end of direct colonial rule. Global coloniality, therefore, refers to a pattern of comprehensive and deep-reaching power spread throughout the world. It is about how, even when the formal process of colonisation has ended, there remains a form of power, which produces, uses, and legitimises differences between societies and forms of knowledge (Banazak and Ceja 2010: 115). An additional pertinent point is that unlike postcolonial studies, coloniality takes a much broader focus. It problematises colonial power as a continuum that transcends the colonial era and whose presence continues to influence and affect current social
realities, including discourses on language and language policy regimes. This is essentially about colonial matrices of power and the tricks they play in the (post)modern world system.

The imposition of citizenship tests in Australia and elsewhere in the Western world is justified on grounds of facilitating the ‘integration’ of citizenship applicants into so-called ‘mainstream’ society. However, these tests are redundant since they are administered to people who have lived in these countries for many years and already have adequate knowledge of the language and way of life they are being tested on. It is in relation to this point that language tests form part of the discursive and ideological arsenal of trickster global coloniality. Testing citizenship applicants in a dominant language (such as English) is a smokescreen for the global coloniality project of governmentality (Foucault 1972) and control. The project of global coloniality on the one hand, and the imposition of citizenship tests on the other are linked to the metaphor of a trickster in two ways. First, citizenship tests are administered under the guise of helping prospective citizens acquire knowledge about the history and values of mainstream society when, in fact, they are meant to close out non-desired cultural and racial groups.

Second, the use of English as the sole language of the test is predicated on the false assumption that English is a neutral language. This discourse on English hides more than it reveals. The one thing it hides is that it presents itself as the ideological opposite of processes of exclusion: that in the midst of linguistic and cultural diversity, English is the mechanism of inclusion, of intercultural dialogue and understanding, of the obliteration of boundaries, and of joint and borderless activity. However, as the previous body of work in critical applied linguistics has shown (for example, Pennycook 1994, 2007; Canagarajah 1999; and Phillipson 2003), English is an ideologically and culturally laden language. The ubiquitous discourse that presents English as a ‘neutral’ and self-evident link language for all obscures the fact that the majority of citizenship test takers also speak several other languages. For most such people, insistence on English effectively amounts to the production and reproduction of the very same colonial matrices of power and epistemological hegemonies that wear them down on a daily basis.

Speaking nearly five decades ago, Toni Morrison (1975: 6) characterised these subtle manifestations of global coloniality in the following terms:

The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language, so you spend twenty years proving you do. Somebody says your head isn’t shaped properly, so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Someone says you have no art, so you dredge that up. Somebody says you have no kingdoms, so you dredge that up. None of that is necessary. There will always be one more thing.

This speaks to the machinations of racism and global coloniality that impose an endless burden of proof on non-desired racialised others. Everything about the non-desired others (their languages and language abilities, cultures, intellect, their humanity, and so on) is subjected to microscopic scrutiny in search of evidence to support racial stereotypes and perceptions about series of ‘lacks’ and ‘absences’. Such deficit hypotheses as lack of literary traditions, lack of proficiency skills in hegemonic languages of the nation state, perceptions about backward and ‘uncivilised’ cultural traditions abound. These habits, practices and attitudes of global coloniality toward the non-desired other are traceable to Euro-modernist racial ideologies.

In a foreword to the 2008 edition of Frantz Fanon’s (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks*, Ziauddin Sardar captures the ongoing racialisation project of global coloniality in the following terms:

We are presented with a series of statements, maxims if you like, both obvious and not so obvious … the black man wants to be white, the white man slaves to reach a human level. We are left with little doubt we are confronting a great deal of anger. The resentment takes us to a particular place: a zone of non-being, an extraordinary sterile and arid region, where black is not a man, and mankind is digging into its own flesh to find meaning … Fanon's anger has a strong contemporary echo. It is the bitterness of those demonstrating against the Empire, the superiority complex of the neo-conservative ideology, and the banality of the ‘War on Terror’. It is the anger of all whose cultures, knowledge systems and ways of being that are ridiculed, demonized, declared inferior and irrational, and, in some cases, eliminated (Sardar 2008: iv).

Sardar goes on to caution against subtle cultural oppression and homogenisation of the non-desired other under pretexts of building nationally ‘cohesive’ and ‘integrated’ societies. He argues that dignity is not located in seeking equality with the white man and his civilisation. Neither is it about assuming the attitudes of the master (read, those born into privileged zones of being such as whiteness) who has allowed his slaves (read, prospective
citizens being naturalised through language tests) to eat at his table. Rather it is about being oneself with all the multiplicities, systems and contradictions of one’s own ways of being, doing and knowing. This is essentially about being oneself – linguistically, culturally, politically, religiously, or otherwise. But the trickster habitus of global coloniality, operating in the form of citizenship tests stands as an albatross, the rite of passage into the zone of being.

French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1986) introduced the concept of habitus as a summary term for dispositions that may generate actions or practices that are highly spontaneous and inventive. Bourdieu popularised ‘habitus’ in social theory as ‘a viable analytic tool for the job of accounting for the cognitive components of action’ (Lizardo 2004: 1). Lizardo further explains that Bourdieu’s use of the concept of habitus relates to habits of thought and learning inculcated especially through institutions. This is to say, ‘habitus is an acquired system of schemes that allow for everyday instances of perception, categorization and the production of action and most importantly for the production of mundane judgments’ (Lizardo 2004: 4). This effectively makes the concept of habitus inseparable from processes of the differential distribution of power and social and political hierarchies that follow; such as those we find in contemporary societies: binaries of citizen/non-citizen, national/foreigner, indigenous/non-indigenous, (permanent) resident/non-resident, and so on. These constitute the habitus that anchors discriminatory and otherwise unwarranted language and citizenship testing regimes examined in this paper. This is a conundrum that rests on another – that of the proverbial trickster.

The complex mythological character of the trickster appears in folk stories among most Indigenous and traditional societies around the world (the spider, the hare, the coyote, the raven). The trickster generally comprises of numerable contradictory traits – intelligent, wise, foolish, perverse, heroic, malicious, cunning, and so on (Robertson 2008; Dorsey 2002; Schmidt 1995). It is this ambiguous, equivocal and duality of character embodied by the trickster that makes this mythical figure a fitting analytical frame for understanding the subtleties of language and citizenship tests discussed above. The myth of the trickster contains extremely useful insights about the way meaning is conveyed in human societies (Grădinaru 2012: 85). Trickster discourse is both destructive and creative – in equal measure. Trickster discourse is, also about ‘risk taking, boundary testing, deception, and cruelty in an effort to teach culturally appropriate attitudes and behaviours’ (Robertson 2008: 18). When coupled with Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, the proverbial character of the trickster generates a nuanced explanatory paradigm for unpacking the complex mechanisms of global coloniality. Global coloniality is the trickster hidden behind language tests (the habitus). Arguably, though the trickster holds the possibility for co-existence of multiple meanings and multiple narratives, it is often the case that only dominant and hegemonic narratives of the most powerful prevail. This is a key lesson that we learn from deployment of language and citizenship tests as a technology for governmentality, disciplining and punishing (Foucault 1972, 1979) the non-desired racialised other.

In what follows, I draw on the foregoing framework to read new meanings into Australia’s language and citizenship testing regimes. I use insights from the decolonial school of thought together with the notion of trickster habitus to support the argument that language and citizenship tests have historically been used as convenient technology by central authorities to exercise power and control over individuals and groups of people alike. I demonstrate that tests are ‘used in powerful ways, leading to their detrimental effects and their uses by those in authority as disciplinary tools’ (Shohamy 2001: 24). I show how the symbolic power of language tests is common technology used by politicians and bureaucrats to achieve political agendas, such as gate keeping non-desired racialised others.

The Dictation Test of 1901

Introduced in 1901, the dictation test was used as the means to exclude ‘undesirable’ intending immigrants, that is, those people whom successive Australian Governments regarded as politically or morally undesirable (York 1992: 4). Prospective immigrants were required to pass a language examination in English or any other European language with which they were not necessarily familiar. Thus, potential immigrants who were ‘undesirable’ by virtue of their nationality or race for example, were not directly excluded on grounds of their race; officially, it was only because of their language skills that they were not permitted entry. As McNamara and Roever (2006: 160) observe, care was taken to ascertain which languages the person in question did know, and then the test was given in a language that the person did not know. Predictably, the person would fail the test and then be excluded on that basis. This means non-desired people were linguistically and socially constructed for purposes of exclusion.

The rigour and effort exerted in establishing the linguistic identities of prospective immigrants was not motivated by the principle of fairness aimed at ensuring the person is tested in the language he/she knows best; rather it was the contrary. This shows the dictation test was a political tool for advancing the cause of the ‘White Australia’ policy, which was itself part of the broader project of global coloniality designed to exclude non-white racial groups. Cases involving the abuse of language tests
for political purposes in Australia are well documented (McNamara 2005; McNamara and Roever 2006). York's (1992) detailed analysis of data from annual returns on persons admitted and refused entry into Australia for the period 1901 to 1957 shows that the largest groups refused entry into Australia in any single year were Chinese (459 persons excluded in 1902); Maltese (214 persons excluded in 1916) and Italians (132 persons excluded in 1930) (York 1992: 16). In all these cases, admission was refused on grounds of failing the dictation test. The first Prime Minister of Federal Australia, Edmund Barton, expressed the hidden political and racial agenda of the dictation test in the following terms:

The moment we begin to define, the moment we begin to say that everyone of a certain nationality or colour shall be restricted, while other persons are not, then as between civilised powers, amongst whom now must be counted Japan, we are liable to trouble and objection … I see no other way except to give a large discretionary power to the authorities in charge of such a measure [the dictation test] (Commonwealth of Australia 1901: 3500).

The idea of giving the dictation test in a way that would appease Australia's and Britain's allies, while at the same time achieving the intended goal of excluding 'undesirable' people, received majority support in federal parliament (Tavan 2005). From the beginning of 1901, the dictation test was administered to targeted individuals, particularly those with political views contrary to the British-Australian values espoused by the ‘White Australia’ policy. Gerald Griffin, an Irish-born communist New Zealander, was excluded in 1934 on the basis of a dictation test which was used to achieve preconceived political goals. Because of his communist ideological inclination, Griffin was not welcome in Australia. Although he was fluent in Irish and English, the authorities chose to administer the dictation test in Dutch, a language that Griffin was not familiar with (McNamara and Roever 2006). As expected, he failed the test and was subsequently deported.

Another well-known case in which political exclusion was camouflaged by the dictation test is that of Egon Kisch, a Czech Jewish communist writer refused entry into Australia by the Lyons government to attend an anti-war congress in 1934. The government first sought to exclude and deport Kisch on the grounds of his communist political beliefs. However, when he jumped ashore from a ship attempting to avoid deportation, the authorities arrested him and administered a dictation test. Because Kisch was fluent in many European languages, including English, the authorities chose to administer the test in Scottish Gaelic, a language with which he was not familiar. Kisch failed the test, the reasonableness of which was successfully challenged in the High Court (McNamara and Roever 2006: 160). However, since the dictation test was merely a smokescreen and the government was intent on excluding him, Kisch was eventually refused entry on other grounds. Egon Kisch's case marked an important turning point in the use of the dictation test for immigration purposes in Australia.

From the 1930s to the early 1940s, the dictation test was rarely used because of the negative publicity received by the Kisch saga. Consequently, annual returns for the years 1931–39 recorded some of the lowest numbers of persons refused admission, with as few as nine people being excluded in 1938, all of them on other grounds, aside for one Chinese person who failed the dictation test (York 1992). Although the yearly figures of people refused admission rose to 41 in 1940, there was a dramatic fall again in 1942, 1943 and 1944 as there were no people refused admission in the three successive years (York 1992). While the events of the Second World War might have played a part, the decline in numbers of people refused admission can also be attributed to limited use of the dictation test as a major criterion for vetting prospective immigrants.

The above examples demonstrate the extent to which the dictation test was an integral part of colonial political discourse on racial, ethnic and political exclusion during the formative years of hegemonic white Australia. The cited cases highlight ‘the dishonest nature of the test, which was a test designed to be failed’ (York 1992: 5). During the heyday of the ‘White Australia’ policy, the political intent of language tests was often deliberately hidden behind what appeared to be an objective mechanism – a test. What this analysis shows is the non-transparent political issues that were at play in securing the power and hegemony of ‘White Australia’. The dictation test seems to have served its intended purpose very well. It proved highly effective as a way of keeping out politically and racially undesirable people. Nevertheless, a combination of changing circumstances in post-World War II Australia led to the softening of the ‘White Australia’ policy, and the subsequent abolition of the dictation test in 1957 (Tavan 2005; Lake 2005). However, stringent immigration and naturalisation conditions similar to those of the dictation test remain in contemporary Australia. The Australian history and values test is one such example.

**The Australian History and Values Test**

The Australian history and values test was introduced in 2007. It is a computer-based test consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions drawn randomly from a large pool of questions on the Australian way of life, responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship, as well as Australian history and geography. Prior to 2007, applicants...
were required to attend a compulsory oral interview and establish that they were of good character. The interviewer, an officer of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, would: (i) check the written application and personal documents; (ii) assess whether the applicant understands the nature of the application; (iii) assess whether the applicant has an adequate knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship; and (iv) assess whether the applicant has a basic knowledge of the English language.

Under the new regime, Australian citizenship applicants have to successfully complete a citizenship test before lodging an application. In other words, the test is an eligibility criterion and the application cannot go ahead unless and until one has passed it. Three crucial assessment criteria are used to determine successful completion of the test: (a) applicants have to demonstrate that they understand the nature of the application; (b) applicants have to demonstrate that they possess basic knowledge of English by successfully completing the written test in the medium of English; and (c) applicants have to demonstrate that they have an adequate knowledge of Australia and of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship.

Arguably, assessment criterion (b) above betrays insistence on English language proficiency skills as the overriding component in the revised citizenship test. English language proficiency becomes the very first barrier that closes out prospective Australian citizenship applicants competent in languages other than English. The results of the Australian citizenship tests undertaken since October 2007 indicate that success rate is lowest in the refugee stream (Ndhlovu 2014). Given the low levels of English language literacy among most refugee citizenship applicants, it is possible that the language question and not a lack of understanding of ‘the Australian way of life’ could be a major barrier. This means Australian citizenship is a preserve and a privilege for only those who have adequate command of the language of access, which is English. The citizenship test has come to reflect the history of Australian attitudes towards non-Anglo Saxon immigrants.

Notwithstanding the already tough nature of the Australian history and values test, the Australian Federal Government further strengthened it in April 2017 by introducing tougher English language testing for immigrants (Commonwealth of Australia 2017). Whereas previously the testing of applicants’ English language skills was integrated into the Australian history and values test (see preceding discussion), the two things have been decoupled in the amended test. That is, prospective Australian citizens are now required to sit two separate tests that gauge (i) their knowledge of Australian history and values and (ii) their English language proficiency skills. Furthermore, whereas previously applicants were expected to demonstrate basic knowledge of the English language, the new regulations require applicants ‘to demonstrate competent English language listening, speaking, reading and writing skills before being able to sit the citizenship test (Commonwealth of Australia 2017: 6).

The policy document titled Strengthening the Test for Australian Citizenship, links the rationale for the new changes to concerns around Australian national security.

Recent terrorist attacks around the world have justifiably caused concern in the Australian community. The Government responds to these threats by continuing to invest in counter-terrorism, strong borders and strong national security. This helps to ensure that Australia remains an open, inclusive and free society [...] The Australian community expects that aspiring citizens demonstrate their allegiance to Australia, their commitment to live in accordance with Australian values, and their willingness and ability to integrate and becoming contributing members of the Australian community (Commonwealth of Australia 2017: 4-5).

The new requirement for a separate English language test has to be understood within the context of broader concerns around ‘national security’, ‘terrorism-related crime’ and ‘integration discourse’. In a later section titled ‘English Language Testing’, the new policy stipulates that ‘[a]spiring citizens will be required to undertake separate upfront English language testing with an accredited provider and achieve a minimum level of “competent”’ (Commonwealth of Australia 2017: 9). There is absolutely no doubt that English is a useful language in Australia and that people need to have this language in order to be able to perform most everyday social and economic transactions. However, the requirement for a ‘competent’ command of English, which is equivalent to the level required for university entry (IELTS band 6), is a step too far. The Australian political environment in which migrants’ legal status is perennially a prominent issue of national debate may influence the underlying feelings of mistrust as new migrants establish their new homes. Every time the Australian citizenship debate comes up, the issue of English language proficiency skills of prospective citizens is brought into the mix. Most political players, the media, political commentators and community groups automatically join the debate, which is often around the question on whether the level of English being insisted upon is reasonable or not. Most language testing experts, community organisations and opposition political
parties say the recent English language requirements are unreasonable and inordinately harsh. But the two important questions that are rarely addressed are about the rationale for bringing up the issue of English language skills into the citizenship debate – in the first instance. What problem does the decision to raise the bar for English language skills seek to resolve? Is there any empirical evidence to suggest that people who have lived in Australia for decades as permanent residents suffer from a lack of English proficiency skills, thus preventing them from societal participation?

In their submission to the Australian Government at the time when the citizenship changes were being proposed, three international experts in language testing from the University of Melbourne had this to say:

The current insistence on ’competent’ English changes the requirement into means of exclusion for many would-be-citizens. The symbolic function of English underlying the changes is now being exploited politically to draw a line between ‘us’ English speakers and ‘them’, which is unnecessary and divisive. The role of language in citizenship requirements is often justified on practical grounds (’you need English to function in Australian society’). While some knowledge of English can reasonably be expected, the question is how much. Research has shown that in a multilingual and multicultural society such as ours, people can function adequately within their own multilingual networks, and at the same time contribute effectively to the society with relatively low levels of English (Knoch et al. 2017: 3).

These reservations to the inordinate English language proficiency requirement point us to the endemic politicalisation of migration and citizenship by successive governments dating back to the early 1900s (see analysis of the dictation test in the preceding section). The rationale for raising the bar for English language skills requirements that ties the whole idea to national security and counter-terrorism is poorly argued. It, in fact, contradicts then Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton’s November 2016 claims about second and third generation Lebanese-Australians as being over-represented in terrorism-related crimes:

The advice I have is that out of the last 33 people who have been charged with terrorist-related offences in this country, 22 of those people are from second and third generation Lebanese-Muslim background. The reality is Malcolm Fraser did make mistakes in bringing some people in the 1970s and we’re seeing that today. We need to be honest in having that discussion. There was a mistake made. Lessons from past migrant programs should be learnt for people settling in Australia today (Dutton 22 November 2016).

If second and third generation descendants of immigrants are most likely to be involved in terrorism, then strengthening English language requirements is not the panacea. The second and third generation descendants of Lebanese-Australians in question were born and raised in Australia, which means their first language is Australian English and their proficiency skills in the language are way above the competence level. Therefore, if the perceived link between low levels of English language skills and propensity to commit terrorism-related crimes exists, how does the Australian Government reconcile the glaring contradiction between its policy and the Immigration Minister’s claims about descendants of Lebanese immigrants? Arguably, linking English language skills to counter-terrorism and national security efforts is a desperate attempt to justify the unfair targeting of the non-desired other. There is no objective correlation between knowledge of the English language and propensity to be involved in criminal activity – beyond mere bigoted impressionistic claims and assumptions founded on hierarchies of humanity produced by the imperial project of global coloniality.

The rationale for the 2017 decision to administer a tougher English language test to Australian citizenship applicants who have lived in the country for many years as permanent residents is debatable. If their level of English is sufficiently inadequate to warrant administering a language test, how have prospective citizens been communicating with other Australians for all the years they have lived in the country as permanent residents? Knoch et al. (2017) drew the government’s attention to the duplicitous nature of the English language test for citizenship. They pointed out in particular the redundancy of the language test. Many Australian citizenship applicants will have previously applied for permanent residency through various pathways, such as skilled migration. To meet the requirements for these permanent migration schemes, applicants would have had to sit and pass a test to prove their English language ability. Knoch et al. (2017: 4) conclude their critique by advising that,

there is no evidence that any of these people would lose their English language skills while working in Australia. On the contrary, their skills are more likely to develop over time as a result of exposure to English and opportunities for English use in the community.

These expert arguments lay bare the underlying political and exclusionary motivations of testing English language
skills for citizenship. Language tests are a political exercise that has absolutely nothing to do with perceived concerns around criminality and failure to integrate into the community. Rather, they have everything to do with subjective normative assumptions about being and becoming Australian. For, what has English language proficiency skills got to do with loyalty to Australia and abiding by its laws and way of life? This troubling question rests on a set of other related questions.

There seems to be an implicit assumption that high English language proficiency skills equate being a good and loyal Australian citizen. But is this really the case? What does this say to Indigenous Australians whose threshold of English language skills may be below the ‘competent’ level being insisted upon? Does this mean Indigenous Australians are not Australian enough? There is also yet another fallacy here about English, which is that English is the language of Australia and that all other languages are migrant languages. This is obviously not true because as we all know, English (in whatever form, shape or variety) is a migrant language in Australia. Until the arrival of the first white settlers in 1788, there was no English language in Australia. This is a well-known historical fact that does not even require references to back it up. There were over 250 indigenous languages in Australia at the time. The majority of them have succumbed to nearly two and half centuries of linguistic imperialism, linguicide and subtle cultural assimilation. But some still exist and are viable. Therefore, I would argue that if we really do want to tie language skills to Australian loyalty, why not insist on knowledge of at least one of the remaining Indigenous languages? This would be a more reasonable expectation because all people, except the Indigenous people, in Australia (including those from the hegemonic Anglo-Celtic extraction) are migrants or descendants of migrants.

Conclusion

What we learn from the preceding analysis is that the triumph of English in Australia’s migration policy is about the politics of perpetuating and legitimating unequal power relations. Because overt racial or ethnic exclusion is now increasingly frowned upon in present day societies, English language tests have come to represent subtle means of closing out individuals and groups of people with ‘questionable’ identities. This, however, is not a language issue but a political matter camouflaged as language-in-migration policy. Australia’s language-in-migration policies have consistently posed a serious threat to the principles of social inclusion, cultural recognition and equality in a country that prides itself as one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world. Starting from the early 1900s to the present, Australian citizenship continues to be simplistically considered a social values matter, with uncritical attention being paid to the place of the language question in the whole matrix. In the preceding pages of this article, I have argued there is a clear pattern in the history of Australian migration policy that demonstrates the centrality of language in determining parameters for inclusion and exclusion. The analysis of the dictation test and the Australian values test revealed the various forms of subtle cultural oppression, political exclusion and discrimination of ‘unwanted’ people that go unchallenged because of the power and authority of language tests. In the final analysis, it can be concluded that these language testing regimes do not have as much to do with English proficiency skills as does the political exigencies of subtle cultural normalisation, discipline and governmentality (Foucault 1979). English language proficiency assessment in citizenship tests is part of a broader political project of global coloniality. Language proficiency tests are the preferred technology for actuating the goals of global coloniality because they have enormous authoritative symbolic power. In Australia, fallacies about English have gone unchallenged whereby we are told proficiency in English equates with being ‘Australian’ and yet as we know, English is a migrant language like any other – it was brought to this part of the world by British settlers from 1788 onwards. What gives English the political influence it currently enjoys is the fact that it is the language of the dominant ‘superior’ race and carries the symbolic power of whiteness in Australia and globally. The (ab)use of language testing regimes throughout the history of contemporary Australia tells the story of how global coloniality and racism have consistently assumed the proverbial character of a trickster that seeks to outwit and evade detection. Like the proverbial trickster, language tests are ubiquitous though their pervasive effects are rarely noticed and thus remain largely unchallenged. The soul of trickster in global coloniality is its supposedly liberal, all-inclusive and accommodating discourse that hides realities of endemic discrimination and the processes of racialisation at play.

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Unfinished Business: Documentary filmmaking and the intersections of government policy, Aboriginal education and anthropology

MICHAEL BROGAN

This paper describes the lines of inquiry that higher degree research (HDR) provides for an opportunity to pursue, in a documentary project motivated by a long-running encounter with anthropological filmmaking and educational policy and practice. Focusing on research and development, and pointing forward to pre-production, it contributes to broader discussions about documentary uses of knowledge, protocols, ethics and the politics of representation. Using the concept of the diaspora illustrates how my film project has come about and describes the research journey from undertaking an Aboriginal cadetship at Film Australia in 1989 to commencing an HDR in creative practice in 2015.

The aim of this paper is to chart interconnections between personal and professional experiences of working in the field of education in relation to challenges faced by the Northern Territory regarding the education and social integration of Aboriginal people, particularly the Aboriginal children who featured in the film Walking in the Sunlight, Walking in the Shadow (Kingsbury 1971). Research enables me to consider the proximity of texts from film, anthropology and policy in relation to one another – and the wider historical projects they represent – and what relationship they may have with Walking in the Sunlight, Walking in the Shadow being made.

Introduction: Walking in the Sunlight, Walking in the Shadow

This paper describes the lines of inquiry that higher degree research (HDR) provides an opportunity to pursue, in a documentary film project motivated by a long-running encounter with anthropological filmmaking and educational policy and practice. My project began as a creative practice, with the intention of making a documentary of my own in response to a government-supported film that I saw early on in that encounter. However, my research for this project led me to seek answers to questions about the making of that film and how it came to be made. Further, to establish how a certain kind of documentary filmmaking about Aboriginal people was framed through a white colonial lens.

The starting point I want to establish is the path connecting the personal and professional experiences of working in the field of education. I will use the idea of diasporic inscription (Brah 1996) as a theoretical framework to map the journey between documentary filmmaking and intersections of government policy, Aboriginal education and anthropology. Avtar Brah develops this idea to describe the lifelong journey across continents, with several places identified as ‘home’. As for Brah, my life is marked by similar inscriptions. I use the inter-relationship between the places I call home to explore what she identifies more generally as the process of ‘mapping political shifts to approach questions of difference and diversity through changes in gendered and racialised discourses and state practices’ (Brah 1996: 1). For me, diasporic inscriptions provide insight into the challenges faced by the Northern Territory regarding the education and social integration of Aboriginal people, particularly the Aboriginal children who featured in the film Walking in the Sunlight, Walking in the Shadow (Kingsbury 1971) (hereafter, Walking), the film I encountered in 1989. Walking was made through a partnership between the Department of the Interior and the Commonwealth Film Unit (later Film Australia).

This paper maps out the intersections between gendered and racialised discourses practised by the state and my personal and professional journey, from starting as an Aboriginal cadet at Film Australia in 1989 to becoming an Aboriginal postgraduate at the University of New England in 2015. Throughout I have been working in the field of education teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These intersections have had a significant bearing on the evolution of my ideas about potentially...
making a documentary in response to that earlier film, and my wider research into Australian documentary filmmaking about Aboriginal people.

I have come to see Walking as a historical artefact for understanding the relationships between documentary filmmaking, government policy, Aboriginal education, anthropology and the construction of ‘Aboriginality’. My encounter with Walking created a bigger picture around the film. Research has enabled me to consider a range of texts – and the historical projects they represent – and what relationship they have with Walking having ever been made. Collectively these texts have become what Brah describes as constitutive moments in the formation of the ‘Aboriginal’ subject (Brah 1996: 11). An example is The Australian Aborigines (Department of Territories 1967), the purpose of which was to fulfill a need by all Australian ministers responsible for Aboriginal welfare to present one publication to record the progress in Aboriginal welfare throughout Australia (Department of Territories 1967: Foreword). This policy text was based on an earlier publication of the same title, The Australian Aborigines by A.P. Elkin (1964), published in cooperation with the American Museum of Natural History. It included a foreword by Margaret Mead, who was working in the Department of Anthropology for the American Museum of Natural History at the time until her death in 1978.

In this broader perspective, Walking is an example of a text that contributes to a particular area of Aboriginal welfare. It is at once a representation of Aborigines in the Northern Territory to wider Australia and a tool for recruiting teachers to work in Aboriginal education in the Territory. Placing this film alongside other historical texts helps to identify what Marcia Langton calls particular ways of seeing and knowing the other (Langton 1993). In discussing debates around the politics of representation, Langton argues the need for ‘an anti-colonialist cultural criticism’ across fields of film, video, television, visual arts, and – significantly – ‘anthropology, film and arts administration and government policy’ (Langton 1993: 7). Interrogating representations of Aborigines requires an iterative approach to seeing the ‘Aboriginal’ subject in inter-related ways as products of our cultures and ways of knowing, particularly film (Langton 1993: 7).

The Framing of Problems: Anthropology and education

In December 1964, the Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs was formally established at Monash University. One of its first projects was to find answers to questions on social, economic, education and health matters framed at the inter-governmental Native Welfare Conference in Canberra in 1961 (Dunn and Tatz 1969: vii). It was decided at this conference that an effective way of tackling these problems would be to conduct a series of national seminars and invite a diverse group of people who, through research or experience, could make a contribution on a particular topic, and to publish the proceedings (Dunn and Tatz 1969: vii). What is of interest is how matters regarding Aboriginal people became framed, in institutional and inter-governmental terms, by the Native Welfare Conference hosted by the Commonwealth Government and chaired by The Hon. Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories. In attendance were all the relevant ministers and officers representing the seven State governments from around Australia. Also, it was duly noted by Hasluck that he described Professor A. P. Elkin as having a lifetime of experience regarding Australian Aborigines (Native Welfare Conference 1961: 1).

The other framing of these problems is indicated by the invitation to a diverse group of people with research and experience to make a contribution on specific topics in the series of national seminars on Aboriginal Affairs. In this series, the national seminar on educational problems was held in 1967. Of some interest here is the use of the term ‘Aborigines' or 'Aboriginal’ after the inter-governmental Aboriginal Welfare Conference of 1963. These terms were deemed suitable and were adopted by the Commonwealth Government Printing Office Style Manual (cited in Dunn and Tatz 1969: viii). During this time, a major publication was produced by the Department of Territories entitled The Australian Aborigines and the recommended terms were used throughout Aborigines and Education, edited by S.S. Dunn and C.M. Tatz (1969). Aborigines and Education serves to create a backdrop to anthropological and ethnographic filmmaking in Australia and, where governments are concerned regarding the welfare of Australian ‘Aborigines’, the frames of reference used to convey the realities surrounding our situation and circumstances. All of these concerns appear to be constructed from the ‘white gaze’ originating from Australia’s colonial heritage. Most significant is the frame in which a ‘pan-Aboriginal Australia’ becomes constituted under Australia’s national policy of assimilation.

Relevant here is Rosalind Kidd’s analysis, in The Way We Civilise (1997), of the movement of anthropologists at the time to claim authority as expert representatives on all matters of Aboriginal culture and as self-imposed arbitrators of Aboriginal interests. A marriage between anthropology and Aboriginal administration was the aim of anthropologists like Elkin, applying pressure on people of influence by suggesting, for instance, that superintendents could be more efficient if they were anthropologically trained at university. Hence, some training in anthropology was essential to gaining an insight to the mind of ‘primitive man’. It was also essential for teachers of pupils from ‘backward’ races to have thorough training in heathen
psychology, otherwise the greatness and importance of the task would be only partly understood.

**Film Australia’s Black Australia: Anthropology and filmmaking**

In the late 1980s I commenced an Aboriginal cadetship at Film Australia and this included the making of *Black Australia* (Brogan and Sibasado 1990). I had full access to Film Australia’s anthropological and ethnographic film collection on this project, the thirteen programs in *Film Australia’s Australia* series (Film Australia 1988). It was during this project that I first encountered *Walking* which was to become a turning point in my personal and professional career. *Walking* depicted two cultural realities within a dominant colonial paradigm where Aboriginal peoples’ stories are absent other than talking images of Aboriginal people which were scripted as indicated. Because of this, it was pivotal to selecting the films for the themes presented in *Black Australia*. I drew a line by excluding all anthropological and ethnographic films made and produced prior to 1970 that did not support what I perceived to be a contemporary Aboriginal worldview, i.e. Aboriginal people talking for themselves. I focused instead on films through stories such as Harry’s in *Peppimenarti* (Iddon 1983).

Contrastingly, in *Walking* the school children and their communities are cast, to use the ‘scientific’ terminology of the day, as full blood ‘Aborigines’. They are not talking for themselves. They are talked about as not understanding what others are trying to do for them, despite best efforts. For instance, at the end of the school day the children ‘just’ go back to the blacks’ camp where the film shows Aborigines conducting ceremony. These are elements of stereotyping that portray Aboriginal people as wild natives. For the first time, the portrayal of Aboriginal people in this film showed me, regardless of my circumstances, the way other Australian people think they know me! This portrayal of Aboriginal people, more than any other films in Film Australia’s collection, reinforced the racist stereotypes I encountered and have known growing up in white middle-class suburbs across the world over.

I was born Aboriginal in Australia but grew up black in England. Like Brah, I began to realise this as an historical entanglement amid a multitude of biographies that are the crucible of the British Empire. My own biography is a reminder of a collective history of Aboriginal people in what we now know as *Terra Nullius* – Australia as a land of opportunity, the lucky country; the formation of a white Australia – via the effects of colonial administration – of a ‘colonial sandwich’ with Europeans at the top, migrants in the middle and Aboriginal people at the bottom.

In *Projecting Australia: Government film since 1945*, Albert Moran (1991) provides some background to *Film Australia’s Australia*. Firstly, it was a co-production between Film Australia and the Australian Bicentennial Authority, materialising in 1988, and secondly, the series was produced and marketed towards schools – a repurposing of Australian government film undertaken since 1945 (Moran 1991: 154). According to Moran, extensive notes were prepared in conjunction with these programs, focusing on ‘what it means to be Australian’. The series was conceived and produced as a teaching resource, utilising films produced by the unit since 1945 and in some instances earlier. The series was made available to schools across the country as a standby for the Bicentennial National Schools Program. Apart from introductions at the beginning of each program and different segments throughout the series by the on-screen commentator, Annette Shun Wah, Film Australia did not film any new material for this production (Moran 1991: 155).

Moran states recycled footage had always been one ingredient of films in this genre. In *Film Australia’s Australia*, the footage consisted of short extracts from different films, with five or six edits compiled to deal with the subject for that program. As described by Moran, extracts would begin abruptly without any introduction or graphic, sound, or conceptual links. The only links that connected these extracts by and large was that they were supposedly about the same thing. Moran describes each extract as being characterised with a subtitle, the name and date of the film indicating the source. He also describes the different features of these extracts; some are in black and white while others are in colour; some have the ‘voice of god’ commentary, others allow the on-screen figures their own voices, while others again have musical soundtracks; some extracts are in the classical style, some are vériété; others are dramatised and yet others are interviews.

Moran asserts the effect of this juxtaposition is twofold. Firstly, in an effort to present positive images of women, Aboriginals and migrants, the extracts convey a pluralist Australia made up of different cultural groups with unique cultural identities, values and beliefs that are consistent with the laws and values of our nation. Secondly, what sets this series apart from other films of this genre is the variance in textuality, more than any other films made since 1945. Moran emphasises that as audiences, we are aware we are watching a film assembled from other films (Moran 1991: 156).

For *Black Australia* I used a similar format, in that Annette Shun Wah was the on-screen commentator for continuity purposes. However, the selection process was determined by attempting to retain a comprehensive Aboriginal worldview that could bring our past to the
present. To achieve this the program was divided into three major themes based around the colours of the Aboriginal flag: Red – Land and Politics, Black – Identity and Self-determination, Yellow – Art and Spirituality. This reinforced the idea that all the programs contained within each of the themes could not be understood separately, hence our use of the flag as a unified approach and symbol of a holistic Aboriginal worldview rarely understood by most non-Indigenous people.

However, the style of our program focused on stories told by a diverse group of Aboriginal people from around the country. These stories were from Elders, custodians, academics, artists, activists, and Aboriginal men, women and children to illustrate inter-generational experiences about being Aboriginal in Australia. Rather than pluck single sequences from a film, we selected several sequences from each film to build an Aboriginal worldview around the story and events on issues related to each of the themes we had identified for our program. Like reading a page in a book from left to right, these sequences remained true to the flow, composition and direction of the original film.

To illustrate this approach to ‘extracting the story’: **Peppimenarti** was originally advertised and marketed by Film Australia in generic terms to reflect progressive government policy. In contrast, our take was to illustrate the social and cultural realities of contemporary Aboriginal lifestyles. In the extracts from this film in **Black Australia**, Harry says ‘we been taught by Europeans to have those things tea, sugar, flour, beer too everybody like beer … we still want to do our own things – ceremony, corroboree – and still follow on our own track like old people used to do before’. His story tells us about the economic realities in the context of European values, as well as cultural survival in the context of Aboriginal values. Harry and the community of Peppimenarti are demonstrating these values can co-exist as they begin the cultural process of reconnecting to country through ceremony.

**Black Australia** was not a compilation documentary in the normal sense, when compared to the other twelve programs in the series. Rather than arranging a cluster of film sequences according to themes for **Film Australia’s Australia** series such as Physical, Social, Political, Cultural and Economic Environments, twelve films were selected according to the themes determined by the colours of the Aboriginal flag. These twelve individual programs were selected out of several hundred documentaries from Film Australia’s own anthropological and ethnographic collection.

In his article ‘Ethnographic film-making in Australia: the first seventy years (1898-1968)’, Ian Dunlop (1979) asserts that ethnographic filmmaking is as old as cinema itself. One contributor to anthropological filmmaking was Baldwin Spencer, who we are told took two trips – one in 1901, heading out into the desert country and the second trip in 1912 heading up to Northern Australia. Spencer, it appears, donated his film to the National Museum of Victoria in 1916 where it remained until 1966. After a meeting with the director of the Museum, Dunlop was shown to a shed storing two tin trunks that contained Spencer’s original film rolls of nitrate negative. Through an agreement with the Museum’s trustees, the Commonwealth Film Unit took charge of the material and supervised the copying of the original negative. But important, too, are the institutional networks in which the films had been made and archived. The duplicates became the property of the National Museum of Victoria, the National Library of Australia and Film Australia.

**Strategies Towards a Documentary Treatment**

At its centre Brah asserts the notion of diaspora as contemporary migrations and not to be confused with casual travel. Contemporary migrations need to be historicised within the concept of diaspora to operate as a useful heuristic device (Brah 1996: 182). I am using diaspora theory as an aspect of my research journey using text to represent unfinished business over 50 years since 1971 when the original film Walking was made and my first encounter with it in 1989. Like cards laid out on a table I have identified texts – to illustrate the historical social-economic, political, and cultural conditions around my own experience – to mark the trajectories between my research and the documentary film I intend to make.

My film project also represents unfinished business, given my personal and professional experiences along my career path from when I undertook the cadetship in 1989 to commencement of higher degree research in 2015. As a filmmaker I have certain views about the film I encountered all those years ago at Film Australia. I cannot escape the social and cultural dilemmas associated with my experience of cross-cultural adoption and that of the children who featured in the film. The experiences we have may appear different in terms of factors relating to our own Aboriginality, assimilation and social histories. However, the policy of assimilation also suggests there are psychological factors to be considered in relation to nature and nurture as these concepts remind us how certain representations frame us by what we are rather than who we are.

Research has become malleable as I attempt to keep all the cards in play. To my way of thinking, it is vitally important to maintain a holistic Aboriginal worldview through all stages of the process of getting the film made. Even the proximity between the Aboriginal children
featured in the original documentary and myself does not bring about full resolution, even if my film were yet to be made.

Our individual experiences as Aboriginal people are very different. In a sense our Aboriginality does not really evolve beyond the imagination of the white gaze when attempting to understand how different our experiences are. Beyond the white gaze our experiences are presented as a memory of our Aboriginality and yet have no bearing on our experiences – only a memory of it. The white gaze becomes a powerful testimony of our experience and a record of our colonial selves. In the case of the Aboriginal children, the policy of assimilation took precedence over their natural disposition, whereas this did not apply in my case of cross-cultural adoption. Therefore, policy in the case of the Aboriginal children in the film sets limits on our ability to comprehend their experiences, as if they had never happened. Higher degree research has enabled me to reconcile the past as I consider my personal and professional journey having worked in the field of education. This aspect of my research represents going the distance between two historical points of reference that describe what has happened since then to what is occurring now and explains why I have been in the field for so long.

More significantly a copy of ‘The Policy of Assimilation’ pertaining to decisions of Commonwealth and State ministers at the 1961 Native Welfare Conference shows that State and Territory governments were concerned with public interest in Australia and overseas which looked upon Aborigines as objects of human curiosity (Native Welfare Conference 1961: 53). The desire to improve public relations was to update government publications and to include contributions from each of the States. These publications were to take the form of the (above-mentioned) booklet The Australian Aborigines and a film (for television) to be distributed throughout the Commonwealth as teaching aids and for use by adult education groups. In addition, an Australia-wide tour or lecture series would be tangible proof that Australia was doing something for their natives. Maybe Walking had served its purpose after all? The challenge is examining the policy in relation to Walking and what bearing it may have on the colonial attitudes of the administrators, teachers and government representatives who also featured throughout the film. The policy of assimilation suggests that it was intended for all Aboriginal people across all States and Territories of Australia and yet the film focused its attention squarely on the Northern Territory.

Langton’s essay ‘Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television … ’ (1993) demonstrates a method and process of my research journey between all the texts. The politics of representation requires debate from a variety of sources as relations between institutions and agencies continue to create even greater issues for Aboriginal people despite their good intentions. Government attempts to address the ‘Aboriginal problem’ belied the cause of advancing the welfare of Aboriginal people so that they may have a happy and satisfying life as Australians.

By contrast in Body Culture, Isobel Crombie (2004: 58-60) suggests the possibility that a hybrid race of Australians was diminished by the notion that Aborigines were a dying race. Once miscegenation had been contained, Aboriginal people became the focus of amateur and professional anthropologists who used cameras to record and measure them. Although the number of ‘full-bloods’ was declining, a problem remained. Crombie asserts alarm was raised when it was discovered that numbers of mixed-race Aboriginals had increased in the first decades of the twentieth century. In response to this situation of dealing with the problem of the half-caste, academics such as Elkin maintained the theory that cultural assimilation through education and other means would be the most effective way of integrating Aboriginal people into the white community (Crombie 2004: 58–60).

I have made contact with a number of people living and working in the Northern Territory. This was made possible through an associate who has social and cultural connections to places, communities and people featured in the film Walking. As social and cultural protocols dictate, my film documentary is reliant on establishing good relations between myself, the children featured in the film, their families and their community.

In ‘Captured images: film archives and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights’, Terri Janke (2006: 78) corroborates Leigh and Saunders’s claim that since 1898 the anthropologists’ film cameras here and abroad have captured a significant amount of Aboriginal social and cultural content. Not to mention ethnographic accounts of culture; sacred ceremonial practices; personal histories; and Aboriginal people’s knowledge about their land, animals, plants and events that have occurred since time of creation to the present. As a result, this institutional corpus of films is of considerable cultural importance to Aboriginal people, their families and communities. Issues now arise as to how to manage this material and to whom the material can be made available. The concerns Aboriginal people have are that contained within these films are records of their cultural and intellectual property.

Janke asserts it should be remembered that a large portion of the images captured in these films occurred at a time
in our history when Aboriginal people were not allowed to exercise for themselves prior and informed consent (Janke 2006: 80). Aboriginal people are seeking to assert their right to reclaim their cultures. Access to these films is one way of ensuring Aboriginal culture's perpetuity and involves using footage about particular Indigenous people and culture by way of repatriating these images back to their original cultural context, consistent with Aboriginal worldviews. However, Janke raises concerns that copyright law recognises individual creators have moral rights of integrity, whereas Aboriginal communities’ right to guard the integrity of their common culture is not recognised at law (Janke 2006: 79). Reciprocity is a collaborative approach and may require both parties to enact such conditions as ethical and cultural practices dictate.

As Janke states, images of the past continue to affect and cause disruption within the community (2006: 80). Aboriginal people have been subject to cinematic representations that are offensive or insulting. Many of these films were anthropological film projects, contributing towards the construction of popular racial stereotypes that still prevail. Walking has been in circulation for many years and continues to be circulated without proper and informed consent of community Elders, and parents, should any images of the past continue to affect and cause disruption within the community. Janke says there are instances where footage may have been taken without proper consent and without negotiation of its proposed uses. This would have left many Aboriginal people, their families and community unaware their images would be used as stock footage, more than one hundred years into the future. The availability of this material has legal implications under privacy laws and breach of performers’ rights as set out in the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) (Janke 2006: 80).

As Kidd (1997) and Crombie (2004) have suggested, soothing the ‘dying pillow’ of Aboriginal culture focused on recording an extinction event, a crisis that saw a growth in anthropological and ethnographic filmmaking that captured what many believed to be the last days of humanity’s primitive origins. With the arrival of new technology, most of this film footage has been reproduced into a more readily available format. This footage might contain sacred/secret material – or may include ceremonies that are not for public consumption. This applies to materials of ceremonies filmed for private use that were later deposited in the institutional archives. Making that material widely available may cause serious disruption to the Aboriginal culture if it were to enter the hands of the uninitiated.

This requires a different approach, considering Walking has been in the public domain for many years (decades) and no doubt discussed widely amongst anthropologists, academics and government administrators. However, I am sure the Aboriginal children, their families, and their community who feature in the film would feel differently knowing an Aboriginal person may be discussing this film without prior consent or approval and knowing they were not acknowledged in the first instance – and this is of concern to me as filmmaker.

My curiosity got the better of me. I wanted to know what had happened to Aboriginal children who had featured in this film. I originally submitted a proposal to make a documentary called Beyond a Shadow of a Doubt concentrating on the lives of the Aboriginal children; this did not proceed. My research now suggests their experiences were subject to assimilationist theory originating from applied anthropology.

The research journey that I have described weaves personal, professional and interdisciplinary threads. It has brought me to consider a different approach in making a film in response to Walking and the issues it has raised since I first encountered it all those years ago. Rather than ‘walk right in’ and react to that film in its own right, I have needed to understand the anthropological, policy and representational practices informing it. Using ‘diasporic inscriptions’ is my way of naming and mapping a journey that draws together a range of texts from these practices, to consider when, why and how these texts were produced, and how their practices made a film such as Walking thinkable. It underscores the importance of contextual research for film history, media analysis and documentary production. In the field in which I am working, it also reinforces the need to negotiate with those people who may have been represented in the film or had different experiences in different contexts from my own, as an intrinsic part of my documentary practice now. In these ways, the research contributes to broader discussions about documentary uses of knowledge, protocols, ethics and the politics of representation.

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Author

As a professional Artist, Educator and Academic I have lived and worked in Sydney and Armidale for over 20 years. I am currently enrolled in a Doctor of Philosophy, Higher Degree Research in Creative Practice, at the University of New England and in the final year of my candidature. My research crosses over several academic disciplines that are consistent with my professional teaching experience in education and industry-based practices in Visual and Performing Arts.

My teaching includes Aboriginal Studies and has enabled me to establish collaborations with public institutions such as the Australian Museum, Art Gallery of New South Wales and the State Library of New South Wales. These integrate experiential learning into my teaching programs, by providing students access to social and cultural resources developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants, community consultants and education officers of those institutions. These collaborations have been reciprocated by my being invited to work on projects throughout my professional and academic career, focusing on a diverse range of contemporary Aboriginal worldviews expressed through film projects, theatre productions and art exhibitions.


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**Flensed**

A figure flickers between the urban streetlights
darting from one pool of shadow to the next.

Hair blacker than dried ink trails languidly
rejecting the silence; the audio shrapnel.

This is the long quiet between explosions
the time of stray bullets, the overdue attack, the ambush.

A measured breath quietens the quickening pulse
the murmur of suburban noise grounds her.

She remembers; I made it out alive,
even if life and living are different
and memories cut like knives.

The war zone is long past gone
but not the depth of her sorrow
like the lowest point of the ocean swell
sinking the boat which floated her
or the bearded sailor who saved her
and brought her to the Lucky Country.

She made it, but not her husband;
the teacher, volunteer, medic.

She made it, but not her son;
the boy who waved to soldiers.

She made it, but not her daughter;
the girl who bandaged her toys.

But she made it
in the Lucky Country.

VAKAREN,
RANGEVILLE, QLD

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Hip-Hop Adulthood: Nihilism, hip-hop, and black American youth in the 21st century

Devon R. Johnson

Over the past forty years, hip-hop music and culture has become an overwhelmingly dominant mode of expression for youth throughout the world, from Australia to Senegal, and nowhere more so than where it originated: The United States of America. This essay cites and seeks to describe anti-black racism and certain forms of nihilism that continue to be existential threats to the maturation processes of hip-hop youth in the US. By explicating some of the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer, Franz Fanon, and Lewis Gordon on existential nihilism and pessimism, I argue that anti-black racism, and what can be called ‘weak nihilistic,’ ideals held over from European modernity have situated black youth in the twenty-first century to adopt nihilistic attitudes in constructing their cultural and aesthetic value productions. As a result, I argue, hip-hop culture can be used to contribute to black existential thought and ought to be considered in terms of its philosophical import as nihilistic rejections of anti-black racism by a new generation of black adults.

Thinking, writing, and reading about hip-hop music and culture can incite many feelings. So, from the beginning, I’d like to say that I am referencing hip-hop as a dominant mode of cultural value production for black American people born in the post-civil rights era of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Also, I am an existentialist; so, I don’t believe there are any essential values necessarily produced by any group of people. However, as an existentialist, it makes sense to talk about conditions under which certain dominant modes of valuing are formed, produced, and transmitted across generational lines. I do not suggest that every black person born after 1969 is a member of the hip-hop community, or that every member of the hip-hop community struggles through pessimism and nihilism, or that every person will find themself in the following analysis. Nevertheless, I think it would be good for certain things to be said concerning some problems of black existential being in anti-black racist societies, the category of black youth, nihilism, and hip-hop. Cultural productions, such as music and art, emerge through lived realities. Music and art often reflect socio-political and existential experiences shared by the occupants of those realities. For instance, in the 1970s hip-hop music emerged reflecting in part the lived anguish and despair of black and brown youth enduring anti-black racist dehumanisation in the United States of America. An aggressive form of pessimism and a simple form of nihilism are usually attributed to hip-hop cultural productions by mainstream observers. However, it is important to bear in mind that hip-hop culture is in its fifth decade of existence and is just now facing the question of what an adult version of its cultural productions look like. In this short essay, I will explain anti-black racist existential contexts constituting unique problems faced during processes of maturation in transitioning from black children into black adults within an anti-black racist society. I hope to offer some insight into the existential relevance and philosophical import of using hip-hop music and its cultural productions to study the lived experiential realities of America’s latest generations of children and adults.

The question of growing up requires considering the role of the category of youth in relation to questions concerning what it means to be an adult in that particular society. Hip-hop culture can at least be traced to expressions of black and brown adolescent youth of New York City in the mid and late 1970s and has expanded into an undeniable global phenomenon. The question of growing up in hip-hop culture is now at a point where it makes sense to ask about its maturity in relation to further questions concerning the possibilities for black adulthood in anti-black racist societies.

As we proceed, I should explain how I came to this question of the maturity of hip-hop. It involves a story. Like to hear it? Here it goes. I am among the first generation of black Americans to be born without recollection of a time before hip-hop. For us, hip-hop was never a possibility that may or may not last; it was, and is, a fact. As a nine-year old in Miami, Florida, I remember my first encounter with hip-hop music. I remember the
first time I realised it was different from other things and caused different reactions. I knew white people did not like it; and somehow, I knew that was a good thing! I remember the first time I listened to hip hop music. The song was Too $hort’s, ‘The Ghetto’. It played on the radio in my uncle’s car. I sat in the passenger seat. I noticed the change in my uncle’s demeanor when that song blared from the speakers. The first time I listened to hip-hop music it was blasting, and it was talking about the ghetto. It was bass heavy. My uncle smoothly danced while he was driving, his movements focused. His head slightly bowed; his body swayed side to side. His right-hand criss-crossed rhythmically with perfectly delayed cadence, while his left-hand remained on the steering wheel. The music was blasting. I could barely hear myself think, but, nevertheless, I was listening clearly. The music was turned up, and I was turned on. I learned in those moments that hip-hop music was something for us; it was for my uncle, the ghetto, and me. The lyrics sang, ‘I’m talking ‘bout the ghetto, that funky, funky ghetto’, and my uncle’s righthand broke cadence; his fingers struck parallel to his chest, three times in a row. He looked as if he were painfully, and cautiously, revealing something. He moved in a possessed manner; or perhaps, he possessed something – a secret; some kind of hidden, forbidden knowledge? Whatever it was, I was elated to be sharing it with him … and I knew that I would share the secret, too.

I have been cultivating the secret of hip-hop within the space between my headphones ever since I was nine years old. The soundtrack adorning my entire academic journey has been almost exclusively furnished by hip-hop. I’ve spent more than half of my life walking across the quads of university campuses, digging through philosophical archives, with my headphones and a slight, steady bop in my neck and shoulders present. I’m not only a member of hip-hop culture; I am also an artist, and I was an artist long before I began also considering myself a serious student of philosophy. So, when I began my doctoral studies, before being gifted a particular book by Lewis Gordon, I was fairly skeptical about the soundness of anything written on hip-hop coming from academic philosophers, even as I had just signed up to embark on the process of joining their ranks. I found many of the articles in the book he gave me interesting in a variety of ways. However, Gordon’s essay, ‘The Problem of Maturity in Hip Hop’, I found disturbing (Gordon 2005: 106).

I found the criticism that hip-hop culture has a problematic relationship with maturity, and in fact may valorise immaturity in unhealthy, and what I now call, ‘weak’ ways, extremely disturbing. While there are undeniable exceptions, some of which Gordon mentioned in his essay, I was forced to begin the process of admitting to myself that, indeed, there was a fundamental problem concerning maturity in hip-hop music and culture, especially as it is popularised within the larger media contexts of anti-black racist American societies. Gordon’s writing, there and in other places, prefigures my thought on existentialism and maturity. His philosophy can be used to demonstrate ways in which hip-hop productions can be articulated as situated within contexts of denials of black humanity. I add, however, that the category of black youth, and by extension hip-hop culture as a phenomenon rooted in the lived experiences of black youth, becomes further situated within what can be called a ‘nihilistic’ existential context of denial. This vehemently militates against possibilities for black adulthood, but wherein there nevertheless remains the possibility for strong, mature, upheavals. I will conclude this essay by suggesting that we are currently undergoing such an upheaval. There is now a generation of hip-hop adults, whom are raising hip-hop children, young men and women poised and ready to challenge the moral and political legitimacy of the contemporary anti-black racist world – a world that has been premised upon our grandparents being erased and the threat of our being relegated to the role of perpetual children.

Anti-black racism depends upon constellations of value projections imposed upon the contemporary human world in ways masquerading and portending the immutability and strength of universal reality. It relies upon people taking seriously a world of colonial value projections imposed particularly on black life as if they were yet another immutable feature of the universal cosmos. Such a treatment of one’s value systems evidences what Friedrich Nietzsche called ‘passive nihilism’. According to Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer’s notion of ‘pessimism’, the meaninglessness of the universe, i.e., the primordial emptiness of all human values and desires, is true. Schopenhauer’s pessimism maintained that all value projections are groundless because they are devoid of inherent meaning. In other words, there is no such thing as meaning in itself. All forms of valuing are nothing more than a human will cast against an overpowering universal reality that destroys the value of willing at the moment of the act, if for no other reason than time and duration itself begin to decay all things, including will, as soon as they are introduced into existence. Thus, human life, on this view, is at best an infinitesimal and meaningless series of empty projections cast against the vast and immutable movement, or will, of the universal cosmos (See Schopenhauer 2007: 8-10, Nietzsche 2010: 13-15).

Nietzsche argued that human values are not meaningless in the specific way that Schopenhauer claimed. Although they may be devoid of universal value, and inherent meaning, human projections have value in terms of the only world of meaning human beings can know, i.e., the phenomenal world of human representation. In light
of Schopenhauer’s pessimism, Nietzsche argued that human life retains the value of phenomenal meaning, which requires an alternative standard for measuring. Phenomenal values can only be evaluated according to whether or not their projections are consistent or inconsistent, strong or weak, in relation to the ultimate predicament of human meaninglessness (See Nietzsche 2010: 13 - 15).

The human existential situation, on this view, is one of having to assume responsibility for producing phenomenal values in a meaningless universe. The processes for such realisations occasion pessimism, that is profound doubt of all universal meaning. Furthermore, one must produce value in a world where traditional, ‘universal’ values have undergone processes of devaluation, thus becoming pessimistically exposed. Thus, we must value in spite of the inherent truth of pessimism: this predicament is properly called, ‘nihilism’. From this perspective, all human valuing projects are nihilistically situated within a universe pessimistically militating against the inherent value of human valuing. Human value projections can masquerade as universal truths (passive/weak nihilism), or they can assert phenomenal willing as their source of value, making human phenomenal projections valuable in spite of an acknowledged, inherent pessimistic universe (active/strong nihilism). All human values must be either passive/weak nihilistic or active/strong nihilistic, since all human values are veiled or unveiled responses to the truth of pessimism, which is, ironically, that there is no ‘given’ truth.

Understanding values as being either weakly or strongly nihilistic in relation to the human existential condition illuminates anti-black racism, which can be understood as a form of weak/passive nihilism. Anti-black racism not only projects centuries old, traditional values of modern European enlightenment thought and culture, it also continuously asserts and militarily enforces that the existence and substance of those cultural projections stand the possibility of being eternal, or metaphysically on par with universal reality itself, i.e., willed by God. Traditionally, morning protocols of police, scouts, reserves, and other volunteers of colonial forces involve hailing a God that endorses the nationalism of their imperial projects. In the United States of America, for example, one can lose one’s livelihood, and/or life, by simply failing to pledge blind allegiance to the ‘given’ goodness of such symbols. Anti-black racism is linked to weak nihilistic estimations of enlightenment notions of philosophical idealism. It attributes its validity to a historical conflation between the phenomenal lives of Europeans and the philosophical categories of rationality itself, where whiteness becomes identical with the unique human capacity to order and attach meaning to reality.

Anti-black racism depends upon a philosophical program whereby weak nihilistically conceived ideals situate white bodies as housing the only sites of production for human values. To exist as a consciousness in a black body, in an anti-black racist world, is to exist through a white nihilistic universe that seeks to render one’s black phenomenal capacities as devoid of inherent value. Black existence in the United States of America, for example, is a historically nihilistic situation of living and attempting to value black human existence in spite of a world that militates against the validity of blackness as a site of value projection; in the same way that Schopenhauer’s cosmos destroyed human value projections, anti-black racist valuations seek to destroy black value projections. Black existence in America is a story that could be titled ‘Black Nihilism: The attempt to value black life in spite of white nihilism’. Black existence in the US has always been the situation of existing as a phenomenal will in the midst of a world existentially dependent upon your erasure. Thus, the fundamentally reoccurring choice involved in black existence in an anti-black racist society is always between choosing to value one’s own phenomenal being as a legitimate source of value-construction, or not. Given the nihilistic situatedness of human values, especially in anti-black racist societies, simply choosing between being nihilistic or not, wrongly frames the question. Rather, the fundamental choice in black life is whether one has the strength to value one’s own phenomenal being as a producer of values; that is, the choice of each human existence is between valuing one’s own existence in a strong or weak way.

Conversations about black youth and anti-black racism sometimes tend to treat black life as if their fundamental choice is between becoming nihilist or not, but we should resist extending binary understandings of nihilism to studies of hip-hop. For example, Cornel West’s thoughts on nihilism and the youth constituting the hip-hop generation paints the phenomenon as purely negative and decadent – one that must be avoided at all costs. What West described as black nihilism was actually a particularly hedonistic form of pessimism that produces the kinds of social illnesses he lamented in his text, Race Matters (West 1993). And yet, one could challenge West’s conclusion by arguing that black nihilism can be a necessary and inevitable, strong, active response to the weak nihilism of anti-black racism.

There is another possibility for responding to anti-black racism: strong black nihilism. Franz Fanon, less than one page into the introduction of Black Skin, White Masks announced his philosophical opposition to weak nihilist value structures, which can also be read as a direct rebuttal to Kantian idealism, ‘I do not come with timeless truths’ (Fanon 1967: 7). Furthermore, his rebuttal against Hegel later in that text describes the black existential
situation and a strong nihilistic response to the weak nihilism implicit in Hegel’s traditional Master-Slave dialectic. Fanon challenges the assumed reciprocity of identity formation processes articulated in Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic. The black, Fanon countered, does not gain recognition through the Master precisely because the Master does not seek recognition from the black – he seeks work. Thus, the black commands, demands, and takes recognition in spite of the Master by mere virtue of the fact of black phenomenal existence insisting upon itself, and not because the black has some universal truth on her side.

It may have behoved previous generations of black freedom fighters to maintain, in various ways, a variety of religious and moral reasons why the salvation of the oppressed is ordained. The older generations might be right; but, it may also be the case that, today, those traditionally sustaining values have themselves become exhausted and devalued by black youth; and nowhere is this more evident than in hip-hop culture. To talk about the future of black youth in America, here in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, will mean confronting new and evolving forms of black nihilism and future constructions of the meaning of blackness. As with any discussion of the future, the category of youth is central. Thinking, today, about the future of black people will necessarily involve thinking about nihilism, anti-black, racism and black youth; and, if you are going to be talking about black youth in the twenty-first century, you must include the hip-hop generation.

Black youth today continue to face traditional forms of nihilism. Again, nihilism is the situation of having to value in light of the fall of traditional forms of value. But, not only is black nihilism a consequence of the revelation of modern European ideals seen as weak, especially for hip-hop youth, it also involves a recognition and devaluation of the weak nihilism involved in traditional modes of valuing black life against anti-black racism. Anti-black racism constructs blackness as an existential space of invisibility where phenomenal life is demanded to exist purely as a negation, or denial, of itself. If one’s human existence is demanded to exist as a non-existence, the prospect of existing as a transcendent, fluid, for-itself, being with the possibilities of pre-reflection, reflection, self-determination, evaluation, judgment, etc., are precluded. If one’s human existence is precluded from these dimensions of growth and maturity, one can never be an adult. Thus, in existential terms, the black adult is erased in an anti-black racist society. But, then, what of black youth? The answer is: Anti-black racism seeks to erase black adults by eviscerating the existential category of black youth.

Franz Fanon apprehended the ways in which anti-black racism situates black existence by demanding that it exist as a non-other, i.e., as an invisibility, against which whiteness seeks to establish itself. It is by accepting the demand to exist as an invisibility that black humanity functions, weakly, as a ‘no’. Rather than becoming a man of resentment, or a weak nihilist who treats antiblack racist values as immutable, Fanon attempted to live blackness as a ‘yes’. He wrote:

Man is a yes that vibrates to cosmic harmonies. Uprooted, baffled, doomed to watch the dissolution of the truths he has worked out for himself one after another, he has to give up projecting onto the world an antinomy that coexists with him (Fanon 1967: 8).

He also wrote:

Man is not merely a possibility of recapture or of negation. If it is true that consciousness is a process of transcendence, we have to see too that this transcendence is haunted by the problems of love and understanding (Fanon 1967: 8).

Because black people in an anti-black racist society must live through a socio-political world premised upon denials of their humanity, they are functionally locked at the level of an object. Blacks function in relation to whites as beings that, perhaps, have not transcended objecthood in ways requisite for full, autonomous consideration in social and political affairs. Another way of wording this: at the existential level, black people function as non-existents and/or children in the anti-black racist world of adult whiteness. Anti-black racism places black people in the precarious absurd existential position of experiencing one’s phenomenal capacities within a world premised upon a preclusion of my having such abilities. Yet, man is not ‘merely recapture’, or ‘negation’, he is a ‘process of transcendence’, Fanon wrote. Man is a phenomenal freedom living through situations. If there is a universal fact, it is that man is freedom living through an existential situation wherein one is constantly uprooted from the stability of each projection, i.e., pessimism. Yet, according to Fanon, man is fated to watch the dissolution of the truths he has worked out for himself one after another. This is the process of maturity – a working out of truth and values that always require critical capacities for developing newer ones. The processes of navigating the human experience of dying and/or no longer having sufficient values, and the processes of creating new ones, are the hallmarks of nihilism.

Anti-black racism and nihilism combine to construct an existential zone of non-being, a parameter against which black phenomenal life is forced to emerge, where existential adulthood becomes eradicated, and
Anti-black racist values force black youth to wrestle with the very adult task of nihilistically dealing with pessimism and erasure in a white human world. Acknowledging limitations and valuing in spite of limitation, i.e., nihilism, is the domain of adulthood. Challenging limitations and dreaming of fantastic futures and alternative possibilities beyond limitations is the domain of youth. Anti-black racism infects the processes inherent in black existential development by removing the essential relationships with possibility germane to the categories of youth. Black youth are demanded to acquiesce to a world of imposed anti-black racist limitation and often have witnessed our elders weakly bow to the same impositions, although many have also lived lives of subversion.

In order to discuss the nihilistic values of black youth in the twenty-first century, one might be hard pressed to find an obviously better subject of study than hip-hop music. As an original critique and expression of dissatisfaction with histories of social and political institutions’ failure to address the most pressing needs of black life, hip-hop culture occupies a pessimistic, black nihilistic disposition towards anti-black racist ideals. However, being pessimistically disposed towards the weaknesses of anti-black racism does not necessarily lead to a strong trans-valuation of those modes of valuing; that is, it remains possible for one to oppose anti-black racism while promoting alternatively weak and unhealthy ideals. The human existential condition requires strong nihilism in the form of having to face the project of forging values through our experiences of meaninglessness. Realised by the decay of traditional values, black nihilism can be an important developmental aspect of black life. Yet, black youth facing problems of nihilism and maturity, whom attempt to value against the weaknesses of white and black traditionalism, do so within a world that denies the processes inherent in such struggles to produce newer values.

The weak nihilistic nature of traditional responses to anti-black racism may be a contributing factor to the prevalence of lamentable attitudes in the youngest of

hip-hop youth; however, traditional modes of black valuing also do not sufficiently address the lived realities of adult hip-hop generations, who occupy an avowedly post-racist America and live the contradictions of America’s post-racist in a variety of contemporary ways. Hip-hop generationers live traditional facts of blackness in newer ways that remain in need of further articulation. What is clear, at least to me, is that whatever else might be said of black American life in the fifth decade after the signing of the civil rights Bill of 1969, the period of alleged ‘post-racism,’ is the era of the hip-hop generation and it is a period of pronounced black nihilism.

In the final lines of Cornel West’s famous chapter on black nihilism in _Race Matters_ he beckons black leadership to have ‘the audacity to take the nihilistic threat by its neck and turn back its deadly assaults’ (West 1993: 31). However, I contend that black nihilism can also produce values beyond the negative ones West identified. It is a mistake in studying nihilism and anti-black racism to collapse black nihilism into an absence or resignation of values. Such a mistake leads to misreading signs of potential nihilistic strength in response to anti-black racism. West, for example, believed that black nihilistic youth had simply lost their traditional values. He wrote:

> The genius of our black foremothers and forefathers was to create powerful buffers to ward off the nihilistic threat, to equip black people with cultural armor to beat back the demons of hopelessness ...

(West 1993: 23).

Perhaps black nihilism is precisely the kind of strength anti-racist struggles require, today, if hope is to be had. Black nihilistic youth, through hip-hop culture, evidence a strength of valuing beyond tradition that seems to me, at worst, undeveloped. We did not lose values, as West once claimed, we devalued traditional modes of valuing – we are the newest generation of black adults trying to grow up. The question becomes whether we are healthily maturing through the processes of devaluing traditional values _en route_ to creating newer ones, and whether or not we are critically engaging the question of what that means. Although Frantz Fanon did not emphasise the term, ‘nihilism,’ explicitly in his work, he engaged its causes and effects for black existence at the level of setting forward new values for humanity. He identified the black existential zone of non-being as ‘a naked declivity’ (Fanon 1967: 8). His depiction of black life struggling to produce an authentic upheaval, to produce a trans-valuation of traditional values, inherently promotes a healthy maturity persisting through white and black nihilism.

What kinds of signs would indicate that black youth are moving in a direction towards pessimistic understandings...
of traditional modes of American orderings of reality, while simultaneously struggling through strong nihilistic alternatives to the decadence of traditional responses? What would that sound like? What kind of music might announce the ominous coming of newer ways of being violently opposed to the weaknesses of this world, which the previous generations have created? What kind of music might also announce the coming of newer ways of being, struggling through the weaknesses of traditional black American values? Much of the last twenty years of popular hip-hop music has indeed demonstrated a weak lauding of dead and dying American capitalist values. The desperate clamour for the rotting spoils of modernity fading into the twilight of a decaying civilisation at the end of the twentieth century and throughout the first decades of the twenty-first century in America is well documented; but this may all be an indication that we are in the midst of a cultural shift. The limits of traditional ideals are being exhausted; hip-hop music has been and remains a loud and consistent, base-filled, thumping symbol of decadence and devaluation alongside hope-filled revaluation, trans-valuation, and possibility forging. Perhaps the secret of Too $hort’s ghetto is only now reaching its more mature articulations.

With the re-emergence of mainstream hip-hop artists deemphasising material acquisition and capitalistically defined conceptions of self in favour of unapologetically black valuations of being, decrying the weaknesses of traditional American ideals of whiteness, seeking to synthesise older traditions with the project of creating newer ones, one can observe a movement among black youth culture struggling to realise its generational project of maturity. Traditionally, groups like Zulu Nation, X-Clan, Public Enemy, Arrested Development, Native Tongues, alongside individual acts like 2Pac, KRS-1, and a host of others, represented explicit nihilistic responses to the anti-black racism of American society. Today, that tradition continues through works of mainstream artists such as Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole, and Rhapsody, to name a few.

Hip-hop culture was borne of black American youth expressing an existential need to develop and articulate newer modes of being in response to the decadence of American life. Hip-hop generationers, today, face the task of becoming hip-hop adults. If creativity, hope, and possibility are the domain of the youth, then the hip-hop adult’s domain is one of providing the necessary structure where creativity and possibility are neither stifled by tradition nor collapsed into a ‘Peter Pan-ism’, but are articulated succinctly, such that we might avoid collapsing the dynamism of black life and its future potentialities into a valorisation of adolescent culture (Gordon 2005: 106). However, critically engaging socio-political dimensions through which black life is situated as a nothingness that functions as neither adult nor child is requisite for the possibility of creating healthy spaces for black youth to mature. To the extent that hip-hop music is facing its adulthood, we at its vanguard must continue turning our attention to developing contexts for future generations of hip-hop youth to mature into hip-hop adults, who will then become tasked with maintaining the value of efforts to eradicate anti-black racism.

What this future hip-hop adult will look like cannot be known ahead of time. Hip-hop culture, like all culture, comes into being and undergoes processes of development. What is needed at this time of facing the problem of hip-hop and maturity is individuals whom can simultaneously embrace the project of creating human possibilities for future generations, while simultaneously remaining oriented within the fluid, creatively strong value paradigms situating our culture. This means, finally, we must give up on the idea that one can ever become too old for hip-hop. Rather, we must accept the challenge that every generation faces and embrace articulating what it means to ‘grow up’, as a hip-hop adult.

References
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Author
Devon R. Johnson, Ph.D., is a Full-time Professor of Instruction of Philosophy at the University of Tampa, in Tampa, Florida, United States of America. His areas of specialisation are Africana Philosophy, Black Existentialism, and Philosophy of Hip-Hop. He has published various essays on “Black Nihilism”, and is currently authoring a forthcoming philosophical text for a well-established academic publisher; he is also an active hip-hop musician who has published several musical projects and performs under the Hip-hop monikers, Carter Woodz, aka Doctor Woodz.
In this paper, from a Maori philosophical standpoint, I consider the brittle self-confidence that has evolved through the deep, western anxiety that comes with fragmenting things in the world. One Maori term, rangirua, is both metaphysical and psychological, and I philosophise on its capacity to point to this problem. Where fragility through fragmentation used to be mainly a non-indigenous phenomenon, it now also afflicts the indigenous (Maori) self. I give examples of the problem, and discuss rangirua with bad faith as a brief backdrop. My discussion of rangirua, in the light of fragility and fragmentation, culminates in some thoughts about how the academic is notably prone to the sort of concussion that rangirua indicates.

In its loyalty to a belief that all things are interrelated, the Maori language commonly makes a point of referencing the first entities of existence, such as nothingness, darkness and completeness. At the same time, it can signal a more immediately human, concrete condition such as a psychological one, and the fact that it opens at once onto both the human and non-human worlds means that dictionary definitions are usually incomplete. With colonisation, however, the philosophical concept that everything must be separable holds sway. Language and all other modes of expression simply reflect that event and the danger is, of course, that the fragmentary condition etches itself into our minds through language and other devices.

One Maori term that clearly carries with it the heft of first entities is rangirua. It is commonly translated as 'uncertain', but the problem with that translation is that the word and its condition have no relevance apart from their relationship to the human self (and, indeed, uncertainty is not necessarily harmful for Maori). Another translation, yielded by an online Maori dictionary (Moorfield 2019), references the term as 'having two aspects' or 'out of tune', which is closer to its more ancient revelation. Its literal meaning of ‘two skies’ is useful because, in Maori philosophy, Ranginui (shortened to ‘rangi’) or ‘sky father’ is an extremely important first entity for Maori thought and the various interconnected or ‘worlded’ (Mika 2017a) phenomena that it co-constitutes/is constituted by. My aim in this paper is to discuss the fragmented self in light of a bispheric realm that is itself set up through fragmentation. The disjointed self, operating in these two spheres, is dislodged, thrown and therefore concussed (violently shaken), and s/he delivers themselves over to the world in a moment of bad faith, best explained in English as ‘disingenuousness’. To explain this phenomenon overall, I shall sometimes adopt the term ‘concussed’ to explain this deceit but shall use all possible terms where appropriate to convey that the fragmented self is in a state of ill-health in various senses of rangirua.

While all walks of colonised life encourage concussion – in which the self is launched out from a ground of unity into one of disconnected illusion – the one we have to deal with most frequently as academics is the university. It is an interesting observation that, under the guise of objectivity, we often set out to ‘dis-cuss’ (shake apart) things as academics. Thus, we are in danger of forcing asunder the very world that, as indigenous scholars, we maintain is interconnected. In other words, as a concussed entity, the academic self–discusses: both conditions apply within the academy. I consider this characteristic of fragmentation, along with others, in the last part of this paper.

Rangi: Things intone, therefore they are

With the dominant presence of western measures of health, questions must surely arise about indigenous equivalents. Western versions of wellbeing rest on first principles through which the world is striven for in its clarity, and the human body is the foremost adjudicator and, simultaneously, object of this account of health. The differences between indigenous and western notions of wellbeing are huge: where western health proceeds with the individual human ‘as the rediscovered portrait of the disease; he is the disease itself, with shadow and relief, modulations, nuances, depth’ (Foucault 1989: 16), indigenous philosophy dictates that the body is inseparable from all things (see generally Durie 1994). For Maori, of chief importance in the description of states of human health are the first entities that gave rise to and persist throughout creation, including nothingness, dark, light and so on. The human self can discern health but...
only because of the fact that the self is constituted by the world. Ultimately, the self and all other things are the full incorporation of the world.

Assessing a state of health may then be possible through a discerning of worldview(s). In a colonised context, evaluating the difference between worldviews forms an immensely important mode of such discernment. For Maori, I argue that it is the assessment of first principles that dictates wellbeing. More broadly, by Maori standards, the tendency to fragment the world so its things bear only a conceptual relationship with each other, gives rise to subsequent acts and perceptions that are not entirely healthy. One term that signifies how things are commissioned into the world is rangi, which can mean any of: tune, attunement or sky father. Rangi is an abbreviation of Ranginui, a primordial entity which gave rise to all things (hence ‘sky father’). It is important to consider the far reach of attunement or resonance in the same way as we do Papatuanuku or earth mother – as fundamental. Indeed, both the terrestrial and stratospheric constitute each other. With the tendency of the Maori language to subtly or directly signify the world in its totality whilst referring to a more local state of being, rangi becomes important for both its resonance of all things and the psychological state of being of the human self. Rangi, meaning resonance, ether, or reverberation, also forms part of terms such as rangimarie (peaceful) and porangi (unhinged). Like other fundamental entities, it implicates a reverberation to the extent that it sets down the very accounts of our existence.

Like those other entities, too, rangi is extremely difficult to translate into English. Perhaps the closest we can get to a definition of it is in its metaphysico-existential ‘eventing’ which dictates that all things should launch – or rise up, emerge, ‘claim the ether’ – immediately as the world, not as an individual, fragmented entity. A thing is the world. Moreover, how a dominant set of thoughts or philosophies dictates the nature of that launch becomes important, with the emergence of thing-as-world resembling an attunement of a thing to the world such that it actually reverberates as world. One possible translation of this intonation of the All is ‘incantation’, which is related to ‘enchantment’ (and thus, in a colonised era, hints at the importance of mystery for Maori in a colonised era). The convergence of all things, and their insistence throughout the All including their emergence into the ether, is incantatory in its original sense of ‘to sing in’. Entities reverberate in their sheer fact of being as the world. Commissioned as world, things are then meant to find themselves within human expression as worlded phenomena.

Example: Resonance and constitution

Supposing I see something, such as a lake. It takes its place before me, but it is not simply what we would normally call a lake: it arises in its totality with the world. It is constituted by the world, including the person who sees it. Thus, Maori labels such as roto (lake) are more-than-singular, immediately embracing the world. The lake arises, but not on its own: it resonates in its arising as world. As with any other thing, the lake resonates with the fullness of all things. Rangi is one way of describing this resonance.

There is a more complicated aspect of rangi at work that relates to our seeing of the lake in the first instance. Not only does the lake constitute me in an abstract sense; it also constitutes my act of ‘seeing’. In other words, I only see because I am constituted by it and all other things. Our language for the lake, and the act of seeing/perceiving, reflect this fact of constitution. Therefore, will the lake simply be the lake (fragmented), or will it be the full convergence of the world (holistic)? And will our language reflect that complicated fact of all things? These are colonised questions that rangi initiates in a colonised context.

This ‘rising up’ is not restricted to the non-human world. If I see someone else, I might say tena koe, which is (likely wrongly) translated as ‘hello’ but in fact literally means ‘there you are’ – a rising up of sorts. In that act, I am acknowledging both the worlded other person – their rising up and resonance as world – and my worldly perception of them.

With this in mind, we can approach this etheric but universal entity as if it designates the human self in the same way as it does all other things – as an encroachment of/as world. The human self intones with all other entities and, as one thing-as-world, is conveyed to all other things in a mysterious way, despite its apparent solitary nature. Several Maori terms appear to reflect this event: ira, for instance, refers not so much to genetic inheritance as the evolving of a thing in its worlded appearance (Mika 2015: 101); whakapapa, only incidentally meaning genealogy, signals the thorough interconnection between all phenomena and their emergence as the materiality of all things (the All), and so on.

Splitting Off from the Primordial Refrain

The crux of my paper is whether any human should ignore, avoid or even flee from this original refrain. From a Maori perspective, there seems to be a terror at work in both the fragmented individual and dominant western thought that indicates a massive detachment from the aforementioned resonance of the All. I speculate on the human pathology aspect later but, if my current ruminations are true, then there may well have been historic attempts to disconnect from not just the earth but also that unifying reverberation. One way of explaining this would be through Heidegger’s
critique of western metaphysics, which is momentarily useful for the indigenous self: he explains that the west after Plato established the highly conceptual self who then decided on the proper place of things. From the Maori perspective of rangi, this mode of fragmentation signals a violence that arose from the west’s drive to deal with the terror of the emotion-laden thing. Unable to deal with the full possibilities of things’ overwhelming insistence, the west delivered a single thing over to its unique characteristics, thereby singling it out. The fear of a thing’s mystery – which is actually the world’s mystery – could be effectively dealt with; it was rendered discordant with other entities (even though through logic for instance, it could have conceptual correspondence). Unable to consider the possibility that a thing indeed shares itself with all other entities, western thought established a serenity that is, in fact, born of the paralysis of utter fear.

Both Plato and Aristotle set the scene for this fragmentation and, from a Maori-worlded vantage point, the fragmentation would establish a metaphysical realm that has manifested in a catapulting way for the western self. Fragmentation did something to conceptual worlds themselves, which are also material insofar as they signal towards the attunement of that first entity, rangi. Anecdotally speaking, Maori frequently acknowledge that separation from the All is undesirable. But from a Maori perspective, how did this occur? I speculate that it occurred through a thrownness that continuously catapults the self and other things outward from a materiality that embraced all things. In traditional times, Maori lived within the complexity of all things, and thus clarity was not the true aim of life (Mika 2014: 55) – this non-foundational matter was all things and made us necessarily emotional. In western thought, this ground has become one that depends on thinking, one on which we can (apparently) make firm, certain assertions about all other things (Mika 2017b).

This entire problem indicates the desire to create another realm that the fragmented self could launch into, thereby escaping the attunement established by insistence. The launching of the fragmented self into a disjointed metaphysical realm is a product of worry about the totality of things and the repercussions of that for certainty. Worry itself has an interesting origin that may go some way towards explaining our dilemma here, as it signifies the biting and shaking of the throat – as in a dog or wolf on the attack – and it carries with it an original sense of ‘to turn, bend’ (Harper 2019). The west made a turn into this other realm by not only worrying (and hence gutting at its most vulnerable point) the promise of resonance but also by fretting itself into another, controllable domain. The west worried or troubled the world and all worlds in their togetherness, and, through that subconscious anxiety, worried into existence a realm which was never meant to be. This rarefied realm is supposed to exist outside of the world. This was the first launch – the ejection of an aspect of the All so that it became available as a realm to place and order all things, including ourselves. We then worry individual things so that they are ejected or catapulted into this bizarre ether. We worry ourselves so that we are placed there too, and so that we can put ourselves in line with the already aligned things we choose to deal with.1

Human expression is deeply implicated with this worry. Language, for instance, either reflects or dismisses the primordial incantation. Where language corresponds with its incantatory sense, it will ‘have a kinaesthetic feeling base .... [eventually enabling] one to attune to the environment more completely’ (Browne 2005: 22). Attempting to salvage a more holistic view of language for western thought, the Early German Romantic philosopher and poet, Novalis, also advocated for rediscovering the resonance of ‘things and words’ (Wood 2007: 168) through poetic thought, thereby making things mysterious and rescuing them from a splintering regard. Fragmentation of things from each other, and treating them as if they are not collapsed with all others, also runs counter to what Van Manen (2016) advocates as an approach that is ‘sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, in the way language speaks when it allows the things themselves to speak’ (111). Van Manen is referring here to phenomenology and research but his words more broadly echo McNeill’s (2005), who speaks from a Maori perspective when she notes that rangi enunciates ‘the rhythm in the sense of life force vibrations’ (143). In the paralysis inflicted by fragmentation, language’s ability to reflect the All is stifled, and humanity, more intent on talking about things precisely, becomes dissonant with its relations. Thought and, indeed, existence are manufactured back to a rigid arrangement and there is every likelihood that the fragmented self is actually now unable to hear (in Maori, rongo, which also means ‘to sense’) the original refrain. Thus, rangi can be thought of as one way of talking about a primordial language that was meant to be reflected in human speech. With fragmentation, language is distanced and unheard because its resonance is somewhere ‘over there’. Language, along with all other things, preserves the strict meaning of all things as they slot into their allotted places.

**Rangirua: Concussion**

A Maori term that could deal with this negatively dual creation is rangirua, which is usually defined as ‘uncertain’ but could be interpreted more metaphysically as a state of concussion such that the self is thumped into two worlds. While in much New Zealand literature it is almost trendy to be ‘of two worlds’, the false world that fragmentation has constructed has different connotations: as I have indicated, it suggests a realm initiated by sheer horror. We have to consider that rangirua has its own intonation...
Despite the fact that it signals a lack thereof – but the resonance it has is one of headiness. It carries with it a notion of dislodgement. Cherryl Smith (2007), Maori academic/researcher, notes of rangi in its general sense that it often has links with notions of displacement:

For Māori, states of disconnection could result in illness. There are common terms for people who are considered ill through states of disconnectedness. They are considered to be more of the rangi state, and lacking in presence. Terms exist such as rangirua (confusion), wairangi (mad), haurangi (drunk) and porangi (mad). Such people were considered ill. They could be wanderers with no purpose (Smith 2007: 69).

The primordially of rangirua is partly genuine to the extent that it does indicate the first incantation; however, its emphasis is on the hype of the fragmented self, who finds him-/herself in a state of paralysed shock. The fragmented self imposes his/her own authority onto the world and receives a cognitive image that is now unrelated to the full force of the world that allowed that image to begin with. The world, then, is merely an image and, swaying to two tunes (one the imaginary, the other reality – although the latter is long forgotten), the fragmented sufferer is pulled in two directions at once but is not aware that they are being wrenched.

As a song, the ether that I note here intones as static being. Catapulting ourselves as fragmented entities, and indeed launching things to be regarded in their frozen state, we harmonise with the stillness of this grand ether by dislodging and throwing ourselves outwards from the All. We then become frozen within that artificial realm, in a manner so shocking that it manifests as complete calm – which might seem to be completely unrelated to terror but, as I noted earlier, is actually terror’s tune. I want to reiterate that indigenous peoples are susceptible to fragmentation as the fundamental mode of colonisation. Thus, even the ‘colored’ version of the Euro-self ‘seems to walk on air, since his solid foundations no longer lay beneath him’ (Gordon 1995:9). Gordon’s words are insightful for the Maori metaphysics philosopher for their gesture towards a problem of a lack of ‘ground’ – a highly fraught translation, from a Maori perspective – and of a lift-off into the ether and a discharge from a co-constituted origin, even for the indigenous self.

An example may clarify the issue. Cherryl Smith (2007: 70) describes gathering plants and preparing flax with her grandmother, who did not encourage questions about how such traditional processes worked. However, Smith noticed a change in the prominence of questioning, as did others: ‘They [the author’s relations], too … notice a marked increase in the number of questions that are asked – “why” and “what” questions. The assumption is that such questions are signs of curiosity and intelligence and that it is healthy to ask such questions’.

In dominant western thought and practice, gleaning knowledge is highly important. The ability to question becomes a key device in that thought and practice, and so the question sits at the base of much interaction with the world. Implicit in the question, as Smith suggests, is the belief that things are discoverable. Moreover, with rangirua, the question allows the self to disembode, to distinguish him-/herself from something else – one talks about something through the question. We become too conceptual and disengage from the very matter we are engaging with. Maori are forced to navigate the world of ‘why’ and ‘what’ through all facets of life, whilst not necessarily wanting to navigate that world.

In an encounter with a world that privileges the collection of knowledge – whether through the question or simply through tacit assumption – a more-than-human disassociation occurs. The problem that Plato and Aristotle established for the west, and then by extension for Maori, is further entrenched. When forced to engage with constant questions in order to gain knowledge, we in fact are privileging the tonal dissonance that comes from occupying a staunchly dominant headspace.

Smith’s insight is also interesting because she notices a fundamental change. Where we might have thought that it was Pakeha (European) who were victims of this tendency to question (and to occupy a state of rangirua), the problem seems to be afflicting Maori more now.

I should indicate here that this primordial intonation is not simply a product of the mind but is also real, and the individual’s launch from it is admittedly productive because it does allow that individual to gain critical distance from things in order to ‘know’ them. It also manifests, however, in an overall drive to avoid ground assumptions, for instance, in that act of knowledge production. A phrase for this phenomenon, as it develops in the human world, is bad faith. Sartre (1992), in his use of the phrase, describes a type of eviction – between the self and the world’s possibilities – that takes place when an individual self-consciously assumes the characteristics of another persona or role. He offers his famous example of a waiter (101) who tries too hard to embody all the properties that, the waiter himself imagines, are necessary to make a waiter what it is. This over-the-top behaviour makes the waiter appear to be sticking strictly to a script; he has thoroughly become ‘WAITER’. That role-playing would simply be amusing if that were the problem in total, but it actually motions towards a much graver issue. The
waiter has firstly made a definition decision. Initially, he could have decided between either acting in accordance with the freedom of being in the world including its uncertainties, or instead assuming a role to avoid those same uncertainties. He decided on the latter. Philosopher Lewis Gordon identifies the following about mauvaise foi (bad faith):

It is such because it in effect is an effort to perform a variety of contradictions the consequence of which requires lying to ourselves, making ourselves believe what we don't believe, using our freedom to deny it, asserting the very human effort at human evasion (Gordon 2012: 6).

Sartre’s warning applies to us all, in that we are all falling short of opening ourselves to a much more authentic, although unclear, existence.

The Academic: A concussed individual

The academy, perhaps unsurprisingly, is replete with instances of bad faith. Where Sartre’s description is useful for our discussion of rangirua is in how he alerts us to the self’s handpicked, academic identity as a measure of avoidance. The WAITER can be seen in the academy in several superficial guises, mostly just as ACADEMIC. S/he self-consciously may adopt the hand-on-chin pose (and do that somehow too self-consciously, without a hint of mockery) or too deliberately assume a befuddled look; too stringently uphold process for the apparent betterment of the academy (and thus almost steps in to ‘take the hard knocks’ on behalf of the academy), or assume – too readily – the identity of the critic on committees. In many forums, s/he may have taken exception to another academic’s work and, instead of (say) handing an application or paper to a peer and confess his or her anger or sense of instability – thereby retaining his or her full engagement with the world’s possibilities by refusing to conduct the review – s/he undermines the other’s work with a cold and apparently objective veneer. As an antidote to his/ her own problem, he/she could be openly offensive in the feedback, which would admittedly clash with academic expectations in general, but it would at least mark him/her as free. Of significant interest in these examples to a Maori reader might be that one’s anger is delivered through the medium of neutral language. Beneath the quiet purr on the page lurks a seething rage that the bad faith sufferer is unable to face and yet cannot quite subdue.

In those scenarios, the reviewer of an application or paper has created for themselves a sort of imbalance that is akin to Sartre’s bad faith but, from a Maori perspective, has some significant additions. Rangirua is also concerned with the following: that, in adopting a role, the self has ignored the fact of his or her constitution by all other things. The fragmented academic, for instance, would never throw him-/herself into doubt by critiquing his or her own work publicly, because s/he is (apparently) detached from the work. To the fragmented self, their work is not meant to prioritise their vulnerability. By the self’s vulnerability in this context, I mean the inability or unwillingness to pay attention to the world’s intonation within an idea and, then, the failure to account for how it is largely impossible to fully articulate that worlded echo. They therefore never fully incorporate themselves into their work, including the heroism of their failure that is one possibility of the world. Their quiet self-assuredness as they move through their writing is evidence of an attitude towards the image of a thing: in the case of the fragmented academic, this image of a thing as an individual phenomenon is a truthful grasp of it, with a state of rangirua simply forcing away the entity of the thing being imagined and encouraging the fragmented agent to focus on the work as merely a conceptual enterprise. The idea and its subsequent unravelling, in other words, are launched into the ether as distinct from all others.

Sartre’s discussion about the WAITER was clearly a product of a discerning onlooker, and in a similar way there is a sense that something is not quite right with the fragmented individual. The fragmented self feels to another person as if he or she is not awash with all other things, never admitting self-doubt, and having a tendency to gather knowledge in a bid to fill an apparent void – this void, I have posited, being one that lies in the wake of the fragmented self’s launch into the other ether. There is a sense of brittleness to the fragmented academic self, and therefore just as subjectivity plays a part in discerning Sartre’s WAITER, so rangirua is also intuited. Indeed, intuition for Maori is extremely important: Maori academic Royal (2008: 37), for instance, suggests that it is through the world’s awakening that one comes to genuinely perceive an event. Valentine (2009: 135) likens the Maori word wairua to ‘intuitive consciousness’, and with this faculty at the forefront for a bystander it may seem as if the sickness of rangirua is a certain spiritual impoverishment that blocks an authentic relationship with the world; it doesn't necessarily show itself as a physical manifestation (although it may), but it evolves as a deep fear of the uncertainty of the world and the complete interrelationship of its things. Manifesting, though, as harmony, it is a delusion, where ‘the peace of this peacefulness is merely the undisturbed continuing relentlessness of the fury of self-assertion which is resolutely self-reliant’ (Heidegger 2001: 114).

Conclusion

The cruel irony for any of us writing about this problem is that discussing rangirua, or indeed anything, is actually evidence of the discussion of the self and all other things. Shaken apart and forced into a stratospheric realm, the
fragmented and academic self writes about rangirua as if it does not govern him/her. S/he is divorced from the very pathology s/he is shaking apart. This is a clear example of rangirua and relates to what I noted about a fear of self-doubt. What rangirua might indicate, then, is actually a deep self-certainty, established by the ancient drive to allot things their apparently rightful place, rather than by conscious uncertainty (as the dictionary has it).

A great deal of work remains to decolonise, or at least question, the static nature of terms as they have been translated economically into the language of colonisation. Rangirua manifests – perhaps most vividly – as this very act: discerning the disembodying rupture that has arisen through fragmentation. These sorts of inquiries into first entities and their manufacture of all things is precisely what rangirua in its colonised proposition would not want but cannot help encouraging for the Maori self.

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End Notes
1. Through colonisation, this discordance fractured indigenous thought, too, and so from this point I mostly refer to the ‘fragmented’ rather than the ‘Western’ self. To indulge in anecdote: I recall a conversation I had with an elder, who stated she found Pakeha ‘brittle’. I suspect this brittleness has also infiltrated Maori existence as well, through fragmentation. However, the concept of a deep metaphysical fragility fascinated me from quite early on, and although I am unsure whether ‘rangirua’ did indeed refer to the profound divorce from all things, I speculate that it could in our current context. Many of us, I am sure, have seen this play out in our indigenous communities in various ways.

Author
Carl Mika is a Maori of the Tuhourangi tribe, and is an associate professor in the Division of Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand. Previously, he worked as a criminal and Treaty of Waitangi lawyer, librarian, and research contracts manager. He completed his PhD in 2013 in German Studies at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, exploring a Maori notion of Being, with the fragments of the Early German Romantic poet and philosopher, Novalis, informing much of his work. He now works almost entirely in the area of Maori thought/philosophy, with a particular focus on its revitalisation within a colonised reality. Committed to investigating indigenous notions of holism, Carl is currently working on the Maori concepts of nothingness and darkness in response to an Enlightenment focus on clarity, and is speculating on how they can form the backdrop of academic expression. He also has an interest in current debates on crossovers between Maori thought/philosophy and science. He is Director of Centre for Global Studies, University of Waikato and adjunct professor of RMIT.

Thin Elegy
Your funeral lingers,
as the forgetfulness of sport,
selling 24/7
in 7-Eleven,
with snacks & the set
of the body
like music
squeezed
from a tube.

AIDAN COLEMAN,
ADELAIDE, SA
A Daughter of the Oppressors

Eliza Kent

This paper examines the disjuncture between the myth of white, colonial Australia, and the reality of how we treated the Aboriginal people who had been here for millennia. It argues that the only way white Australia can justify its mythologising of its foundation is by ignoring the long history of British coloniality prior to the invasion of Australia. It shows that even historians who claim to be dealing with the reality of Australia’s colonisation, do so through a lens that discounts the brutality and intentionality of British colonisation generally, and takes no account of the practice/policy the British had of invasion, conquest and dispossession of other people’s land prior to coming to Australia.

I acknowledge I live and work on First Nations land, and that sovereignty was never ceded.

Introduction

My paternal grandmother had a story about the origins of our family in Australia. It holds that we are descended from a First Fleet convict who, on arrival in Port Jackson, fled into the scrub, only to reappear several years later, with a ‘bush’ wife and cluster of children, to finish his sentence on a farm belonging to his brothers, who had migrated as free settlers. My grandmother always maintained that this ‘bush wife’ was an Australian Aboriginal woman, and that we could claim in our lineage to be members of the representative groups of Australia’s history.

For my grandmother, who grew up in Quirindi in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales, this story was particularly important. Not least because it gave her the tools to elide the racism she knew permeated herself, her family and her community. It provided a basis from which she could claim that she, and those she loved, were exempt from the brutal race relations of the Hunter Valley. This romance of origins allowed my grandmother to tell me stories about the kindnesses of the Aboriginal women that ‘helped’ her mother with thirteen kids, or the Aboriginal men who ‘helped’ around the farm. But it was to ignore the reality of what was being done to these same people, and what their life was like, when they disappeared outside the circle of homestead lights. By genealogical sleight of hand, my grandmother exempted us from the inter-generational trauma, land dispossession and cultural genocide she knew was being perpetrated every day by people just like us.

I grew up in Northern NSW, in ‘New England’. At school, I shared classrooms with Aboriginal students from the Anglican orphanage up the road. In high school, the Aboriginal girls saved me from a beating by the white girls from town. The first person I truly admired was an Aboriginal girl who, aged 17, refused to leave school, though heavily pregnant. I was in awe of her absolute disregard for the vicious disapproval of the white teachers and students. When I later left my country home for Sydney, I went to work in a women’s refuge, where my co-workers and a great number of our clients were First Nations women. When, many years later, I moved to Melbourne to do my PhD, I worked with the First Nations community on campus and was recruited to work as a learning advisor to First Nations students. When I then transitioned into university administration, I worked extensively with First Nations people, and have recently been supporting First Nations’ researchers at UNE. All my life, I have had First Nations friends, schoolmates, workmates, clients, and colleagues. I have been supported by them, involved with their families, treated with affection and respect. This proximity means I have witnessed repeatedly the racism and ignorance with which my fellow white Australians have treated my First Nations friends and colleagues. Hence, much as I can understand my grandmother’s desire to reshape her world into more comfortable contours, her romance of origins does not really work for me.

White Australian racism means that, while as a nation we can be reduced to tears by the suffering of people in Syria or refugee detention camps, the ongoing, daily struggle of the Aboriginal community to raise children in safety, to survive beyond mid-life, to deal with constant death and trauma that are the consequence of what we have
done in this country, to cope with the horrifying attrition of Aboriginal communities through imprisonment, to resist our continued removal of their children, to support family members in prison, to deal with poverty and overt, daily discrimination, has left us largely unmoved. Indeed, more than ever, we are likely to characterise these struggles with reference to personal, moral or community failure: we blame the people we discriminate against for our discrimination.

This essay started life as a conference paper delivered in 2005. At the time I first wrote it, change seemed possible. Writing now in 2019, that seems laughably naïve. First Nations people continue to live in a country which wilfully denies them fundamental rights, knowingly disregards the historical dispossession that is the basis for white Australian prosperity, actively prevents First Nations peoples’ economic participation. And where white Australians recently voted in a government that takes pride in its whiteness, minister Ken Wyatt notwithstanding, and actively ‘protect[s] a mythologized history imagined as distinctly male, perhaps manifested in a champion cricketer wearing a slouched armed forces hat, sitting astride a dead racehorse’ (Birch 2002: 45). It is true that Aboriginal history is researched and studied to a much greater degree than it was previously, but the vast majority of ‘Aboriginal’ research in Australian universities is produced by non-Indigenous researchers. Furthermore, gaining access to the university research sector (with its capacity to authorise knowledge) remains very difficult for First Nations researchers, and barely possible for those who don’t want to use western methodologies, or who write in First Nations languages, or use Aboriginal English. First Nations’ people, despite their significant and trenchant critiques of white Australian higher education and research sectors, remain in non-sovereign institutional, cultural and material spaces within Australian universities (i.e., Behrendt et al. 2012). Further, in my experience, the vast majority of non-Indigenous Australian academics, like the wider non-Indigenous community, perform little substantive action to change this, or even see it as their role to address it.

As I am writing this, a news alert appeared on my phone for an article in The Sydney Morning Herald which begins as follows:

Aboriginal Australians are still dying: more than 400 people have died in custody since the end of the royal commission in 1991, and its findings remain true today. Deaths in custody are not an isolated phenomenon, but the direct consequence of the over representation of Aboriginal people in custody. Those deaths resonate through communities for years, even decades (Perkins 2019).

The article describes the death of Miss Dhu, who died alone over three days in a cell in Port Hedland in 2014. Police had attended a breach of a family violence order, then arrested Ms Dhu, who was the victim of the violence, for unpaid fines. She died from an infection from an injury – sustained some months earlier – one that could have been easily treated but, due to ‘unprofessional and inhumane’ treatment by police, and ‘deficient treatment by hospital staff’, Ms Dhu died. In 1991 (when the Deaths in Custody Commission was held) 14% of those in custody were Aboriginal, today its 28%. Aboriginal people are just 3% of the population (Perkins 2019). Not only is the situation for Australian First Nations people not improving, things are getting worse.

**Historical Silences**

Most white Australians have an opinion about the ‘Aboriginal problem’ – one that makes little reference to the reality of Aboriginal life in this country, such as the suffering and death of Ms Dhu. Mostly, this opinion is formed through the media (for recent controversies see Meade 2019; Thompson 2019), because most white Australians do not share public, private or institutional spaces with Aboriginal people. Hence, we are almost entirely ignorant of Aboriginal culture and protocols, beyond Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners. Most significantly, because we do not share historical spaces with Aboriginal people, most of us remain wilfully ignorant of our own history in this country. This ignorance permits white Australians to support a foundational myth in which heroic settlers, who did not hurt anyone on purpose, endured untold hardships in order to convert savage Australia to agricultural and urban productivity, as was only right and proper. While some members of white Australia wring their hands in horror at the crimes of the settler society, and others now accept that the continent was invaded rather than ‘settled’, very few accept the logic that this perpetration is reflected in the race relations of modern Australian society, nor that these relations of race are thoroughly implicated in their individual white lives.

This historical silence has found an ally in beliefs about Australia’s multiculturalism, which together obscure the realities of Aboriginal exclusion from contemporary Australian prosperity. Many people who support and participate in the culture of ‘white’ Australia are not necessarily Anglo-Saxon at all. In this sense, ‘white’ Australia, as a set of shared values, ethics, outlook and privilege, does not even have to acknowledge its whiteness anymore, but can point to what Inga Clendinnen calls our ‘authentically cosmopolitan civic culture’ (Clendinnen cited in Moses 2004: 11). White Australia can thus rest on its laurels, congratulate itself for being an equitable nation that values diversity, and gives everyone
a ‘fair go’. It can be said that the ‘original settlers’ laid the foundations of a truly democratic nation. This later permitted the inclusion of the post-World War migrants from Europe, then from Asia, and now from all corners of the globe. We wear the presence of Asians, Africans, Indians, Indonesians, Chinese, and others, as a badge to prove our inclusiveness (unless they are Islamic, in which case they do not ‘share our values’). This acts to preserve the silences around the fact that white Australia did not, has not, and apparently cannot, come to terms with the truth about our origins in this country.

The sophistication with which we preserve certain silences at the heart of our histories is demonstrated in a book of essays, edited by A. Dirk Moses, on genocide and settler society (Moses 2004). In one essay, the mass death and cultural destruction which occurred in South-West Western Australia is described as the ‘largely unintended outcome’ of ‘hunger for land, a commitment to a ruthless economic development and discriminatory relations of race’. This brought destruction for Aboriginal people caught up in its wake. On the whole, these essays argue that early Australian governance was not a ‘co-ordinated plan of genocide’, but rather ‘a genocidal society’ which ‘resorted over time to strategies that mirrored the ‘techniques of genocide’ ... as a result of ‘a set of bungled outcomes from persistent demands of settlers to erase the Aboriginal presence ... based on seemingly benign measures ... [that] claimed to be helping Aboriginal people’. It was ‘mounting frustration’ that led colonial governments to ‘increasingly drastic measures’, while ‘parsimony and official inertia’ prevented ‘the necessary investment of sustained high levels of energy, time, finance and manpower’ (Haebich in Moses 2004: 286).

Even though under assimilation Aboriginal children continued to be removed, and in larger numbers than before, this should not disguise the fact that assimilation and absorption were, as policies, conceptually distinct (Manne in Moses 2004: 239).

Finally, these authors believe that race relations are an important discursive field, and ‘[t]he treatment of Aboriginal people in “settled” Australia in the early twentieth-century emerges as a rich site for further analyses and comparative discussion of the question of colonial genocide’ (Haebich in Moses 2004: 268).

‘Rich sites for further analyses’ – really?

It is my contention that in these essays, academic objectivity and scholarly distance provide a justification for not confronting the reality of the axes and bullets, whips, ropes, rapes and deaths which lie at the heart of our history. Assimilative or absorptive, technically genocidal or not, planned or haphazard, I refuse to accept historical accounts that reduce the murderous activities of white colonials to ‘rich sites for further analyses and comparative discussion’. The conceptual distinction of assimilation and biological absorption seems to me to be pure pedantry, given the severity of the outcome for Aboriginal people of both policies; to understand the consequences of the British invasion as ‘unintended outcomes’, or the result of bureaucratic bungling, seems extraordinary. And what is being said exactly? That with more money, energy and better planning, the destruction of Aboriginal people and society could have been carried out in a more organised and considered fashion? To paraphrase Tony Birch, this is a bloodless response to a blood-soaked history (Birch 2002: 45).

Throughout, the authors cited refer to ‘settlers’, ‘settlement’ and ‘settler society’ – terms which infer an entirely passive act of merely coming to rest in unoccupied spaces, ensuring our histories remain rooted in *terra nullīc* silences. Hence, all these accounts are shaped entirely by the actions of colonials, not the consequences for Aboriginal people, thus relegating the Aboriginal experience of ‘settlement’ to the un-investigated margins. Perhaps the collection should have included some Australian First Nation writers and perspectives? Instead it preserves the lies and silences of the nineteenth-century British, while author and reader remain complicit in the foundation myth. The very language of these accounts hides the fact of what occurred. By dealing with the issue of culpability as ‘rich sites for further analyses and comparative discussion’, these authors treat the actions of colonials and outcomes for Aboriginal people as if they are without contemporary consequences, as if this history was consigned to the past. There is no acknowledgement that, because we have failed to be truthful about our history, we are, in fact, repeating it. Instead of dogs, guns and missions, we remain committed to entrenched structural disadvantage which results in decreased life expectancy, continuing deaths in custody, unemployment, substance abuse, poverty, and appalling rates of imprisonment. It is called ‘intergenerational trauma’ because it is intergenerational: it continues.

Aboriginal Australia Has a White Problem

Like our historians, the wider community has inherited a set of stories that we tell each other and our children, which relocate culpability away from ourselves. Australians who subscribe to conservative political and historical traditions
were travelling the globe from the end of the fourteenth century, historians treat Australian colonisation as if it were carried out in isolation. In fact, the colonisation of Australia by the British was the culmination of five centuries of colonial projects, the most famous of which was the invasion of North America, but which included the activities of the spice trade in south east Asia, whaling off Japan, a long history of nefarious activities in the Pacific, and the slave trade in Africa. If we situate our history within this context, it is much harder to support the idea of ‘unintended outcomes’ produced by ignorance and inexperience.

Awareness of this history, for example, completely undermines the popular claim that the spread of disease was an ‘unintended’ outcome: rather it was a central consequence of the colonising process. Fifty years after Columbus made landfall in the Caribbean, entire Native communities had vanished. Throughout the Caribbean and South America, from the earliest years of European contact, epidemics of disease – smallpox, influenza, and typhus – decimated local populations. The first colonising effort of the British in North America, the Roanoke Island expeditions of the 1580s, recorded a fearful mortality among the Secotan of Virginia. Within a few days of the English visiting any Native American town, one Englishman recorded in his journal, ‘the people began to die very fast, and many in short space [of time]; in some towns about twenty, in some forty, in some sixty, & in one six score, which in truth was [most] of their numbers … [which] by report of the oldest men … [had] never happened before …’ (Hariot cited in Miller 2000: 100-102).

From the time the British first arrived in Australia they observed death from their diseases among the Aboriginal populations around Sydney harbour, about which modern writers have said things like ‘[t]hese epidemics were not meant to happen’ (Hughes 1987: 91). There is absolutely no doubt that this mortality assisted colonisation, and there is no doubt that the nineteenth-century British knew this. The reality of vast empty lands, first in North America, later in Australia, fitted well with plans for conversion to British agriculture. In 1630 in Massachusetts, where European diseases had taken an appalling toll on First Nations peoples, John Cotton preached that, when the Englishman recorded in his journal, ‘the people began to die very fast, and many in short space [of time]; in some towns about twenty, in some forty, in some sixty, & in one six score, which in truth was [most] of their numbers … [which] by report of the oldest men … [had] never happened before …’ (Hariot cited in Miller 2000: 100-102).

White Australians cannot envisage our forebears as agents of modernity, and at the same time claim they
had no awareness of the effect of their diseases, when the British had been writing about the effects of these diseases for several centuries. We might find solace in our belief that British colonists were medically illiterate and that death from disease was an 'unintended outcome,' but this is just not true. The British knew from their experience in the Americas, and the Pacific, that Indigenous populations were highly susceptible to their diseases, and that stepping foot on a foreign shore was issuing a death sentence. It had been happening since the 1490s, and it was implicit in the God-ordained 'ruthless economics' propounded by Imperial Britain. Furthermore, as my citation of Peter Carroll, writing in 1969, above indicates, this has been recognised in other historiographies of Imperial Britain for decades.

Similarly, the claim that British colonists had no subjective intent to eliminate Aboriginal people can likewise only be maintained in ignorance of the history of European colonial strategies. To believe that the destruction of entire peoples was not intended, we have to ignore Cortes's march of death through Mexico, searching for gold, killing as he went in order to paralyse the will of the population, and in doing so shattered the ancient civilisation of the Aztecs. We need to ignore Pizarro's activities in Peru, where he used the same tactics for the same reasons, in order to provide raw materials to fuel the rise of capitalist economies in Europe. We need to ignore the activities of the British in Virginia who wiped out nation after nation when, unable to live with the First Nations Americans, and not able to enslave them, the British decided to exterminate them.

We need to overlook the English Puritans who, when disturbed by the presence of heathen peoples on blessed 'New England', declared all land to be under a legal vacuum (which sounds familiar). Because the First Peoples had not subdued the land, they had only a natural right to it, which did not stand up the 'civil' right the English claimed they had (Carroll 1969: 13-15; Gaskill 2014: 61-62). When the Pequot resisted the taking of their land, the English employed the tactics Cortes and Pizarro had used a century before, massacring women and children to terrorise the enemy. When the English invaded Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts in 1642, the Wampanoag population numbered about 3000, by 1764 there were three hundred left. On nearby Block Island, the Native American population numbered about 1500 in 1662; by 1774 they were reduced to 51. We have known these facts for a very long time (Zinn 1980: 11-17; Horwitz 2008).

An example of the colonial rationale comes from William Bradford, governor of Plymouth colony, describing the massacre of the Pequot at Mystic, Connecticut, on the 26th of May, 1637:

Those that [e]scaped the fire where slain with the sword; some hewed to pieces, others run through with rapiers ... and very few escaped. It was conceived they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stink and scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and thus [we] gave pray[er]s thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for [us] ... [to] give ... so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting enemy (Bradford in Davis 1948: 339).

Whenever Indigenous populations stood in the way of colonial ambitions, Europeans simply wiped them out.

With this longer view in mind, I do not see how it is possible for us to continue to regard the colonisation of this country by our ancestors 'a set of bungled outcomes' as if they were doing something they knew nothing about for the very first time. Our histories, both official and folkloric, do not recognise how much experience the British had at colonisation prior to arriving on this continent. By the time they arrived at Botany Bay, it had been three centuries since John Cabot had claimed Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and the Grand Banks fisheries for Henry VIII. The colonisation of Australia was carried out by a people who had geared their entire economy, national vision and race destiny to the conquest of lands and peoples on the basis that they had more right to lands than the original inhabitants. It might comfort us to see our forebears as the naïve, slightly incompetent, but ultimately valorous agents of the Colonial Office, ready to confront every challenge and endure every hardship. The fact is, Australia was colonised by a nation that knew exactly how to go about appropriating other peoples' land, carried this out with ruthless efficiency, in total awareness of what they were doing, and with unfettered possession of the land as their acknowledged, and fully documented, goal.

Australia was one of the last in a long line of British colonial projects. Its place in the colonial chronology meant the British could bring to bear the colonising experience of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, centuries that saw the greatest mass death of people ever – so much so that it is now thought even to have changed the global climate (Milman 2019). To this can be added the eighteenth century experience of eradicating the peoples of North America. The British who came to Australia had a sophisticated repertoire of justifications, strategies and tactics to employ to empty the land of its peoples, both individually and as a nation. That Aboriginal people survived the arsenal of exterminatory practices levelled at them demonstrates, not that the British lacked genocidal intent, but a determination to survive that white Australia has yet to appreciate.
My final objection to the histories in the Moses collection is that they are dangerously adrift from a connection to the present. Without this connection they do not provide us with a template for action, with a way to make change. This is about what type of people we want to be. We can continue to allow our past to shape our present and remain the beneficiaries of a national ethos that ensures Aboriginal kids do not get the same start in life as white kids, do not experience the same levels of material comfort, and expect to die at midlife. We can maintain the lies and silences that enable us to support egalitarianism when we know we are not fair, and to honour military traditions that ignore the Frontier Wars. And if we continue to create historical fictions that help us to avoid the unpalatable crimes of our forebears, then we perpetuate colonisation. If we do this, then it is not because Aboriginal people have failed to be reconciled, but because we are not reconciled to the truth of who we are.

Alternatively, we can learn to be silent, passive, absent and teachable. We can stop telling Aboriginal people what is best for them and acknowledge their un extinguished sovereignty. We can stop actively asserting that the playing field is level, when we know it is geared to our advantage. We can absent ourselves from physical and cultural spaces that we believe we own – Blue Mud Bay? Uluru? (Taylor 2019; Allam 2019: 27 June) and concede the Aboriginal right to self-determination without oversight and regulation. We can find the courage to face up to the racism that permeates every single white Australian and their context, whether we acknowledge it or not, deny it or not. We can confront the reality that the price of our white Australian/European privilege has been five centuries of death.

References
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Referendum Council 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart

Perkins, M. 2019 ‘How many times does one person have to be tested?’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 28 July.
Thompson, A. 2019 ‘Aboriginal kids in Sunrise video could be seen as ‘damaged goods’: court,’ The Sydney Morning Herald, 12 June.

End Notes
1. Landscapes and Exile: Belonging and Home, Institute of Advanced Study, University of Western Australia in partnership with the Centre d’Estudis Australians, Australian Students Centre, Universitat de Barcelona, held in New Norcia, 2005. Now, as when I first presented this, I remain immeasurably grateful to First Nations colleagues for taking me seriously. Living in rural NSW, it is impossible to ignore this, I remain immeasurably grateful to First Nations colleagues for taking me seriously. Living in rural NSW, it is impossible to ignore the viciousness of white Australia to Aboriginal ways of being, doing and knowing. That the generosity of Aboriginal people to whitfellas continues is a testament to their calibre as a people, and an indictment of ours.

Author
Dr Eliza Kent is the Deputy Director, Graduate Studies at the University of New England. Prior to working in higher education, she worked in the homeless and community services sector, and had excellent colleagues and clients who taught her a lot about being Aboriginal in Australia. As an independent historian she researches masculinity and witch hunts in the early modern British Transatlantic and has published Cases of Male Witchcraft in Old and New England, 1592 to 1692 (Brepols 2013) as well as articles and book chapters on gender and witchcraft. She is currently preparing a book on the Salem witch hunts of 1692, titled God’s Lieutenants: masculinity and witch hunting, Salem 1692 (forthcoming).
Tory Richard’s most ambitious goal is to deliver interactive, installation sculpture along the public foreshores of Australia. Her most recent commissioned work was a 2-metre bronze and sandstone commemorative piece, in collaboration with St. Jude’s Church, Randwick in Sydney. This was installed in March 2019 and has been endorsed by the NSW Heritage Council.

Tory’s art practice incorporates installation sculpture, printmaking, oil painting, drawing and digital media. Based on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, she primarily investigates concepts of natural order and balance in her work. The nucleus of her practice places emphasis on life sized installation sculpture and large scale intaglio copper etchings. She approaches each day with the exploratory attitude towards blending techniques to discover unexpected representations.

Tory has been the recipient of the Sunshine Coast Local Artist 3D Prize for her bronze portrait work and is working with private institutions on installation sculptural commissions. Tory is pursuing her interests as a professional artist (part-time) following an extensive business career, and is currently completing her BFA with the San Francisco Academy of Art. She has been a national committee member and treasurer of the Print Council of Australia since 2013.

As a sculptor, Tory surveys the possibilities of art in private and public spaces each day. Her process provides her with a platform to develop her ideas and extend her practice through collaboration and conversations about community connection. She is dedicated to the idea of achieving excellence in the way in which we engage with each other, with our society and our cities and champions the importance of innovation and taking calculated artistic risks. Tory’s process is to discuss, design, debate, negotiate, create, project-manage, build and install.

Image 1 (Pages 61-63): Three Strong Women – Installation St. Jude’s Anglican Church, Randwick 2019

Strong and resourceful women have underpinned community service on behalf of St. Jude’s Church for over 150 years and will do so well into coming centuries. This commissioned installation sculpture in the church grounds responds directly to the brief to recognise the past and future spirit of these unrecognised women through an uplifting and enduring contemporary bronze sculpture. The themes embedded into the design of the sculpture are femininity, faithfulness, truthfulness, wisdom, consistency, strength, support, resourcefulness and devotion.

The sculpture recognises both the majesty and organic nature of the enormous old fig that has watched over the cemetery for over a century, and the power of community service that has deeply united the women to one another, the parish and St. Jude’s Church. It is a fitting symbolic representation of the excerpt from the Book of Ruth 2:12. “The Lord recompense you for what you have done and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

The purpose of this piece which was unveiled on a sunny day in the St. Jude’s cemetery, Randwick in March 2019, is to provide a comforting, welcome place to rest, be at peace and quietly contemplate spiritual matters, and to bring into that reflection a gentle reminder of the valuable, devoted work of the unrecognised female guardians of the community.

Parishioner Dr. Fred Earl Orr, PhD, St. Jude’s Parishioner and Clinical Psychologist and Conjoint Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine, UNSW penned a beautiful poem dedicated to this work. He wrote:

A sunny day in early autumn in the St. Judes cemetery, Randwick, where ‘Three Strong Women’ stand in bronze, a sculpture by Tory Richards:

- Soft lustres of blues and greens with the delicate stirring of maritime grays
- Bathes these three caring figures in a patina so gentle, so embracing. A small wren
- Rests on the shoulder of one women, and if you listen imaginatively, you might hear, “Come hither to this safe place, and be at peace.”
- In one delicately crafted hand, a rose in full bloom, reminding us all of the Fragrance of acceptance, understanding, and forgiveness to all who pass our way.
- The women stand nobly with caring and celestial concern on their sandstone plinth.

Many friends gathered under the embracing limbs of the maternal fig tree overhead
Listening to warm words of greeting amidst the tombstones nearby which Whisper, quietly and sincerely, “Welcome”.

The women stand nobly with caring and celestial concern on their sandstone plinth.
They speak of 150 years of ministry given by many dedicated women of St. Judes.

While their statuesque voices are silent, their presence speaks boldly of strength,
Forbearance, empathy, humanity and sensitivity.
Over the years to come, these women will age, as will happen to us all.
Their patina will accept the gentle, subtle essence of salty air carried high

To this sacred ground from the seaside below. Visitors who stroll by, please pause and
Gently touch the robes of the women, listen to the messages of the wren, and recall the
Fragrance of the rose. Allow these sensations to remind you of the women who contributed
So much, so often to so many in the church and community nearby.

The bronzed women bid you “Welcome”.
TO THE GLORY OF GOD IN CELEBRATION FOR THE FAITHFULNESS AND MINISTRY OF THE WOMEN OF ST. JUDE’S OVER 150 YEARS

“A FULL REWARD BE GIVEN YOU BY THE LORD THE GOD OF ISRAEL, UNDER WhOSE WINGS YOU HAVE COME TO TAKE REFUGE”

Ruth 2:12

Artist: Tony Richards
Octopus, or Coleoids – part of the Cephalopod family of invertebrates, have an uncanny, problem-solving intellect. They are fascinating and beautiful and are under considerable threat due to changing environmental conditions. They have three hearts, nine brains, can fly fifty metres through the air, problem solve and make hilarious strategic manoeuvres, artfully change colour and texture, change body shape to mimic other poisonous creatures, are protective of their own and have been known to make great friends with divers.

As a devout nature lover, in this instance, I wish to raise awareness of these inspirational, precious creatures and promote Octopus in particular, or ‘Copper Bloods’ as I have termed this body of work, as something so much more than a food source to voraciously consume without thought.

My work aims to move the viewer, to access their personal space and help to find a certain peaceful resolution to an issue. My techniques are explorative, reactive, courageous and sensual, aiming for viewers to enjoy a concentrated visual experience and come away with a response to an idea, an impression or feeling that becomes important to them. I hope to connect and present a notion to the observer that can then be resolved with a hopeful message. My ambitious message within this series is that we must continue to raise awareness of and appreciate the extraordinary intellect and uniqueness of these fascinating and important beings.
Copper Bloods I, Intaglio Print, Hand Embossed, Edition of 8, 49.45 x 31 cm, 2017

Copper Bloods II, Intaglio Print, Hand Embossed, Edition of 8, 49.45 x 31 cm, 2017
Guilt

I did not give money to the boys in Arusha
grinning devilishly close on my heels chanting mzungu
or the internet café girl who offered up her hopes
in a scrawled-up piece of paper asking for help, please help
The woman begging on Sokoine Road, leprosy-stumped hand
rocking back and forth, was the only one I graced with a shilingi
Coin to palm, my fingers brushed damaged skin
I shook away a sudden irrational fear I would catch the disease
On the Ngorongoro Crater, time stopped. A blood-splashed zebra
panting her last breaths lifted a tired leg in pirouette greeting
Greedy cameras jostled to steal her dying soul
and jeeps zoomed away—

Fleur BeAupert,
Surry Hills, NSW
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