
Benevolence, belonging and the repression of white violence

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Author statement

I affirm that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University library, being available for loan and photocopying

Damien W. Riggs

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Abstract

Research on racism in Australia by white psychologists is often fraught with tensions surrounding a) accounting for privilege, b) the depiction of particular racial minorities, and c) how individual acts of racism are understood. Nowhere is this more evident than in research that focuses on the relationship between Indigenous and white Australians. Such research, as this thesis will demonstrate, has at times failed to provide an account of the ongoing acts of racism that shape the discipline of psychology, and which thus inform how white psychologists in Australia write about Indigenous people. As a counter to this, I outline in this thesis an alternate approach to understanding racism in Australia, one that focuses on the ways in which racism is foundational to white subjectivities in Australia, and one that understands white violence against Indigenous people as an ongoing act. In order to explicate these points, and to examine what they mean in relation to white claims to belonging in Australia, I employ psychoanalytic concepts within a framework of critical psychology in order to develop an account of racism which, whilst drawing on the insights afforded by social constructionist approaches to racism and subjectivity, usefully extends such approaches in order to understand their import for examining racism in Australia. More specifically, I demonstrate how racism in Australia displays what Hook (2005) refers to as a 'psychic life of colonial power', one that implicates all people in histories of racism, and one that highlights the collective psychological nature of racism, rather than understanding it as an individual act. In the analyses that follow from this framework I demonstrate how white privilege and its corollary - the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty - are warranted by white Australians. To do this, I engage in a textual analysis of empirical data, focusing on both the everyday talk of white Australians as gathered via focus groups and a speech by Prime Minister Howard. In particular, I highlight how claims by white Australians to 'doing good' for Indigenous people (what I refer to as 'benevolence') may in fact be seen to evidence

one particular moment where the originary violence of colonisation is yet again played out in the name of the white nation. More specifically, and following Ahmed (2004), I suggest that claims to 'anti-racism' may be seen as 'non-performatives' – they do not require white Australians to actually challenge our unearned privilege, nor to examine how we are located within racialised networks of power. In contrast to this, I sketch out an approach to examining racism, both within the discipline of psychology and beyond, that is accountable for ongoing histories of colonial violence, which acknowledges the role that the discipline often continues to play in the legitimisation of race, and which is willing to address the relationship that white Australians are already in with Indigenous Australians.

Publication list

The contents of this thesis represent the culmination of a collection of papers published over the span of three years. The publications drawn upon are:

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Preface

To speak of 'race relations' in Australia is a necessarily difficult task. It requires the speaker to elaborate many things, including where they speak from, what it means to speak from that position, how they understand 'race' itself as a category, what the implications are of any particular understanding of 'race', who they are being accountable to, and so forth. These multiple requirements can often lead those of us writing about race, and particularly those of us who identify as white, to engage in any number of actions, including, disavowing our own location, claiming some form of oppression for ourselves, refusing to engage with privilege, or writing in a way that presumes that what we 'know' about race is somehow more truthful or correct. Adrienne Rich (1996) has referred to this as 'white solipsism' – the belief not only that 'the self' is all we can know, but that white *selves* are all that *should* be known. Claims by white people to 'knowledge', or 'giving up power', or any number of the claims made in the name of 'anti-racism', can thus often serve to deny the complicity of those of us who identify as white with what may be understood as the epistemic and ontological violence that results from ongoing histories of colonisation.

By writing myself into these pages, and more specifically, by elaborating a situated understanding of colonisation in Australia *as a white person*, I hope to offer a reading of ongoing acts of colonial violence, and their relation to what I loosely refer to as 'anti-racism', that accounts for how white subjectivities are produced in Australia. In order to do this, I primarily focus on the relationship that exists in Australia between white people and Indigenous people. I realise that this is a somewhat problematic move, as it does not pay adequate attention to the relationship that all non-indigenous Australians have to colonial histories, nor will my approach necessarily pay sufficient attention to the multiplicities of whiteness itself. An unfortunate by-product of any theorising of race is that certain aspects will be focused upon, whilst

others are left largely unmentioned. This, I believe, is perhaps in many ways a necessary outcome. The alternate would possibly be to theorise race in a totalising or universalising fashion, or to apply certain theories to encapsulate the experiences of all people living in a colonial nation such as Australia. I of course believe that there is a great need to theorise the multiple relationships that exist within Australia in regards to colonisation, and certainly to examine how multiple subject positions differentially locate all people in relation to the norm of white, middle-class, masculine heterosexuality (e.g., see Riggs, 2006). This is certainly something that I touch on throughout this body of work. Yet, at the same time, I am mindful of the limitations of my own claims to knowledge, and the privileges that I hold in speaking about Indigenous/white relations in Australia as a white person.

On that note, it is important to locate myself as a non-indigenous Australian – a white gay middle-class male – and to acknowledge that I live on the land of the Kurna people, the traditional owners of the land upon which Adelaide, South Australia, is located. In acknowledging the sovereignty of the Kurna people, I also draw attention to Fiona Nicoll's (2000) important statement that: "Indigenous sovereignty exists *because* I cannot know of what it consists; my epistemological artillery cannot penetrate it" (p. 370). Drawing from her work, I thus recognise that whilst I am always already in a relationship to Indigenous sovereignty, and that it indeed constitutes the ground upon which I write, my work can most honestly start by examining whiteness, rather than trying to account for what Indigenous sovereignty might be. As a result, whilst my theorising involves examining what Indigenous sovereignty *as a fact* means to white people in Australia, my interest lies not in claiming to know what that fact actually is, but rather to look at how it has been engaged with, refuted, or disavowed since colonisation.

The theoretical position that I outline, and my analysis of what I term the 'psychic life of colonial power' (see also Hook, 2004; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2005), is not, however, primarily a historical account wherein 'history' would be understood as the telling of 'what has already been'. Rather, my intention is to look at how the production of certain histories constitutes an ongoing effort to deny acts of white violence against Indigenous people, both in the past, the present, and the future.

In order to do justice to this approach, I elaborate an account of white subjectivities that draws upon psychoanalytic and critical psychological understandings of racism and subjectification. My use of psychoanalysis is not so as to diagnose white neuroses *per se*, but rather I use it as an interpretive tool for understanding how white subjectivities are always already shaped in a relationship to histories of colonising violence. In doing so, I seek to provide a means through which to understand the thoroughly social nature of racism, racial identification and white hegemony. Obviously this is an immense task, and one that this piece of work can only begin to contribute to. I do believe, however, that the framework that I will scaffold, and the analyses that will stem from it, will hold important insights into how racism and white privilege operate, and how such privilege is often deployed precisely at the moment when white people set out to 'do good'.

My reasons for using psychoanalytic concepts within a critical psychological framework are as follows. Critical psychology has long been produced through a conversation with psychoanalysis (e.g., Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984). This is because the critical psychological project has largely involved developing an account of both how processes of subjectification function, and how certain subjectivities may be rendered intelligible as a result within particular discourses. This is a distinctly different project from that of either social psychology (which largely seeks to locate the individual within a social context) or discursive

psychology (which largely elaborates how people construct particular realities through talk). Critical psychology, in contrast, seeks to understand how subjectivities themselves are constructed in talk, and how particular subjectivities are available to us as a function of subjectification within Western societies. Moreover, a critical psychological approach that draws on psychoanalytic concepts seeks to look not only at how racialised subjectivities are constructed in talk, but also how talk serves as a screen that reflects back to us the broader social context. In this sense the approach I take is one that examines talk not for individual rhetoric *per se*, but rather for what that talk tells us about the context within which 'the individual' exists.

As I have already suggested, the critical psychological project has been usefully extended through an engagement with psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis may be broadly understood as offering an understanding of the individual that neither reduces subjectivity to discrete entities, nor focuses solely on the social or institutional. Rather, psychoanalysis provides us with an account of how particular subject positions are rendered intelligible within particular social contexts, and how such subject positions are thus constituted by, whilst simultaneously being constitutive of, these contexts (Elliot & Spezzano, 2000). In other words, not only are 'we' shaped by the social contexts within which we live, but the social context is constantly reconfigured, or more precisely *reiterated*, by the subjects who inhabit it. As a result, particular subject positions may be seen to reflect the operations of particular contexts: prohibitions on particular practices produces particular subjects, just as the reformulation of particular subject positions alters how power circulates in certain contexts. Psychoanalysis thus provides us with one window into the mutual effects of subjectivity and subjectification.

Such mutuality is one of the key features of this thesis. In regards to racism and race privilege, my interest is to elaborate how particular (white) subjects are rendered

intelligible within the context of a colonial nation, and from there to explore how this produces particular subjectivities *vis-à-vis* antiracism, race privilege and belonging (see also Cash, 2004). By first focusing on practices of subjectification in regards to racism, I create a space from which to view the implications of such practices for the everyday lives of white people in Australia. Whilst this may read in places as a rather deterministic account of racism, it is not one that precludes social change. Rather, my suggestion is that social change can only occur once white people are able to recognise how racial subjectification works, and how it produces white subjects who are always already invested in racism. Being accountable for this investment is not the same as being eternally thwarted when attempting to challenge racism and race privilege. Instead, it is to understand how any challenge to racism by white people is always produced in a relation to ongoing histories of colonising violence.

In order to elaborate these points, I use psychoanalysis through the lens of critical psychology in two distinct ways. First, I use psychoanalysis as a heuristic that I believe holds great explanatory power in regards to processes of subjectification. In this respect it affords us insights into white subjectivities that do not fall back on either the individual subject of mainstream psychology or the generalised subject that arises from more social accounts of racism. Psychoanalysis in this respect focuses on the inescapable relationship between the concepts of the individual and the social, and indeed it provides us with one means through which to challenge the very notion of this binary (Wetherell, 1999).

The second way in which I use psychoanalysis is as a metaphor for the commonplace ways in which we relate to one another. I do this because I believe that psychoanalysis holds a particularly strong foothold in Western societies in regards to how we talk about ourselves (see also Parker, 1997). It provides us with a language through which to talk about our experiences, and indeed through which our

very selves are produced. As such, certain psychoanalytic concepts may be seen as metaphors for how we live within Western societies. Using psychoanalysis in this sense, and particularly in tandem with the previous utilisation outlined above, remains true to the spirit of psychoanalytic inquiry, without necessarily reifying psychoanalytic concepts as true in an *a priori* sense. As a result, I use psychoanalysis both because it can help us to understand a great deal about racism and racial subjectification, and because it is intimately involved in the production of particular ways of understanding racism and subjectivities. Whilst these approaches to understanding racism and race privilege will often necessitate a number of complex theoretical moves in order to explicate the importance of grasping how colonial violence is implicated in the formation of white subjectivities, I believe this is integral to developing a critique of the potentially assimilatory aspects of anti-racism, and to working towards a more ethical engagement with Indigenous sovereignty on the part of white people such as myself.

My use of psychoanalysis in conjunction with critical psychology is extended through my engagement with the work of scholars in the field of critical race and whiteness studies (e.g., Hage, 1988; Haggis, 2005; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Nicoll, 2000). Work in this area has been at the forefront both in Australia and abroad in challenging how white hegemony is understood. Its main concern has not been to pay yet more attention to white subjectivities *per se*, but rather to understand how racism operates *through* the functioning of certain subjectivities – indeed how it differentially serves as a basis (either to oppress or privilege) for subjectivities in colonial nations such as Australia. Critical race and whiteness studies thus usefully build upon a psychoanalytic approach to the study of racism, which itself provides an account that exceeds that of the individualised focus of much of the psychological work on racism. Critical race and whiteness studies is centrally concerned with how white hegemony functions through institutions, how it informs everything from the law

to health care, from education to psychological knowledge. As such, the work of critical race and whiteness scholars serves as the overarching epistemological framework for this thesis, through which psychoanalytic and critical psychological tools serve as methods for understanding how whiteness functions at the level of the everyday.

Any critique of white privilege, and particularly one that includes a critique of white people's anti-racism, brings with it a great potential for hostility or resentment – indeed this is something that has often marked white responses to critical race and whiteness studies, both from within the media and academic mainstream (e.g., *The Weekend Australian*, 2003), and from within critical race and whiteness studies itself (e.g., Probyn, 2004). These everyday responses to critiques of whiteness is exemplified well by a comment that a white friend of mine made once in response to Indigenous activist Lilla Watson's (1992, p.1) well-known statement – “if you've come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let's work together”. My friend read this and stated that ‘comments like that will only offend people and stop them helping’. This to me is emblematic of how any challenge to notions of ‘white good’ (for which I henceforth use the term benevolence) is often taken as a threat to the perceived integrity of the image of a ‘good white nation’ and, by extension, white people ourselves. My interest in this thesis is thus to examine how it is that white hegemony is seemingly so easily unsettled, and to elaborate what this means about the uneasy relationship between white people and histories of white violence. By examining how critiques of whiteness are often resisted by white people, and by exploring how discourses of benevolence may often work to reassert white hegemony, I therefore seek not to attribute psychological meaning to such acts, where ‘psychology’ refers to an internal ‘state of mind’ held by a particular group of people. Rather, my aim is to demonstrate how the networks of power that circulate under colonialism in Australia demonstrate a

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particular 'psychic life' of their own – one that is foundational to the ways in which white Australians understand ourselves.

As will hopefully become clearer throughout the following introductory chapter, the present text can never be an answer or solution to how to be a better 'good white person'. Rather, and to again refer to the work of Fiona Nicoll (2004a), instead of seeking to 'solve racism' by being 'better' white people, it is important that those of us who identify as white recognise that the very belief in the 'goodness' of white people is foundational to practices of oppression in this country. What I call for here instead is not a 'black armband' account of colonisation, as Prime Minister Howard would have us believe, but rather a calling to account of how white privilege operates, and how it appears in places that to some (white) people may seem surprising, whilst to others may seem entirely commonplace and expected. To confront the multifarious nature of white violence in Australia is thus to be willing (for those of us who identify as white) to be rendered uncomfortable in the face of complicity, and to engage with, rather than refute, our own locations.

1

Introduction

The discipline of psychology has a long, and relatively contested history in regards to racism. In his historical overview *Race, Racism and Psychology*, Graham Richards (1997) tells how psychological research has been used to what he refers to as 'racist' and 'racialist' ends. In regards to the former, he demonstrates how research programmes such as those developed in Nazi Germany, and those used in the application of eugenics in the US, display a wilful violence towards those positioned as racial others. In regards to the latter, Richards (p. xi) suggests that whilst not all of psychology is necessarily racist (where to be racist is defined as having "attitudes and practices which are explicitly hostile and denigratory (sic) towards people defined as belonging to another 'race'"), much of it is 'racialist', in that it holds a "theoretical or ideological belief in the reality of races and the scientific validity of analysing human affairs and human diversity in terms of racial differences". Whilst these are indeed significant points, it is nonetheless important to question the utility of Richards' supposition that this distinction between racism and racialism may be useful for looking at how individual white psychologists have been involved in research that has been varyingly 'racist', 'racialist' or both. The question that it raises for me is whether a focus on the two terms potentially introduce a dichotomy whereby a fourth group of (nominally white) psychologists is implied: those who are neither racist nor racialist nor both.

This problematic construction of a dichotomy between racism and racialism is, I believe, exemplified best in Richards' (1997) critique of Howitt and Owusu-Bempah's excellent text, *The Racism of Psychology* (1994). By constructing his own work as an

'objective' account of racism/racialism in psychology, Richards is able to position Howitt and Owusu-Bempah as somehow more invested in the terms that they use, and thus as somehow less accurate in their portrayal of racism in psychology. Thus whilst Richards admits to being "in fundamental sympathy with this work" (p. 296), he goes on to suggest that it is a "very angry text" that "selectively pil[es] up positive instances [of psychology's racism] with no counterbalancing and often in a decontextualised fashion" (p. 297). Certainly Richards is not alone in such critiques of Howitt and Owusu-Bempah's text (e.g. see Milner, 1996). Yet, whilst such critics may juxtapose the work of Howitt and Owusu-Bempah with their own (the implication being that their work is not 'angry' or 'selective'), it would appear to me that this does very little to usefully engage with Howitt and Owusu-Bempah's primary thesis – that psychology is inherently racist. Instead, in critiquing Howitt and Owusu-Bempah's work, authors such as Richards engage in what Fiona Nicoll (2000) refers to as the 'violence of perspective'. She suggests that in depicting the work of others as 'merely a perspective' (rather than as 'objective knowledge'), there is a great risk of enacting epistemic violence against those who claim forms of knowledge that refuse to prioritise those approaches traditionally sanctioned by white science. Richards engages in this to the extent that he fails to adequately locate himself as a white psychologist within ongoing histories of racism, and where he promotes a 'historical' view of psychology that to some extent excuses the ongoing effects of the racialised knowledge produced by the discipline.

This, of course, is not to set up a straw character in the work of Richards (1997) in order to show how my own work (or response to Howitt and Owusu-Bempah's (1994) text) is inherently better. Richards does indeed provide a very cogent historical account of psychology and racism, and he likewise acknowledges the role that psychology has played in justifying and perpetuating racism. However in contrast to the approach Richards (1997) employs, which may be referred to as one that situates

psychology in a relationship to racism, my approach attempts to situate the white psychologist (including myself) as a product of racism, which, necessarily, calls for a very different framework for understanding the relationship between psychology and racism. These differences may be neatly summarised by a response a friend made when I first told her that this thesis was to be about racism and psychology. She insightfully said; “more like racism *is* psychology”. This comment epitomises the gap between my own position and that of Richards. Whilst we share many common opinions about how psychology operates as a structuring metaphor in Western society, and how the discipline cannot help but influence racist practices, my own position on the foundational nature of racism in the formation of the identities of white psychologists and white psychology pushes the boundaries of Richards’ account, founded as it is upon a distinction between racism and racialism. Instead, I find it more productive to examine how all white people in a society founded on racial differences are in some way complicit with racism. Whilst that may seem like an overly deterministic account of how racism operates, I think that, particularly in the context of a colonial nation such as Australia, it may allow for an understanding of racism at the level of the psyche that does not fall back upon individualistic accounts of how racism operates. In other words, an understanding of racism as foundational to the formation of white subjectivities in colonial nations may challenge the dichotomy that is often posited between supposedly ‘good white anti-racists’ and ‘bad white racists’. By examining how racism always operates both *for* and *against* – how it generates both privilege and oppression – it may be possible to challenge accounts of racism in Australia that typically fail to adequately account for the structural effects of racism (Fine, 1997). The approach to understanding racism as a collective psychic practice that I elaborate throughout this thesis will thus hopefully add to the existing literature (both within psychology and beyond) that seeks to challenge racism and race privilege.

Introduction

In order to begin this task, it is necessary for me to devote some space in the early chapters of this thesis to explicating a number of interlocking frameworks. The problem with this of course is that they must be placed in some sort of order, and ordering can always tend towards a hierarchical ranking of frameworks – what Kerry Chamberlain (2000) has referred to as ‘flow charting’, and which often results in ‘methodolatry’ – an overconcern with getting the method ‘right’ – something that is often accompanied by a lack of theorising within research, or a failure to explore the philosophical implications of any research approach. In an attempt to counter this, I provide in this introduction an account of how I came, as a white student of psychology, to identify some limitations within psychological research that may be broadly classified as ‘anti-racist’, and how I have sought to address these limitations within my own research. This will involve in part explicating my own approach to research within this text, in part providing some very tentative definitions for how I write within this thesis, in part evoking a philosophical framework for understanding racism, and of course repeatedly returning to my own location as a white person who himself is complicit with racism. Whilst this will no doubt be an incomplete narrative, and one that will unfold far beyond this particular chapter, it will hopefully provide the reader with the means to evaluate how I approach the study of racism, psychology and subjectivity.

With that in mind, when I first began to read the writings of (predominantly white) psychologists in Australia in the field of race and racism, coming as I did from a background in women’s studies and sociology in addition to psychology, I noticed some assumptions that I found problematic, particularly as they were most often couched in terms of anti-racism. By anti-racism I refer to those approaches to critiquing, challenging and deconstructing the endemic racism that exists within colonial nations such as Australia. Such approaches often involve speaking out about

how racism oppresses certain groups of people, developing ways of challenging racism, and highlighting the ways in which racism is enshrined in institutions such as the law, health care, education and social policy. My concern with the psychological research in this area was not that it didn't do enough towards these ends *per se*, but that it did not sufficiently examine the assumptions that often inform anti-racism, namely, that it can at times slip into 'helping the other'; that it can be about examining racism *against*, rather than racism *for*, and that it can continue to prioritise the agendas of dominant group members.

These limitations facing anti-racist research and practice are thus in need of greater exploration and consideration. In order to explicate these issues further, it is necessary to briefly elaborate here some of the key ways in which, in my reading, the writings of white psychologists on racism in Australia can be seen to reinforce a number of normative assumptions about how racism should be understood. Before doing that, however, it is important to outline how I use the term 'white' here, and what this means for the overall message of this text.

Talking about whiteness

To refer to someone as 'white', particularly in the context of Australia, is to refer to them as occupying a particular location in relation to racialised networks of power. To refer to someone as white is not to naively accept that race as a category is useful, or a biological fact, or internally coherent. Rather, to 'recognise race' (as in referring to someone as 'white') is to acknowledge that the assumption of racialised differences continues to inform how we relate to one another as people, and that this is the legacy of a long history of violence that has been perpetuated in the name of imperialism and empire against people classified as racial others. To speak of

someone 'being white' is thus to unsettle the norm of white privilege - to refuse to continue to allow those of us who identify or are identified as white a position of normality – to challenge our assumptions of invisibility or 'racelessness', and to locate white people as benefactors within the discriminatory classificatory system that is 'race'.

Of course at the same time it is never quite as simple as that. Many white people will contest their location in regards to a white racial norm. The category white is one that is always changing: we only need to look back a few decades to see how differing groups of people in Australia were often not considered to be white (Nicolacopoulos & Vassilacopoulos, 2004). However my point here is not to reduce the wide range of subject positions inhabited by people differentially identified as white to one that always already enacts race privilege in the same way. Rather, my point is that white hegemony operates precisely because of its ability to embrace a wide range of people (in albeit markedly differing ways) in the service of the white nation (for more on this see Nicoll, 2001; Riggs, 2006).

These points about the multiplicities of white identities highlights the utility of the term 'whiteness'. To refer to the study of whiteness is not to refer to the study of an internal essence, or to posit a static social fact that is beyond challenge. Instead, to study whiteness is to study the interlocking, complex ways in which white people benefit from white privilege, enshrined as it is in institutional networks that prioritise the values, behaviours and beliefs of dominant group members (Moreton-Robinson, 2000a). Whiteness may thus be understood as a form of cultural capital that, whilst being differentially distributed amongst those variously identified as white, does nonetheless come at the expense of the oppression of those who are identified as not being white (Fine, 1997). In the case of Australia, and as I identified (not unproblematically) in the preface, the institutions of whiteness, and the privilege that

accrues to white people as a result, comes primarily at the expense of Indigenous people: through the genocide of Indigenous cultures, the theft of Indigenous lands, and the removal of Indigenous children from their families.

Throughout this thesis I follow the work of Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000a), in suggesting that for those of us who identify as white, the enactment of white subjectivities is always already premised upon, and is a direct result of, colonisation. As I shall elaborate in the following chapter, I understand subjectivity in the philosophical sense of how we are brought into being as viable subjects under particular regimes of power, ones that prioritise particular subject positions (particularly in regards to what are classified as racialised, sexualised, gendered and classed differences) over others (Butler, 1997). To be a subject in this sense, to be recognised as a knowable entity, is to be always already located in relation to particular norms, and to have been incorporated into those norms at the very moment of our subjectification.

Having briefly outlined how I will use some of the key terms within this thesis, I now turn to look in more depth at how white psychologists in Australia write about race, and to outline some of the limitations that I see in this work.

White psychologists' writing on racism in Australia

In this section I elaborate some of the problematic assumptions that appear in work written on racism by white psychologists in Australia. This is, I believe, an important part of my argument, not because it allows me to claim a 'better' way of examining racism, but rather because it highlights why a differing approach is necessary, and to draw attention to both the strengths and weaknesses of current research. Whilst not

a literature review in any sense, this section is perhaps most usefully understood as a scaffolding for building up a theoretical basis for the chapters that follow. By introducing to the reader the arguments that I use, it will be possible to demonstrate some of the difficulties that I highlighted in the preface that arise when writing about race, and to connect these to the broader issue of how racism operates in Australia.

The papers that I analyse in this section were published between 1994 and 2005, a time when many significant shifts occurred in Australian politics. These papers thus in many ways usefully reflect how psychological knowledge continues to be shaped in political contexts, particularly in relation to the policies and practices of the incumbent Liberal government in regards to an apology to, or treaty with, Indigenous people, and the ten year state-sponsored reconciliation movement, running from 1991 to 2001 (points that I will elaborate in Chapter Two). Also of considerable importance have been the ongoing contestations over land rights, including the landmark Mabo2 case, the subsequent recognition of Native Title, and the rolling back of Native Title rights by the Howard government subsequent to the Wik land rights decision. All of the papers that I consider here were thus published in a context where speaking about race was highly political. That, I believe, makes these papers all the more interesting, as they draw attention to how white psychologists in Australia engage with the political in their work.

As I stated in the preface, my focus is on research that looks at the relationship between white and Indigenous people. This limited focus partly accounts for the relatively small number of papers included in this review. There were of course a number of papers by Indigenous psychologists (e.g., see chapters in Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett, 2000) and a number by white psychologists (e.g., Augoustinos, 2002; Augoustinos & LeCouteur, 2004) that are not analysed here, partly because most of the former and many of the latter will be used in later chapters as critical

tools for understanding how racism operates, and partly because some of the remaining papers covered ground already covered by other papers. There seemed to be little use in repeating the same types of statements *ad finitum*.

In order to highlight the differing problems that I have identified in this literature, I have divided it into four sections, each of which covers a broad theme as represented in the literature written by white psychologists. Each section contains a summary of the problem(s), some examples to highlight how this looks in practice, and some comments on the implications of the problems. It should be noted that these problems often overlapped, and likewise, that many of the papers that were problematic are also incredibly useful in regards to what they contribute to the deconstruction of racism in Australia.

‘Good anti-racists’ vs. ‘bad racists’

One of the themes that often appears in white psychologists’ writings about race in Australia is the idea that racism is enacted solely by those white people positioned as ‘bad racists’: people who discriminate against others as a result of intra-psychic prejudice (e.g., Walker, 1994; Pederson, Griffiths, Contos, Bishop & Walker, 2000; Sweeney, Johnson & Trimble, 1996). Such research on racism typically produces two outcomes: first, that white academics are implicitly constructed as good anti-racists who can diagnose certain white people as being racist, and second, that racism is only enacted at the level of the individual white person. This of course ignores the multiple ways in which racism is enshrined in a wide range of social institutions, and thus fails to recognise the benefits that all white people gain from white race privilege. This failure demonstrates an ignorance of the social context within which ‘bad racists’ purportedly exist: people who are explicitly racist or

discriminatory live within a social context that in some way reinforces their beliefs and encourages a belief in the normative status of white privilege (Fanon, 1967).

The notion of the 'bad white racist' appears in the work of Saxton (2004), who in her paper on whiteness and reconciliation, analyses the talk of young white people involved in workshops related to reconciliation. Saxton notes that her white participants represent racism:

as isolated individual bigotry rather than the normative ideology of Australian society. By accounting for racism as attitudes that other people have, these participants adopted a neutral position on race issues and provided a contrast against which their own views may appear liberal and egalitarian (p. 17).

Yet both prior to this statement and following it, Saxton positions one particular white speaker as “demonstrating transparently racist views”, ones that included “blatant racist expressions”. In this example, Saxton appears to implicitly discern between white people who use “blatant racist expressions”, and those who don't. Whilst her concern is obviously with the explicit voicing of racism by white people, her framing of the discussion in this way fails to clearly locate herself as a white person who similarly exists in a relationship to racism and race privilege, and thus sets up a binary between those who appear to be explicitly racist, and those who 'just' live in a racist society. Further on in the paper, Saxton offers the important insight that white participants who refer to those who are outspokenly racist in the political arena (such as Pauline Hanson, founder and then leader of the One Nation Party in Australia) may be seen as attempting to:

obscure the racial basis of white race privilege and [thus] distance the speaker, and the white elite with whom he identifies, from their complicity in maintaining and reproducing racial inequality (p. 18).

Whilst Saxton is indeed correct in making such a statement, she does not apply it to the logic presented within her own writing above, nor does it lead her to position herself as benefiting from white privilege.

Challenging the use of the concept 'bad racists' does not of course mean that psychologists should not view individual acts of discrimination as oppressive. Rather, the important point here is to recognise that all white people living in Australia benefit from race privilege, no matter how differentially we may be positioned in relation to the norm of middle-class heterosexual masculinity. As a result, explicit acts of racism must be understood as occurring within a social milieu that in some way condones such acts. These points about the problematic usage of a binary between 'good anti-racists' and 'bad racists' holds important implications both for the analyses that I provide later in this work, and for the ways in which we understand or challenge racism and race privilege. This is not to say that white people cannot challenge white privilege. Rather my point is that drawing distinctions between good and bad white people masks white privilege (Wong, 1994) and ignores the impact that it has upon the lives of Indigenous people. For those of us who identify as white, locating ourselves in our work may be one of the steps involved in being accountable for the privileges that we may hold, and in challenging how such privilege often goes unmarked if we are to solely focus on those who explicitly voice racist sentiment.

Racism as 'intergroup conflict'

The second area where white psychologists' writings on race in Australia may be seen as problematic is in the areas of social cognition and self categorisation theory (e.g., Terry, Hogg & Blackwood, 2001; Reynolds and Turner, 2001; Augoustinos, Ahrens & Innes, 1994). Such research typically focuses on the ways in which differing social groups discriminate against one another on the basis of a particular social identity. Such theorising accepts cognitions as occurring within the psyche of the autonomous individual, and posits that cognitions such as categorisation and stereotyping are natural events (Reicher, 2001). The reality of the social categories that are investigated is also typically taken for granted, or seen as 'naturally occurring' (Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001). This ignores the ways in which 'group differences' (e.g., as for racism) are constructions that are the product of certain social contexts, such as those produced under colonialism. In other words, racialised categories are taken to reflect a natural point of difference, rather than one that is a product of colonisation itself (Henwood, 1994). That people can be arbitrarily grouped according to bodily features is accepted as an *a priori* justification for discrimination. This masks the ways in which racialisation is the product of the particular interpretive frameworks that are privileged within Western societies such as Australia, rather than based on a necessary cognitive distinction.

My intention here of course is not to suggest that we do not live our lives according to social markers of difference: to make a statement to the contrary would be to effectively minimise the impact of such markers of difference upon our everyday lives, whether that be to oppress or to privilege. Rather my point is that accepting discrimination as a necessary function of an individual's cognitions is to reify points of difference as reflecting *a priori* signifiers of difference, rather than conceiving of them

as constructed in the service of imperialism and colonisation (Henriques, 1984). This has obvious implications in the Australian context, whereby difference is marked upon those who are not white – the normative status of whiteness serves to render invisible white privilege (to white people). As a result, white psychologists who write about race in the social cognition and self categorisation tradition run the risk of positioning those who experience racism enacted against them as being to blame for racism itself. Thus rather than exploring why certain markers of difference are given such prominence, and how they may work in the service of particular hegemonies, research that focuses on social cognitions can in effect work to reinforce the supposedly unavoidable nature of racism. This, I think, is quite different to my point in this thesis that racism is foundational to white subjectivities. To say that racism is one of the processes through which white subjects become intelligible is not the same thing as saying that racial differences are hard-wired, internal attributes. Whilst theories such as self categorisation theory (SCT) represent an attempt at bringing together the social and the individual, they are still reliant upon a model of the ‘internal psyche’ in order to explain racism. Bringing racism back to individual people in this way, whilst perhaps incorporating how social norms influence individual behaviour, can in effect contribute to the depiction of certain people as ‘bad racists’.

One example of this appears in the work of Reynolds, Turner, Haslam and Ryan (2001). In their paper, they explore how inter-group prejudice operates in an Australian sample, and suggest that SCT may be useful for understanding why participants respond in certain ways in regards to national sentiment. Their use of SCT leads them to suggest that:

When a person’s social identity becomes salient, there are psychological consequences for that person, so that his or her behaviour, cognition, and psychology are quantitatively and qualitatively different... As the distinction

between personal identity and social identity implies, there is a *psychological discontinuity* between people acting as individuals and people acting as group members (p. 428).

This emphasis on a “discontinuity between people acting as individuals and people acting as group members” does very little to explicate the immense continuities that exist for white people acting as either individuals or group members in a society that is based upon racial differences. In other words, a focus upon the “psychological consequences” of social identity (where psychological refers to an internal process) can serve to reduce race privilege (for example) to a social or personal identity factor, rather than as something that informs all aspects of our lives. In other words, by attributing to cognitions the status of psychological fact, whilst stemming from an intention to examine the societal contexts within which cognitions occur, can lead to such cognitions being implicitly taken as reflecting something that is somehow natural, or indeed inevitable. This in many ways puts prejudice outside of the social and into the realm of the natural, where it becomes a taken for granted commonplace. My point here is not to suggest that theories such as SCT do not theorise the structuring role that the ‘social’ plays in a person’s identity, but rather to suggest that the particular way in which the social is theorised tends towards a reduction of the social to a collective of individuals, rather than seeing the social as the very site where ‘the individual’ is rendered intelligible.

Indeed, in the area of social identity theory there have been some important critiques raised about how the subject area of social cognition understands and researches racism. Researchers such as Hopkins, Reicher and Levine (1997) have been critical of the way that focusing on inter-group differentiation ignores the power dynamics that underlie the ability to position certain people as being different. Following them, I would contend that rather than understanding difference as a result of cognitive

structures, it may be more fruitful to understand the ways in which differences have been constructed in the service of practices of imperialism and colonialism: 'seeing difference' as salient to our identities is thus a normal white way of being in a white world. Thus rather than perpetuating the assumption that the minimal group studies of Tajfel (1969) can be generalised across contexts (as has been suggested within social cognition theory), we may instead see how the misreading of the minimal group studies as reflecting coherent, stable means of interpreting and behaving in the world reflects the larger framework of a white psychological epistemology, rather than the measurable cognitions of particular 'racist' individuals (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994).

Objects of power

Another way in which the relationship between white privilege and colonisation is masked in white psychologists' writings on race in Australia is through the positioning of Indigenous people as 'objects of power' (Luke, 1997); "they constitute a massively damaged object in the Australian psyche" (Williams, 2001, p. 137). In this regard, the use of the terms 'they' (Indigenous peoples) and 'we' (white Australians) were identified by Augoustinos, Tuffin and Sale (1999) as one of the tools that are commonly used by white people to "construct these two social groups as highly distinct and internally homogeneous categories and, by so doing, differentiate them as oppositional contrasts" (p. 96). As a result, Indigenous people are positioned as always already without agency, and as in need of 'help' or 'assistance' from white people. This leads to Indigenous people being positioned as passive recipients of whiteness (hooks, 1995). Augoustinos, Tuffin and Rapley (1999) refer to this positioning of Indigenous people as passive recipients in the terms of a discourse of 'Aboriginal plight'. Augoustinos, Tuffin and Rapley (1999) found that the white

participants in their research used the discourse of 'Aboriginal plight' to position the issues that Indigenous subjects face as being caused by their Indigeneity. In other words, the negative relationship between colonisation and poor Indigenous life quality statistics was seen as the result of Indigenous people's inability to adapt to colonisation, rather than due to colonisation and white privilege itself. This same discourse of us/them (where Indigenous people are seen as passive objects) is implicitly drawn upon in the work of white psychologists. This focus on Indigenous disadvantage (without a corollary focus on white privilege) can often result in white psychologists failing to interrogate privilege (e.g., Augoustinos, LeCouteur & Soyland, 2002). For example, LeCouteur and Augoustinos (2001) suggest that the fact "that discussions focused on such 'problems' [was] hardly surprising" (p. 53). I would question why it appears normative that participants' talk centres on Indigenous disadvantage, rather than white privilege. By positioning white participants' talk in this way, whiteness is left unmarked, and the binary of agentic white subject/passive Indigenous object is left as a taken for granted assumption. In other words, talking about how racism is enacted in talk, and examining white people's constructions of Indigenous people as 'objects of power', does not necessarily appear to entail challenging the power dynamics that exist between these two groups, and which accord white people the privilege necessary to assert particular viewpoints.

In an even more explicit example of white psychologists constructing Indigenous people as 'objects of power', the research by Saxton (2004) cited earlier can again be seen to contradict itself, where whilst it is suggested that the attribution of a:

position of agency to the government (and the white people they represent)
[works to] promote a representation of Indigenous people as passive and
dependent (p. 16),

this is preceded by the suggestion that:

constrained and lacking in the power to transform relations, an accommodative voice appears to give [women, the gay and lesbian movement and racial minorities] representation, while denying them the agency to establish or control their own identities and subjectivities. (p. 15)

Here Indigenous people (amongst others) are represented as “lacking in power” and “denied agency to... control their own identities”. The problem with this account is partly that it fails to adequately grasp the fact of Indigenous sovereignty and the ways in which it always already precedes and exceeds white claims to sovereignty, and partly that, whilst it acknowledges that the government does indeed “promote a representation of Indigenous people as passive”, Saxton seems to take as axiomatic that this reflects the actual position of Indigenous people as “lacking in power” and “den[ied] agency”.

The problem with these types of representations of Indigenous people, then, is not necessarily that they attempt to account for how Indigenous people are discriminated against *per se*, but rather that such discrimination is always already taken to represent the transformation of Indigenous people into passive ‘objects of power’. As I have already suggested, this is largely to due to a failure to theorise the relationship between Indigenous sovereignty and colonial violence. This would of course *not* entail speaking for Indigenous sovereignty, as I suggested in the preface, but would rather involve, as Fiona Nicoll (2004b, p. 19) suggests, “a political and intellectual responsibility to analyse and evaluate the innumerable ways in which white sovereignty circumscribes and mitigates the exercise of Indigenous sovereignty”. This is a radically different project to describing Indigenous people as passive

'objects of power', and one that would be far more likely to account for white privilege.

'Race = non-white'

The writings of white psychologists about Indigenous people often maintain a clear distinction between the two groups, which ignores the ways in which Indigenous disadvantage and white privilege are intimately related (Tannoch-Bland, 1998), and which can work to reinforce the assumption that racial differences represent *a priori* facts. Whilst it is of course important to recognise the incommensurable differences that shape the lives of Indigenous and white people in Australia, and in particular to recognise the ontological relationship that Indigenous people have to country that exceeds white claims to ownership and belonging (Moreton-Robinson, 2003), it is also important to be mindful of how easy it is to slip into a binary of us and them, where the 'us' is not racialised, whilst the category 'them' is.

This type of us/them binary is maintained through the use of language that positions Indigeneity as the site of racial difference: Indigenous people are marked as racialised, whilst white people are not. As a result, Indigenous people are implicitly constructed as not fitting into the category of 'Australians' – they are hyphenated in terms such as 'Indigenous Australians', 'Aboriginal Australians' (most often without white Australians being named as white), and 'Australia's Indigenous people' (e.g., Chamarette, 2000; Walker, 2001).

Another way in which Indigenous people are positioned as the site of racial difference is in the use of quotation marks to construct white identities as normative - as reflecting some actual reality - whilst simultaneously rejecting Indigeneity as 'just

a social construction'. One example of this appears as follows:

standard ability tests are as appropriate for use with individual members of
'*minority*' ethnic groups as with individual members of *majority* ethnic groups
(Dyck, 1996, p. 67, emphases added).

Here it may be seen that the *majority* (without quotation marks) is positioned as not being a construction, whilst the term "'minority' ethnic groups" is a somehow more contested category.

Another example of the ways in which Indigenous people are marked as racialised, and white people are implicitly not, appears in the following extract:

Indigenous people were seen as more disadvantaged than families and single mothers but less disadvantaged than the elderly, disabled, and youth
(Gomersall, Davidson & Ho, 2000, p. 119).

Such use of language suggests a hierarchical ordering of oppressions, rather than seeing Indigenous people as experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage as a result of white privilege (Huggins, 1994). In the extract, Indigenous people are positioned in contrast to a number of other social categories of which they may well also be members. Indigenous people are seen as racialised objects, but not as "families and single mothers" or "elderly, disabled [or] youth". The implicit assumption here is that these categories thus refer to white families and single mothers and white elderly, disabled and young people.

These problems that exist around how white people write about race and racism are of course not easily solved. Whilst it is important that white people are named as

such in psychological research, and whilst it is also important to draw attention to how racial differences impact upon individual experience, it is nonetheless difficult to do this without reifying race as an *a priori* category, or reducing the experience of difference to a social category. Moreover, and in regards to the relationship between Indigenous and white people in Australia, there exists a similar epistemic struggle over not reifying the category 'race', whilst still acknowledging the incommensurable ontological differences that shape our lives as Indigenous and white people. These are not issues that I am attempting to solve here, but rather my point is that they are issues that have been given little space in the writings of white psychologists, and which require sustained attention in order to at least begin a rethinking of how those of us who identify as white write about racism in Australia. To start by recognising how white people and white privilege are often left unmarked may be one way of engaging with how racism operates.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have introduced to the reader why I believe that the study of racism within psychology requires some rethinking, and I have begun to sketch out my own approach to doing this. By starting from the work of Richards (1997), and outlining how my own approach to understanding racism marks a departure from this type of understanding of racism in psychology, I have elaborated some of the key issues that I believe require attention in the development of the critical study of racism in psychology. In doing this I have introduced some key terms that I will use throughout this text, and I have applied them to look at how white psychologists have written about race (and in particular the relationships between Indigenous and white people) in Australia. In the following chapters, the four themes that I outlined above – 'good anti-racists vs. bad racists', 'racism as intergroup conflict', 'objects of power' and

'race = non-white' – will be central to the development of an account of how racism operates in the 'psychic life' of colonial nations such as Australia.

In regards to the chapters that follow, I elaborate the importance of developing a philosophical and theoretical framework through which to understand how racism operates at the level of the psyche. This entails an elaboration of how I use the term 'psyche' itself, and how it relates to the theoretical traditions (such as psychoanalysis) upon which I have drawn. Before doing this, however, I begin in Chapter Two to sketch out the historical context of the 'history wars' in Australia, and highlight how they continue to inform research on race in Australia. In Chapters Three and Four, I expand upon my suggestion that racism is foundational to the formation of white subjectivities in colonial nations, and I use this claim to substantiate my critique of white psychologists' writings on race in Australia, and to introduce the concept of benevolence, which I use throughout the remainder of this text to refer to the complex ways in which white privilege operates, often precisely at the moment when white people claim to be 'doing good' for those whose who are positioned as racialised others.

Having introduced the key psychoanalytic concepts that I use, and having explicated the reasons for employing such an approach, I go on in Chapters Five and Six to explore a number of texts where we may see a 'psychic life of colonial power' at work. These texts range from focus group transcripts with groups of white Australians, to speeches made by Prime Minister Howard, to television documentaries on reconciliation, to my own experiences as a white person living in Australia. This diverse range of sources allows me to demonstrate the endemic nature of racism in Australia, and to suggest that far from being confined to the acts of 'bad racists', racism informs the everyday ways in which we relate to one another as people in Australia.

Most importantly, in theorising how racism operates in Australia, I take as central the role that the fact of Indigenous sovereignty plays in shaping the psyche of the white Australian nation. This, of course, is not to position Indigenous people as the cause of white racism, nor is it to speak for Indigenous sovereignty. Rather, my point is to elaborate how the talk and actions of white Australians demonstrates how the fiction of Terra Nullius has always been implicitly known as such – whilst it was upheld in law until very recently as a means to deny Indigenous land rights, and whilst it continues to inform how Indigenous people are depicted in Australia, I will argue in Chapter Seven that the presence of Indigenous people, and more precisely the agency of Indigenous people and the fact of Indigenous sovereignty, has always formed an unacknowledged core of white Australian identity. To speak of racism in Australia is thus to look at how this core operates, how it is denied, how it remains, and how it represents a logic that is always already anxious. To unsettle the position of those of us who identify as white, or rather, to identify that we have always been unsettled, is to me part of the key work for white psychologists working in the area of racism in Australia.

2

History wars

In this chapter I sketch out the historical context of Australia in regards to colonisation, and examine the ongoing implications of this context for the location of white people living in Australia. In order to explicate from this the epistemic and ontological struggles that continue to occur over rights to definition in Australia, I use the recent example of the 'history wars' to demonstrate how race privilege in Australia continues to be deployed to justify colonisation and thus white ownership. This will hopefully provide the reader with a clear idea of the 'unfinished business' that arises from histories of dispossession and genocide.

Of course accounting for history is never an impartial affair. The history of Australia's colonisation continues to be a contested site, wherein narratives of a 'civilising mission' challenge narratives of dispossession and genocide. Such struggles over representation demonstrate one of the key questions that Keith Jenkins (1991) raises in his work on the discipline of history, namely; whose history counts? From this perspective, history may be understood not as an 'objective truth' arrived at by those who correctly study 'the facts', but rather as a meaning-making practice that privileges certain groups of people over others, and which thus legitimises the world view of particular groups to the exclusion and oppression of others. Understood in this way, contestations over 'Australia's history' represent much more than an academic exercise in truth-making. Instead, they underpin the claims to belonging that white people have made to this country since colonisation, and the corollary denial of Indigenous sovereignty that this desire for belonging has engendered.

What this chapter will highlight, then, is the importance of this thesis overall in its aim of examining how white belonging is claimed in Australia, and how this is achieved through the repression of a certain version of history, one that has been dubbed by politicians and media commentators alike as a 'black armband' view of Australian history. Yet, in contrast to this, I will examine what Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004a) has referred to as a 'white blindfold' view of Australian history – one that seeks to focus on all the 'good things' that white people have done for Indigenous people, and one that constructs an image of the 'good white nation'. To speak of a white blindfold view of Australian history is to thus speak against how the nation as a whole typically imagines itself, and to provide for the reader a context through which to understand why white people may be collectively engaged in the psychic disavowal of both colonising violence and Indigenous sovereignty.

Colonisation in Australia: A potted history

There are of course numerous well known texts written about the history of colonisation in Australia. Many of these, written by white people, attempt to provide an honest account of acts of genocide against Indigenous people (e.g., Reynolds, 1999), whilst other accounts by white people (e.g., Windschuttle, 2002) attempt to deny colonial violence. There are also an increasing number of texts written by Indigenous people (e.g., Huggins, 1991; Moreton-Robinson, 2000), which seek to counter a 'white blindfold' account of colonisation, and assert the authority of Indigenous people to speak on such matters. My interest in this section is not to attempt to summarise these works, nor to engage *per se* in a discussion of historical accounts themselves (though this will be the focus of the following section). Rather my interest here is to briefly outline two particular sites where we have seen examples of contestations over history occurring in Australia since colonisation: in

the legal fiction of Terra Nullius, and in the decade long, state-sponsored, reconciliation process. These two sites, I will argue, provide us with clear examples of how ongoing histories of white violence are managed by the white nation, and how they continue to inform public debates over sovereignty rights in Australia.

Fictions of ownership

Australia as a nation, and more specifically, Australia as a part of the colonising project of the British empire, was established upon a series of *a priori* assumptions about land ownership and the entitlement of white colonisers to appropriate land from Indigenous people. In contrast to colonial nations such as the United States and New Zealand, where some form of treaty was negotiated with Indigenous people, Australia was 'taken possession' in the name of King George III, despite an awareness on the part of both Captain Cook and the British monarchy that Australia was already inhabited. The presence of Indigenous owners was circumvented by the declaring of the land as 'Terra Nullius' – as 'land of no one'. This legal assumption presumed not that the land was literally empty, but that it was legally empty of property owning subjects who held a rightful or recognised claim to ownership. Such an assumption, which required the brutal enforcement of the presumed to be sovereign rights of the British monarchy, has thus informed relationships between Indigenous and white people since first contact.

What the assumption of Terra Nullius signifies, in regards to Indigenous people, is that the sovereignties of the more than two hundred Indigenous nations that existed in Australia before colonisation were denied. Yet the denial of sovereignty by white colonisers does not mean that the sovereignty of Indigenous people does not continue to exist, nor that Indigenous people have not consistently resisted the theft

of their lands (Moreton-Robinson, 2003). Whilst white people may have gained control of much of the land that constitutes Australia through brute force of numbers, and whilst this land is claimed as a possession of the Australian nation State (proclaimed as such in 1901), the existence of Indigenous title to land has not been effectively distinguished. This was shown in the landmark Mabo² land rights case, where the High Court recognised the inherent rights of Indigenous people to hold title to land as First Nations people. However this has not been without consequence. Primary of these has been the Howard government's Native Title Amendment Act, 1998, which significantly tightened the requirements for the claiming of land rights as they were originally outlined in the Native Title Act (1993) passed by the previous Labor government. This amendment to the Act was passed in many ways as a response to the findings of the Wik land rights claim, which recognised that Native Title is not inherently extinguished by the granting of a pastoral lease. Findings such as these were seen as constituting a threat to the sovereignty claims of the white nation, hence the passing of the Native Title Amendment Act.

Though since the passing of the Act some land claims have been successful (such as the Miriuwung Gajjerong case), many have not been recognised by the High Court (such as those by the Yarmirr, Fejo and Yorta Yorta First Nations people). In the case of the Yorta Yorta people, the testimony of white pastoralists and anthropologists were used to 'prove' that the Yorta Yorta people had not had 'continuous contact with their lands' and, in Justice Olney's words, that the 'tide of history' had 'washed away' native title (Moreton-Robinson, 2004a). This represents one particular example of the legal fiction of Terra Nullius being used to perpetuate the claiming of ownership by white people, where native title is defined according to the rules of white law, and where the testimony of white people is taken as *a priori* evidence of possession.

As I will elaborate through my analyses in Chapters Five and Six, these representations of Indigenous sovereignty through land rights cases allow for the fiction of Terra Nullius to be perpetuated. In other words, as case after case is not recognised within the High Court, white Australians are given reassurance that our claims to land will not be 'threatened' by Indigenous people. The myth of Terra Nullius thus continues to inform how the white nation is envisaged, and continues to be a founding myth upon which white belonging is claimed. As I will suggest in the following section, the continued prioritisation of white ways of knowing implicitly informed the state-sponsored reconciliation process, and thus from the beginning made it difficult for reconciliation *as an acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty* to be the outcome.

The reconciliation movement

Running for the decade between 1991 and 2001, the reconciliation movement in Australia (as conceptualised by the current coalition government which came into office in 1996) focused primarily on improving the life opportunities of Indigenous people. On the ground, the movement sought to engage white people in working on our own roles and locations in regards to colonisation, and to developing a form of recognition of, or apology for, dispossession and genocide. In this sense it was very much seen as a 'people's movement', examples of which were seen in the Sorry Day events that were held throughout Australia, the signing of Sorry books by non-Indigenous Australians, and marches such as that which traversed the Sydney Harbour Bridge in May 2000, where over a quarter of a million people walked in support of reconciliation and a national apology. Displays such as these were taken as clear indications of a large proportion of the nation's support for an apology to be

made by the Prime Minister on behalf of the nation, though such an apology was never officially made.

Key also to the reconciliation movement were 'reconciliation circles' – groups of (often predominantly) white people who came together to talk about colonisation and to develop ways of working in partnership with Indigenous people. Yet, as Fiona Nicoll (2001, p. 154) has suggested, there was a large gap in the rhetoric around reconciliation, in particular in regards to what purpose it was seen to serve: was it about 'reconciliation to' ("to make another resigned or contentedly submissive"), or 'reconciliation with' (which "conveys the meaning of 'harmonising', 'healing' or 'making friendly after estrangement'")? I would suggest that the government rhetoric (in particular around 'practical reconciliation' as I will elaborate in Chapter Five) was about 'reconciliation to' – the focus was far more on the problems faced by Indigenous people *as problems in their own right*, rather than as problems caused by the ongoing effects of colonisation. As I will discuss both in the analysis in Chapter Five and in Chapter Seven, this directing of attention toward Indigenous people (much like my suggestions in regards to white psychologists' writings on race in Australia in the previous chapter) does very little to challenge how racism and race privilege operate in Australia.

Both the continued deployment of Terra Nullius as a lens through which to understand white belonging in Australia, and the refusal of Prime Minister Howard to offer an apology to Indigenous people as part of the reconciliation process, may be understood as attempts at managing accounts of history in Australia, and in reasserting a particular white version of history that focuses on the 'good intentions' of white people. The political context that existed (and continues to exist) in Australia post-reconciliation was one that downplayed the existence of white violence, and which sought to further marginalise the resistances of Indigenous people. One

particular place where this was played out was in Keith Windschuttle's (2002) book *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, and the ensuing debates over it. These debates demonstrate some of the practical ways in which white ways of knowing continue to be privileged in relation to histories of colonisation, and it is to an examination of these debates that I now turn.

Windschuttle's Fabrication: Contestations of history and truth

Of particular interest to me in this section are the debates between Windschuttle (2002) and those white academics that he critiques in his book as supporting what he terms the 'genocide thesis'. These contestations over representation provide a useful means for understanding how history operates as a rhetorical device, and how it is deployed to warrant particular claims to truth. From this starting point, then, I seek to demonstrate two of the rhetorical strategies that would appear to be evident in debates surrounding (and located within) Windschuttle's text. Following on from a brief elaboration of the ideological nature of historical research, I will propose that both 'claims to objectivity' and acts of 'ontological imperialism' (Young, 1990) represent rhetorical strategies that are deployed to a) manage opponents' truth claims, b) legitimise white ways of knowing, and thus c) represent particular individual truth claims as more valid than others. In looking at the effects of these rhetorical strategies, this chapter takes as central the challenge that Indigenous sovereignty presents to white truth claims.

Thus, rather than attempting to perpetuate any claim to an 'objective perspective', my intention is to firmly locate the subjectivity of the researcher as a central aspect of research in the area of history. As a result, I suggest that all white academics (myself included) need to examine how our claims to objectivity render us complicit with

oppressive practices, and what this means for any attempt to disprove the theories of our 'opponents' in accepting the terms set by science (as an appropriate 'arbiter of truth'). Indeed, I suggest that conceptualisations such as those represented by the term 'opponent' are inherently flawed – they presume that white people, through adherence to scientific values, can overcome the institutionalised racism within which we are located. Instead, I propose that we need to develop more ethical ways of responding to the sovereignty of Indigenous people, and to recognise our own complicity within the hegemony of whiteness.

Whose history – Whose silence?

Constructions of history within the debates surrounding Windschuttle's (2002) book demonstrate some of the ideological underpinnings of white historical research. Thus as Keith Jenkins (1991, p. 19) suggests, "in the end history is theory and theory is ideological and ideology is just material interests". These material interests may be understood as connected to maintaining white privilege by justifying white control of resources and white hegemony over which accounts of history hold sway. This is evident in the framing of the debates surrounding Windshuttle's book, and in particular, the discussions that examine the phrase 'the Great Australian Silence', which was evoked by W.E.H. Stanner in his Boyer lecture in 1968. Windschuttle critiques Henry Reynolds (1999) for using the phrase by suggesting that "as an accurate summary of Australian cultural history in the first half of the twentieth century, it is not convincing" (p. 409). In so doing, he seeks to render visible the ideological assumptions of Reynolds' work, by demonstrating his investment (as well as that of Stanner) in promoting a particular political viewpoint of Australian history. Windschuttle thus contrasts this with his own position, which he implicitly suggests is 'ideology free'.

As a response to this, Robert Manne (2003, p. 12), in his introduction to the edited collection *Whitewash* (a response to Windschuttle's book), suggests that Windschuttle (2002) misses the point of the phrase, and instead reasserts the claim that "both scholars and citizens had, thus far [at the time of Stanner's speech], failed to integrate the story of the Aboriginal dispossession and its aftermath into their understanding of the course of Australian history". In doing this, whilst he reveals Windschuttle's own ideological and political assumptions, Manne fails to recognise that by reasserting the validity of the phrase, he in effect privileges a white account of history, one within which the notion of 'silence' makes sense. In other words, rather than paying attention to the vocality of Indigenous people in regards to history, he prioritises silence as the dominant discourse at the time of Stanner's lecture. Whilst it is important to acknowledge that silence was indeed the dominant white discourse at the time, it is also important to recognise the ways in which the phrase effectively excludes Indigenous people from the category 'Australian citizen', and thus perpetuates the notion that Indigenous people have not 'looked back' or voiced dissent in the face of colonisation.

This debate over the use of Stanner's phrase exemplifies some of the ways in which the ideological nature of white historical accounts is often masked through recourse to notions of truth and fact: debating the meaning of the term does little to decentre white values, and instead may be seen as reasserting the validity of white accounts of history. Thus as Martha Augoustinos (2002, p. 135) suggests, "the historical narrative explains away and rationalizes existing social relations and inequities". A focus on what counts as truth, and 'whose (white) history matters', work to construct history as a site divorced from the present. As a result, and regardless of claims to the contrary, such constructions evidence attempts to locate white people outside of history, and more specifically, outside of white violence. From this perspective,

critiquing someone else's historical research does not necessarily require a critique of one's own privilege – it allows for the masking of the privilege that inheres to white academic writing. As I will elaborate in the next section, the rhetorical tool of 'objectivity' is one of the ways in which white historians locate themselves outside of history.

Further to the previous point about the past/present binary, it is useful to elaborate the ideological functions of this distinction. Constructions of history as an 'artefact of the past' work to maintain a gap between current day actions, and the 'previous actions' of those who are located firmly 'in the past'. Thus as Jenkins (1991, p. 18) suggests, "those who control the present control the past and those who control the past control the future... Thus people(s) in the present need antecedents to locate themselves now and legitimate their ongoing and future ways of living". This demonstrates the paradox that underpins the past/present binary, namely, that those of us who identify as white need to find ways to justify our belonging, but at the same time this is problematic in that our only justification is through recourse to the violence of colonisation and the myth of Terra Nullius. Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter (1992, p. 185) have suggested that this results in a logic whereby "accounts which most effectively justify the status quo flexibly stress the continuity of good and the discontinuity of evil". This is evident within the debate over Windschuttle's (2002) book, where those involved either focus on the ongoing 'generosity of white people' (whose aim is to 'civilise'), and the location of 'bad choices' in the past (in Windschuttle's case), or (again) on the 'generosity of white people' (whose aim it to 'do good' by 'telling the truth' about colonisation), and the location of 'the bad' as being the position of certain 'misguided' historians (in the case of Windschuttle's opponents). In both instances white violence is managed through the deployment of the past/present distinction – either through the denial of white

violence, or through the suggestion that ‘good white intentions’ can help to generate white absolution.

In contrast to this understanding of the past, we may understand the very concrete ways in which the past continues to exist in the present. Hadyn White (1978, p. 81) suggests that “the past can be conceived to have continued to exist in the present... as elements of social praxis inherited from the past in the form of conventions, ideas, institutions, beliefs, and so on”. In this way, the foundational assumption of Terra Nullius (for example) continues to inform legal, political and social responses to Indigenous sovereignty, and thus continues to reassert the normative status of whiteness. As a result, ‘the past’ is constructed as something both foreign to those of us who identify as white, and also intimately a part of who we are, and the unearned privileges that we benefit from. The past is foreign, in that as white people we now lay claim to a form of national belonging that discounts the relatively short duration of our location in this country, thus positioning ‘narratives of arrival’ as somewhat foreign to our sense of belonging now (a point that I will elaborate in Chapter Four). Yet, at the same time, the past structures how we understand ourselves – the triumphs that we claim – and therefore the sense of self-through-belonging that we evoke.

Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2001) provides a theoretical framework through which to understand these apparent paradoxes of white belonging – the refutation of white violence on the one hand, and the promotion of white sovereignty through the denial of Indigenous sovereignty on the other. Moreton-Robinson suggests that this demonstrates the “conjuncture of good intentions of individuals and the theft, denial and silence that [has] supported white sovereignty” (p. 8). This simultaneity of benevolence and violence renders visible a ‘national psychosis’ – a form of unsettling that is produced through a recognition of the illegal dispossession of Indigenous

people (see also Riggs, 2004a; Rutherford, 2002). Read alongside the fact of Indigenous sovereignty, then, this point thus demonstrates the ideological advantages that stem from claiming a separation between the past and the present. Such a distinction maintains white violence as being 'in the past', thus allowing white historians to elaborate 'the present' as somehow being more free from racialised assumptions or race privilege. As the following analysis of scientific rhetoric will show, this 'up the mountain research saga' (Kitzinger, 1990) allows for an account of historical research that legitimates white ways of knowing through the tropes of objectivity and proof.

Rhetorical device I – Objectivity and truth

Following on from the previous discussion of the ideological underpinnings of white historical research, it may be possible to examine Windshuttle's (2002) text more closely (and the responses to it) in order to better understand how notions of truth are used to warrant particular versions of history. Intimately related to this is an understanding of what is achieved via particular constructions of history – what are their material outcomes, and how do they reify science as having access to the truth?

Hadyn White (1978) identifies the trope of metonymy as one particular rhetorical tool that is used to warrant claims to objectivity. White suggests that metonymy is deployed to mask the metaphorical nature of science – that in order to claim a 'truthful' representational value for their research, those who utilise discourses of science rely upon the presumption that a direct correspondence exists between what is observed, and its representation. As a result, particular truth claims about historical events are warranted by the presumed relationship between an event and the ways in which it is reported. What is being signified (e.g., genocide) and what is doing the

signifying (e.g., particular accounts of colonisation) are brought into a metonymic relationship in accounts such as those of Windschuttle and his opponents, so that it can be claimed that that which signifies is a precise representation of the truth. Such claims to metonymy serve to deny the disjuncture between particular events and the ways in which they are represented, and thus serve to assert a particular hegemonic interpretation of 'history'.

One example of this appears in the introduction to Windschuttle's (2002) book, where he proposes that:

This series is... an excursion into the methodology of history. It examines how we can know about the past, the kinds of evidence we can regard as reliable, and how to detect false claims when they are made... There was no choice but to address the fabric of [other white historians'] scholarship in order to unpick their work and to establish what *really* happened (p. 10, emphasis added).

With this in mind, he suggests that:

[One] reason to start with Tasmania is because its records are so good. On the mainland, the supporters of the genocide thesis often hide the weakness of their case behind what they claim is a paucity of historical documents... This is definitely untrue for Van Diemen's Land. Hence, rather than evidence 'never existing' or being lost or destroyed, the documentary record here is comprehensive and accessible (p. 4).

Together, these two extracts demonstrate the assumptions of objectivity that Windschuttle brings to his analysis. Thus, in drawing upon the discourse of scientific objectivity, Windschuttle takes white written records *a priori* as truth – that which is written down is not only all there is to know, but is also an accurate recording of

historical events (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). In his justification for looking at the settlement of Tasmania, Windschuttle suggests that it is a fair place to start 'because all of its records are so good'. Here 'good' is taken to mean true, where truth is defined by the standards of white historical research. In this regard, truth is taken to be an artefact that can be objectively measured, according to the rules of verification. Thus throughout the book Windschuttle attempts to prove his claims by providing corroborating evidence for his thesis. This entails a reliance upon white written accounts of frontier Tasmania, and the promotion of these as representing 'what really happened'. In light of the previous discussion of the reasons for constructing white historical research as fact, Windschuttle's reference to the 'good' of 'Tasmania's records' may also be taken to mean non-anxiety provoking, where the white records of a 'civilising mission' can work to absolve the white nation of blame for the genocide of Indigenous people. In this regard, then, claims to the objectivity of white records (and by implication, his own research) allow Windschuttle to justify rhetorically his position 'outside' of 'the past', and thus to reassert his truth claims.

Windschuttle (2002) elaborates this claim in his suggestion that:

The argument that all history was politicised, that it was impossible for the historian to shed his political interests and prejudices, and that those who believed they could do so were only deluding themselves, became the most corrupting influence of all. It turned the traditional role of the historian, to stand outside contemporary society in order to seek the truth of the past, on its head. It allowed historians to write from an overtly partisan position and to justify this both to themselves and to anyone who dared to challenge them (p. 402).

In this extract Windschuttle clearly derides those who acknowledge the partisan nature of historical research, and instead aligns himself with a view of historical

research as one that represents 'objective truth'. By constructing these contrasting positions, Windschuttle is able to draw upon the power of scientific rhetoric in order to undermine the truth claims of those he labels supporters of the 'genocide thesis'. In particular, he pays attention to the work of Lyndall Ryan, and devotes a chapter to demonstrating the 'unscientific status' of her work. He concludes this chapter by suggesting that:

Unfortunately... standards of proof, accuracy and rigour are largely absent from the work of the current practitioners of Aboriginal history. In particular, the fact that Lyndall Ryan's work is devoid of credibility at so many places is a reflection not only of her own standards but also of those of the school of historiography of which she has long been an esteemed member. Not only have none of her colleagues publicly exposed her fabrications, they have continued to endorse her work (p. 166).

Together, these continual assertions of 'objective truth' are used to bolster Windschuttle's claim to be representing what 'really happened'. Thus rather than recognising the metaphorical nature of his claims (i.e., that they are driven by a desire to represent 'the past' in ways that reassert the goodness of white people), Windschuttle attempts to pass off his account as being factual – as the closest possible approximation of the events from the perspective of the present. Yet, as Denning (1996, p. 46) suggests, such "definitions are rarely descriptions of what is, only declarations of territoriality claimed". In this regard, Windschuttle's use of the rhetoric of objectivity may be more transparently understood as an attempt to reassert white belonging, and the sovereignty of white ownership.

The use of the rhetoric of objectivity is also evident in some of the responses to Windschuttle's (2002) book. Whilst on the whole these responses are prefaced by a

recognition of the situatedness of historical knowledges and the subjectivity of the researcher, they do little to challenge scientific objectivity as the framework for determining truth. Thus as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2001, p. 12) suggests, all white historians “provide their interpretations through white man’s filtered lens – a lens which is blind to the way in which white race privilege manifests itself in and through such work. The ‘truth’ can only reside in the minds and the written word of white knowers”. Moreton-Robinson here points towards the limitations of using science as an arbiter of truth – the continual prioritisation of white constructions of truth only serves to reify the status quo, by ignoring white privilege, and thus in essence denying the situatedness of white truth claims.

In her refutation of Windschuttle’s (2002) critique of her own work, Ryan (2003) suggests that:

I will show that he has little understanding of the process of footnoting and even less knowledge of the sources I have used... I suggest that this tells us more about his lack of familiarity with research into primary sources than about the way I have used my footnotes... Windschuttle... mis-read and relied on sources that any scholar with a knowledge of the Tasmanian archives would have readily found to be incomplete (p. 233).

In this way, Ryan deploys the criteria of science in order to demonstrate Windschuttle’s ‘lack of familiarity’. As a result, Ryan implicitly suggests that Windschuttle’s findings are a poor approximation of the truth, and that by employing a more ‘objective’ reading strategy (i.e., one that does have an understanding of ‘primary sources’) she is able to more accurately discern the ‘truth of history’. Having said that, the point here is not that Ryan should not have the right to defend her work, nor that Windschuttle’s should go unchallenged. Rather, my point (and one which will

be elaborated further) is that in accepting the terms of science when engaging in such debates, we continue to reify truth as a white concept, and one that is determined by the 'proper practices' of white historical research.

A similar critique of Windschuttle (2002) is provided by Peter Boyce (2003), in his suggestion that:

The number of elementary errors in *Fabrication* will soon exclude it from serious historical debate... The narrow selection of sources result[ed] in a profound ignorance of the basics of Van Diemonian [sic] economy, society, politics, which in turn leads to a series of elementary errors (p. 20).

In pointing out the 'elementary errors' of Windschuttle's work, Boyce clearly constructs what counts as 'serious historical debate'. Those who do not play by the rules of white historical research are effectively excluded from involvement. Whilst this might be a useful way to exclude Windschuttle from the research area, it also in effect excludes other voices that dissent from the dominant paradigm of historical research. Boyce's claims also work to reassert the privilege that is given to white interpretations. In suggesting that Windschuttle displayed a 'profound ignorance of the basics of Van Diemonian [sic] economy, society, politics', he implicitly suggests that he (and other white historians) have a better understanding of these factors as a result of their research not containing errors. As a result, the terms that he employs, and the authority that he assumes work to recentre white accounts of history. Objectivity in this sense thus resembles a claim to neutrality, whereby individual white historians have the ability to ascertain what the facts are (i.e., about 'economy, society, politics'), and from there make a judgment about what constitutes the truth. This particular account of historical objectivity thus assumes a position that effectively rules out alternate explanations and modes of understanding – for example, a focus

on 'avoiding errors' or 'understanding the basics' works to mask the ethics of these particular foci. In other words, the 'choice' to focus on these aspects of colonisation comes as a direct result of race privilege, and more precisely, from the assumption that historical events can be researched 'at a distance', rather than as revealing the constitutive violence of white belonging. As the following section will elaborate, these assumptions demonstrate what Robert Young (1990) has termed 'ontological imperialism' – the ways in which those people who are positioned as the racialised other are allowed very specific locations within white historical research.

Rhetorical device II - Ontological imperialism

The rhetorical device of ontological imperialism achieves two very important outcomes that work to manage the violence of colonisation and the corollary privilege of white people. First, it excludes but does not dismiss those people positioned as the racialised other, and second, it allows for the possibility of the subjectivity of the racialised other in very specific ways, set on the terms of whiteness. This demonstrates the networks of power that inhere to historical research – the means by which it allows for very particular understandings of the racialised other, in ways that represent an attempt at co-opting difference. Thus as Robert Young (1990, p. 13) suggests, "when [white] knowledge or theory comprehends the other, then the alterity of the latter vanishes as it becomes part of the same".

Read through this lens, the rhetorical device of ontological imperialism may thus be understood as an attempt at reasserting the hegemony of white historical knowledge. Windschuttle (2002) employs this rhetorical device when he attempts to dismiss the claims of those white historians who attempt to demonstrate the *a priori* rights of Indigenous people to land and ownership. For example, he proposes that:

The concept of 'land rights', which now dominate[s] both academic discourse and the Aboriginal political agenda, is also incongruous to Tasmania. The notion of 'rights' derives exclusively from the European political tradition, and has no meaning in traditional Aboriginal culture. The term 'land' is just as alien, having no role in either the vocabulary or the conceptual apparatus of Tasmanian hunter-gatherers (p. 404).

In this way, Windschuttle is able to ascribe a very specific (i.e., 'primitive') ontological position to Indigenous people, by constructing notions of 'land' and 'rights' as being solely European conceptualisations. In so doing, Windschuttle allows for the presence of Indigenous people, but does so by dismissing their claims to ownership as defined by the terms set by white people. Such a positioning, however, misses one key point – that Indigenous people are entitled to claim rights as citizens of the white nation. In her work on the Yorta Yorta land rights decision, Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004b) suggests that the 'possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty' performs this ontological manoeuvre in order to reassert white sovereignty. As a result, white belonging is legitimated, and Indigenous sovereignty denied.

Windschuttle (2002) takes this ontological imperialism one step further by, in effect, denying Indigenous people a location within the category of 'humanity':

To talk about the Tasmanian Aborigines acting with 'humanity and compassion' [as per Sharon Morgan's (1992) suggestion in her book *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*] is to invoke concepts they would have regarded with complete incomprehension. These terms come not from Aboriginal but from European culture. It was the European Enlightenment that founded the idea of the unity of humanity and the Christian religion that originated the notion of sharing the suffering of others. Neither was a concept held by hunter-gatherer society, in

Tasmania or anywhere else, for whom the idea of loyalties owed and sentiments shared beyond the boundary of kinship was literally unthinkable (p. 406).

This extract works to both position Indigenous people as being outside of the category 'humanity' (and thus as being not entitled to rights), and to dismiss the truth claims of Indigenous historians through the implicit assertion that any notion of 'Indigenous humanity and compassion' represents an inauthentic representation of Indigenous people 'in the past'. The arbitrary nature of this account of history is premised upon the construction of white colonisers as active subjects. In taking white colonisers' accounts as representing the truth, Windschuttle accords them the position 'active settler subject'. The outcome of this positioning is that Indigenous people are automatically assigned the corollary status of 'passive native object': Indigenous people are positioned as passive recipients of white settlement. Yet, such a construction may be seen as anxiety producing, in that it leaves the white nation open to accusations of colonisation and dispossession, rather than the result of 'natural progress'. In other words, the imposition of white people onto Indigenous lands may be read as an intentional act of genocide. This anxiety is managed through the construction of colonial intent as the desire to 'civilize and modernize' (Windschuttle, p. 9), acts which are positioned as 'merely' benevolent, rather than oppressive. In this way, the construction of Indigenous people as passive recipients of colonisation is achieved through recourse to the binary of 'civilised vs. primitive' (Torgovnick, 1990).

Attempts at denying the fact of Indigenous sovereignty are visible in some of the responses to Windshuttle's (2002) claim that Indigenous people 'have no role' for the term 'land' (p. 404), or no concept of 'humanity' (p. 406). In his examination of these

claims, Peter Boyce (2003) suggests that the evidence that Windschuttle uses is both unreliable, and indeed can be read as 'disproving' Windschuttle's thesis:

In fact, even Peron's [the French naturalist whose written reports Windschuttle cites as proof of the 'violent nature' of Indigenous society] views differ significantly. The naturalist had a friendly meeting at Port Cygnet with the Aborigines, including three men, two women and four children, 'providing the most striking example we had ever had of attention and reasoning among savage people' (p. 65).

In using Peron's report of 'attention and reasoning', Boyce effectively reinforces the validity of these terms as important points for consideration in regards to ownership and sovereignty. Likewise, Boyce reinscribes the ontological imperialism inherent to Windschuttle's statement, by defending Indigenous people as 'appropriate others'. In so doing, he does little to move the discussion away from the terms set by white historical research, and instead continues to focus on the values of white people. Thus as Greg Lehman (2003, p. 75) suggests, such an approach "equates the idea of truth with the search for facts" rather than understanding it as "a question of authenticity and at the same time of an apprehension of reality". Lehman goes on to suggest, following Lacan, that "the desire for recognition produces a primordial confrontation leading to the desire for the disappearance of the other" (p. 183). This is evident in the extracts from both Windschuttle and Boyce, where their apparent desire to recognise the goodness of white people results in a desire to erase Indigenous people, or at the very least, to represent Indigenous people in ways that deny Indigenous sovereignty. Such ontological imperialism demonstrates the synchronicity of the past and present, whereby white violence continues to inform the ways in which white historians engage with Indigenous sovereignty, and the accounts of ongoing histories that are privileged. In the section that follows, this point will be

further elaborated, by returning to the rhetoric of scientific objectivity, and linking this to the explication of ontological imperialism. It will be suggested that together these two rhetorical devices demonstrate the ways in which the 'rules of the game' of white historical research are often engaged to the exclusion of Indigenous understandings of historical truth, regardless of the intent of the author.

Complicity, resistance and engagement

In her work on the 'rhetoric of pseudoscience', Celia Kitzinger (1990) suggests some of the apparent advantages of using this rhetorical device to refute others' truth claims, but she also demonstrates the problems of complicity that it generates. Kitzinger proposes that whilst "the rhetoric of pseudoscience is very attractive to many people because it appears to offer a legitimate and intelligible language with which to discredit unpalatable or oppressive research findings", it does so by "function[ing] as a jeremiad – a rhetorical form devoted to bringing good out of evil: out of the pseudoscience of the past... a new, truly scientific [form of knowledge] is waiting to be born". As a result, the rhetoric of pseudoscience is not outside of science – indeed, it is precisely through its claims to knowing what scientific truth 'really is' that pseudoscience achieves its rhetorical effects.

As I have already shown, Windschuttle (2002) uses this rhetorical device to discredit his opponents by pointing out the 'flaws' in their research – by claiming that they have produced 'bad historical scientific research'. In contrast to this, he is thus able to suggest that his research represents a 'step forward' towards more accurate (and thus more truthful) historical knowledge. As has also been shown, some of those white historians opposing Windschuttle have similarly drawn on the notion of pseudoscience in order to suggest that Windschuttle's research contains "elementary

errors” (Boyce, 2003, p. 18), and that it demonstrates “little understanding of the process of footnoting (Ryan, 2003, p. 233). These contestations over truth claims thus demonstrate how “struggles over what will count as rational accounts of the world are struggles over how to see” (Harraway, 1987, p. 587). In this way, both of the white approaches to understanding the history of colonisation outlined in the previous sections rely upon the oppositional positions that are made available through the rhetoric of pseudoscience. Whilst each position argues its case in subtly different ways, they nonetheless rely upon science as a framework – a framework that has long provided legitimation for the oppression of Indigenous people (Anderson, 2002).

As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, these apparently oppositional positions may instead be understood as representing but one small aspect of the possible approaches to understanding colonisation: claims to right wing (‘denialist’) or left wing (‘apologist’) positions do not even come close to exhausting potential readings of colonisation. Rather, they represent the dominant white modes of historical accounting. Keith Jenkins’ (1991) work on historical research demonstrates some of the problems that inhere to notions of ‘left and right’. Jenkins suggests that if one particular position is taken as representing a central neutral point (and in this chapter I have suggested that ‘objective historical research’ is purported to occupy this position), then this notion of neutrality is deployed to manage the position of those researchers whose work is deemed to be oppressive. In this way, the spectrum of possible historical knowledges is defined by its relation to this apparently neutral centre. Yet, if we are to understand this entire reading of historical knowledge as founded solely on the values and beliefs of white culture, then it may instead be seen to represent just one aspect of a much larger spectrum of possible readings. Thus as Jenkins suggests, “a spectrum cannot have a centre” (p. 36).

What this elaboration suggests, then, is that instead of perpetuating the notion that scientific knowledge represents a universal truth, white historians need to recognise the locality of all knowledges. Thus rather than continuing to marginalise Indigenous accounts of history by contrasting them with the 'objective' analyses that are supposedly produced by white historians (such as Windschuttle), it is important to acknowledge that white histories represent truths that come from a particular, invested, perspective. Fiona Nicoll (2000) suggests that this notion of 'perspective' is used to contrast what are termed 'Indigenous perspectives' with 'white objectivity', thus legitimating the hegemony of white truth claims. However, if we are to understand Indigenous accounts of history as pointing towards the locatedness of all knowledge, then it may be possible to understand the work of white historians as 'just another perspective'.¹

The unfortunate problem with this is that white historians most often do not position their work as historically and contextually contingent, but rather rely upon claims to universality to justify their work. What is required, then, is a form of critical reflexivity, where those of us who identify as white acknowledge the locality of our work, but at the same time focus on the ways in which our work is made possible by the privilege of the location that is whiteness. Thus my suggestion is not that we should ignore the ways in which white writing props up the institutions of whiteness, but rather that we must engage in a 'politics of location'. This would also entail a willingness to engage with the critiques that Indigenous people continue to make, and to recognise the

¹ Obviously such a position may be read as suggesting a form of cultural relativism, whereby all 'perspectives' are equal. Yet as Keith Jenkins (1991) suggests, this demonstrates a rather naïve reading of historical research that seeks to be accountable for its location. Rather, a focus on individual perspectives does not negate a moral standpoint on issues of violence – instead, it suggests that we must prioritise the 'perspectives' of those whose experiences are ones of oppression and violence, and whose truth claims exceed relativising through the sovereign rights of their knowledges. Thus the point here is not one of relativism, but one instead one of accountability.

sovereignty of Indigenous people as the ground upon which white historians attempt to generate truth claims.

This approach to understanding histories of colonisation may therefore represent a more ethical engagement with Indigenous sovereignty. Instead of taking the white desire to 'know the other' as its starting point, it would acknowledge the need for white historians to account for their privileged position, and to shift the focus "from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served" (Morrison, 1992, p. 90). This should not be read as a naïve attempt to enact benevolence through 'restoring the defiled native object' (Chow, 1994), but rather an acknowledgement of the ongoing histories of oppression that have shaped the white nation, and the intimate relationship between white privilege and Indigenous disadvantage. From this perspective, any notion of scientific objectivity, and more precisely, the claim that scientific knowledge represents a universal truth, may more transparently be seen to demonstrate the violence of scientific knowledge: it is founded upon an attempt to generalise white values in order to justify white violence, and legitimate white belonging.

An ethical response to this understanding of history (as a 'scientific practice') would thus entail a focus on whose history is being told, and to what ends – how do dominant historical narratives perpetuate social hegemony? In this section I have suggested one way in which this focus may be engaged – by examining how white truth claims are achieved, and thus by turning our attention to how white belonging is justified. What this suggests is that we need a 'history of the present' – a more adequate engagement with how white privilege now is founded upon over two hundred years of violence. Such an understanding of the 'present past' may allow white historians to move beyond the 'now/then' mentality that often appears to

dominate white historical research, and instead to recognise how 'the past' continues to exist 'in the present'.

Chapter summary

Perhaps one of the most useful points to come from the latter part of this chapter is the way in which I have demonstrated how Windschuttle (2002) incidentally renders visible the violence of scientific objectivity as a world making practice based on exclusion. Whilst Windschuttle (and indeed those who oppose him) position their debates as being about how history is done, and what counts as history, the debates may also be read as an explication of white violence – of the oppressive practices that constitute white knowledge making. It is important to note, however, that in writing about white violence in academic writing I have not sought to recoup a moral position for myself by further colonising Indigenous people. In other words, rather than parading Indigenous accounts of history as a warrant for moral authority, I have sought to reflexively engage with Indigenous critiques of white historical research, and to thus be accountable for the privilege that white writing assumes.

Obviously there is a considerable gap between these aims and the effects of white writing. Colonisation is not going to end simply because white people 'engage with their privilege'. Yet, at the same time, continuing to deny the inherent politicality of academic research is not going to result in a substantial engagement with Indigenous sovereignty. What this suggests, then, is that research on race relations in Australia by white people needs to continue to engage with its own foundational assumptions, and to explicate some of the practices that warrant its authority. Such an approach obviously will entail a continued focus on the networks of power that shape scientific knowledge, and the relationship that this has to white writing. Finally, in regards to

my focus on the history wars as they appear in the debates over Windschuttle's (2002) text, white historical research represents much more than just an attempt to 'understand the world'. Rather, it may be seen as a social practice that manages histories of oppression, and which is often used to legitimate white belonging and ownership.

With this in mind, we may look back to my earlier points in the chapter about how the myth of Terra Nullius functions in Australia to warrant white belonging, and thus deny Indigenous sovereignty. Much like Prime Minister Howard's refusal to offer an apology, Windschuttle's (2002) account of Australian history is one that represents a 'white blindfold' account of colonisation. They both serve to deny accountability for ongoing acts of white violence, and they both serve to reassert the status of the 'good white nation'. Yet, as I will elaborate in the following two chapters, rather than denying the investment that white people have in racism and race privilege, claims to 'good intentions' may instead be seen as aimed at repressing the foundational role that racism plays in the constitution of white subjectivities in Australia.

3

Psychoanalysis and the white racial subject

In this chapter I provide an account of how white people become intelligible subjects within racialised networks of power in Australia. This, I believe, is a necessary analytic move, required in order to provide a theoretical basis from which to begin to understand how white privilege and racism operates in Australia as foundational to white identities, rather than as a consequence of living in a racist society. Claims such as these may no doubt be read as essentialist – as positing that those of us who identify as white are always already racist. These types of arguments, however, can serve to rhetorically silence critical analyses of racism and race privilege. Likewise, accusations of essentialism can result in the researcher retreating to a position of relativism, whereby race is seen as ‘just’ a social construction – a position that I believe to be dangerous as it can often fail to pay attention to the ways in which race continues to privilege and oppress people (Riggs & Augoustinos, 2005). What I propose in this chapter, then, is an account of the racialisation of white subjectivities that, whilst attending to what I refer to as a ‘psychic life’, does not resort to notions of internality, or at least notions of internality as typically understood within mainstream psychology. Drawing on the theoretical and philosophical insights of Judith Butler (1997), I first provide an account of racialisation that draws out the foundational instabilities of white subjectivities in Australia, and which thus highlights some of the ways in which the fact of Indigenous sovereignty is engaged with.

Following on from this account of white subject formation, I go on to draw from this account some of the implications that it holds for looking at how white people draw upon race privilege as an available discursive resource in Australia. Drawing on the

work of Billig (1999), Hook (2005) and Seshadri-Crooks (2001), I elaborate a psychoanalytic account of how racism operates at the level of the psyche. This will entail introducing key psychoanalytic concepts that will be employed in the analysis chapters, and evoking an analytic framework that affords me the necessary tools for looking at racism in ways that need not fall back upon some of the approaches identified in the previous chapter. By providing a broad sketch of how a psychoanalytic approach to understanding racism may help us understand how forms of epistemic violence are perpetuated in Australia, I hope to provide the reader with the critical tools to evaluate the utility of my analyses in later chapters, and to begin the work of thinking through what this means in the context of anti-racist practice.

Overall, the important contribution of this chapter to current research on racism in the areas of psychoanalysis and critical psychology is that it brings them together into a closer symbiosis than has previously been the case. Moreover, not only does it draw together these two areas of research, but it also utilises approaches drawn from cultural studies (e.g., Butler, 1997) and critical race and whiteness studies (e.g., Moreton-Robinson, 2003) to extend psychoanalytic and critical psychological accounts, in that it refuses a primary focus on *either* subjectification or subjectivity, and instead carefully draws out the intimate relation between the two. The focus of this chapter is thus neither the 'individual racist', nor the 'racist institution'. Rather, its focus is an elaboration of how racism comes to be at the very moment it is enacted, just as the speaking white subject is made possible through its location within racist discourse.

Becoming an intelligible (white) subject

As I suggested in the introductory chapter, to become an intelligible subject within a colonial nation such as Australia is to be formed in relation to a series of norms. The subject of the Australian nation (as distinct from Australian citizens) continues to refer primarily to the white, middle class, heterosexual subject, a subject who is formed through a possessive investment in white belonging in Australia (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). Such investments are structured through the disavowal of Indigenous ownership, and are a continuation of the acts of dispossession and genocide that are formative of the Australian national psyche. To unpack this somewhat; the originary violence of the Australian nation continues to shape the ways in which those invested in the nation relate to one another. It requires that this violence be routinely disavowed, in order to construct a notion of 'the good nation'. Indeed, as Rutherford (2002) has suggested, notions of a 'national good' are intimately related to national violence – the former exists precisely as an enactment of the latter. This results in non-indigenous people claiming a location as subjects of the Australian nation at the expense of Indigenous people in two ways: a) as a result of the fact of Indigenous dispossession (i.e., those of us who identify as white claim to belong to land that is stolen), and b) through the construction of Indigenous people themselves as a threat to the Australian nation, a claim that is used to further exclude Indigenous people from representation within the national space (Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). In order for these two factors to be rendered normative, the nation requires nominal members (i.e., those who are recognised by the nation as being legitimate subjects of the nation) to invest in the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty.

Hook (2005) usefully distinguishes between denial (understood as the refutation of another's claim or statement, and the subsequent blanking out of the affect associated with the occurrence of that claim), and disavowal (understood as an act of perception that, whilst refuting the knowledge of another's claim, actually evidences the ongoing impact on affect that the claim makes). A fine line, indeed, in

distinguishing between denial and disavowal, but I believe a useful one for understanding how white subjectivities are forever founded (or indeed founder) upon the anxiety that Indigenous sovereignty produces, whilst at the same time evidencing the ongoing enactment of such anxiety. The term 'disavowal' thus signifies the relationship that white people are always in with Indigenous sovereignty (Nicoll, 2004), and the importance of grasping how this shapes the psychic life of the white Australian nation.

The psychic life of colonial power

In relation to the notion of a 'psychic life of colonial power', then, it is possible to conceive of this term as referring to the collective ways in which white Australians are invested in maintaining the unequal power relations that exist under colonialism. Colonial power in Australia, and its operation through discourses of racialised difference, thus work in the service of white hegemony by setting up a series of exclusionary binaries wherein representation is reserved primarily for white people. Thus as Butler (1997, pp. 10-11) suggests, "Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject... and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language". Here we may understand that if white ways of knowing and conceptualising subjectivity are taken as normative in Australia, then by default it will be the case that 'being intelligible' (as a subject of the nation) will only be extended to those who are established through the language of the nation (i.e., one that is founded upon the denial of colonial violence). The psychic life of colonial power is thus a network of racialised practices that are performed by recognised colonising subjects who hold an investment in this power. These networks of power attempt to exclude Indigenous people from representation by attributing the role of 'object' to Indigenous people.

However, such attributions are rarely successful. Thus, whilst as Teo and Fabrarro (2003, p. 683) suggest: “When it comes to socio-historical concepts such as subjectivity, identity, intelligence, emotion, motivation, personality, and so on, Euro-American researchers tend to teach, write and act as if they have told the whole story of human mental life”, I would emphasise the importance of the disclaimer ‘as if’ in their statement. In other words, though the white Australian nation may believe in the success of its psychic power, this success is rarely evidenced as a totality within the nation. Indigenous people have always resisted colonial power, and continue to challenge the hegemony of white ways of knowing. Furthermore, what Moreton-Robinson (2003, p. 31) has termed Indigenous people’s “ontological relationship to land” continues to unsettle claims to white belonging by demonstrating the inalienable rights that Indigenous people hold within the land (this is an important point that I will take up in the concluding chapter of this thesis).

My aim in this section is thus twofold: to illustrate how colonial power is exercised in the service of white belonging, and at the same time to draw attention to the ways in which the myth of white sovereignty is continually destabilised by the visibility of ongoing histories of white violence. Claims to white sovereignty thus represent what Ridgeway (2001) has termed a ‘terra nullius of the mind’. In suggesting this term, Ridgeway alludes to the fact that most white Australians demonstrate a ‘wilful forgetfulness’ in regards to histories of genocide and dispossession. Ridgeway’s statement thus draws attention to the previously mentioned distinction between denial and disavowal – within this ‘wilful forgetfulness’ remains the trace of white anxiety, and the ongoing impact that the fact of Indigenous sovereignty has upon affect. In other words, whilst white people often deny our relationship to both colonial violence and Indigenous sovereignty by focusing on all of the supposedly ‘good things’ that we have done for Indigenous people, the metaphor of a ‘Terra Nullius of

the mind' draws attention to the fact that (much like the legal fiction of Terra Nullius itself) it is far from the case that 'white minds' (as enactments of a colonial psyche) are an 'empty land' in regards to memories of white violence. Indeed, as the recent public debates in Australia concerning the Stolen Generations clearly demonstrate, they are densely populated by ongoing histories of colonisation (cf., Haggis, 2001).

Subjectification and collective memory

Following on from the introduction of the concept of the psychic life of colonial power, we may now turn to an understanding of the ways in which this 'psychic life' is played out on a day-to-day basis, where commonsense discourses of race, racism and reconciliation are deployed to justify the past and the present. The above point about the collective memory of colonial violence thus reinforces my suggestion that colonial power has a 'psychic life' – not that critical approaches to examining racism in psychology should take psychoanalytic concepts (for example) and use them to diagnose 'white neuroses' *per se*, but rather that we need to look at how whiteness operates psychically in the service of white hegemony. This is a fine but important distinction – understanding how subjective investments in colonial power work is not the same thing as suggesting that racism occurs in the minds of individual people.

Butler (1997, p. 19, original emphasis) argues a related point in her work on subjectivity and power, where she suggests that the "process of internalization *fabricates the distinction between interior and exterior life*, offering us a distinction between the psychic and the social that differs significantly from an account of the psychic internalization of norms". In other words, if we are to understand the construction (or psychologisation) of subjectivities as occurring through the assumption of a distinction between interior/exterior, intra/intersubjective, then

subjectivities (here referring specifically to white subjectivities in colonial nations) necessarily reflect the ways in which internalisation is achieved as an aspect of subject-hood. This, however, whilst predominantly being the case in regards to the formulation of white subjectivities, does not suffice to explain how race operates in the service of subjectification, and how investments in race are continually reasserted in the face of dissent. Butler's quote suggests that whilst the claim to interiority reflects the interior/exterior distinction as privileged in Western nations, an understanding of the 'psychic internalisation of norms' may be a potentially more productive way of approaching race, and more specifically, possessive investments in race privilege.

As previously outlined in regards to the ways in which non-indigenous people in Australia disavow Indigenous sovereignty, if we are to understand the psyche as the site where white Australian subjects are made possible within particular contexts, then understanding racism becomes not a matter of individualisation or internalisation (as the opposite of exteriorisation), but rather one of subjectification, where becoming intelligible subjects on the terms set under colonial power requires white Australians to be spoken into existence as subjects through racism. This process requires that the collective memories held within colonial nations be taken up as an available resource by all nominal members, and actively reiterated and normalised on a daily basis. For example, in my own work on racism in Australia (Riggs, 2004a; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004; 2005), I have suggested that discourses of white denial (which serve as ongoing enactments of white violence) are taken up as commonplace in discussions of land rights amongst non-indigenous Australians. Such commonplaces represent resources that are available for explaining or accounting for both Indigenous resistance, and white claims to ownership.

There is an important point that I should clarify here, however, in relation to racism as a formative aspect of subjectification in colonial nations. There is a risk that a statement such as this will be read as one which absolves white Australians of responsibility or accountability. In other words, if occupying the site of the subject in Australia means being spoken through discourses of racism, then it could be inferred that non-indigenous Australians are interpellated into racism, and that this is something that is beyond our control. However, following on from Butler's critique of the notion of interpellation as outlined in her *Psychic Life of Power*, we may understand that subjects are not hailed by a sovereign power that identifies them as racialised *after* their formation as a subject. As Butler (1997) suggests:

The interpellation of the subject through the inaugurative address of state authority presupposes not only that the inculcation of conscience already has taken place, but that conscience, understood as the psychic operation of a regulatory norm, constitutes a specifically psychic and social working of power on which interpellation depends but for which it can give no account. Moreover, the model of power in Althusser's account attributes performative power to the authoritative voice, the voice of sanction, and hence to a notion of language figured as speech (pp. 5-6).

As I have outlined previously, the (white) subject of the Australian nation may thus be understood not as one that is addressed as racialised after its inception, but rather that the very speaking of intelligible national subjects in Australia is founded upon the racialisation of collective consciousness itself. In order to further develop this understanding of how the white subject is raced at the moment of their/our initiation into networks of power, and the implications of this for understanding racialised practices in our everyday lives, I would suggest that what is required is a focus on how particular bodies are 'made to matter'. This, as I will elaborate in the following

section, will further elaborate my claims as to the foundational aspects of racism in Australia, and its relation to subjective investments in whiteness as collective psychic responses to colonial violence.

How do bodies matter? The ‘epidermilisation’ of difference

There exists a great deal of literature on racialised embodiment outside of the discipline of psychology (e.g., Alcoff, 1999; Winnubst, 2004), although unfortunately, this has not largely penetrated into the discipline of psychology (though see Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). This has resulted in what Granek (2005a; b) terms a ‘writing over the body’:

To theorize *over* the body is a violation. It is a dominating and power-laden act, like rape, it is about disregarding the subjectivity of the other in an enforcing of one’s own beliefs about what is appropriate and desirable (2005a, p. 4; original emphasis).

In the example of racism in Australia, there exists a long history of both colonising authorities and academics theorising (and legislating) over the bodies of Indigenous people – of both using the body of the racialised other to determine access to rights and subjectivity, whilst simultaneously denying the reality of the body in order to justify claims such as those underpinning the fiction of Terra Nullius. In other words, only particular bodies have been constructed as mattering in Australia. The irony of this is that such bodies (i.e., those of white people) have most often not been marked as (racialised) bodies in the eyes of the nation. Thus, as I suggested in the previous section in regards to subjectification, the subject that comes into being under the sign of race is one that is prescribed by the hierarchical forms of knowledge that are

deemed intelligible within the framework of race itself – only certain bodies (materialised through visual markers that are accorded value within racialised systems) are ascribed with power, at the expense of those bodies positioned as being without (or unable to have) power.

Racialised differences are thus achieved primarily through sets of contrasts, wherein ‘the other’ is marked as ‘having race’, whilst the normative white self is not marked as raced (as I suggested in the introductory chapter). This demonstrates what Fanon (1967) has termed ‘epidermalisation’, or as Hall (2000, p. 5) defines it: “the writing of difference on the skin of the other”. Here difference becomes a function of the white self, which works to actively produce the location of the other-as-object (as opposed to actually representing the location of people who do not identify or who are not identified as white). From this perspective, I would suggest that epidermalisation thus marks the practice whereby difference is actually constructed on the terms of the same – racialised difference is structured upon the incorporation of incommensurable difference into a logic of sameness, whereby the location of those who refute white hegemony (e.g., Indigenous people in Australia) is incorporated into the self/other split produced under colonialism (Riggs, 2005a).² Hook (2005) suggests much the same thing in his incisive analysis of the racial stereotype, where he expands and clarifies the work of Bhabha (1994). Hook, following Bhabha, suggests that the racial stereotype (particularly as it is enacted through the repetitive framing of particular presumed bodily forms of the racialised other) demonstrates an attempt to achieve the impossible: “the fixity of mutually exclusive subject categories for colonizer and colonized” (p. 13). This attempt at the impossible may be understood as a form of

² For example, the ontological relationship that Indigenous people have to country in Australia, which precedes and exceeds non-indigenous positionings or disavowals of Indigenous sovereignty, demonstrates a refusal to be incorporated into a logic of sameness that would see Indigenous people wholly co-opted into a white system of representation (see Moreton-Robinson, 2003).

disavowal, as described earlier, aimed at erasing the anxiety that the existence of the racial other (as opposed to the racialised object of the stereotype) produces.

To clarify: my point here is that the co-option of difference (marked in this instance as race) into a logic of sameness (through, for example, the racial stereotype of the other), serves to deny the incommensurable differences that undermine white hegemony, and more specifically, white claims to ownership and belonging in Australia. My point in this section is thus not to further fetishise race, or to call for a 'return to the body', but instead to look at how the skin, which is conceptualised as the container of the body (and in particular those types of (white) bodies that accrue privilege within Australia), is both given such prominence in racialised accounts of subjectivity in Western nations, whilst at the same time the skin of white people is seldom ever mentioned (Winnubst, 2004). Discourses of race are thus not about 'describing' the differences between people, but about incorporating these differences into one particular way of understanding the world. Thus as Alcoff (1999, pp. 15-16) suggests, race as a practice of visibility works to "enclos[e] the entirety of difference within a taxonomy organized by a single logic". This point therefore demonstrates the importance of examining how race is materialised, and how it is used to legitimate practices of oppression.

In *Psychic Life of Power*, Butler (1997) provides a useful reading of Foucault's work on the prison. Whilst not talking about race, the following passage draws interesting and useful parallels with the materialisation of race:

The materiality of the prison, Foucault writes, is established to the extent that (*dans la mesure ou*) it is a vector and instrument of power. Hence, the prison is *materialized* to the extent that it is invested with power. To be grammatically accurate, there is no prison prior to its materialization; its materialization is

coextensive with its investiture with power relations; and materiality is the effect and gauge of this investment. The prison comes to be only within the field of power relations, more specifically, only to the extent that it is saturated with such relation and that such a saturation is formative of its very being. Here the body – of the prisoner and the prison – is not an independent materiality, a static surface or site, which a subsequent investment comes to mark, signify upon, or pervade; the body is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive (p. 91; original emphasis).

Leaving aside the obvious connections between Foucault's work on the prison and the notion of 'race as a prison' (e.g., Muecke, 1992), I would suggest that this passage from Butler usefully extends my previous discussion of race as formative of subjectification. Indeed, it draws attention to the issue of accountability, and provides a more nuanced account of precisely how subjective investments work through the materialisation of race, and how this demonstrates the complicity of non-indigenous people in Australia with racism.

To elaborate: if, following Butler's logic, there is no 'race' prior to its materialisation, and if this materialisation occurs through the investment of race with power, then it would seem important to grasp how materialisation occurs concomitantly with subjectification. In other words, how does what I have previously said about the taking up of a collective memory of colonial violence become 'written' through the body – how is it that the materialisation of particular bodies as mattering occurs as a result of their location within ongoing histories of colonisation, and thus as products of practices of subjectification that occur within racialised networks of power? Towards the end of the passage Butler suggests a potential answer to this question, namely that "the body... is not an independent materiality... which a subsequent investment comes to mark... the body is that for which materialization and investiture

are coextensive". In regards to race, then, the racialised body does not exist outside of a particular context, nor does the body become racialised upon the choosing of particular individuals. Rather, in the context of a nation built upon colonising desires (such as Australia), bodies come to matter precisely as markers of race that are used to shore up the colonising project. White bodies must thus be invested with race as a prerequisite for intelligibility within a nation that is founded upon racial difference as its source of legitimation. To do otherwise would be to deny the hegemony of white rule, or at the very least to acknowledge the legitimacy of Indigenous sovereignty. The question, then, is not whether the racialised body is brought into being through colonial power and is subsequently inhabited by a subject differentially invested in said power (or vice versa), but rather that white bodies are spoken into being specifically as colonial bodies – as bodies whose existence relies upon the corollary of particular subjective investments in the colonial project. In regards to subjectivity, then, the racialisation of bodies is the very grounds for subjectification – we come into being as knowers/subjects or objects in the form of particular racialised bodies.

The production of difference

It is important, however, to acknowledge here that this may at first seem to be a rather overdeterministic reading of racialised embodiment, and one that subsumes the experiences of Indigenous people (alongside those who are identified as 'non-white' within the Australian nation) yet again into a logic of 'difference in sameness', whereby racialisation occurs in the same ways (and for the same purpose) for all people. This is not my claim at all. Instead, my point has been to mark precisely how those bodies that are typically not designated as racialised (i.e., white bodies) come into being through discourses of race in relation to colonial power. This, as I see it, was a large part of Fanon's (1967) project – not to maintain a focus on how the white

man constructs the black man, but how the white man constructs the white man *through* his constructions of the black man. Racism, and an investment in racialised practices (such as the materialisation of race), are thus formative of white subjectivities in Australia.

The important point that arises from this understanding of subject formation, then, is that the racialisation of white subjects is for the large part denied (in order to legitimate the *a priori* status of white privilege) by focusing on race as a 'regime of looking', whereby the white subject (rendered intelligible within networks of colonial power) does the looking, rather than being a recipient of a racialised gaze. Thus as Seshadri-Crooks (2000, p. 2) suggests, "although race cannot be reduced to the look... it is common knowledge that some 'black' people can be very white, and some 'whites' can be very dark; identity is a question of 'heritage', not skin colour. Once claimed, however, heritage is ultimately marked by the body... thus by visibility I refer to a regime of looking that thrives on 'major' and 'minor' details in order to shore up one's symbolic position".

The desire to control the gaze (and to do so by controlling what counts as 'major' and 'minor' details) thus demonstrates what I along with Martha Augoustinos have termed elsewhere the 'anxiety of whiteness' (Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). That is, whilst on the one hand there is the white desire to 'be whiteness' (to occupy the site of the signifier), such a desire is predicated upon an illusory notion of wholeness – that those of us who are white could exceed the racialised categories of whiteness, and thus occupy *all* positions (or more accurately, deny *any* position other than the 'whole self') within a racialised system of representation. Yet the paradox (and thus anxiety) is that such a fantasy of wholeness would effectively obliterate constructions of difference – resulting in the destruction of the self/other binaries that racialised systems are reliant upon (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000). In this way the 'double nature' of

white anxiety is always already evident in the ways in which the gaze circulates as a purported site of power. Obviously this is not to deny the ways in which the gaze does exert effects over colonised people, but instead my point is that attempts at controlling racialised looking through marking particular bodies as 'raced' is always an incomplete project – it never totally encompasses signification or representation in Australia.

As I will suggest in the following section, my explication of the racialisation of white subjectivities in this section leads me to propose a particular psychoanalytic approach to reading white violence in Australia. This approach, as it follows on from my reading of the 'psychic life of colonial power', involves looking at the everyday talk and actions of white Australians to examine the 'trace' of anxiety that remains. This, I propose, is one means through which we may see more clearly how the hegemony of whiteness fails to ever fully encompass racial representation in Australia.

Psychoanalysis as 'postcolonising' reading practice

Psychoanalysis, as a means to understanding subjectivity, holds considerable cultural value within Western societies. Thus we often see psychoanalytic concepts used in television programmes to explain characters' motives, we may often talk to one another about the significance of our dreams, or we may attribute to others intent based on how we interpret their 'unconscious motives'. As a result of its relatively privileged location within the Australian vernacular, I would suggest that psychoanalysis may provide us with a means of further understanding how white subjectivities function within colonial nations such as Australia. In this way, psychoanalysis may be understood not simply as a description of the meaning-making practices of particular social groups, but rather I would suggest that in many

ways it makes possible these practices in ways that normalise, whilst rendering invisible, dominant forms of knowledge, thus lending them the appearance of universality (Parker, 1997; Riggs, 2004b). As a result, psychoanalysis may be read not as a tool for diagnosing the pre-existing problems of a cultural group or individual (as it is often commonly understood as doing), but instead may be seen as a cultural resource that prioritises particular moral and ethical understandings of 'the world'.

In this section I aim to demonstrate how psychoanalysis may thus be of use in rendering visible the 'epistemic violence' that structures white subjectivities in Western nations (Probyn, 2002). As a result, I focus on what I have referred to thus far as the ongoing practices of white violence, and the corollary denial of Indigenous sovereignty, both of which I understand as underpinning white belonging in Australia (see also Moreton-Robinson, 2000a; 2003; Nicoll, 2000). I propose that in contrast to traditional approaches to the study of racism within psychology, an understanding of psychoanalysis as a cultural resource may allow for a thoroughly social analysis of racism (cf., Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). Thus rather than starting from the presumption that racism results from the 'faulty cognitions' of 'bad racists', I seek to locate racism as a social practice that thoroughly saturates Western cultures (cf., Riggs & Selby, 2003). In this way, a psychoanalytic approach to understanding racism may allow for a more contextually located, and thus socially accountable, engagement with ongoing histories of colonisation in Australia.

I also seek to examine how psychoanalysis itself as a social practice may often contribute to the reassertion of white ways of knowing as universal. In contrast to this, I would propose that understanding psychoanalysis as a 'post-colonising' (Moreton-Robinson, 2003) reading practice, may enable a more transparent account of the ways in which it evidences the exclusionary practices of colonisation, and thus

may provide an analytic framework that can contribute to the destabilisation of the hegemony of whiteness.

Psychoanalysis and the critical psychological study of racism

Research in the area of critical psychology, and particularly that which falls broadly under the banner of discursive approaches, such as that of Parker (1997) and Billig (1997; 1998; 1999), has engaged in a reformulation of psychoanalysis, understood in their terms as a social practice that occurs between people in everyday talk, rather than as something that exists 'within people's heads'. Parker suggests that psychoanalysis, as a dominant mode of talking about and interpreting our experiences, holds considerable sway in Western cultures. He proposes that as a cultural resource, psychoanalysis makes available a range of subject positions (e.g., the neurotic, the hysteric), which shape how we understand ourselves and our relationships with other people. Parker also suggests that the somewhat ambivalent relationship that exists between the disciplines of psychoanalysis and psychology renders psychoanalysis a particularly useful tool for examining how understandings of 'the individual' that circulate in the discipline are made possible. In applying this to the example of racism, then, an understanding of psychoanalysis that examines how psychoanalytic concepts operate in our everyday lives may offer an alternative to the individualism that dominates psychological approaches to the study of racism by focusing on racism as a relational practice that shapes colonial nations such as Australia.

Billig (1999) develops this idea by suggesting that we can see the ways in which psychoanalysis as a cultural resource is enacted in everyday talk, and in particular in the ways in which conversations are based upon the exclusion (or repression) of

certain topics that are considered to be taboo (such as racism). In this regard, he proposes psychoanalysis as an example of a reading practice that renders visible how we 'do repression'. I take this account as one method that may be applied to the study of racism in colonial nations (see also Billig, 1997, on racism and psychoanalysis). In particular, I share Billig's view of psychoanalysis as holding a hegemonic position in Western cultures through a number of interconnected factors: 1) that Freud's development of psychoanalytic theory was in many ways determined by its location within the context of Austria in the early 20th century, and the rise of anti-Semitism, 2) that it thus provides a means to understanding the rhetorical strategies that manage the issues of self and other that arose from the practices of imperial expansion and colonialism, and 3) that psychoanalysis itself provides the means not only for rendering visible practices of repression, but also for masking its own agendas – not only does it reveal acts of repression, but it similarly shows us how to 'do repression'. As a result, psychoanalysis has become thoroughly institutionalised as a meaning making (rather than simply interpreting) practice, and one that contributes to, whilst also making possible the analysis of, enactments of 'racism-as-repression'.

In a similar approach to Billig's (1999), Frosh, Pheonix and Pattman (2000) employ a combination of discursive psychology and psychoanalysis in order to better understand how young masculinities are constructed through concurrent discourses of gender and race. From their analysis of the talk of a young, white, working class male, they suggest that '[white] identity is built on the basis of an occluded otherness...' (p. 234). In this way, they propose that it is useful to look at the range of contexts within which identities are structured, rather than simply relying on 'hidden processes' to explain practices of racism. Thus in their reading, racism presents a cultural resource that speakers draw upon in everyday talk, but at the same time it is a resource (or way of understanding the world) that is often repressed in order to

choose (for example) a 'non-racist subject position' (cf., Frosh et al., p. 226). In this way, Frosh et al. suggest that psychoanalysis may provide us with a means of understanding why people make these choices, and thus how they are invested in particular cultural frameworks and practices.

In slight contrast to this, I would suggest that the context of racism effectively works to deny choice – that in a society such as Australia, racism represents a foundational aspect of white subjectivities (see also Riggs & Selby, 2003). Thus race, as a network of power relations that constructs privilege and disadvantage, is a category that we automatically have a relation to – it would certainly be difficult for a white person in any Western country to claim a position 'outside' of racism. I would suggest that it may therefore be more productive to focus on how white people manage their complicity with racism, or their location in relation to particular social norms or taboos around race, rather than looking at why people 'choose' particular subject positions. Thus whilst still connecting with the suggestion of Frosh et al. (2000) that we need to understand people's investment in whiteness (for example), we may do this through a lens that recognises the formative aspects of racism that most often preclude choice (see also Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). Indeed, I would suggest that 'choice' is a difficult aspect to bring into any analysis of racism – how can we talk about 'choice' in ways that do not contribute to the denial of histories of colonial violence, and the erasure of Indigenous people?

This brief summary of how psychoanalysis has been used in critical/discursive approaches to the study of racism leads me to suggest my own approach in this regard. In the next section I will outline how I propose to use psychoanalysis as a 'postcolonising reading practice' for interrogating the ways in which white Australians talk about our belonging and location in Australia.

The repression of white violence

In explicating my own approach to using psychoanalysis as a reading practice, I follow in part from both Elliot (1996) and Nolan (2003), who have examined some of the complex ways in which psychoanalysis is implicated in the knowledge practices that have shaped racism in colonial nations. Their suggestion is not that we should engage in a naïve revisionist history of Freud that focuses on the ‘racism of psychoanalysis’ *per se*, nor do they attempt to excuse psychoanalysis or Freud from histories of racism. Rather, their intent (and one that I share) is to examine how these histories position psychoanalysis as a potential site for challenging racism. The question then, is how may psychoanalysis work to render visible the social practices of racism through the framework of psychoanalysis itself?

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud (1930) suggested that white civilisation (or more precisely, culture – see Parker, 1997, pp. 111-112 for a discussion of this), requires the repression of its foundational violence in order to institute a particular moral order, and moreover, to equate that moral order with a notion of ‘white good’. Thus Nolan (2003), in her analysis of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*, suggests that the simplistic claim of a ‘civilising mission’ (in regards to colonisation) should not be accepted, but rather that colonisation should be viewed as an act of aggression – as the psychological and physical displacement of Indigenous systems of representation (see also Moreton-Robinson, 2000a). Rhanjana Khanna (2003) proposes the concept of ‘worlding’ in order to explore how particular knowledge making practices are universalised through the subjugation of alternate knowledges. She suggests that the practices of worlding are “profoundly ideological” (p. 4) – that they are reliant upon the concealment of colonial violence in ways that justify white belonging whilst denying the acts of appropriation that shape practices of imperialism (see also

Probyn, 2002). To map this concept onto the Australian context, I would suggest that the form of 'worlding' that arose from colonisation was reliant upon the fiction of Terra Nullius – the presumption that only white ways of knowing about land and country were valid. Such presumptions continue to inform the ways in which the white Australian nation responds to the sovereignty of Indigenous people, and thus hold us in 'psychoanalytic-like relations' (cf., Parker, 1997), where the conflation of the subject positions 'white' with 'self' and 'Indigenous' with 'other' works to legitimise the unequal relations that exist between the two groups (a point that I will elaborate further in the next section, see also Riggs & Selby, 2003). To paraphrase Khanna, then, we may suggest then that the worlding of white morality works to normalise (or universalise) such understandings of morality so as to justify white violence against those who 'transgress' it. In this way, the incommensurability of white and Indigenous knowledges is used as a justification for the oppression of Indigenous people by positioning white ways of knowing as 'essentially good' (Probyn, 2002).

As a result, the disavowal of white violence since colonisation works to deny the agency of Indigenous people by attempting to subsume them within a white discourse of subject/object. Thus as Nolan (2003, p. 62) suggests: "For Freud, the 'primitive man' he is seeking to analyse [in *Totem and Taboo*] can only be perceived hauntingly through a complex series of relationships to Indigenous Australians who are made to stand near to, in for (represent), and be a well preserved image of the savagery of Europe's prior selves". In other words, the conflation of Indigenous people with the position of the other in psychoanalytic theory (as per Nolan's description) works to both recognise and deny difference by refuting Indigenous sovereignty (through recourse to Terra Nullius, as mentioned earlier). In a similar way, Elliot (1996) describes some of the ways in which people who are positioned as 'non-white' are routinely rendered invisible through the assertion of their location within the position of 'the other'. She suggests that this effects a double erasure of

Indigenous people – not only does it deny Indigenous resistances to colonisation (and thus denies the location of white people within a relation to Indigenous sovereignty; see Nicoll, 2004), but it also works to position Indigenous people as always already subsumed within white discourses of self. And this is precisely where I believe a psychoanalytic account of racism may be useful – to explore the commonplace ways in which white violence is disavowed, and how we may see this at work in the everyday talk and actions of white people

One way to achieve a destabilisation of existing psychological readings of racism (as elaborated in the introductory chapter) may be to utilise psychoanalysis as a ‘reading practice’ – a means to understanding how racism is managed in Western societies through acts such as those that may be termed ‘repression’. To summarise this term: my use of the term ‘repression’ in this thesis is intended to highlight how particular actions are routinely disavowed or explained away by white Australians. In particular, actions such as complicity with racism, the existence of white privilege, the relationship that those of us who identify as white have to Indigenous sovereignty, and the fact of ongoing histories of colonial violence, are all justified or disavowed (whilst still retaining a trace of their affect, as I elaborated earlier) through their repression in the everyday talk and actions of white people. As I will elaborate in the analysis chapters, this can be as simple as a blanket denial of a need for white accountability (as per Prime Minister Howard’s refusal to offer an apology to Indigenous people), or in the complex ways that white people talk about reconciliation that, in effect, often denies complicity. My aim in using the term repression is thus to look at how there always remains a trace of what is being repressed – the act of repression is always anxiety producing and it is to these sites of anxieties that I turn in the analyses that I provide.

Metalepsis and the justification of colonisation

One of the ways that I will attempt to 'get at' the anxiety produced by white repression is to focus on how history is constructed in markedly different ways according to how particular events are temporalised. Edelman (1991, p. 96) suggests that this is captured in the term 'metalepsis' – "the rhetorical substitution of cause for effect or effect for cause, a substitution that disturbs the relationship of early and late...". This concept of metalepsis will be an important psychoanalytic tool for use in the analysis chapters to come. I believe that it holds great potential for understanding how events 'in the past' are disconnected from events 'in the present' in order to deny white accountability for colonial violence. As I will suggest in the analysis chapters, the effects of metalepsis are evident when white people retrospectively attribute blame to Indigenous people for colonisation, or when white people routinely attempt to disavow their location within a racist society. A focus on the 'substitution of cause for effect' will afford me the possibility to examine the ways in which white acts of genocide and dispossession are managed through recourse to claims about 'Indigenous threat', which work to both deny white violence since colonisation, whilst simultaneously masking Indigenous agency by employing primitivism as a lens through which white people may interpret the resistances of Indigenous people (for more, see Riggs, 2004c, in relation to Keith Windschuttle's work on colonial violence, and Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004, in relation to discourses of 'Indigenous threat'). As I will go on to elaborate, psychoanalysis may thus be a useful tool for rendering visible ongoing acts of colonial violence.

So the question that arises now is: if psychoanalysis is often employed as a cultural resource to justify the erasure of Indigenous people, how can it possibly be used to challenge such understandings? I would suggest that the answer lies again in the

notion of metalepsis – if dominant (white) understandings of colonisation rely upon a relatively linear interpretation of the history of ‘white civilisation’, then the unsettling of this linearity may allow for the voicing of a critical reading of colonisation and racism in Australia. More specifically, psychoanalysis may provide a means to understanding texts in differing ways, so as to challenge the now/then understanding of cause and effect (Parker, 1997).

Drawing on these notions of ‘metalepsis’ and ‘constructions of the other’, I would suggest that some of the foundational tenets of psychoanalysis are directly applicable to the analysis of colonial nations, and thus, colonial subjectivities. The account of subjectivity as outlined throughout the work of Freud may be (very) roughly referred to as the practice of understanding how ‘past events’ have shaped ‘the present’. Thus the revealing of the ‘primal scene’ is taken as a key tool for understanding the complexes of adult experiences. This account may be translated into the colonial context, whereby it is only possible to understand how white subjectivities are constructed ‘in the now’ through recourse to the primal scene of colonial violence. I would suggest that we may locate this as being the context of Terra Nullius itself – if white belonging in Australia is predicated on the denial of Indigenous sovereignty, then how is this lack justified by us as white people in Australia currently?

This point brings up two interesting readings of white subjectivities that arise from a psychoanalytic understanding of racism. First, how are white subjectivities founded upon a particular form of us lack (as opposed to the lack that is foundation to all subjectivities, as theorised by Lacan) that is either played out as either racist violence, or the corollary denial of racism, and second, how does a psychoanalytic application of metalepsis trouble a straightforward account of white violence as occurring ‘back then’? As I will now discuss, the answer perhaps is that

psychoanalysis can direct our attention towards how racism operates at the level of the psyche (understood as previously outlined as a collective practice), and to help us understand what this means for how white subjectivities are formed in a relation to what may be termed 'the uncanny'.

'The postcolonial uncanny'

In her work on belonging in Australia, Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2003, p. 24) argues that: "Indigenous belonging challenges the assumption that Australia is postcolonial because our relation to land, what I call an ontological belonging, is omnipresent, and continues to unsettle non-Indigenous belonging based on illegal possession". Moreton-Robinson highlights the contested nature of the term 'postcolonial' in the Australian context, and its applicability to understanding the structure of racism in colonial nations. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the continued refusal to recognise the fact of Indigenous sovereignty, and the refusal of the current coalition government to offer an apology to Indigenous people or adequately engage with Indigenous claims to land rights. Most recently, this has been exemplified by the dismantling of ATSIC, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission³, whose role it has been to represent Indigenous people (by Indigenous people) within the government. Whilst a discussion of the implications of this decision are beyond the scope of this chapter, it should suffice to say that this decision on behalf of the government is but one example of the ongoing denial of Indigenous sovereignty.

These points about the status of Australia as a 'postcolonial' nation draws attention to the third psychoanalytic term in need of elaboration here, namely, the concept of 'the uncanny'. Freud's concept of the uncanny is, I believe, extremely useful for bringing

³ For more see <http://www.atsic.gov.au>

together the previous concepts of repression and metalepsis, and highlights that whilst such concepts help to elucidate how white privilege and violence is routinely disavowed in Australia, there are always effects that are visible as a result of such disavowal. To elaborate: Freud (1961, p. 220) suggested that uncanny experiences occur when something that we assume to be familiar is rendered unfamiliar. In their book titled *Uncanny Australia*, Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs (1998) suggest that this is also the case when something unfamiliar becomes familiar. In this sense the notion that white Australians are 'settled' is rendered uncanny when we look more transparently at histories of dispossession. Thus instead of assuming that white people are always already settled, it may be more productive to look at how white people are instead thoroughly unsettled – as being 'foreigners' to this land (cf., Kristeva, 1994; Moran, 2002). In this way, that which is unfamiliar – the 'foreign' – becomes the site where white Australians are located, rendering any feelings of settledness as uncanny.

In addition to this understanding of the uncanny, Freud (1961, p. 224) suggested that the uncanny "is the name for everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light". We may draw obvious parallels here with the ongoing histories of white violence (e.g., the forced removal of Indigenous children, land theft and the destruction of sacred sites), histories which have up until recently remained repressed in the white national psyche. Regardless of the justifications that been claimed for these actions, and their relegation to 'the past', the ongoing visibility of these practices renders uncanny white claims to benevolence (as I will elaborate in the following chapter). Instead the foundations of white belonging are re-presented as located upon acts of violence and negation.

One of the ways in which these uncanny experiences are managed (in order to bolster the hegemony of whiteness) is through the discourse of 'Indigenous threat'.

Elsewhere, I (along with Martha Augoustinos, 2004) have argued for one particular understanding of 'subjective investments in whiteness' as being managed through the projection of threat onto Indigenous people. Within these discursive practices, white violence is recast as a response to the *a priori* threat presented by Indigenous people (see also Clarke, 2002). Contemporary discourses of threat thus draw upon this positioning to justify white advantage through recourse to the 'threat' of Indigenous land claims (Nicoll, 1998). In this way, the uncanny effects of such land claims are blamed upon Indigenous people, thus making it possible for the white nation to ignore the fact that the uncanny is produced precisely by a lack of any 'true' white claim to land, rather than as a result of any justifiable or *a priori* sovereignty of white people.

Simon Clarke and Anthony Moran (2002) suggest that these uncanny effects of projection are also managed through the construction of Indigenous people (rather than white people) as the site of the uncanny. In this way, white feelings of foundational uncanniness are repressed. This construction of Indigenous people as uncanny is evident in discourses that suggest Indigenous people have 'lost their culture' and that 'urban Indigenous people no longer belong anywhere'. Such white discourses construct the uncanny situation whereby Indigenous people (who are taken as having a long-standing relationship with the land) are positioned as being unsettled – as having no belonging. In this way, the lack of belonging experienced by those of us who identify as white is repressed through being projected onto Indigenous people, the result being that our uncanny location in this country is masked. Such practices demonstrate the ways in which constructions of Indigenous people's presence as uncanny in fact reflect the unsettledness of white people in Australia. As such, these acts of repression are always at the borders of white identifications, threatening to reveal the instability of positioning (Stephenson, 2002) that shapes our subjectivities.

Having said this, Fiona Probyn (2002) points towards the ways in which the projection of the uncanny onto Indigenous people is rendered problematic if we turn to a consideration of white attempts at claiming 'indigenous status' in order to manage Indigenous land claims. For, if we are to understand that within white systems of representation there can be no claim to a normative white self without contrast to a non-white other, then any claims to 'becoming indigenous' in effect draw attention to the uncanny status of whiteness in Australia. Thus the proposition 'in order to belong we must become other' is disrupted when we are forced to recognise the location of Indigenous peoples themselves. This demonstrates what Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (2000, p. 84) refers to as the "lack of a lack": where the site of the other (which is either taken to be totally different from whiteness, or the site that white people aspire to be – to 'have indigenous belonging') is populated by a group of people who challenge the authority of whiteness, and demand recognition of their sovereignty in this land. In this way, Indigenous land claims render visible the uncanny status of white belonging, and generate an uncanny effect that unsettles white claims to 'indigenous status'. In these intersecting ways, white belonging is rendered uncanny – either through the revealing of whiteness as located upon Indigenous disadvantage, or through the challenge that Indigenous land claims present to the 'indigenising moves' of white people. The concept of the uncanny is thus an important term for challenging how white claims to belonging operate in Australia, as will be the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter summary

This chapter has set up an important framework for understanding how white people become intelligible racial subjects in Australia. In explicating how racialisation occurs

as a part of subjectification, I have demonstrated the central importance of understanding the purposes to which racial differences are used in Australia. In developing a psychoanalytic account of how racialisation operates in the service of white hegemony, I have highlighted some of the complex ways in which race is materialised, and have elaborated how white privilege most often serves to leave white people (in the eyes of white people) unmarked by race. This is in contrast to some of the types of psychological research highlighted in the previous chapter, where I suggested that some research on race in Australia by white psychologists tends towards only labelling non-white people as 'having race'. Similarly, in this chapter I have highlighted the need to understand racism not as a product of the 'faulty cognitions' of 'bad racists', but rather as foundational to white subjectivities in Australia. Also, in my philosophical and theoretical discussion of subjectification, I explored how Indigenous people are far from 'objects of power' in the Australian context, and instead reiterated the centrality of Indigenous sovereignty to the identity claims of white Australians, and the challenges that Indigenous people's "ontological relationship to country" continue to present to white hegemony.

My extended discussion of psychoanalysis as a 'postcolonising reading practice' will hopefully have provided the reader with an understanding of key terms such as 'repression', 'metalepsis', and 'the uncanny'. These terms, and others to be introduced in the next chapter, will be central to the analyses that I provide in later chapters. Understanding the complex relationships that exist between psychoanalysis, racism and subjectification will be central in the development of a critical psychological account of racism. As I will elaborate in the following chapter, this entails an understanding of how discourses of benevolence often work in the service of white belonging in Australia, yet will highlight that they are always incomplete in their role in repressing white violence. By focusing on how white belonging is founded upon anxiety, the following chapter will draw the reader's

attention to the dilemmas that arise for white people when attempting to engage in anti-racist practice, particularly if such practice is not based upon an adequate theorisation of power, privilege and their operations through racialised difference. To talk of the relationship between benevolence, belonging and the repression of white violence in the following chapter will thus introduce more thoroughly to the reader the central argument of this thesis – that white violence is never truly repressed, that white belonging is never fully claimed, and that white people often engage in epistemic violence at precisely the moment where we set out to ‘do good’.

‘Good white people’ and belonging in Australia

In this chapter I will further elaborate on the insights afforded us through the framework of psychoanalysis provided in the previous chapter. More specifically, I will provide a psychoanalytic account of how white people living in Australia who set out to ‘do good’ (what I term ‘benevolence’) often enact forms of colonial violence as a result of exercising their race privilege at the very moment when they engage in anti-racist practice. Moreover, and as Jennifer Ruthford (2002, p. 81) suggests in her work on the One Nation party, “unseemly events that may have happened are [viewed as] the result of good intention gone awry”. In other words, not only is benevolence deployed when white people claim to be acting from good intentions ‘in the present’, but it is also used to retrospectively attribute good intentions to the actions of white Australians ‘in the past’. Discourses of benevolence, I would suggest, are thus thoroughly imbricated in the machinations of power in colonial nations such as Australia.

In order to provide further scaffolding for the analysis chapters that follow, in this chapter I elaborate on this notion of benevolence and its location in racialised networks of power, and connect it to an examination of how belonging is claimed by white people in Australia. In part, my suggestion is that white belonging is in many ways a product of discourses of benevolence – to claim to be ‘acting out of good intentions’ allows white people to disavow ongoing acts of white violence and thus feel somewhat more settled (or less uncanny) in claiming to belong. The act of claiming a position of belonging is therefore, in my opinion, one that enacts considerable epistemic violence – it often involves the repression of colonial histories (and the complicity of white people in them), and also often displays metaleptic

effects, where white belonging is depicted as being under threat by Indigenous people, actions that again deny the role of white people in colonising violence.

To speak of benevolence and belonging in the same sentence is thus to evoke a stance on racism and power in Australia that refuses to separate out 'good anti-racists' from 'bad racists', and which instead examines how all of us who identify as white are complicit with privilege and oppression. Whilst, as I will highlight in this chapter (and elaborate in the analyses that follow), claims to benevolence involve powerful rhetorical ploys aimed at denying complicity, there is always a trace of complicity that remains – repression is never a complete act. By outlining how benevolence circulates as a discourse in Australia, I will demonstrate how the management of racism and race privilege need not be understood as the work of individual white people who hold particular 'faulty cognitions', but rather it is a commonplace form of accounting for the foundational nature of racism in Australia.

Benevolence/repression

In regards to understanding benevolence within a psychoanalytic framework, I take as useful the work of Jennifer Rutherford (2002) and Ghassan Hage (1998), in their suggestion that discourses of the 'good white nation' are constructed through recourse to notions of white benevolence (see also Riggs, 2004a; b). Both Rutherford and Hage suggest that enactments of the subject position 'good white person' work to repress histories of genocide and dispossession by positioning white Australians as holders of the national good. Yet such acts of repression must be continually reiterated in order to manage the unsettling that is produced when Indigenous people speak back about their own experiences of colonisation. Thus as Hage suggests, it is precisely at the point where those constructed as the racialised other challenge the

hegemony of whiteness that the moral imperative of the good nation is reasserted. Likewise, Rutherford proposes that enactments of white morality are always already enactments of white aggression – as attempts at maintaining white dominance and reasserting an *a priori* right to white sovereignty. One of the ways in which this aggression is repressed is through it being projected outside of whiteness. The construction of Indigenous people as being a threat to the safety of white people, communities and cultures is a typical example of this (Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). Yet, following Freud (1961), I would suggest that the uncanny effects that are produced when the white nation attempts to pass off histories of white violence as a natural response to the threat of Indigenous violence demonstrate the paradoxical nature of white belonging in this country (see also Riggs, 2005b). As I will now discuss, these enactments of repression and projection are evident in the discourses of benevolence that are often drawn upon by those of us who identify as white in Australia.

Benevolence as a practice of race privilege

As I have already indicated, benevolence produces a number of rhetorical effects in relation to white belonging in Australia. Historically, benevolence has been employed as a means to justify white invasion. For example, discourses of 'saving the native' were deployed to claim a 'need' for whites to engage in 'helping the other' (Samson, 2002). In this way, the destruction or denial of Indigenous cultures was justified rhetorically through recourse to the 'civilising mission' – it was the 'white person's burden' to bring religion (and thus presumably 'culture') to Indigenous people. Yet, I would suggest that such practices are not simply the product of the times in which they occurred. Rather, they are but one point in an ongoing process of management that is aimed at constructing a foundational claim for white sovereignty (see also

Jolly, 1993). These points about 'helping the other' are poignantly captured in the oft cited statement from Lila Watson (1992), Indigenous activist and educator:

If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, let's work together (p. 1).

As Watson suggests, the well-meaning intentions of those of us working in the area of anti-racism are rendered problematic when viewed within the broader framework of colonisation. Thus, as Jane Samson (1998, p. 175) proposes in her research on imperialism and the work of white missionaries; "one person's humanitarian intervention is another's neocolonialism".

As a result of this understanding of how 'good intentions' circulate in colonial nations, and when looking at benevolence as a site for understanding some of the operations of whiteness, I would suggest that rather than employing a 'narrative of progression' in relation to 'white good', where colonisation is positioned as happening 'back then' (which thus suggests that those of us who are white are now 'more enlightened'), I would instead propose that there is a 'continuum of benevolence' through which white belonging is managed. In this way, colonisation may be seen as an ongoing process, something that is evident in much of the current coalition government's rhetoric around reparation and land rights for Indigenous people. In other words, whilst white benevolence may take many different forms according to its location within particular historical or spatial contexts, it is always already an act of white privilege that perpetuates oppressive practices against Indigenous people (see also Hage, 1998).

In order to manage the existence of such oppression, the violence of colonisation is repressed within white nationalist discourse through recourse to benevolence as a

foundational trope. For, if it can be demonstrated that white people have long been engaged in 'acts of generosity' towards Indigenous people, then our location within Australia is presumed to be less problematic. Indeed, as an ongoing tool of repression, white benevolence works to continually reassert the moral good of white people in their relations with Indigenous people. Such assumptions, however, ignore the power relations that are endemic to practices of benevolence. Thus, as Susan Ryan (2000) suggests, benevolence is an inherently hierarchical practice – it is based on the presumption that certain groups of people can determine the moral worth or authenticity of groups of people who are deemed to be in need of assistance. Indeed, I would agree with Ryan in her suggestion that benevolence is also implicitly a racialised practice – that due to its location within histories of racialised hierarchies, the role of the good person is reserved predominantly for white people. As a result, the category 'good white person' works to a) attribute moral worth to white people, b) reinforce the power dynamics that structure race as a category of difference and c) mask such power relations by drawing on benevolence as a practice of altruism.

These three points demonstrate the ways in which discourses of benevolence are implicitly aimed at managing the agency of those people positioned as the racialised other. In Australia, this translates into a range of practices that are designed to limit the authority of Indigenous people and manage the challenges that Indigenous people may present to the hegemony of whiteness. Yet, having said that, I would suggest that rather than denying Indigenous agency, white practices of benevolence demonstrate the anxieties that result from the relationship that white people always already have with Indigenous sovereignty. Thus instead of managing Indigenous agency, white benevolence, quite unintentionally, renders visible the unstable foundations of white belonging. Thus as I suggested in the previous chapter, repression is always an incomplete act – that which is being repressed always

threatens to re-emerge, and as a result there is always considerable emotional and psychological work involved in maintaining acts of repression.

Claims to white belonging

In this section I will outline some of the ways in which white Australians lay claim to belonging in this country, and I highlight how this is often reliant upon particular forms of identification that are not only racialised (as I outlined in the previous chapter), but are also spatialised – they are contingent upon particular place-based affinities. This may of course seem like a rather banal statement – there is nothing inherently problematic about claiming to belong to somewhere we feel to be familiar. Yet we only need to reflect on the location of white people in Australia as living upon land that is ‘illegally possessed’ (Moreton-Robinson, 2003) to see such claims to belonging as being inherently problematic.

In looking at how place and belonging are racialised, then, I will develop further my argument about how benevolence operates to mask the uneasy foundations of white belonging. In so doing, I will draw attention to some of the instabilities that often arise when those of us who identify as white talk about or claim belonging, and I will again highlight how this signals our uncanny location as racialised subjects in Australia. This will allow me to further elaborate on how white subjectivities are formed in a relationship to racialised violence, and to demonstrate how white subjectivities are always already unsettled.

Spatialised identifications: Claiming self/claiming place

In an incisive paper on white belonging, Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos (2004) suggest that white subjectivities demonstrate an 'ontological disturbance' – that any possibility for belonging as a white person in Australia is thoroughly unsettled by the relationship that white people have with Indigenous sovereignty. From this I would suggest that attempts by the white nation to subsume Indigenous people within the position of the other may be understood in effect to undermine claims to white belonging. To elaborate: Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos suggest that in order for white people to belong, we require the recognition of our 'right to belong' at an ontological level. Yet, if the sovereignty of Indigenous people is denied, there can be no possibility of such recognition for white people by those who would be in a position to recognise us as subjects-who-belong. As a result, and as I believe a psychoanalytic reading of colonisation demonstrates, white violence is an ongoing practice that is directed at managing this ontological disturbance, so as to deny the agency of Indigenous people, and thus position the white nation as its own point of recognition – as an *a priori* sovereign power (as Terra Nullius would have us believe). Yet, if we are to understand white subjectivities as founded upon this lack of belonging, or more specifically, through a lack of any recognition of a 'right to belong', then the 'ontological disturbance' that constitutes white subjectivities produces a white subject who is always already anxious. Having said that, there is obviously an uncanny relationship that exists between the foundational lack of white subjectivities and the hegemony of whiteness in this country. The question, then, is how is it that white people continue to benefit from unearned race privilege, despite our rather anxious location in relation to histories of place?

Jacques Rancière (1994) suggests that the anxieties surrounding a lack of belonging are repressed through recourse to spatialisation as an identificatory practice. In other words, through the production of a range of discourses that simulate the 'settledness' of white national identity (e.g., an emphasis on white 'achievements' in relation to: war ['the digger'], agriculture ['the pastoralist'] and 'over-coming the harsh environment' ['the battler']), it has been possible for white subjectivities to be shaped through a notion of place and belonging (Moran, 2002; Moreton-Robinson, 2003). In this way 'settler belonging' is premised on what Fiona Probyn (2002, p. 75), following Spivak, terms 'epistemic violence'. Such acts work to mask colonial violence against Indigenous people, and thus allows for the rewriting of white history as the 'peaceful settlement' of an uninhabited land (see Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Riggs, 2004c, for more on this in regards to the Windschuttle debates).

This point demonstrates the ongoing connections between the ideologies of Terra Nullius and the identificatory practices of white people. Whilst Terra Nullius may have been challenged as a justification for refusing land rights claims to Indigenous peoples, this has not translated into the contestation of Terra Nullius as a social practice that informs white spatialised identifications (cf., Moran, 2002). Indeed, such identifications may be understood in many ways as being reinforced by the High Court's verdicts – whilst the outcomes may be viewed as a step towards recognising the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, the verdicts nonetheless serve to enshrine white ways of knowing *a priori* as being an objective measure of what is classified as place and belonging. Thus as Moreton-Robinson (2004b) suggests, refusals to recognise Indigenous land rights, both pre- and post- *Mabo*², demonstrate the tight grip that the white nation maintains in regards to defining who can, and who cannot, possess land. Thus, as an ongoing practice of colonisation, Terra Nullius continues to exist as an *a priori* justification for the 'settledness' of white subjectivities. In denying the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, the white nation can therefore

continue to employ discourses of place to bolster its hold upon land (cf., Nicoll, 1998).

Yet at the same time, such attempts at managing place only serve to render visible the contingent nature of white identificatory practices. Rather than simply reasserting white dominance, they render visible the anxieties that shape any sense of white belonging. Thus as Judith Butler (1993) suggests in regards to identificatory practices, a reliance upon the binaries of self and other (as underpinning white subjectivities) leaves identities that are founded through such practices open to the unsettling that arises from the presence of those people positioned as the excluded other. As I suggested in the previous chapter, and following Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (2000), I would propose this 'lack of a lack' to be one site where whiteness is rendered most visibly uncanny. Whilst the constant reiteration of white subjectivities serves to create a semblance of reality (i.e., the fixity of identities), this is only the case if those people positioned as the other to the white self can be adequately kept 'within the frame' of white histories (Chow, 1994; Riggs, 2004d). When there is a 'failure of positioning', in that Indigenous people, for example, challenge the dominance of white systems of representation, then the practices of repression that attempt to mask white violence are revealed. And it is here that the uncanny effects of white belonging are exposed – that those of us who identify as white people are shown to be claiming a position of belonging that is made possible only through the denial of our previous location(s), and the dis-location of Indigenous people.

Belonging and 'placialised' binaries

As I have just outlined, white subjectivities may usefully be understood as structured through spatialised practices of identification. In this way, the binaries of here and

there, self and other, are made possible through the privileging of location; both the site of subjectivity as being within individual bodies, and as such bodies being located within particular places. In her work on the 'ethics of travel', Seshadri-Crooks (2002) outlines some of the ways in which these practices of identification are reliant upon the privileging of a very specific form of white knowing about place: the association made between ownership, belonging and self. Seshadri-Crooks suggests that rather than repeating this form of knowing by accepting a simplistic understanding of the uncanny effects of white belonging as produced through the conflation of the here and there (i.e., the familiar and the unfamiliar), we need to better understand how belonging may be understood in ways that challenge such white assumptions of ownership. To state this point more strongly: I would suggest that in order to thoroughly unsettle claims to white belonging, we need to render uncanny the very concept of location itself, rather than solely conceiving particular locations as being uncanny (where the location itself is a taken for granted object). What this requires, then, is the challenging of what I will term 'placialised binaries'. Here I refer to the intricate ways in which racialised practices are connected to discourses of place to produce an understanding of white belonging as predicated upon a purported *a priori* white sovereignty. In other words, as the normative subject position within racialised hierarchies, whiteness is accorded a relatively invisible location for white people. This 'invisibility of race' in the eyes of white people thus translates into an explicit visibilisation of race for those people positioned as the racialised other (as I suggested in the introductory chapter in regards to the ways that white psychologists in Australia at times talk about race). In these very complex ways, white belonging is made to appear as if it is always already located upon a universal sense of place – that it is the 'natural right' of white people to assume ownership of land (Moreton-Robinson, 2003). Of course, the corollary of this is that Indigenous people (for example) are positioned as 'lacking' this sort of belonging – as being ineligible to claim the status of 'land-holder'. This demonstrates the ways in

which racialised binaries construct specific understandings of place in colonial nations. In order to unsettle the dominance of such white ways of knowing, it is thus necessary to render visible the limits (and uneasy foundations) of such identificatory practices. To do this I will provide a brief example from the text mentioned in the previous chapter: *Uncanny Australia*. I do this not to critique the text *per se*, but rather to demonstrate how normative notions of place are ingrained in the writings of white people, and how they limit the challenges that those of us who identify as white may make to oppressive practices in Australia.

In the conclusion to their book, Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs (1998, p. 138) suggest that "in an uncanny Australia, one's place is always already another's place and the issue of possession is never complete, never entirely settled". They go on to state that "one can never be completely in possession of place: one is always (dis)possessed, in the sense that neither possession nor dispossession is a fully realisable category". What these quotes suggest to me is that for the authors the realisation of categories of possession and place could be a potential end point for managing a desire for 'settledness'. This demonstrates one of the assumptions that shape white discourses of belonging: whilst Gelder and Jacobs acknowledge the ways in which "one's place is always already another's place", this is predicated upon the belief that place *should* be conflated with possession. What this engenders is an understanding of white belonging as unsettled by our inability to 'own place' due to the prior 'claims to land' of Indigenous people, rather than focusing on how this very understanding of place is structured through acts of dispossession.

Such notions of place and possession also serve in many ways to claim a metonymic relationship between a white 'lack of possession' and Indigenous dispossession, thus ignoring the assumptions of place that have driven imperialism. The point, then, is that whilst throughout their book Gelder and Jacobs (1998) outline the uncanny

effects of white belonging, they fall short of taking the necessary step required to outline what this means for the hegemonic status of white understandings of belonging. The problem, then, is that this may be read as translating into the reassertion of white ways of knowing, and a somewhat naïve understanding of the disjunctures between white and Indigenous belonging. Such an approach serves to minimise the incommensurability of belonging that has shaped the histories of white Australia through acts of dispossession and genocide, and instead recuperates Indigenous belonging into notions of white national belonging through the appropriation of indigeneity as an accessible category for white people.

Points such as these in regards to appropriation highlight the problems that arise from white people in Australia attempting to speak about Indigenous belonging. To speak of Indigenous belonging on the same terms as that of white belonging is to miss the point not only that Indigenous sovereignty always already exceeds white claims to belonging and ownerships, but also that Indigenous sovereignty and belonging can not be understood in terms of ownership as typically defined by white people. Whilst of course it is true that Indigenous people do own land in the sense of possession through property purchase, and whilst Indigenous land claims are required to go through the white court system in order to 'prove' that native title exists, these two types of Indigenous ownership and belonging should not be equated with an Indigenous ontological relationship to land. As Moreton-Robinson (2003) points out, when Indigenous people speak of land and belonging, this is not done so as to evoke a form of 'strategic essentialism' (as some white academics have suggested to be the case). Rather, the relationship that Indigenous people have to land is one that exists within an Indigenous ontology of place – one that is founded upon an Indigenous-specific understanding of ownership. Not only can this form of ownership not be overwritten by white claims to ownership, but it cannot be interpellated into a white understanding of place and ownership.

Of course we can see from this how such claims may be appropriated or used rhetorically to justify oppression – people living in countries outside Australia could apply this logic to claim the right to exclude other people from belonging, or to justify violence or oppression by claiming that 'we were here first'. Whilst it is no doubt true that people locally and internationally could do just that, and whilst it is something that makes it all the more difficult for *white people* to speak about Indigenous belonging and ownership, I would suggest that we should not resort to yet again attempting to locate Indigenous belonging and ontology within a white field of knowledge – even if the aim is only to prevent Indigenous claims to ontological belonging being used to oppressive ends by people living in other countries. Understanding the specific context in Australia within which Indigenous belonging and ownership exists (as I elaborated in Chapter Two) is thus an important tool in countering accusations of essentialism. Countering such claims by reasserting a white interpretation of place (and by implication asserting an Indigenous form of placialised subjectivity) may do very little to a) understand how Indigenous sovereignty exists a priori to white claims to sovereignty, and thus b) challenge the everyday ways in which white belonging is claimed through violence.

What this illustrates is the need for the ongoing problematisation of white ways of knowing, and the continued examination of how the spatialisation of white identities is produced. Importantly, we need to focus on the uncanny effects of white belonging in order to highlight the limits (and location) of white understandings of place and belonging. One site where we may challenge the placialised binaries of white belonging is in the paradox that structures white claims to location (and thus claims to ownership). Even though white belonging is constructed through universalised assumptions of white superiority (which are most often voiced at the level of the nation), it is also premised on an understanding of white subjectivities as grounded in particular places. These dual locations may thus be understood as compromising the

binaries of Indigenous-local/white-universal that constitute white claims to belonging (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002). Whilst such 'localising of whiteness' may be understood as premised upon its implicit power to universalise, it is nonetheless the case that whiteness also requires identificatory practices that operate at a local level, and which in some way requires a foregoing of the universal in order to lay claim to place. These uncanny aspects of white belonging thus forever unsettle white subjectivities. What they also make obvious are the anxieties that shape the white nation, and the limits to the placialised binaries that inform white hegemony. If we are instead to recognise the uncanny foundations of white identifications in this country, then the binaries of local/universal become more transparently the machinations of imperialism, and thus evidence a desire to enforce boundaries that are always already impossible.

In these ways, and as both Moreton-Robinson (2003) and Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos (2004) suggest, the denial of Indigenous sovereignty is an attempt at claiming some form of white ontological belonging in Australia. Yet, as they also suggest, claims to postcoloniality are troubled by the location of white people in Australia through ongoing histories of white violence. What is required, then, is a brief explication of how the term postcolonial represents a disjuncture in the context of white belonging in Australia, before I move on to conclude with some of the implications for white subjectivities in Australia in light of the previous discussions of benevolence, belonging and the repression of white violence.

'Postcolonising' subjectivities

The use of the term 'postcolonising' within this text is derived from the work of Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2003). Moreton-Robinson suggests

that she uses “the verb postcolonizing to signify the active, the current and the continuing nature of the colonizing relationship that positions [Indigenous people] as belonging but not belonging” (p. 38). Moreton-Robinson contrasts this with the more common term ‘postcolonial’, which she suggests is not appropriate in the Australian context, as “Indigenous belonging challenges the assumption that Australia is postcolonial because [Indigenous] relation to land... [what Moreton-Robinson terms an ‘ontological belonging’] is omnipresent, and continues to unsettle non-Indigenous belonging based on illegal dispossession” (p. 24). Moreton-Robinson’s term thus draws attention to ongoing contestations over definitions in Australia, and evidences the limitations that arise if white scholars continue to ignore Indigenous sovereignties in our work on race and whiteness.

Moreton-Robinson’s (2003) statements demonstrate that whilst a view of history that denies white violence holds sway in Australia within the current political climate, it is by no means the only understanding of colonisation available. Indeed, in working within a context of Indigenous sovereignty, the term ‘postcolonising’ has many advantages. What it points towards is that whilst the white nation may continue to engage in practices that oppress Indigenous people (and repress white violence), the challenge of Indigenous sovereignty is one that cannot be simply dismissed (see also Nicoll, 2004). Moreover, I would suggest that from this perspective acts of repression are rendered more obviously attempts at reasserting white hegemony, and can thus be seen as destabilising claims to the *a priori* sovereignty of white people.

Thus if we are to return to the previous chapter’s points on psychoanalysis and colonisation, we may see that the denial of Indigenous sovereignty is predicated upon the denial of white lack. In this way, the temporality of colonisation is unsettled through the metalepsis of white violence – not only does white violence continue to occur, but retrospective acts of epistemic violence continue to construct colonisation

as 'free of violence', a claim that is used to justify white invasion (see also Riggs, 2004a). Yet, if we are to read colonisation through psychoanalysis, by reading backwards and across histories, it may be possible to see how a) white narratives of the present are located upon a range of assumptions about responsibility (or the denial of it), and similarly, b) these assumptions have formed the basis of white belonging since colonisation, in ways that continue to affect how we understand our location as white people now (Allen, 2003). Thus, rather than accepting a straightforward definition of the 'post-colonial', we may employ psychoanalysis as a means to understanding a 'continuum of colonisation' that, read through metalepsis, allows for a reading of the past and present as mutually constituted through the repression of white violence.

In summary, then, to identify as white in Australia, and to enjoy the unearned privileges that accompany this racialised location, is to forever occupy an unsettled relationship to belonging. Whilst a wide range of rhetorical ploys may be drawn upon to refute Indigenous sovereignty or claim a right to belong as white people (as I will elaborate in the following chapters), such claims never fully account for the effects of colonisation and the fact of white violence. As I will suggest in the final section of this chapter, this inability to fully claim a position of belonging produces a melancholic white subject whose engagement in acts of repression may be read as a symptom of the psychic life of colonial power, founded as it is upon disavowal of colonial violence.

On racial melancholia

I begin this section with some definitions. In his 1917 essay on 'Mourning and Melancholia', Freud proposed two distinctly different forms of grief: the first –

mourning – involves the acceptance of a certain loss, and the acknowledgment that that which is lost can be relinquished. Mourning is a process that leads to acceptance in Freud's understanding. Melancholia, however, is less about acceptance (in terms of 'moving on'), and more about a refusal to let go of that which has been lost. This results in a form of psychic consumption, where the lost object is 'taken in' – it is retained by the melancholic subject and incorporated into (or perhaps indeed instantiates) their sense of self. Whilst this may produce a subject who appears to have come to terms with their loss, it in fact demonstrates a subject who continues to seek nourishment from that loss – the lost object becomes central to who they are. Yet Freud does not stop there. He proposes not only that the lost object becomes central to the psychic life of the melancholic subject, but that this subject moves not from dissatisfaction to satisfaction as a result of the incorporation of the lost object, but rather to greater dissatisfaction and resentment for the feelings of loss towards the object that accrue. In other words, as the melancholic subject grows to resent the object for being lost, they too become to resent that aspect of themselves – one that may well be foundational to their sense of self. Thus as Anne Anlin Cheng (2001) suggests,

The melancholic is stuck in more ways than just temporally: he or she is stuck – almost choking on – the hateful and loved thing that he or she has devoured (p. 9).

As a result, the melancholic subject in effect turns against themselves – they cannot be free of what they have incorporated, cannot let go of their grief, and thus must find ways of repressing or disavowing their melancholic position.

In her text *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler (1997) suggests that the effects of melancholia thus in part instigate the illusory binary of internal and external: the

incorporation of a lost object produces a psychic space which is claimed as internal – as the property of the melancholic subject. In this sense, such a subject is produced only through its relationship to loss – to claim to be a subject founded upon loss is to always already be reliant upon the lost object itself. Obvious parallels may be drawn here between the racialisation of white subjectivities as I outlined in the previous chapter, and the denial of Indigenous sovereignty in Australia. In other words, not only are white enactments of repression aimed at managing the very fact of Indigenous sovereignty (i.e., to deny its existence), but this is done to repress the primary fact that the incorporation of an originary lost object occurs even before the white subject speaks or knows. Part of the effects of metalepsis in the context of white violence is to substitute cause for effect: to deny that anything has been lost in the first place, and to project that loss onto another group of people.

Of course it is somewhat a dubious task to simplistically attribute melancholia to white subjectivity – this proposal does indeed sit well with my overall thesis in this text, but it requires far greater elaboration in order to more clearly examine precisely how melancholia may work in the context of white subjectivities in Australia, and how this may lead us to particular assessments of how racism works in the service of white hegemony. In her text *The Melancholy of Race*, Cheng (2001) proposes that part of the reason why certain groups of people are positioned as racialised others is because of their refusal to be incorporated. It is far easier for the white nation to position those who are not white as lost objects who are themselves melancholic subjects, rather than acknowledging the opposite – that the production of a certain lost object instead signals the failure of white systems of representation to fully encompass or subsume all groups of people at all times.

Perhaps the clearest instance of this failure can be seen in the dogged adherence to the fiction of Terra Nullius, both in land rights cases, where white laws continue to be

used to deny Indigenous ownership (Moreton-Robinson, 2004b), and in the social structuring of Terra Nullius as a founding myth of the white nation. As I suggested earlier in this chapter, the assumption of Terra Nullius continues to inform much of government policy around Indigenous rights (where Indigenous rights are seen as 'special interests', rather than as *a priori* rights to sovereignty), and in the ways in which white people talk about and represent Indigenous people (as somehow undeserving of rights). These are issues that I will return to in the following chapter, but it should suffice to say here that the construction of this land called Australia as itself always already a lost object – as something that was claimed at the same time as it was not available for the claiming – continues to haunt the white nation. In this regard, both Cheng (2001) and Butler (1997) suggest that the notion of melancholia is inherently connected to place, belonging and ownership. Butler suggests that “melancholia produces a set of spatializing tropes for psychic life” (p. 171), whilst Cheng suggests that much like melancholia:

the racial question is an issue of *place*... Segregation and colonialism are internally fraught institutions not because they have eliminated the other but because they need the very thing they hate or fear (p. 12).

Butler's statement points us towards the important effects that result from the types of psychic life that are valorised within white Western cultures. The notion of the autonomous individual under neo-liberalism is one of a subject who claims themselves *for themselves*: the white individual subject is self-possessing, belonging to itself, and in control of itself. To claim a place as a white subject is thus to claim entitlement to place itself. Melancholia in this sense works in the service of the white nation, where a psychic life can be claimed on behalf of the nation and its (white) subjects that is all encompassing, all knowing and irrefutable. Yet, as Cheng suggests, these claims are made not because the white nation has actually succeeded in actually achieving its

claims to irrefutability – far from it. Rather, what is being repressed – what has been lost – is the very ability to be free of that which it hates or fears: that which cannot be incorporated. Thus whilst the white nation may disclaim any notion of melancholia as part of its existence, such melancholia is central to its very claims to sovereignty. Thus we could infer that to be an intelligible white subject (in addition to all that I proposed in the previous chapter), is to be a melancholic subject.

This is one point where we may also see the uncanny effects of white claims to belonging, particularly as they exist in a relationship to the refutation of Indigenous people's rights to belonging. Similar to Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos' (2004) notion of the 'onto-pathology' of white subjectivities, the incorporation not only of Indigenous people as objects lost to the nation, but also of the loss of belonging that was brought into being by white people in the fiction of Terra Nullius, translates into a form of melancholia that can do nothing but continually enact the incorporation of its lost objects. These points about the melancholic white subject of course hold important implications for how we understand the operations of racialised power networks in Australia. As Cheng (2001) suggests, "The model of melancholic incorporation, far from prescribing or reifying the conditions of the racial other, reveals an intricate world of psychical negotiation that unsettles the simplistic division between power and powerlessness" (p. xi). Importantly (particularly for my argument about the notion of a 'psychic life' referring not to internal mechanisms as per the tenets of mainstream psychology, but rather as social practices designed to produce a distinction between 'interior' and 'exterior'), she also suggests that "racial melancholia serves not as a description of the feeling of a group of people but as a theoretical model of identity" (p. xi). As I have reiterated numerous times within this thesis already, to be an intelligible white subject is not to be any particular type of person as a result of the feelings that we hold, but rather to be produced precisely because of our location in the context of a nation that is itself founded on particular

sentiments. Whilst these sentiments may be inherently ambivalent (in that the white nation is reliant upon the incorporation of lost objects that it continually repudiates), there is nonetheless a certain national sentiment that we may refer to as melancholic.

This suggests to me a return to my earlier discussion of benevolence, where I proposed that discourses of benevolence or acts of 'white good' are always already enactments of repression in the face of anxieties over white belonging. To be a melancholic subject produced in a relation to a constitutive loss is to be entrapped in a paradoxical relationship to oneself: to be forever engaged in both disavowing one's own violent histories, whilst claiming for oneself a positive sense of racial identity (in order to legitimate privilege). Acts of benevolence may thus be read as attempts at accounting for this paradox – by claiming to act from benevolence, by attributing to oneself a position of inherent goodness, those of us who identify as white may be able to perpetuate a belief in our right to belong. The flaw of course in this logic is that without acknowledgment, without recognition of our inability to belong at an ontological level, no quantity of benevolent acts can overcome the knowledge of histories of white violence, nor the fact of Indigenous sovereignty. And as deterministic as this account of white subjectivities may appear, it is one place where I believe we may start from in order to understand why discourses of benevolence are deployed, and how they continue to evidence the 'anxiety of whiteness'.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have made the necessary move from the previous chapter, in which I theorised one particular psychoanalytic understanding of how white subjectivities are racialised, towards an understanding of how this may look in practice. In other words, having developed a philosophic framework within which to understand part of the

reason why racism operates as it does in colonial nations, and how it works in the service of white privilege, I have now elaborated what this may mean in the lives of white people living in Australia. The implications that I have pointed towards are indeed immense: they suggest that claims to white belonging represent a constitutional impossibility. Whilst of course white people can and do continue to assert our right to belonging and to ownership, this, I have proposed, may be seen as forever unsettled. This does not mean that white people don't currently enjoy immense privileges that arise from the fact that we claim to belong. Nor are my suggestions intended to excuse white people who may feel disenfranchised or excluded from belonging (claims that I will consider further in the chapters to come). Rather, my point is that things are not always what they seem to be. The white nation may appear to be coherent, or stable, or unmarked by race, but in actuality it is an always incomplete project, one that continues to founder on the fiction of Terra Nullius and the repression of white violence.

This chapter has opened up a way for understanding how we may take the philosophical and theoretical claims from the previous chapter, and apply them to looking at how white belonging is claimed in Australia. Thus rather than simply seeking to diagnose 'bad racists', or to attribute racism as an 'intention' of certain white people, my aim has been to use this chapter as a stepping stone to engaging in a philosophical analysis of how discourses of benevolence work at the level of the psyche – how they evidence the everyday repression of white violence. In the following two chapters I thus take up this call by looking at some of the complex ways in which those of us who identify as white talk about belonging, talk about racism, and account for colonisation. As I have already suggested, this often happens precisely when white people set out to 'do good' – the melancholic nature of our location as intelligible subjects continually reveals itself in the claims that we make.

5

‘Special interests’, land rights and the management of race privilege

In this first analysis chapter I examine some of the ways in which claims to white belonging are substantiated in two interconnected ways: through the construction of Indigenous people as having ‘special issues’ that are seen to warrant ‘unfair advantages’, and through the corollary positioning of Indigenous people as a threat to lives of ‘good white Australians’. In order to elaborate how these types of constructions demonstrate some of the work of white repression, I focus in this chapter on two data sites: Prime Minister Howard’s Menzies lecture (2000), and some extracts of talk from a focus group with white Australians, conducted in 1995, a time of unprecedented public debate over land rights and colonisation. Both of these sites, I will suggest, highlight some of the commonplace strategies used to deny white violence, and to also refute the fact of Indigenous sovereignty. By focusing on how benevolent rhetoric is deployed in Howard’s speech, and on how Indigenous people are constructed as ‘threats’ in the talk of white Australians, I will elaborate on my suggestions in earlier chapters on how race privilege and racism are accounted for in Australia.

Of key importance to this chapter (alongside the theoretical and philosophical framework that I have developed in this thesis thus far) is the work of Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004b) on the ‘possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty’. In her keenly theoretical analysis of the Yorta Yorta land rights decision, Moreton-Robinson highlights how decisions such as these, as arbitrated in courts of law premised on the values of white people, will always already privilege the claims to possession and

ownership of white people. I thus take this argument as central to understanding why white people are invested in repressing particular histories, and constructing Indigenous rights in certain ways. This also connects to my argument in the previous chapter about the melancholic nature of white subjectivities. Whilst this is an issue that I will take up in further detail in the following chapter, the focus group data analysed in this chapter will in part highlight how such melancholic investments operate.

Before moving on to the analyses, I should reiterate my position as developed in Chapter Two. My intention in looking at the ways in which white privilege is managed is *not* to attribute to individual white people the subject position 'bad white racist', nor is it to suggest that the actions or words of a particular white person reflect a stable, internal set of mechanisms. Rather, my intent is to examine some of the commonplace frameworks, meaning making tools, rhetorical devices, and turns of phrase that circulate within the white Australian idiom. By understanding these as broad cultural resources that are available to nominal group members (i.e., white people in Australia), my goal is to highlight how they work in the service of white hegemony at the level of a collective psyche. My understanding of a 'collective psyche' is not so to speak about a 'shared mindset' in a biological or cultural sense, but rather to examine how ongoing legacies of white colonial violence are managed in Australia, and how this management represents a collective psychic investment in white hegemony. Whilst, as I suggested in the introduction, white people are differentially invested in white privilege, and whilst it is also true that I do not here account for how other non-indigenous Australians are positioned in a relationship both to whiteness and Indigenous sovereignty, I do however believe that understanding some of the strategies that circulate for warranting race privilege can be useful in combating the normative status of whiteness in Australia.

This chapter thus in part draws on work in the discursive tradition within critical psychology, which looks at the particular resources that speakers draw upon when accounting for racism or race privilege (e.g., Augoustinos, 2002; Augoustinos & LeCouteur, 2004; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Where my approach diverges to that of discursive psychology, and where it largely *converges* with the work of Billig (1999), is that I examine not only what *is* said in the talk of Howard and the focus group participants, but also what *isn't* said: what traces of ongoing histories of white violence we can read in the talk of white people, knowing the context of colonisation and dispossession. Such an approach, as it draws on psychoanalysis, sees talk not only as a site where rhetorical devices are put together to formulate arguments or positions on particular issues, but also as a site where we can read a 'collective psyche' – where we can see how particular histories are played out in talk. This requires a focus not on idiom or rhetoric *per se*, but rather on what particular portions of talk may signify to us when located in a broader social context. As such, my approach is in places more akin to cultural studies, in that it is less interested in claiming 'empirical truth' for my 'findings', and is more concerned with charting how subjectivities operate through discourse, and how particular discursive practices render intelligible particular subjectivities: my aim is not to generalisability, but rather to draw out the complexities of how racism functions in colonial nations, something that cannot be reduced to empirical findings.

Managing possessive investments

Aileen Moreton-Robinson's (2004b) work on the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty suggests three key aspects that demonstrate the investments that white people in Australia have in maintaining unequal social relations. Firstly, the possessive logic "works ideologically and discursively to naturalise the nation as a

white possession”, secondly, it is “predicated on exclusion and what it does not own – the sovereignty of the Indigenous other” and finally, it “promotes the idea of race neutrality on the premise that ‘race’ only belongs to the other and has little impact upon the distribution of society’s resources” (pp. 5-6). In this section I will elaborate how these three points are evident in Howard’s talk around reconciliation, and thus how such subjective investments in whiteness work to deny the violence of white belonging.

‘People of genuine goodwill’

In regards to Moreton-Robinson’s (2004b) first point, the construction of the nation as a white possession is central to managing the unsettling that Indigenous sovereignty produces. In her work on white nationalism, Jennifer Rutherford (2002) suggests that white belonging since colonisation has involved an ongoing struggle to assert the naturalness of the location of white people as *owners*, and to thus negate the ‘impossibility of signification’ that continues to trouble white ownership. This point demonstrates the uncanniness of white belonging – that the construction of white ownership as an *a priori* fact is based on the fiction of Terra Nullius. As a result, the revealing of this fiction through (for example) Indigenous land claims works to render uncanny white belonging, and thus destabilises any foundational claim to white ownership or belonging (Riggs, 2005b). The possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty may thus be understood as a form of warranting that is used to manage this uncanniness by constructing the nation as a white possession.

Such claims to possession are evident in Prime Minister Howard’s (2000) Menzies lecture, in which he talks about reconciliation and Indigenous rights. Yet whilst this is the explicit focus of the lecture, his implicit reference is to the Australian nation as

being only and always white. Thus he states that "a great level of goodwill exists towards the Indigenous people of *our* nation" (emphasis added). As Ghassan Hage (1998) suggests, this use of the first person plural in reference to 'our nation' works to construct the audience as white – that the category 'our' refers to non-Indigenous people (see also Lecouteur, Rapley & Augoustinos, 2001). As a result, Indigenous people are positioned as objects, rather than subjects, of the white nation (as I suggested in the introductory chapter). Howard also constructs the nation as being 'possessively white' in his suggestion that

We can never feel satisfied, nor can we feel complete, until [Australia's social] cohesion is extended throughout all sections of the community and specifically until Indigenous Australians enjoy the same opportunities and the same plentiful lives as any other Australian (p. ?; emphases added).

In this way, the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty works to construct 'social cohesion' as a white property that can be 'generously' extended to Indigenous Australians. This logic of possession thus locates the 'ability to give' as a moral property of the white nation, thus arrogating to the nation the power to define who will, and who will not, be included within its boundaries. Such constructions effectively secure the nation as a white possession, and thus manage the uncanny nature of white belonging through recourse to the privileged location that has been assumed by white people since colonisation.

This point about how inclusion operates in Howard's (2000) speech demonstrates Moreton-Robinson's (2004b) suggestion that the possessive logic is based on exclusion – on the denial of Indigenous sovereignty. This denial is achieved in part through the prioritising of white ways of knowing. As a result, white values are taken to be central in determining what counts as reconciliation. This continual assertion of

a 'right to define' denies the incommensurable differences that shape Indigenous and non-indigenous experiences in this country, thus effectively disavowing Indigenous sovereignty by implicitly calling for adherence to a white model of reconciliation. Thus as Howard states in his address:

On issues as complex and difficult as the call for some form of legal treaty or formal national apology [i.e., the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty] beyond expressions of personal sorrow and regret, people of genuine goodwill can and will legitimately hold different points of view.

Whilst Howard here purports to recognise 'different points of view', he does so by prefacing this with the statement that 'people of genuine goodwill *can and will* have differing opinions. In doing so, he asserts that white people (presumably those who are of 'genuine goodwill') have an inherent right to 'hold different points of view' (i.e., they are 'legitimate'). This statement is thus contrasted with what by implication would be considered (in Howard's view) an 'illegitimate' view of these 'complex and difficult' issues – that white people have no right to a point of view that discounts Indigenous sovereignty. In this way, Howard effectively silences the voicing of Indigenous sovereignty *on the terms set by Indigenous people*, and instead recentres white ways of knowing as 'legitimate' (Moreton-Robinson, 1998). As I will elaborate further in the next section, the 'goodwill' of 'benevolent white people' is thus one tool that is deployed to further marginalise the critiques and challenges raised by Indigenous people.

In regards to Moreton-Robinson's (2004b) final point, and one that has been elaborated by George Lipsitz (1998) in the US context, is the way that 'race' is not conceptualised as mediating access to 'possessive investments'. This understanding of race as the 'cage of the other' has long been identified as a key rhetorical tool for

discrediting calls for 'equal access' and for affirmative action policies (e.g., Hage, 1998, Moreton-Robinson, 2000a). Yet as Lipsitz suggests, "neither conservative 'free market' policies nor liberal social welfare policies can solve the 'white problem'... because both reinforce the possessive investment in whiteness" (p. 22). In this way, white privilege continues to remain unexamined, even if race is recognised as a factor in relation to access to rights. This therefore becomes a central tool in right wing politics, in that governments can claim to address 'minority issues', whilst perpetuating the notion that white people accumulate property and financial standing through 'individual merit', rather than as a result of unearned white privilege (Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley, 1999, Lecouteur & Augoustinos, 2001).

This framing of race as a 'non-issue' comes up in Howard's (2000) lecture when he talks about the 'gains' that have been made in Indigenous communities over the past 30 years through government policies. He suggests that:

[The] criticism, that nothing is getting better, is common to both extremes of the debate – those who would abolish all such *special programmes*, and to those who say that nothing less than a legally enforceable treaty and *special* Constitutional rights will 'solve the problem' (emphasis added).

This quote raises two notable points in relation to the supposed 'non-issue' of race. First, is the suggestion that programmes and policies directed at Indigenous people are 'special'. The implication of this is that such programmes represent an unearned privilege that Indigenous people hold. Obviously this is a laughable suggestion, yet it is one that is constantly used to undermine the right to reparation that Indigenous people are entitled to as a result of the recognition of the impact of genocide and dispossession. Thus, in effect, the construction of Indigenous programmes as 'special' works to deny the privileges that white people hold as a result of the entire

political and welfare system being structured around and through white ways of knowing.

The second important point here is that Howard juxtaposes those right wing groups who advocate for the abolishment of Indigenous programmes with those groups of people (presumably he is referring primarily to Indigenous people) who are calling for a treaty and constitutional recognition. The offensive suggestion that this would constitute 'special constitutional rights' aside, the contrast that Howard provides effectively positions right wing and Indigenous groups as having equal access to voicing their opinions, and moreover, to expect that these opinions will be heard. In this way, race is put to one side as a primary marker of difference in Australia, and Howard instead positions the political sphere as constituted through an 'equal playing field' – one which thus allows all people equal space within the nation.

As this brief exploration of Moreton-Robinson's (2004b) three points demonstrates, the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty underpins many of the ways in which white people talk about claims to belonging and ownership in this country. What I have sought to illustrate are some of the complex rhetorical strategies that are employed to warrant white privilege, or more precisely, to discount white privilege as a factor to be considered. As a result, the investments that white people collectively hold in regards to the status quo of racialised differences are founded upon the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty. Yet, at the same time, the vast majority of white people (and we could tentatively place Howard in this category) purport to support Indigenous rights, and claim to recognise "that the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in earlier times represents the most blemished chapter in our history" (Howard, 2000). In the following section, I thus look more closely at how such claims to benevolence are aimed at masking the possessive logic of patriarchal white

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sovereignty, and may therefore be understood as yet another means through which Indigenous sovereignty is denied, and thus white violence perpetuated.

'Promoting *the cause of reconciliation*'

As I suggested in the previous section, claims to benevolence work to construct the white nation as inherently good. A focus on the purportedly 'benevolent acts' of the white nation thus work to manage ongoing histories of white violence through recourse to the moral intent of the 'civilising mission' – white people can't *really* be blamed for our violence against Indigenous people as our intentions were/are good (Riggs, 2004a). Such constructions of benevolence are evident in Howard's (2000) talk, in the ways that he focuses on all of the 'good things' that he and his government are doing for Indigenous people (a point that I highlight further on in this section). This works to ward off any accusations that white people benefit from race privilege, or that government policies are founded on racist assumptions. Instead, Howard is able to construct his policies as morally upstanding and as representing a 'fair go' for Indigenous people, a position that he again contrasts with those who would seek 'symbolic expressions of support' for Indigenous people – something opposed to the 'real meaning' that his policies supposedly represent.

In this regard, Howard (2000) repeatedly draws on a construction of 'practical reconciliation' as representing a 'real' response to the issues faced by Indigenous people. Thus he states that:

A measure of the genuineness of the government's commitment to practical reconciliation is that the \$2.3 billion now annually spent on Indigenous-specific programmes is, in *real* terms, a record for any government ... while no one denies that as a nation we need to do better than in the past, there are

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examples of *real* achievement in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (emphases added).

By constructing 'practical reconciliation' in this way, Howard is able to position his government as the most progressive of any in relation to 'Indigenous specific programmes'. This in effect works to claim an anti-racist position for the government, by focusing on all of the 'good things' that the government does for Indigenous people. Howard also puts forward the idea that the 'real achievements' made by Indigenous people are a direct result of 'Indigenous-specific programmes', rather than resulting from the agency of Indigenous people themselves. Such a construction thus reinforces the notion of the 'civilising mission' – that Indigenous people are in need of help from white people, and that 'real achievements' result from the interventions of white government policies and programmes.

Howard (2000) also relies upon 'indisputable evidence' in regards to 'long-term improvement in many Aboriginal socio-economic indicators' in order to demonstrate that white benevolence has resulted in benefits for Indigenous people. Some of these suggested by Howard include:

The proportion of Indigenous Australians who own their own home [which] has increased from 1 in 4 to 1 in 3 since the 1970s... Aboriginal enrolments in higher education increased by 60 percent in the 1990s... [and] at least 15 percent of the continent is now Aboriginal owned or controlled.

Without wanting to detract from the importance of these gains, I wish to draw attention to that which is not said in these statements, and the ways in which these unmentioned aspects work to manage white privilege and repress white violence through the deployment of benevolence. In citing these examples Howard employs a

rhetorical ploy which glosses over the corollaries of these statistics: there is no mention of how many white Australians own their own homes, there is no contextualisation of Indigenous higher education enrolments (i.e., we have no way of gauging what this 60 percent increase means), and there is no recognition of what the '15 percent of the continent... now Aboriginal owned and controlled' actually represents (cf., Riggs and Selby, 2003). In other words, there are no connections drawn between Indigenous ownership or dispossession (what about the other 85 percent?) and colonisation. Moreover, there is no acknowledgement of the immense struggles that underpin this control of '15 percent of the continent', nor the fact that the Howard government has actively sought to undermine Indigenous land rights claims (see Moreton-Robinson, 1998). Instead, Howard focuses on these outcomes as arising from the benevolence of the white nation, thus discounting the resistances that Indigenous people have made since colonisation, and the gains that have been made *by* Indigenous people, *for* Indigenous people.

This demonstrates a point that Ghassan Hage (1998) makes in his work on the white nation – that acts of benevolence mask the power differentials that frame which groups are positioned as givers and receivers of benevolence (cf., Ryan, 2000). Thus the ability to be benevolent is always already predicated upon the power to do so – it does not require the giving up or challenging of power, but rather is reliant upon an imbalance of power to instantiate the categories of giver and receiver. This understanding of benevolence thus demonstrates how Howard's 'benevolent practices' evidence an attempt at masking the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty: if benevolence is understood as an act of generosity that is seen to be unrelated to social disadvantage or histories of oppression, then it is possible for white privilege to remain unmarked, and for the possessive logic to be played off as the benevolent acts of 'good white people' (Riggs, 2004a). This masking of the power differentials that underpin benevolence is evident in Howard's construction of

reconciliation as being an issue of equity, rather than privilege, in his acknowledgement of:

... the fine work of the [Reconciliation] Council in general in promoting *the cause* of reconciliation throughout Australian society (emphasis added).

By constructing reconciliation as a 'cause', Howard is able to direct focus away from the systemic factors underlying the disadvantages faced by Indigenous people, and instead to construct it as a 'cause' that deserves attention by benevolent white people. Similarly, Howard consistently suggests that:

... rather than [having] a disproportionate focus on what is the preferred path [for reconciliation], our collective priority must be to strengthen support for the ongoing process and, most importantly, improve the lives of Indigenous Australians.

As I have already suggested, Howard's claim that 'we' need to focus on 'real change', rather than 'symbolic support', works to minimise the challenge that Indigenous sovereignty presents to the white nation, and instead constructs change as purely an economic matter – thus reflecting the white nation's possessive logic. In other words, in addition to deflecting attention away from the systemic functions of white privilege, Howard's focus on 'real' as opposed to 'symbolic' change exemplifies the logic of possession that informs the white nation's reading of reconciliation. This is not to suggest that financial reparation should not be an important aspect of reconciliation, but rather to draw attention to the ways in which such a focus may serve to recentre 'white benevolence', rather than critiquing white power. Thus Howard suggests that 'our collective priority' (and here we may read this 'our' as referring to non-indigenous people, as I have already outlined) must be to 'improve

the lives of Indigenous Australians' – to continue the benevolent mission of imperialism, rather than to question our rights to belonging and ownership, founded as they are upon 'illegal possession' (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, p. 24).

Finally, a reliance upon a discourse of benevolence (in order to mask the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty) is evident in Howard's constructions of temporality within the lecture. Thus, whilst on the one hand he suggests that within Indigenous communities there are 'Australians who need our help', on the other hand he suggests that such communities are 'living, active... not a generation from the past'. Such understandings of Indigenous people work to construct Howard's policies as benevolent, by ignoring the reasons why Indigenous people experience disadvantage. By locating Indigenous communities as 'active', rather than as 'a generation from the past', Howard is able to discount the impact of colonisation, and instead construct Indigenous communities as 'a cause' or as in need of 'special programmes' (as previously discussed), thus effectively locating the blame for Indigenous disadvantage within Indigenous communities. (As he suggests, government policies need to focus on the 'symptoms of community disfunction (sic) such as substance abuse and violence' – a focus that denies the historical antecedents of these issues). Again, this allows for a construction of benevolence as the enactment of the 'good white nation', rather than as the legacy of colonisation.

This construction of Indigenous communities as 'active' and 'in the present' constructs a metaleptic account of Indigenous rights, whereby on the one hand Howard can position Indigenous people in what I would suggest is a strategically agentic position, whilst on the other Indigenous people are depicted as in need of help from the government. As a result, Indigenous agency is recognised, but on specific terms set by the white nation. The effects of metalepsis are evident here when cause is substituted for effect: Indigenous people are seen as being in need

because they are Indigenous people, not because of the impact that colonisation continues to have in shaping privilege and oppression in Australia. Howard's approach to constructing Indigenous rights thus warrants white privilege as precisely what is needed to 'help' Indigenous people: without the actions of white people (acting through the desire to 'do good for the other'), Indigenous people would have no access to 'special programmes'. The holding of unearned privilege by white people in Australia is thus accorded a justificatory role through the attribution of agency primarily to white people. The construction of Indigenous people as 'active... not a generation from the past' thus works to both deny the historical antecedents that lie behind both white privilege and Indigenous disadvantage, and also to implicitly construct Indigenous people 'in the present' as somehow being both 'active' and yet unable to 'help themselves'. The effect thus becomes the cause: the effect of colonisation – that Indigenous rights have been denied – becomes seen as the cause – that Indigenous people, whilst active and 'in the present', have no ability to effect change for themselves. The cause of Indigenous disadvantage (colonisation) thus becomes the effect in the logic provided by Howard: white privilege (or at least the ability of the white nation to 'help' Indigenous people) becomes an effect of Indigenous people's status itself. In other words, the implication of Howard's speech is that white people help Indigenous people because Indigenous people cannot do it themselves – that white actions *follow on from* Indigenous non-actions, rather than white actions (such as reparation) being seen as an appropriate response to other white actions (such as dispossession and genocide).

A reading of Howard's speech through the lens of metalepsis thus affords us an understanding of how the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty is founded upon a reversal of cause and effect. This, I believe, is a very commonplace means of accounting for white belonging in Australia: it accords white people with a right to both belonging and agency that justifies white privilege, and which retains the

positioning of Indigenous people as 'objects of power'. White discourses of reconciliation thus reflect the distinction that Fiona Nicoll (2001) proposes in this regard: the government sponsored agenda for 'practical reconciliation' presumes that all that is needed is yet more white attention to issues of Indigenous disadvantage. Such a presumption constitutes what Nicoll (p. 154) refers to as the difference between 'reconciliation to' ("to make another resigned or contentedly submissive"), and 'reconciliation with' (which "conveys the meaning of 'harmonising', 'healing' or 'making friendly after estrangement'"). The metaleptic effects of Howard's speech thus demonstrate how his statements about practical reconciliation reveal a desire to make Indigenous people submit to the will or 'good intentions' of the white nation, rather than to engage in an acknowledgment of Indigenous sovereignty.

Repressing white violence: Projecting threat

In this second analysis, I turn to focus more explicitly on how white violence is repressed in the everyday talk of white people. Here I elaborate some of the specific rhetorical tools that are used to account for histories of colonisation, and to look at how a positive white identity is worked up between participants in the context of a focus group session. The extracts of talk in the following analysis are drawn from two discussion groups, each comprising four white undergraduate psychology students, conducted in 1995 on 'race relations in Australia' by Lucinda Sale (see Augoustinos, Tuffin & Sale, 1999). The time at which the extracts reported here were collected (June 1995) is of considerable significance as it was during a period of unprecedented public debate in Australia over Indigenous entitlements to land. Most notable was the Mabo2 decision of the High Court, and the subsequent Native Title Act (1993), which, for the first time, recognised that an inherent *right* of Native Title – or Indigenous ownership of land – existed where formerly none had been

acknowledged (though, as I suggested in chapter two, the Act was subsequently amended to place greater restrictions on the claiming of native title). More locally, in South Australia, considerable media attention was given to Indigenous protests at the building of a bridge at Hindmarsh Island on land of cultural and spiritual significance to the local Ngarrindjeri people.

Group discussions were conducted in preference to individual interviews to facilitate a closer approximation to the kind of spontaneous talk, argument, and debate likely to be found in everyday conversation. The group discussions covered a range of issues including the nature of racism in Australia, observed instances of racialised discrimination, affirmative action, equal opportunity, and Indigenous land rights. The following analysis focuses specifically on the particular sections of talk where the participants talked about Indigenous land claims. Whilst I acknowledge that the retrospective analysis of participants' talk may be seen as a form of textual empiricism (cf., Parker & Burman, 1994), where participants' talk is used to justify the truth claims of the author, I believe that the talk that arose from these discussion groups represents pervasive patterns of talk within the wider white Australian polity. My use of existing data here (and elsewhere within this text) is intended as a counter to some of the issues that I feel are involved in creating yet more spaces for white people to generate more (negative) talk about Indigenous people. Thus the utilisation of already existing data is intended to: a) demonstrate the ways in which white talk is structured by a set of relatively stable discourses regarding Indigenous people, and b) challenge forms of white-on-white research which prohibit the interviewer/researcher from intervening in racist talk – why provide yet another opportunity for racist talk to be expressed without being challenged?

'It was sort of 'save the backyards' kind of mentality'

Enactments of repression in conversations between white Australians work to construct Indigenous peoples as the cause of a certain 'white fear', and to suggest that this fear is a response to the 'reality' of 'Indigenous threat'. As I will suggest in this analysis, such constructions achieve two things: 1) they allow white Australians to justify their sense of belonging or ownership as 'defended territory', and 2) to disavow or repress the fact of Indigenous sovereignty and the inability of the white nation to actually overwrite it. In order for colonisation to be positioned as a *response* to a threat, Indigenous peoples must (within a logic of 'white fear') be constructed as actively engaging in acts that are intended to harm the white nation, rather than as responses to colonisation, dispossession and genocide that assert Indigenous sovereignty (Moran, 2002). One of the ways in which the anxieties surrounding Indigenous land rights are managed is via the positioning of white people as victims of unfounded Indigenous land claims. As can be seen in the extract below (in which all names and identifying details have been changed to protect anonymity), white talk around Indigenous land claims centres on stereotypical constructions of Indigenous peoples as 'abusing the system', and thus implicitly works to avoid the topic of colonisation.

Anthony: [In regards to Mabo] ... You just have to be careful... a backlash ... in the sense that not too many people get very upset that 'why should they be getting having all these handouts' in a sense

James: ... if they're going to abuse it, particularly if they abuse it then if it comes up again that ... well people will say 'what are you going to do with it, last time... alcohol and what ever ... you've abused your position'

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Anthony: There is a fine line between them being compensated and them taking advantage of their position as it if felt to be. A lot of Anglo-Australians would umm are sort of are concerned about, they feel they are taking advantage; they're given much more than they need, umm whereas where it may be true that what ever percentage of them...

Martin: Like I've got an uncle that lives in Kempsey in New South Wales north coast and they've got an Aboriginal, couple of Aboriginal groups up there and the government sort of got them housing and they burnt the houses to the ground so the government built them brick houses and um you saw them driving round in brand new Pajero four wheel drives or what not and you sort of get the impression that they sort of got all this and you see what they could do to it and they just don't seem to appreciate what they are given but maybe because they don't want it ahh I don't know but the impression you get is that the government, you sort of see the government trying to help them as I said by throwing money at them, at the problem, but it doesn't seem to be doing any good, maybe because they don't want it - they want to try and get up there on their own - they don't need any help or maybe because they just don't care but yeah you see it first hand and what not and you form opinions and its difficult to change and you see sort of things like that.

As I suggested in the introductory chapter in my analysis of how white psychologists write about race in Australia, constructions of 'us and them' work to highlight the differences between 'Anglo-Australians' and 'Aboriginals' in ways that render Indigeneity the problematic category. Thus 'Anglo-Australians' are seen in the above extracts as being 'upset [that] they [Indigenous people are] having all these handouts', and that Indigenous people are 'taking advantage; they're given much more than they need'. Such constructions work to position Indigenous people as 'taking advantage', rather than as being compensated for the impact of colonisation.

Thus as Anthony suggests, 'there is a fine line between them being compensated and them taking advantage of their position'. Statements such as these work to position white people as a) not to blame for Indigenous disadvantage (indeed Indigenous people are seen as having 'money thrown at them' – as being privileged) and b) that there are not implicit advantages to being recognised as white in Australia.

We may thus understand the ways in which the advantages that white people hold simply by being white are repressed, and instead projected onto Indigenous people as receiving 'all these handouts'. By expanding our focus to the historical contingencies of white advantage, it is possible to understand such acts of projection as maintaining whiteness (and specifically white privilege) as an unspoken category. And it is the 'threat' of whiteness being exposed as a site of unfair advantage that reinforces notions that Indigenous claims to land and compensation are therefore threats to white nationhood. Moreover, these anxieties may be understood as centering upon subjective investments in whiteness. Thus if whiteness is exposed as a historically located (rather than *a priori*) network of power relations, then the hegemony of white systems of representation is unsettled. The following extract makes explicit the ways in which 'Indigenous threat' generates enactments of white fear.

Martin: Something the media failed to bring out – the sort of aid – you've been given all this chunk of land and that it was sort of 'save the backyards' kind of mentality and a lot of people got scared... the truth of the matter was that unless they had continual contact with their land they didn't have a claim under that decision so I think that people failed to realise that and that scared a lot of people.

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Anthony: Umm and I was surprised 'cos I guess you read about but... a friend I do have that's fairly close is doing law and actually he's manning some case against the housing trust or whatever but in amongst all that he you know was telling me about some group that was about to make a claim on Adelaide and it really freaked me out this is bullshit.

Barbara: (laugh)

James: They've already claimed part of Brisbane, haven't they a claim....

The enactment of white fear as a response to 'Indigenous threat' (in the form of land claims) is exemplified by Anthony, who suggests that a land 'claim on Adelaide... really freaked me out'. Martin's suggestion that there is a 'save the backyards kind of mentality' refers to the ways in which the white nation purports to 'live in fear' of Indigenous people who will come in and take 'our' land. This fantasy of the 'dangerous Other' (Elliot, 1996) is actually an incisive comment on the sentiment of white belonging in Australia. I believe it demonstrates the melancholic foundations of white subjectivity, where the incorporation of a lost object (alternately the refusal by Indigenous people to recognise white claims to belonging or the loss of this country itself as a claimable object) always threatens to overwhelm or subsume the melancholic subject. This fear that acts of repression will fail, and hence reveal the anxiety of white belonging, thus demonstrates not that Indigenous people threaten the white nation in the ways that the participants in these extracts would suggest, but rather that white belonging is always already threatened by the very presence of Indigenous people, and by the fact that they carry sovereignty and ontological belonging in ways that cannot be extinguished by white claims to the contrary.

One of the ways in which the reality of Indigenous sovereignty is managed is through the aforementioned construction of Indigenous people as 'objects of power' - as being passive victims of colonisation. Augoustinos, Tuffin and Rapley (1999) suggest that contrasting rhetorical constructions of Indigenous people are used in an attempt at disavowing the fact of Indigenous sovereignty in Australia. Thus Indigenous sovereignty is positioned as being either a moot point because Indigenous people are presumed to be passive objects rather than agentic subjects, or else Indigenous land claims are seen as a part of the 'whitening' of Indigeneity, and are thus seen as the actions of a group of 'greedy land grabbers' who have no 'continual contact with their land', and thus no justification for making land claims (see also Nicoll, 2000, for a further discussion of white constructions of Indigenous sovereignty).

'They would bring them up with all the cultures'

The construction of Indigenous people as having no 'continual contact with their land' is also deployed to construct whiteness as the normative racial category in Australia. As we will see in the next extract, by constructing Indigenous people as no longer being 'full blood'⁴, Indigenous people are implicitly constructed as being 'just another Australian' – and thus that they should be treated the same as white Australians. Yet at the same time, Indigenous peoples are positioned as being the sole occupiers of the category 'race'. In other words, by linking racialised categories to notions of biology, references to 'blood' locate Indigenous peoples firmly within racialised systems, thus perpetuating understandings of white people as not being raced. As can be seen in the extract below, the 'conflict' of Indigenous land claims is positioned as resulting from Indigenous people's 'problematic racial identity'.

⁴ I use this term because it is deployed in participants' talk. The reader should be aware that such terms are highly offensive to Indigenous communities, and the use of such terms is in no way supported by the author.

Natalie: So in between killing them off they'd dilute what was left and they would bring them up with all the cultures like our ideas and ideologies and...

Barbara: Part of the problem is we don't really have any true Aboriginals any more they're all half caste or quarter caste that's where you get problems because they've got this conflict 'I am Aboriginal but I have a white parent or I come from a slightly white background' and then you get this confusion.

Natalie: We don't have any true Australians either we're a multi-cultural nation – so aren't we Australians?"

James: So there's been a concerted effort to assimilate?

Barbara: Ohh yeah

James: Yeah 'cos you don't see that many full bloods at all.

The positioning of Indigenous people as being part of a 'multicultural nation – so aren't we [all just] Australians' works to deny ongoing histories of colonisation, and thus positions land claims as unjustified – as intentional threats to the harmony of the 'multicultural nation'. The claim that 'we don't really have any true Aboriginals any more' problematises contemporary Indigenous identities by constructing two contrasting categories: 'true Aboriginals' and thus implicitly, 'false Aboriginals'. In this way the legitimacy of Indigenous identity claims (and by implication land claims) are rendered suspect. This 'confusion' over identity is moreover located within Indigenous people themselves ('*they've* got this conflict . . . confusion'). So whilst on the one hand Indigenous peoples are positioned as occupying markedly racialised subject positions, they are also located outside whiteness – as not having access to

the signifying systems that mark white subjectivities. This suggests to me one of the ways in which the 'anxiety of whiteness' is managed – the inability of white people to occupy the position of the signifier is managed by projecting this lack onto Indigenous peoples – the implicit category 'false Aboriginals' denies any possibility of agentic signification for Indigenous peoples, thus reasserting the primacy of white subjectivities within white systems of representation.

In this extract Indigenous identity and culture are abstracted from the history of colonisation and treated as static objects – as existing (in a timeless, 'pre-colonial' state) in ways that are not dynamic and ever-changing (Riggs, 2004d). This can be contrasted with the construction of white culture as always evolving - thus Natalie's statement that we 'would bring them up with all the cultures'. These interpretations of ongoing histories of colonisation work to normalise the construction of 'Indigenous threat' by focusing on Indigeneity as alternatively 'a problem', 'a lack' or 'a site of fear', instead of examining the ways in which Indigeneity is retrospectively constructed through the lens of whiteness so as to absolve the legacy of colonisation.

Of course it is important to recognise here the moment when the white participants *do* acknowledge acts of colonising violence. Thus Natalie begins her turn in the above extract by saying 'so in between killing them off...' Here Natalie is clearly stating what she knows or is aware of about colonisation – that it involved genocide. Yet, as I suggested in the previous paragraph, this statement leads into a statement about 'bring[ing] them up with all the cultures'. In this way whilst Natalie does indeed acknowledge colonising violence, she in many ways negates this acknowledgment through the implicit assumption that 'killing them off' was a part of the 'civilising mission' to 'bring them up with all the cultures'. Statements such as those made by Natalie signal the inherent difficulty that the participants appeared to face in talking

about colonising violence without resorting to explaining it away with clarifying follow up comments.

The projection of threat onto Indigenous people, and the corollary denial of white violence is thus accomplished in multiple, and often contradictory ways. In the first series of extracts, Indigenous people are positioned as the 'them' to the 'us' of white Australia. Yet in the final extracts, Indigenous people are positioned as no longer being 'full blood', the suggestion being that Indigenous people should consider themselves to be 'Australians' like everyone else. Such contradictions work to manage Indigenous land claims by positioning them as unjustified and illegitimate (in that everyone should have the same access), but simultaneously as being made by a group of people who are a threat to the white nation. Thus Indigenous people are both threats, in that they 'unsettle the settler' via land claims (through focusing on the spectre of colonisation), yet Indigenous people are also positioned as passive recipients of government policies (i.e., assimilation, welfare etc.). It is through these multiple positionings that white violence is managed – the construction of Indigenous people as 'a threat' works to mask whiteness and its relation to colonisation, whilst the construction of Indigenous people as always already subjugated works to manage this 'threat' by reasserting white superiority.

As may be seen from the above extracts, subjective investments in whiteness are managed in many ways. The talk examined here demonstrates how the 'anxiety of whiteness' circulates in white people's talk about Indigenous land rights. Most obviously, there were attempts at projecting unsettling events onto Indigenous peoples. Rather than adequately acknowledging complicity in histories of oppression (as opposed to acknowledging colonisation as Natalie did in here statement about 'killing' and then backing down from it by turning the focus to other issues), the white participants positioned themselves as 'objective observers' of history. Yet at the

same time there is an anxiety around 'not being white enough'. This desire to occupy the position of the signifier is evident in the ways in which Indigenous peoples are positioned as being wholly outside of white systems of representation – as being always already the site of difference. I would suggest that this demonstrates the social practices that constitute subjective investments in whiteness in Australia, and the ways in which this draws attention to what I have termed earlier a 'psychic life of colonial power' – a set of resources that circulate for repressing histories of white violence.

Chapter summary

In this first analysis chapter I have documented examples of some of the discourses that circulate within Australia that are used to account for ongoing histories of white violence, and which thus represent attempts at warranting white belonging. These types of discourse are not, I would posit, limited to the speakers represented within this text. Rather, they represent pervasive forms of accounting for white belonging in Australia, and may be seen in any number of places where white people talk about belonging, ownership, identity, and in particular where this coincides with discussions of Indigenous rights.

In utilising the theoretical tools provided in the work of Moreton-Robinson (2004b) to examine the 'possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty', I have drawn attention to some of the ways in which Indigenous rights are constructed as 'special issues' within political rhetoric. Likewise, I have highlighted how white Australians use the notion of 'Indigenous threat' to construct Indigenous rights as 'special issues' that 'threaten' the coherence of the white nation. In both data sites analysed in this chapter, white belonging is warranted by constructing Indigenous people as outside

the white nation, and thus as somehow needing to be grateful for all the 'good things' that white people supposedly do for Indigenous people. I have also suggested that one of the carry-on effects of such constructions is that Indigenous people are depicted as racialised in problematic ways, whereas whiteness and white race privilege are largely left unmarked.

In speaking of the ways in which white violence is repressed through a focus on Indigenous rights as 'special issues', or through the use of discourses such as 'Indigenous threat', I have demonstrated how we may understand repression operating not as an intrapsychic process, but as a social practice that is accorded considerable value within Australia. As I will elaborate further in the following analysis chapter, and as Michael Billig (1999) has illustrated well in his work on repression, examining talk is as much about looking at what is *not* being said, as it is about looking at what participants *do* say. Knowing the issues that circulate in a particular social context can help to understand why particular discursive resources are employed by speakers, and how such resources are used to warrant particular claims. As I suggested in Chapter Two, to speak as a white subject in Australia is to speak in relation to particular normative claims in regards to race, racism and race privilege. Applying this to examining data sites such as those in this chapter is thus about examining how such claims appear in the talk of white Australians, rather than attributing particular cognitive dysfunctions to those of us who identify as white.

Finally, in this chapter I have begun some of the work that will be taken up in the following chapter, namely looking at examples of melancholia and metalepsis in the talk of white Australians. This, I believe, holds important insights into how repression operates in the service of race privilege, and may afford us a view of the psychic life of colonial power that focuses on the relational, rather than individual, ways in which racism functions in Australia. As has already been evidenced in this chapter, the

repression of white violence involves what Lorraine Johnson Riordan, Janie Conway Herron and Pam Johnston (2002) have referred to as a 'time/space machine', one that works to fix Indigenous people within the framework of the 'primitive native', whilst according to white people a linear, progressive narrative of civilisation. White violence is downplayed as the benevolent 'civilising mission' of the white person. It is to these types of narratives that I turn in the following chapter.

6

Anti-racism, repression and the disavowal of accountability

In this chapter I develop some of the arguments contained in the previous chapter, as well as building up a critique from which to establish some potential ways for reconceptualising 'anti-racism' in the following and final chapter. In particular, I explore how constructions of anti-racism may at times founder upon a distinction between 'good anti-racists' and 'bad racists', and I look at how such distinctions may be reliant upon the repression of white violence. By looking at some extracts of talk from a documentary screened in Australia in 1999 entitled *Whiteys Like Us*, I draw attention to some of the problems that were inherent to the state-sponsored process of 'practical reconciliation', namely that white people in many ways were encouraged to 'know about' Indigenous people, or to 'work for' reconciliation, rather than actually interrogating how white privilege operates.

A second point of focus within this chapter is to examine how accountability is disavowed by white Australians. In returning to the concept of disavowal, I seek to examine how the notion of metalepsis may assist us in reading the traces of affect that remain in the talk of white Australians. In other words if, as I suggested in Chapter Two, we are to understand disavowal as representing an act of perception that, whilst refuting the knowledge of another's claim, actually evidences the ongoing impact on affect that the claim makes, then it may be possible to comprehend what is *not* being said when white people talk about Indigenous people in Australia. This, I believe, is very different to attributing 'unconscious desires' to white people, where 'the unconscious' is held to be an internal property of an individual's psyche. Rather,

to look at what is not being said is to look at the ways in which particular histories are constructed in the talk of white people, and how this may differ from the histories that are recounted by Indigenous people.

These types of arguments are of course never easy ones to make, writing as I do from the position of a white male living in Australia. Whilst I will elaborate on this point in the final chapter of this thesis, I also include in this chapter an analysis of my own location as a white person in relation to anti-racism and research on race in Australia. I do this not as a form of disingenuous 'self-confession', where I claim that 'yes, I too benefit from unearned race privilege'. Such a claim would do very little to actually move my analysis in productive ways, or to develop a useful argument from which to launch into the final chapter. Rather, my intention is to engage with some of the difficulties that arise in the area of 'anti-racism', and to highlight some of the dilemmas that this presents to white people living in Australia. In so doing, I draw upon the work of Sara Ahmed (2004) to outline how declarative statements such as 'I too am racist' do not function as a form of transcendence, but may in fact serve to reinforce the normative status of whiteness and race privilege at the very moment of their declaration. These concluding points will serve to introduce some of the problems currently facing 'anti-racist practice', and to signal some of the issues associated with the assumption that we need to 'move beyond race'. Highlighting the foundational nature of racism, as I elaborated in Chapter Two, will perhaps allow for a more transparent account of the location of white people in Australia: one that acknowledges acts of repression at the same moment as it recognises how central these are to white subjectivities.

The reconciliation movement and benevolence

The data analysed in this section are drawn from the aforementioned documentary *Whiteys Like Us* (Landers, 1999). Screened in Australia in 1999, the documentary focused on a study circle that was a part of the 10-year 'reconciliation plan' within Australia. The aims of such study circles were to facilitate discussions over how white people may work productively with Indigenous people towards reconciliation. In this particular study circle, we saw a highly dynamic set of exchanges between the white participants, exchanges that demonstrate concrete examples of people managing stake, warranting belonging, denying accountability and apportioning blame to other people. Many of the familiar tropes identified within discursive analyses of racism are evident, including the suggestion that 'we can't live in the past', that 'people in the present can't be held accountable for actions from the past' and that Indigenous people have 'lost their culture' (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). These are all of course key rhetorical strategies for denying responsibility, however they are not my particular focus in this analysis.

What I do seek to explore, however, are some of the ways in which discourses of benevolence are deployed in order to repress histories of white violence. This is done in many different ways by the participants in the documentary, but in the following analysis I focus on two approaches to reconciliation that may at first seem quite disparate. Yet, as I will demonstrate, both approaches achieve similar rhetorical effects in regards to repressing white complicity with racism.

‘I never, never, never saw anything but good done for Aborigines’

The first extract comes from Lesley, a white woman in her late 70’s. As a response to several of the group members outlining the impact that colonisation has had on Indigenous people, Lesley responds that:

Lesley: I never, never, never saw anything but good done for Aborigines. And sure, I was with a small tribe of 150, but they chose to come and live beside us, and they came up gladly to get food and we gave it to them – they didn’t care what it was, and they loved sausages. They had nothing in the way of clothes – they were glad to have blankets – they were glad to have clothes for the same reason, there were lots of things they didn’t have... They wouldn’t still be here if they had been left the way they were – we had to say ‘brush the flies out of the babies’ eyes’ – and [now] they’re blaming us because they get sick.

Lesley’s account of white benevolence draws upon the missionary desire to ‘do good for the native’. Indeed, she suggests that ‘they [Indigenous people] wouldn’t still be here if they had been left the way they were’. Such an account effectively works to manage the suggestions of her fellow participants in a previous turn that white people should be accountable for poor Indigenous health. Thus Lesley counters what she sees as Indigenous people ‘blaming us because they get sick’, by retrospectively projecting blame for poor health onto those Indigenous people who needed to be told to ‘brush the flies out of the babies’ eyes’. Additionally, Lesley represses her own involvement by focusing on the ways that white benevolence was supposedly welcomed by Indigenous people, when she suggests that ‘they came up gladly to get food’, and that ‘they were glad to have blankets’. This emphasis on what is presumed to be the positive response of Indigenous people (i.e., that ‘they were glad’) ignores the networks of power that shape the relationships between Indigenous and white

people in Australia since colonisation. In Lesley's account Indigenous people are thus constructed as passive recipients of white benevolence.

In addition, Lesley's acts of projection work to implicitly construct Indigenous people as the site of blame for colonisation, through recourse to the trope of benevolence. In other words, in accepting benevolence as always already an act of white moral good that is a response to some 'objective need' (i.e., that 'they wouldn't still be here if they had been left the way they were'), Lesley is able to construct Indigenous people as at fault for 'getting sick'. In this way, she represses the genocidal acts of colonisation and instead recentres the notion of imperialism as the result of 'natural progress'. This allows Lesley to rhetorically justify her acts of benevolence as intrinsically good, which also implicitly constructs the 'recipients' of her benevolence as either unable or unwilling to 'do good' for themselves.

As I have suggested throughout this text, acts of benevolence may be understood as attempts at constructing a claim to white sovereignty that exceeds Indigenous sovereignty. Lesley provides a good example of this when she outlines all that she believes the Indigenous people that she met 'lacked' (i.e., clothes, blankets, health care and food). By positioning herself as a 'good white person' who could 'save' Indigenous people, Lesley thus implicitly asserts a right to sovereignty through ownership – that she is entitled to belong because she a) came from a 'superior culture', and b) that she used her location within this culture to 'do good'. These assumptions work to construct Indigenous sovereignty as either an impossibility, or an exercise doomed to fail.

Yet, in contrast to this, Indigenous people continue to challenge, resist and refuse the imposition of white ways of knowing. Whilst Lesley's account positions Indigenous people as passive recipients of colonisation, Indigenous theorising (e.g., Moreton-

Robinson, 2000a) and life stories (e.g., Huggins & Huggins, 2000; Kartinyeri, 2000) demonstrate that this is far from the case. This suggests that discourses of benevolence may be read for the signs of the alternate histories they attempt to repress. For example, in the extract from Lesley we may read a space for alternate histories of benevolence – in whose eyes were Indigenous people ‘glad’, and by whose definition would Indigenous people ‘not still be here’? In this way it may be possible to read white accounts of benevolence as always already an attempt to manage stake – to repress or deny Indigenous sovereignty, a fact that always already exists and which thus unsettles any claim to white belonging.

‘Such a nice little old lady’

The following extracts represents statements made by two other members of the study circle: Sandy and Bere, two middle aged white women in the group, are positioned within the documentary as being shocked by statements made by Lesley. In this way, their own claims to benevolence are constructed as being somehow more valid, or at least less oppressive to Indigenous people than those of Lesley. Thus, when asked about Lesley’s statements outside of the group environment, they are quick to distance themselves from Lesley’s ‘missionary position’, and instead attempt to legitimate their own involvement in the group through the implicit assertion of their location within the subject position ‘good white anti-racist’. Yet, as I will suggest, their own ‘acts of benevolence’ (i.e., that they are involved in a reconciliation group to ‘help people’) are founded upon beliefs about race that are similar to those of Lesley.

Sandy: I thought ‘why did I sit here [next to Lesley]?’ ... I thought she looked like such a ‘nice little old lady’.

Bere: Her [Lesley's] comments were so, well, straight out racist, and terribly hurtful to a whole lot of people.

Here Sandy and Bere demonstrate what Jane Samson (2000) and Jennifer Rutherford (2002) have identified as the categorising of white people (by white people) as either good or bad in order to construct white benevolence as a moral category. Samson suggests that by constructing certain white people as being 'bad racists', it is possible to ignore the ways in which racism structures the lives of all people living in Australia. Thus as Sandy suggests, she thought Lesley was 'a nice little old lady', which implicitly suggests that 'nice little old [white] ladies' aren't racist, or that they don't benefit from race privilege. Similarly, it constructs her implicit position as a 'good white person', through contrast with the 'evil racist' sitting next to her.

Bere takes a more explicit position about Lesley, in her statement that 'her comments were so, well, straight out racist'. Whilst this may not necessarily be read as inferring that Bere is claiming a non-racist subject position (i.e., it could be read that she is suggesting that white people are either 'racist', or 'straight out racist'), it nonetheless maintains a focus on explicit acts of racism against, rather than focusing also on acts of racism for – acts that produce white privilege (Fine, 1997). In this way Bere's focus on Lesley is similar to that of Sandy – it works to project racism onto someone else, thus implicitly constructing Bere as a 'good white person'. This projection would also appear to be evident in Bere's suggestion that Lesley's comments were 'terribly hurtful to a whole lot of people', the implication of this being that Bere is one of those people who are 'terribly hurt'. This suggestion works to repress the incommensurable locations that differentiate white people's experiences of racism from those of

Indigenous people. Thus, rather than identifying herself as someone whose privilege holds the potential to be ‘terribly hurtful’, Bere projects this ‘ability to hurt’ onto Lesley.

I would thus propose from these two extracts that, whilst Sandy and Bere contrast their benevolence with that of Lesley, they draw upon an approach to reconciliation that is very similar to Lesley’s – that white people can (and should) direct and control what counts as reconciliation. Thus in asserting their location within the subject position ‘good white person’, Sandy and Bere repress their own relationships to racialised practices, and effectively deny the ways in which their acts of benevolence may be viewed differently by Indigenous people. Together, these two short extracts, and the analysis of them, unsettle benevolence as a foundational enactment of white morality, and instead demonstrate some of the anxieties that shape white subjectivities. Lesley manages her stake in imperialism by citing her benevolent acts, thus repressing her relation to colonisation as an oppressive practice, whilst Sandy and Bere distance themselves from racism by projecting it onto Lesley. In these complex ways, all of the participants manage their claim to belonging in Australia, and thus effectively deny their relationship to Indigenous sovereignty.

The doing of repression: Metalepsis and disavowal

The data in this section are again taken from the focus groups first introduced in the previous chapter. This data set represents a rich resource for examining how repression operates in the everyday talk of white people, and how this signifies relatively pervasive patterns of accounting for white violence. Of particular interest in the extract analysed here are the operations of metalepsis: as I will elaborate, white claims to belonging involve complex strategies of disavowal, and thus produce contradictory and paradoxical accounts that highlight the workings of repression.

Likewise, and as I suggested in the previous chapter, such disavowal may be seen to signal the melancholic nature of white subjectivities. To have incorporated a lost object in the sense of melancholic is to always already be shaped in a relationship to that object. As the participants' talk suggests, some of the anxiety that surrounds identifying as white in Australia may indeed stem from melancholia – those of us who identify as white may well at times be 'choking' on that which we refuse to acknowledge.

'Captain Cook didn't sign an agreement when he, you know...'

In the extract that follows we can see the participants engaged in accounting for their own opinions about land rights, and justifying why they believe they, as white Australians, have a right to belong. Of particular interest are the references to historical events, and the ways in which they are managed through particular forms of accounting for white violence.

Anthony: I think the current [Indigenous land claim] just, well, sounds like a circus to me - money money going left right and centre there. But Mabo actually, yeah, I get quite angry about that - I actually don't feel any responsibility for my forebears.

Interviewer: Why's that?

Anthony: Well I wasn't there.

Natalie: (laugh)

Anthony: But yeah, no I don't.

Barbara: Relevant point.

Anthony: Umm, and I was surprised 'cos I guess you read about that but... a friend I do have that's fairly close is doing law and actually he's manning some case against the housing trust or whatever but in amongst all that he, you know, was telling me about some group that was about to make a claim on Adelaide and it really freaked me out - this is bullshit.

Barbara: (laughs)

James: They've already claimed part of Brisbane, haven't they a claim...

Anthony: Yeah. I don't know. Just something inside, just it really made me quite angry - it is just bullshit, you know why? Well because Captain Cook didn't sign an agreement when he, you know... I really get quite angry - it's bullshit.

Natalie: Yeah but its all...

Anthony: And I nah, no I don't, I don't feel any, you know, I feel responsible for what's happening currently but I, I don't feel guilt or umm, responsibility for my forebears.

Natalie: Mmm, but they're also using their being Aboriginal to get their own way to a certain extent more.

Barbara: You can't be responsible for something you weren't around for.

Much the same as in the analysis in the previous chapter of this same data set, in this extract we can see examples of the participants 'doing repression', and in

particular, repressing histories of white violence through the construction of the category 'Indigenous threat'. Thus Anthony suggests that a friend of his told him 'about some group [of Indigenous people] that was about to make a claim on Adelaide and it really freaked me out'. James then goes on to say that some Indigenous people have 'already claimed part of Brisbane'. In these ways, Indigenous people are positioned as a 'threat' to the harmony of the white nation (Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). Such constructions disavow white violence by focusing on the 'threatening acts' that Indigenous people are supposedly engaging in (i.e., making claims on land – as Anthony says, 'it really freaked me out'). Such constructions position Indigenous people as at fault for 'freaking out' white people such as Anthony – that the actions of Indigenous people in regards to land rights are in no way a response to over 200 years of white violence against Indigenous people. Thus white violence is repressed within the participants' talk, allowing the moral good of whiteness to be reasserted.

In a similar way, white violence 'threatens' to come up as an issue, but is repressed in order to maintain the image of white moral good. Billig (1999) suggests that we can see repression happening in talk when people hesitate during conversations, or when they change topic during a sentence. He suggests that this represents people managing their stake in the conversation, and repressing the topics that they feel uncomfortable about or which are considered to be socially taboo. Thus in his fifth turn, Anthony attempts to justify the denial of land rights to Indigenous people by pointing out that there was no treaty between Indigenous people and white colonisers: 'Well because Captain Cook didn't sign an agreement when he, you know... I really get quite angry – it's bullshit'. Here we can see that when Anthony comes to the point in his talk where white violence threatens to be revealed (which would thus undermine his implicit justification for the white possession of land), he backs off and instead recentres his own anger at the land claims of Indigenous

people. His statement that ‘Captain Cook didn’t sign an agreement when he, you know’ could just as easily have led Anthony to talk about ‘what we *do* know’ – that colonisation resulted in the genocide and dispossession of Indigenous people, a fact that effectively renders redundant any suggestion about ‘an agreement’.

This point about what Anthony shies away from speaking about also demonstrates some of the issues that arise in the extract in regards to the management of claims to white belonging (or the lack of it). Thus in the statement about Captain Cook, Anthony represses histories of white violence in order to legitimise white belonging. If he had talked about ‘what we *do* know’, then he would have effectively undermined his own claims to belonging. In other words, if Anthony had taken up the alternate argument, white claims to a form of belonging that exceeds Indigenous sovereignty would have been rendered unintelligible. Similarly, Natalie represses her privilege as a white person in order to manage her belonging. Towards the end of the extract she suggests that the Indigenous people who are making land claims are ‘using their being Aboriginal to get their own way’. This effectively denies that on an everyday basis white people in Australia use our ‘being white’ to justify our belonging, our dominance and our rights to control in Australia. Thus in pointing out that Indigenous people are ‘using being Aboriginal’, Natalie is able to repress the normative foundations of her own belonging, by positioning only Indigenous people as ‘using’ an identity category to their own ends.

All of the participants (and in particular Anthony) engage in a range of rhetorical strategies in order to justify their belonging, and as a whole they demonstrate the benefits of employing a psychoanalytic account for rendering visible the metalepsis that structures the talk. At the start of the extract, Anthony uses the suggestion that ‘I don’t feel any responsibility for my forebears’ in order to deny any responsibility for white violence, and thus implicitly to deny Indigenous land claims. Yet in so doing, he

acknowledges the existence of his 'forebears', thus constructing a now/then model of history, whereby the present is somehow related to what went 'before'. He then goes on to deny the connection between now and then, by stating that he doesn't feel any responsibility because 'well I wasn't there'. In this way, he distances himself from his 'forebears', and denies a model of accountability that rests upon a now/then linear model of history. Further on in the extract, Anthony states that 'Captain Cook didn't sign an agreement...' to which we could append 'back then', and he then goes on to say that 'I really get quite angry', to which we could add 'now'. Here Anthony implicitly creates a distinction between 'then' (and its implication in colonial violence), and 'now', in which he feels justified in 'feeling angry' (or indeed not feeling guilty).

I would suggest that whilst it may appear that Anthony effectively distances himself from acts of white violence, the understanding of metalepsis that a psychoanalytic reading of racism may provide can allow us to view the text differently. Thus Anthony's claim to anger in the 'now' may be read as an enactment of the ongoing violence that he represses when he shifts the talk away from 'Captain Cook... when he, you know...'. In this way the distinction between now and then is challenged, thus evidencing the repression of ongoing acts of white violence. This reading is reinforced in Anthony's last turn, where he states that 'I feel responsible for what's happening currently but I don't feel guilt or umm responsibility for my forebears'. Here again, Anthony returns to a construction of history that denies a connection between now and then, which fails to adequately account for why he 'feel[s] responsible for what's happening currently' (see also Augoustinos, 2002, for more on how the category 'history' is used as a rhetorical resource to legitimate particular contemporary social issues). His denial of guilt for his forebears may thus be read as an attempt at distancing himself from the (repressed) reference to Captain Cook and white violence in his prior turn. We can see this in the interactional trouble that he faces in expressing this to his fellow participants, whereby in his final turn Anthony

repeats himself a number of times; changes his claims about accountability (from 'I don't feel any you know' to 'I feel responsible'); and uses the word 'but' to signal a break between what he will and will not be held responsible for (cf., Billig, 1999).

Following both Billig (1999) and Edelman (1991), I would suggest that such repetitions within peoples' talk actually signal the 'doing of repression' - that in order to manage the fact that his denial of Indigenous land rights is a re-enactment of the violence of 'Captain Cook' and (potentially also) his 'forebears', Anthony repeats himself in trying to limit his accountability, thus belying the now/then effects of colonial violence that underpin his claims to belonging. In this way, the metalepsis of the text challenges the final claim made by Barbara; that 'you can't be responsible for something you weren't around for', by challenging a now/then account of history. This instead renders visible the way that white violence (and thus white responsibility) is an ongoing act. By juxtaposing the now and then, the participants attempt to manage white belonging by focusing on the now, and yet continually they are drawn into accounting for the past, or denying their connection to it. I would suggest that a psychoanalytic reading of these acts of 'doing repression' reveals the contingency of the now on the then, thus disconfirming Barbara's statement by demonstrating that we as white people are responsible for something (i.e., white violence) that we have always been around for, and which continues to 'be around'.

From the analysis of the extract above, I have suggested that the participants 'do repression' in order to manage their relationship to white privilege, racism and Indigenous sovereignty by constructing historical narratives that repress white violence, by projecting this violence onto Indigenous people, and by alternately denying and affirming their relation to the history of Australia's colonisation by white people. In these multiple ways, all of the participants manage their claim to belonging in Australia, and demonstrate some of the complex practices of repression that prop

up white privilege. The psychoanalytic analysis that I have engaged in thus reveals the contingency of white belonging, and challenges now/then accounts of white history through the metalepsis inherent in the texts.

Melancholia and metalepsis

Before moving on to the final section of this chapter, it may be incisive to examine some of the implications of the preceding analyses for my discussion of melancholia in Chapter Three. From the above analysis, I would propose that to feel responsible for something, but to disavow any guilt, may represent a symptom of melancholic incorporation. In other words, to have incorporated a lost object at the level of the collective psyche (such as the lost, but never actually possessed, claim to white belonging) is to be formed in a relationship to that loss. But to acknowledge that loss would be to acknowledge why that loss happened. In the case of colonisation, the narrative of the triumphant white settler requires a disavowal of the failure of colonisation to adequately displace Indigenous sovereignty, or to fully write white sovereignty as an *a priori* fact. Yet this disavowal continues to hold a trace of the original recognition of loss: the affect of white subjectivities is forever marked by this loss – it is something that white Australians are always managing in our day to day relations in the context of a nation that never quite manages to contain its anxieties over ownership.

To extrapolate from these points on melancholia to the previous analysis: to feel responsible, but to not be able to state what that responsibility represents, demonstrates how metalepsis operates to repress white violence. Not only, as I elaborated in the previous chapter, does cause become substituted for effect, but in the analysis above, a particular effect (land claims) produces a particular affect (white

anger over land claims), yet no cause for this is elaborated. This disjuncture between cause and effect allows white Australians to either claim ignorance of the ongoing effects of colonisation, or to refute that reparation is required as a result of these ongoing effects. But what are we to make of references to 'Captain Cook' and 'forbears'? How do these references fit into a schema of effect that has no cause? In part, and as I suggested earlier, this problem demonstrates the disjuncture between now/then accounts of history, and also demonstrates accounts that recognise the contingency of the 'now' on the 'then'. Moreover, this disjuncture also highlights how thoroughly imbricated constructions of white benevolence 'in the now' are in the repudiation of white violence 'back then'.

If we are to return to the first analysis in this chapter, then, we may further see how claims to benevolence demonstrate the melancholic nature of white subjectivities. In the extract from Lesley, she is emphatic about how 'glad' Indigenous people were for 'food, blankets and clothes'. She is also emphatic in her statement that 'I never, never, never saw anything but good done for Aborigines'. Statements such as these lead me to question what exactly counts as good in the eyes of the white Australian nation. This is especially the case if we consider the concept of melancholia, and its implication in white subject formation. If, as racialised subjects, white people in Australia incorporate a loss (of belonging, of an ability to foundationally deny Indigenous sovereignty) as part of our becoming intelligible subjects, then it may be possible to infer that the anger and resentment that comes from the incorporation of this loss, the 'choking' on it to use Cheng's (2002) words, may well surface at precisely the moments when we are forced to confront this loss. In Lesley's case, when she is challenged by other white people about the legacy of colonisation and white violence, she attempts to contain this violence, and its accompanying loss, in her claims to absolute benevolence ('I never, never, never saw anything but good done for Aborigines) and her emphatic statements about the perceived gladness of

Indigenous people. These types of disavowal, and in particular the strength with which they are stated, highlight the difficult work that is being done to repress the affect produced by disavowing white violence. To 'be good' on the terms set by the white nation is often to evoke a particular relationship to the idealisation of the 'good nation', one that is free of blame or accountability.

As I will suggest in the final section of this chapter, there may be little use in engaging in anti-racist practice that takes as its aim a desire to reduce blame or to free white people from accountability for racism and race privilege. Rather, following Sara Ahmed (2004), I will suggest that complicity and discomfort may well be key tools in the work that white people do in challenging privilege – work that involves 'sitting with', rather than 'moving beyond', the violence of colonisation.

The non-performativity of anti-racism

Considerable space has been given within white writings on whiteness as to the question of what it means to be a white person writing about whiteness (e.g., Brewster, 2005; Probyn, 2004). Such writing has at times focused largely on the anxiety of writing as a white person in the context of a nation founded on racism. Similarly, such writing has paid particular attention to what it means to be a white person invested with power that is unearned – how can such power be challenged, critiqued or otherwise 'given up'. Yet questions such as these can be seen to enact what Sara Ahmed (2004) has termed the 'non-performativity of anti-racism'. She suggests that certain claims by white people to be engaging in anti-racist practice can in fact reinforce the normative position of whiteness where to declare one's actions as a white person is to somehow 'transcend' racism. She thus asks the question: "is an anxious whiteness that declares its own anxiety about its worry

better, where better might even evoke the promise of ‘non-racism’ or ‘anti-racism?’” (p. 7). Her answer to this is somewhat ambivalent, but it certainly points towards the limitations of any notion that the ‘anti-racism white subject’ is somehow inherently ‘better’ simply because it owns or confesses to its own racism. She terms this a “politics of declaration, in which institutions as well as individuals ‘admit’ to forms of bad practice, and in which the ‘admission’ itself becomes seen as good practice” (p. 11).

Ahmed’s (2004) points echo my own in regards to benevolence, and highlight how admissions or claims to benevolence may well in part reflect a cultural repertoire for explaining away or disavowing white violence. Thus as Ahmed suggests in regards to white people talking about whiteness:

declaring whiteness, or even ‘admitting’ to one’s own racism, when the declaration is assumed to be ‘evidence’ of an anti-racist commitment, does not do what it says. In other words, putting whiteness into speech, as an object to be spoken about, however critically, is not an anti-racist action, and nor does it necessarily commit a state, institution or person to a form of action that we could describe as anti-racist (p. 12).

This last point is, I believe, central to understanding how benevolence operates in the service of repression, and how it functions to deny white accountability. To ‘do good’ or to ‘have benevolent intentions’ does not necessarily translate into social change, nor does it require the benefactor to challenge their own position of power. Thus the move within some writing by white people to take up the challenge of ‘giving up power’, as theorised by Indigenous academics such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000a), has tended towards a rather narrow understanding of power that can work to reinforce the supposed sovereign power of white people, and thus attribute to

Indigenous people a position that is always already on the receiving end of power. Conversely, white writing on racial power can tend towards attributing to white people a disempowered subject position, whereby white people claim to be disaffected by the giving up of power, something that often results in a disavowal of how power continues to function within racialised networks. These problems all demonstrate Ahmed's point about how claims to benevolence or anti-racism do not necessarily require a commitment to addressing unequal social relations. Thus as Moreton-Robinson suggests, white people's "anti-racist practice, as an intellectual engagement, is evidence of their compassion, but systemic racism is not experienced as subject/knowers" (2000b, p. 350). In the analysis that follows I will turn to look at some experiences from my own life as a white person, where attempts at challenging power or engaging in anti-racist practice may instead be seen as demonstrating the non-performativity of white peoples' engagement with race privilege in Australia.

Guilt and the disavowal of responsibility

In this section and the one that follows I start with a vignette from my own personal experience as a white person living in Australia. From the vignettes I extrapolate some key points about what it means to be engaged in anti-racist practice as a white person, and I suggest, following Ahmed (2004), how such practices may not live up to the performative claims that they make.

An opportunity arose during my honours year for a vigorous discussion with other white psychology students, centred on issues of whiteness, racism and Indigeneity in Australia. During this debate there were many instances where the participants (including myself) spoke from an extremely emotional perspective. Towards the end of this debate the talk moved towards depictions

of Indigenous people as causing the social disadvantage that they experience – one particular person suggested that ‘if they tried harder to be like us then their lives would be better’. I suggested that it might be useful to consider the relationship between racism *for* and racism *against*, and to recognise that the corollary of Indigenous disadvantage is white advantage. The reaction to this from several people was ‘you are trying to make me feel guilty’, to which I responded with a firm ‘no’ – that guilt has nothing to do with it and serves no purpose in working towards some form of reconciliation. This seemed to appease many of the people, and the conversation ended soon after, without any conversation of how privilege operates.

The position that I took in the debate described above in regards to guilt seems in retrospect to be in part a product of the environment in which it took place – whilst emotions ran high during the debate, it seemed that we were all at pains to present ourselves as rational white people. My response then in regards to the spectre of guilt was to downplay this emotion and thus to allow us as a group to feel more comfortable in our assertions. I do not believe, however, that such downplaying of emotions was associated with what Williams (2000) refers to as the ‘bad manners’ of talking about white guilt, but rather it was an attempt at preventing emotion from minimising what had seemed to be a ‘rational’ argument. In other words, my anti-racist practice in this instance was to employ a discourse of rationalism in an attempt to convince the people I was speaking with that what I was saying was reasonable. Such an approach may be seen as ‘non-performative’, in that it didn’t actually do what it was intended to: rather than making a point in a ‘rational manner’ so as to avoid emotions taking over the conversation, I instead potentially sidetracked the conversation away from what could have been useful emotional work to undertake. It was not until days later that I realised that a discussion of guilt could indeed have contributed to a better understanding of the way white people respond to the legacy

of colonization (Augoustinos & LeCouteur, 2004). Thus as Williams suggests, rather than guilt (or the disavowal of it) being a side effect of white and Indigenous relations, it is “central to their definition” (p.137).

The debate contributed significantly to my own understanding of guilt, and the way that I experience it. Prior to the debate I would have said that I did not harbor feelings of guilt in regards to colonisation – that I had developed an anti-racist practise that I felt comfortable with. Upon reflection and discussing the nature of guilt within the debate, I came to realise that guilt was something that I had disavowed, but that traces of it remained in my willingness to excuse us all from ‘guilt talk’. The interaction described may have resulted in a number of processes occurring in our talk, all of which may be seen as products of the social context within which white people live – a context that most often refuses to engage with responsibility for white violence. As a result, my own anti-racist practice as a white person was shaped around my own disavowal of guilt. One obvious way in which I repressed this was to raise issues of race privilege in regards to *other white people’s* talk about Indigenous people, rather than locating myself too as a benefactor of unearned race privilege. Thus even though my response to their suggestions that they were being made to feel guilty was ‘no’, the implication was that perhaps they were: that as someone engaged in anti-racist practice I was somehow better equipped to ‘diagnose’ racism, or to direct a conversation to ‘appropriate outcomes’.

This example from my own experience also highlights how white people engaged in anti-racist practice may often arrogate to ourselves the right to label what is racist and what isn’t. Yet such actions demonstrate the ‘non-performativity of anti-racism’ in that they do not require the challenging of white privilege. To critique another white person for their racism does not require the white critic to actually acknowledge the racialised power they draw upon in doing so – to expect to be heard, to expect

freedom from retribution as a result, and to expect that our words will effect some change. In this particular example, I was playing the role of the 'ethnographic ventriloquist' (Huggins & Saunders, 1994) – I was speaking for Indigenous people whilst having neither the authority to do so, nor the critical framework through which to interrogate my own privilege in the process. To me this is a powerful example of how 'well meaning intentions', particularly if left unexamined, may do very little to develop an accountable anti-racist practice on the part of white people, and may instead only serve to reinforce white claims to hegemony. In the second experience that I recount here, I focus on how 'good intentions' can result in white people failing to acknowledge the very ground upon which we engage in anti-racist practice.

The politics of intervention

In response to the war in East Timor, in early 2001 a large group of students in my home town of Adelaide decided to organise a rally to demonstrate solidarity with those who were experiencing oppression in East Timor. Once the procession had made its way to parliament house, speeches were made by white students about the 'appalling situation' that people were facing in East Timor. Whilst this was happening, an Indigenous man who was walking by decided to offer his opinion. After getting past the police (who initially tried to stop him), he spoke to the crowd, and suggested that the group of predominantly white students should be looking at what was going on in our own country in regards to the treatment of Indigenous people. This was met with silence by the (white) crowd, and the speeches quickly returned to the topic of East Timor. The comment by the Indigenous man was not raised again as a political issue within the white group.

From the position that hindsight offers, I can see clearly how the rally described here, whilst stemming from 'good intentions', failed to adequately grasp the context within which white benevolence operates. As a group of politically active white people, our protest was an enactment of the trope of benevolence, a subject position that enabled us to in many ways disavow our own complicity not only with the war in East Timor, but also with the ongoing 'history wars' going on in Australia. In this way, by talking out about the issues facing non-white people, white people may unintentionally engage in a form of exposure that maintains the direction of the gaze away from whiteness – the spectacle of the exhibition of the wounded other affords white people the subject position of exhibitor (Hage, 1998). Such displays reinforce the power of choice that is inherent to whiteness: to have the expectation of being heard, moreover, the expectation of being believed. The actual problems that the racial other face become secondary to the white presentation of self through displays of concern for the other. Such displays thus become in effect a rhetorical monologue on whiteness, rather than a dialogue between individuals, speaking from differing subject positions. The normative status of whiteness as seen in claims to benevolence effectively appropriates the voice of the racial other in order to reify, and simultaneously mask, its own position of dominance and complicity in oppression. Thus as Crenshaw (1997) suggests:

One part of the experience of oppression is to be (mis)represented by others who enjoy the power to speak and to be heard by virtue of their social location. Another is to go unheard in an overwhelming cacophony of privileged voices (p. 147).

When white people claim an authority to speak, we often do so by positioning those who are seen as racial others as the object of our discussion - as unproblematically needing to be spoken about. When the object returns that gaze, when the racial

other refuses a white position of marginalisation, their voices are alternately positioned as unwarranted, or as in the example outlined above, simply ignored (Moreton-Robinson, 1998). Our belief as white people that we had the right to speak out about East Timor as a problem external to ourselves highlights how in challenging the actions of a group in another country, we effectively masked our own involvement in oppression, and left unchallenged the fundamental structures of whiteness that maintain power imbalances in Australia. This demonstrates the ways in which the silences surrounding whiteness (by white people) can occur at the same time as (white) speech that claims to speak out from an anti-racist agenda. Such speaking does the work of repression by overwriting the voice of the racial other with the voice of the white subject. Thus whilst the protest may have been seen by us as a group of mainly white students as a valid response to an issue on a white political agenda, such agendas are not turned back to reflect upon our location as white people. As I suggested when looking at the previous experience, what counts as oppression thus becomes defined on the terms of white people (Ahmed, 2004).

Another issue that was present at the protest was the depiction of the Australian government as reluctant to assist East Timor. The emotion that was involved within the group was directed towards a government who were positioned as 'evil racists': as unwilling to fulfil certain moral obligations. Yet such constructions of the government can be seen to be doing the more implicit work of the demonstration; the construction of the 'bad racist' and the 'good anti-racist'. This binary allowed those in the latter category to consider their action beyond reproach, hence the surprised reaction to the suggestions by the Indigenous man. It is far easier to be involved with 'anti-racist' practice, and to leave the structural forms of inequality unchallenged, than to question one's own position of privilege (Wong, 1994). As Hage (1998) suggests, "many of those who position themselves as 'multicultural' and 'anti-racists' are merely deploying a more sophisticated fantasy of White supremacy" (p. 23). As

such, claims to 'good intentions' serve to reinstate the dominance of white ways of knowing.

A final point about this particular experience: my suggestion is not that those of us who identify as white should not want to speak out about oppression. Rather, my point is that the Indigenous man challenged us to recognise that we do so in a relationship to Indigenous sovereignty. In asserting his own sovereignty, and in 'talking back' to the predominantly white gathering, his reminder was one that whilst timely, was not adequately engaged with. Indeed, the rally started from Victoria Square, a site of considerable significance to Indigenous people in Adelaide. Yet there was no acknowledgement of Indigenous people as the traditional owners of the land, nor did we as a group reflect on what such a rally meant at a time when not only was there a war in East Timor, but where the decade of state-sponsored reconciliation was drawing to a close, and yet no apology had been offered to Indigenous people, nor had Indigenous land rights been adequately acknowledged.

Chapter summary

As I have sketched out in this chapter, and following on from the work of Sara Ahmed (2004), white claims to benevolence and anti-racism may be seen as non-performatives – they don't actually do what they claim to do. They do not require the giving up of power, they often don't entail an examination of how power is racialised, they attribute to white people a form of anti-racist agency that may do very little to challenge white privilege, and they repress or disavow ongoing histories of white violence. As I suggested in the preface, to speak about racism as a white person in Australia is a necessarily difficult task, and one that requires far greater accountability and theorisation than has perhaps exemplified such writing thus far. In examining

some of my own experiences, I have sought not to excuse myself from racism, nor to simplistically claim that 'I am racist too'. Rather, my intention has been to highlight how claims to anti-racism require continued examination.

In looking at data from both the focus groups used in the previous chapter, and from the documentary *Whiteys Like Us*, I have demonstrated a number of interrelated points: 1) how white violence is repressed through claims to benevolence, 2) how the category 'good anti-racist' is constructed through contrast with the category 'bad racist', 3) how traces of repression are evident when white people attempt to justify our history and location in Australia, 4) how white subjectivities thus evidence the effects of melancholia, and 5) how the category 'Indigenous threat' is employed to warrant ongoing acts of dispossession and colonisation. These are perhaps some of the central claims of this text, and as such highlight the utility of theorising how white subjects are racialised, and how such racialisation is managed through discourses of benevolence. To claim belonging as a white person in Australia is thus to be in some way engaged in perpetuating or justifying the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty. Yet, as these five points demonstrate, such disavowal is never complete, and always threatens to undermine white claims to belonging.

In the following and final chapter I turn to elaborate what this might all mean in regards to anti-racism, and how we may conceptualise some of the outcomes that arise from white claims to benevolence. In particular, I will highlight how claims to benevolence and accompanying acts of repression always already fail to instantiate a logic whereby Indigenous sovereignty is refuted. Instead, I will propose that what is required is an understanding of anti-racism that starts from the fact of Indigenous sovereignty, and which explores what it might mean for white people in Australia to acknowledge the relationship we already have with Indigenous people

Finally, it is important to point out that critical readings of race and racism are always located within particular contexts. Acknowledging the centrality of white ways of understanding race (as well as subjectivity and embodiment) may therefore be an important step towards decentring the hegemony of whiteness. Thus as Nicoll (2001) suggests, we need to develop an eccentric (as opposed to normative) account of race that refuses to either reify race as an *a priori* category of difference, or discount race as being just a social construction. By better understanding how race is 'done' in everyday ways, and how it works in the service of whiteness, we may be able to contribute to the growing psychological literature that works through the complexities of race, not so as to 'come out the other side' *per se*, but to see more clearly where we stand when we are precisely right in the middle of it.

7

Inalienable rights and the rhetoric of the gift

In this chapter I draw on the insights about white belonging that come from the two preceding analysis chapters, and apply this to understand one final means through which benevolence is deployed by white people in order to disavow Indigenous sovereignty. However, in doing so I will elaborate how such acts of disavowal are always doomed to failure – they can never serve to fully overwrite Indigenous sovereignty, nor divest Indigenous people of their inalienable rights to land. Through an application of recent theorising on ‘the gift’, I will suggest that examples of benevolence (such as those demonstrated in Prime Minister Howard’s (2000) speech, or in the talk of focus group participants) represent an attempt at equating alienable and inalienable rights, the outcome being that ‘gifts’ of white benevolence are seen as demanding reciprocity in the form of a recognition of white belonging. Yet, as I have suggested throughout this thesis, such attempts at co-opting Indigenous people under the terms of the white nation in fact demonstrate the instability of belonging that has exemplified the location of white people in this country since colonisation. Thus, rather than denying Indigenous sovereignty, such attempts to assimilate inalienable rights to land and belonging render visible the limitations of the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty for legitimising white ownership, and as a result, contribute to a critique of the foundational violence that structures white belonging. Benevolence may thus be understood as demonstrating a vested interest in white self-management, rather than as an act of an always already ‘good white nation’.

The rhetoric of the gift

The logic of 'gift relationships' has long been presented within philosophical and anthropological literature as a way of understanding how people relate to one another, and how we are often located within reciprocal relationships with other people (see chapters in Schrift, 1997). In his work on gift relationships, Mark Osteen (2002a) suggests a number of key points that I take as useful for understanding how discourses of benevolence work to construct a particular notion of the 'good white nation' that is reliant upon the disavowal of white violence. First, is the notion that "giving gifts involves bad faith... we lie to ourselves by choosing to ignore or forget our calculation of self-interest" (p. 16). Second, is the suggestion that "a desire to be recognized" is an important facet of gift giving relationships (p. 17). Finally, he draws a point from Bourdieu's work on the gift, to suggest that "gift exchange is a euphemism... that masks... an ugly economic truth" (p. 25). Together, these three points draw attention to the rhetorical strategies that may be seen as central to discourses of benevolence, aimed as they are at managing the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty.

In order to examine one particular example of the economics that inform the logic of gift relationships, I return once again to look at Prime Minister Howard's (2000) Menzies lecture, and in particular his statements and policies around 'practical reconciliation'. Such policies, I would suggest, engender a framework within which Howard can be seen to 'benevolently extend' an invitation to a gift relationship to Indigenous people on behalf of the white nation. Thus Howard claims in the Menzies lecture (2000) that:

Through policy initiatives that will flow from perceptive investigations such as the McClure Report... [which examined] the links between economic and social engagement... we can develop new and better ways to empower individuals and promote self-reliance throughout [Indigenous] communities.

Statements such as these allow Howard to construct 'empowerment' and 'self-reliance' as a gift given to Indigenous communities by focusing on the 'new and better ways' that white 'policy initiatives' provide for managing reconciliation. In so doing, Howard implicitly suggests that his government is 'giving' Indigenous people 'empowerment' and 'self reliance'.

My reference here to Howard's 'giving' highlights the gift relationship that Howard's benevolence may be seen to generate – if Indigenous people are positioned as active agents within a gift relationship, then Howard is able to co-opt Indigenous people into an expectation of reciprocity. Thus, in the context of talking about 'policy initiatives' aimed at addressing the McClure report, Howard suggests that the 'core Australian values... of equity and a fair go' will enable the development of 'new and better ways to help all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous'. The question that this begs, then, is that if Howard does not pay attention to the need to challenge unearned white privilege, and if his policies are based on a possessive logic that discounts racism, then what is he referring to when he says that such policies will benefit 'non-Indigenous Australians'? I would suggest that this particular statement renders visible the gift logic that informs Howard's 'benevolence'. Thus the implicit assertion that practical reconciliation will create 'good, productive, autonomous' Indigenous citizens allows Howard to set the terms of national belonging as one that focuses on reciprocity, and to thus reaffirm the national imaginary as one premised on the values of white people. This assertion is evident in his closing remarks, where he states that:

We have come a long way in recent years... [we are] united in our values and united in the hopes we hold for the future. The way forward towards true reconciliation is surely to build upon this unity...

By drawing on a framework of unity, Howard is able to again construct national belonging as constituted through sameness – that Indigenous people share ‘values and hopes’ with non-indigenous people, and that this ‘common goal approach’ is the most productive for working towards ‘true reconciliation’. From this we can clearly see that Howard’s definition of ‘true reconciliation’ relies upon a gift-like relationship, whereby the white nation ‘gives’ Indigenous people equal access, and in return Indigenous people recognise the need for ‘shared values’ and a common sense of belonging. Thus on Howard’s terms, Indigenous people are strategically located as equal players, the aim being to promote the reciprocity that is required in order to legitimise white belonging as being ‘just like’ Indigenous belonging.

Yet, as I will now discuss, this attempt at placing Indigenous and non-indigenous people on the same footing is based upon a possessive logic that fails to recognise incommensurable differences, and which thus effectively negates Howard’s attempts to co-opt Indigenous people into a gift relationship. Howard’s implicit reliance upon reciprocity may instead be seen as an anxious attempt at warranting non-indigenous belonging in the face of Indigenous sovereignty.

Inalienable rights

The above discussion of the gift can be further elaborated by exploring the distinction between alienable and inalienable rights. The former may be understood as

representing commodity-based social relations, which “involve alienable objects exchanged between reciprocally independent transactors that thereby establish quantitative relationships between the objects transacted”, whilst inalienable objects are those “exchanged by reciprocally dependant people that establish qualitative relationships between the transactors” (Osteen 2002b, p. 233). Whilst this binary runs the risk of romanticising the latter category as being ‘beyond commodity’, it may still provide a useful distinction that can be applied to the gift relationship as exemplified in Howard’s rhetoric. Thus I would suggest that Howard’s attempt at engendering reciprocity through ‘practical reconciliation’ is reliant upon the confusing of alienable and inalienable rights – he attempts to bring the two terms into metonymy so as to justify white belonging and simultaneously deny Indigenous sovereignty.

Yet, as the above points about inalienability demonstrate, there is an inherent impossibility in equating inalienable and alienable rights. Thus whilst Howard may seek to create a reciprocal relationship through the ‘giving’ of equal rights and ‘special programmes’ (which in itself is an interesting paradox), the relationship remains a fantasy of the white nation, rather than one that actually represents ‘unity’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (cf. Hage, 1998). Instead, any attempt to co-opt the inalienable rights that Indigenous people hold to ownership of land demonstrates the ‘need for recognition’ that underpins attempts at white belonging in Australia (as I elaborated in Chapter Four). As a result, a focus on attempts at engendering reciprocity renders visible the reliance that white people have upon Indigenous people in order to warrant a sense of self. Thus, whilst Howard attempts to construct his benevolence as initiating a gift relationship, it may instead be viewed as a response to the implicit gift that the presence of Indigenous people bestows – the binary construction of white self/Indigenous other (problematically) allows for white people to claim a form of self that is predicated on

this distinction. As a result, and by this logic, it is not Indigenous people who 'owe' the white nation for its benevolence, but rather that the white nation owes Indigenous people for any sense of belonging (however fraught with tension).

It is important to point out that I am privileging a white model of reciprocity and gift giving here in order to examine how discourses of benevolence work to manage the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty. My previous suggestion that Indigenous people bestow a gift should not be read as a naïve reassertion of the centrality of white interpretations of being and belonging. Rather, my intention is to point out exactly how the logic of benevolence, reciprocity and possession is based upon a flawed understanding of rights. More specifically, the binaries of self and other that inform white belonging are neither universal nor ahistorical – they are the result of ongoing practices of colonisation that prioritise white ways of knowing – much the same way as the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty is rooted in ongoing histories of imperial and colonial governmental practices in Australia. What this logic fails to take into account, and which I would suggest the equation of alienable and inalienable rights attempts to manage, is the sovereignty of Indigenous people, a fact which neither the fiction of Terra Nullius, nor the assertion of white belonging can overwrite.

To return to the work of Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004b), then, the possessive logic of patriarchal whiteness that inheres to Howard's constructions of practical reconciliation (as a practice of white benevolence) is thus flawed in two ways. First, it denies Indigenous sovereignty, and in so doing, effectively denies any recognition of a right to white belonging. From this perspective, white benevolence is a thinly disguised attempt at overcoming this 'ontological disturbance' by engendering a gift relationship that overwrites Indigenous people's inalienable rights. Second, and as Moreton-Robinson suggests in her analysis of the outcomes of the Yorta Yorta land

rights case, the possessive logic ignores the common law rights that Indigenous people hold as subjects of the white nation – rights that arise precisely because of colonisation and the appropriation of Indigenous land. Thus Howard's attempts to construct Indigenous rights and issues as being 'special interests' effectively ignores the 'possessive investments' that Indigenous people are entitled to, not only from their own inalienable rights as First Nations people, but also from their rights as citizens of the Australian nation.

This paradoxical denial of Indigenous sovereignty demonstrates the ambivalence that underpins the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty. White people living in Australia are reliant on the category of the racial other in order to legitimate our selves and to warrant our investments in the white nation, yet such investments are always already founded on the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty. As a result, the possessive logic may be understood as profoundly impossible – this is not to deny that this logic has very real effects in the lives of all people living in Australia, and in particular that it enables white ownership through the continued denial of the ongoing ownership of land by Indigenous people. Rather, by focusing on the use of a gift logic to engender white belonging, I have suggested that we may more clearly see some of the impossibilities that structure white belonging, and how these are managed in Howard's rhetoric on practical reconciliation.

To summarise: the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty may be understood as founded upon a set of untenable distinctions. Whilst white Australians such as Prime Minister Howard may attempt to disavow these foundations by co-opting Indigenous people into a reciprocal relationship, with the aim of equating alienable and inalienable rights, this fails to deny Indigenous sovereignty. Thus the possessive logic, whilst continuing to confer unearned privileges to white people, represents an understanding of ownership that will always perpetuate the 'ontological

disturbance' of white belonging. It thus may only be through challenging the assumptions surrounding discourses of benevolence and reciprocity that white people may more respectfully engage with the sovereignty of Indigenous people. It is to this end that I turn in the final sections of this chapter.

'Turning towards another'

Having explicated how a gift logic is deployed to warrant a particular vision of the white nation that justifies white belonging, and having shown how this forever fails to adequately do so, I now turn to look at some potential ways in which white people in Australia may engage in anti-racist practice that starts from the fact of Indigenous sovereignty, and which is accountable for race privilege. Obviously this will not be so as to proscribe a narrow definition of what I think anti-racism should look like. Nor will it be to suggest that one form is inherently better than another. Rather, my point is to bring together the overarching theoretical and philosophical frameworks that I have employed throughout this thesis, and to use them to examine what an ethical engagement with Indigenous sovereignty may look like. This will entail a focus on how power operates within Australia as a nation founded on racialised differences, and will involve an examination of what Ahmed (2004) suggests should be a 'turn towards another' at the same time as examining race privilege. Finally, I will turn to look at the inherently ambivalent status of love in the national imaginary, and I will explore the implications of this in the context of the ways white belonging is claimed more broadly in Australia.

Loving other-wise

In talking about love and the 'good nation', Sara Ahmed (2003) suggests that:

We cannot then equate love with justice. Justice is not about learning to love others, let alone loving difference. Justice is not about 'getting along', but should preserve the right of others not to enter into relationships, 'to not be with me', in the first place. The other, for example, might not want my grief, let alone my sympathy, or love... Love is not what will challenge the very power relations that idealisation 'supports' in its restriction of ideality to some bodies and not others. In fact "to love the abject" is close to the liberal politics as charity, one that usually makes the loving subject feel better for having loved and given love to someone whom is presumed to be unloved, but which sustains the very relations of power that compels the charitable love to be shown in this way... In the resistance to speaking in the name of love, in the recognition that we do not simply act out of love, we can find perhaps a different way of orientating ourselves towards others (pp. 44-47).

In contrast to the types of love that are claimed on behalf of the nation, where certain people are designated as 'appropriate citizens', whilst others are refused a location within the nation (Riggs, 2006), 'love' in Ahmed's terms would not involve a benevolent turn towards the other – that 'all we need is love' to do the work of addressing white violence in Australia. Instead, the term 'loving other-wise', as I elaborate it in this section, suggests two potentially more productive and honest engagements with an ethics of love in a postcolonising nation. First, there is the need, as Ahmed (2004) suggests, for white people seeking to challenge white privilege to not simply stop at looking at our own privilege, but that such an examination of privilege must entail a 'turning towards another'. Such a turn need not be one of benevolence (i.e., to 'help the other'), nor one seeking solace (i.e., 'the

other can teach me what to do better'), but rather would constitute a recognition of how white privilege is constituted through its corollary of Indigenous disadvantage. 'Loving other-wise' in this sense may represent a move towards recognising the role that the location of the racial other plays (and has always played) in the constitution of the white self: the ways in which notions of the 'good white person' have always already been contingent on constructions of 'the primitive', constructions that, whilst not reflecting the actual location of the other, do signify how the (absent) presence of the other is engaged with. This generates questions such as "what purpose do constructions of 'Indigenous threat' (for example) serve the white nation?" rather than questions that seek to look simplistically at either "what is white privilege?" or "what are the problems faced by the non-white other?" Whilst understanding white privilege and non-white disadvantage has an important place in challenging white violence, the notion of being 'wise of the other' may enable white people to actually turn towards another at the same time as we examine white privilege. This may also involve, as Ahmed suggests above, a recognition of the fact that the other may not want to enter into a 'loving relationship' with me, or that claims to love may be unwelcome in regards to racialised power imbalances.

This brings me to the second implication of the term 'loving other-wise'. This is perhaps a more literal meaning: that there is a need to understand how love is constituted in a network of power relations, 'otherwise' we will fail to see how claims to love may work in the service of white hegemony. This understanding of 'loving other-wise' places a prohibition on blithely continuing the government sponsored agenda for 'practical reconciliation', with the presumption that all that is needed is yet more (white) attention to issues of Indigenous disadvantage. Such a presumption constitutes what I referred to in Chapter Two, following Fiona Nicoll (2001, p. 154), as the difference between 'reconciliation to' ("to make another resigned or contentedly submissive"), and 'reconciliation with' (which "conveys the meaning of 'harmonising',

'healing' or 'making friendly after estrangement'"). The term 'loving other-wise' in this sense is thus a clear signal to those of us who identify as white to begin the work of thinking through how white violence continues to be enacted in the name of the national good (Rutherford, 2002). The term also suggests, again following Ahmed (2003), that attempts by white Australians to engage in 'reconciliation with' Indigenous people may be refused – that the ambivalence of love in a postcolonising nation such as Australia requires that those of us who identify as white must recognise that our desire for 'harmonising' or 'healing' may be neither desired or welcomed by Indigenous people. Recognition of the ground of Indigenous sovereignty as the precursor to any engagement with reconciliation by white people thus allows for the possibility of refusal as an inherent right of Indigenous people who are recognised as knowing subjects. To do anything else would be to yet again fail to understand white identities as constituted through racialised power networks that cannot be side-stepped simply by naming whiteness or 'owning up' to white privilege (Ahmed, 2004).

Whilst an extended discussion of how racialised power acts in the service of subject constitution has been covered in Chapter Three (and see Moreton-Robinson, 2000a; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2005), it is important to reiterate here how power as an artefact circulates between people in the service of subject constitution (as opposed to the assumption that it operates solely within people). Such an understanding of power holds important implications for how we understand 'loving other-wise'. If power is understood as the property of the (white) individual, something that can be taken or given up at will, then power will always remain the property of those who hold hegemony (Moreton-Robinson, 2006). Thus the power to tolerate, or to give up power becomes yet another reinforcement of power itself, rather than an actual engagement with the other who may be the object of power (Hage, 1998; Nicoll, 2001). To have love (to own or possess love) is not the same as being for love

(Irigaray, 2002), much the same as to lay claim to power is never sufficient enough to actually occupy a site of unequivocal power (Butler, 1997).

Racialised power thus circulates upon and between bodies, but cannot be pinned down as a property that is held without challenge. Obviously certain (white) bodies lay claim to a position of power, and indeed occupy a site of privilege that is dependent upon the enactment of power, yet such bodies are always constituted in a relationship to historical and spatial forces that are constantly under contestation. To see power as a property solely of particular white bodies (and thus to see other bodies as always without power) is to reinforce the illusion of white sovereignty that has itself been dependent upon a disavowal of, rather than an overwriting of, Indigenous sovereignty. Following Hook (2005), we may thus understand this disavowal as having forever changed white claims to power. In other words, the confrontation with the fact of Indigenous sovereignty cannot be simply denied or displaced, but rather the act of disavowal demonstrates that the white subject (and nation) is forever changed by the encounter. Forms of 'national love', and the types of 'love for the other' claimed within the rhetoric of government-sponsored reconciliation, demonstrate one of the ways in which this encounter is managed.

My points about the ways in which power circulates around discourses of love in postcolonising nations such as Australia demonstrate the ambivalence of love. Love, whether it be for the nation, for another, or as an act of familial constitution, is always contingent in Western (post)colonial nations upon the suppression of its alternate: hate. This suggests that in order for us to understand how love functions as a nationalist practice, we must look at the location of claims to love within a range of historical frameworks. How do claims to love work to distance us from violence? How does love-as-having serve the purpose of claiming ownership or a right to acknowledgment? And how may the claim to 'act from love' actually enact a violent

erasure of those who are taken as an object of this love? This suggests that it is important to understand not only the ways in which we 'love' those we are 'in love' with, or those we take as the objects of our love, but also how we relate to those with whom our relationships are based less on love and more on fear, resentment or disavowal. As Judith Butler (2004) has suggested, we are undone precisely when our claims to love reflect back to us those people we refuse love to, or whose love we designate as invalid. Reflecting on how love operates in the service of hate and exclusion will be an important role for white people engaging in anti-racist practice, and who seek to recognise, acknowledge and engage with our complicity with regimes of white violence and new incarnations of Empire.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have drawn out the implications that arose from the analysis chapters and the frameworks they drew upon. By looking at how benevolence may be seen to produce a gift-like relationship, I have proposed that:

- white anxieties over belonging are disavowed by focusing on the economics of belonging through the generation of gift relationships;
- such relationships, however, are unsettled by the inalienable rights that Indigenous people hold to land, and;
- the logic of the gift (as demonstrated in Howard's speech) thus fails to adequately legitimate claims to white sovereignty.

What is rendered visible, then, throughout the contents of this thesis overall, are the anxieties of white belonging, the impossibilities of white ontological belonging, the inability of white ways of knowing to exceed Indigenous ownership, and thus the

uncanny location of white people in Australia. This obviously has important implications for how those of us who identify as white engage with racism and race privilege in Australia, and how we understand our relationship to Indigenous sovereignty.

In this regard, particularly in relation to the discipline of psychology, I have highlighted throughout this thesis some of the limitations that arise when those of us who identify as white attempt to engage in anti-racist practice. These include a failure to:

- focus on the relationship between white claims to belonging and the fact of Indigenous sovereignty;
- make a 'turn towards another' as well as examining white race privilege;
- recognise how all white people benefit from racism, and;
- theorise the relationship between power, embodiment and racialisation, so that race is seen as something that shapes all of our lives, rather than seeing Indigenous people as 'objects of power' who are oppressed by the faulty cognitions of 'bad racists'.

This is no doubt an incomplete list of the limitations of white anti-racist practice, particularly within the discipline of psychology, but one that highlights the amount of work that remains to be done in interrogating how privilege and oppression operate.

As I have highlighted throughout this thesis, speaking as a white person about whiteness and race privilege is necessarily not an easy task. It is one that requires the theorisation of *how* white subjects speak (as I elaborated in Chapter Three), what claims white people make *when* they speak (as I elaborated in Chapter Four), what the effects are of these ways of speaking, and the rhetorical devices that are

employed (as I elaborated in the two analysis chapters), and how such rhetoric is destabilised through a focus on the inadequacy of white systems of representation to fully claim hegemony (as I have elaborated in this chapter). All of this may in part be seen as a response to my call in the Introduction for a more adequate theorisation of how racism operates in and through psychology, and as such my intent has been that this thesis will not only direct white psychologists in Australia towards examining privilege and its operations, but also to look at how particular forms of knowledge render such privilege intelligible. By utilising psychoanalytic concepts within a critical psychological framework in attempting to understand racism in Australia, I have highlighted some of the ways in which we may see white violence at work, and contributed to the destabilisation of claims to the *a priori* sovereignty of white people in Australia.

In regards to the existing literature in the areas of critical psychology and psychoanalysis, this thesis has extended previous arguments in regards to subjectivity and subjectification, and provided a unique interpretation of what it means to speak as a white person. By focusing not on particular rhetorical strategies *per se* (as per discursive approaches to critical psychology), but rather on the ways in which we see subjectivities played out as social practices that reiterate existing social inequalities, and the opposite – how we can see histories of white violence at work in the talk of white people - I have elaborated an account of racism that does not simply bridge the divide between the social and the individual. Rather, it offers a radical reconfiguration of how we may conceptualise racism as functioning in the service of subjectification, and vice versa.

These reconfigurations represent important interventions into how racism is represented within the discipline of psychology. By drawing on the insights afforded by work in the area of critical race and whiteness studies, this thesis highlights the

role that white people play in propping up white hegemony, *without focusing on white identities per se*. Similarly, in this thesis I have neither spoken *for* Indigenous people, nor positioned Indigenous people as objects of power. Rather my intention has been to speak of *how* Indigenous people are represented by white people (myself included), and how this bespeaks of our disavowed knowledge of ongoing histories of colonial violence. By looking at traces of such violence, or the ways in which it is repressed, I have demonstrated how commonplace it is for disavowal to occur – it is endemic to how white people claim belonging in Australia. From this I have suggested that such claims to belonging evidence a melancholia that lies at the heart of white subjectivities in Australia. The incorporation of a lost object threatens to always exceed the acts of repression aimed at disavowing it, just as the very fact of such melancholia at times seems to overwhelm white conversations about belonging and ownership. Melancholia in my analysis is thus not a form of individual affect, which produces a particular white person, but is rather an aspect of the psychic life of colonial power in Australia, one that produces the particular subjectivities of white people who are variously invested in notions of a ‘good white nation’.

Epilogue

In speaking throughout this thesis about ongoing acts of white violence, and the continued refusal by the white nation to acknowledge the fact of Indigenous sovereignty, I have sought to develop an account of how these two actions are intimately related, and likewise, how they are concurrently disavowed or repressed. In so doing, I have demonstrated some of the complex ways in which white privilege is warranted in Australia, and in particular, how it often comes into play at precisely the moment where white people set out to 'do good'. This then presents a troubling paradox for myself, writing as a white person about racism and anti-racist practice in Australia. Am I required to end this thesis on a note of pessimism or optimism? Or is there something beyond or outside of these two poles that may be somewhat more productive for understanding the implications of the philosophical and theoretical framework that I have provided, and the analyses that have followed from it?

In this epilogue I will seek to do just that: I will expand upon my suggestions in the previous chapters in regards to what it means to write, theorise or politically engage as a white person in Australia. I thus follow on from Fiona Nicoll's (2000) suggestion that what is required is not for white people to be 'better', where better signifies 'more good', but rather that those of us who identify as white must be willing to work with our discomfort, and draw back from always attempting to claim a position as a 'good white person'. Of course my suggestion here will not be that by recognising our complicity with white hegemony, white people engaged in such accountability are somehow 'better' or 'more honest' than those who don't. Rather, my point is to highlight the inherent ambivalence in writing as a white person about racism in Australia.

As I suggested in the preface, there is an inherent danger in writing as a white person about whiteness. This danger extends beyond the reference I made to Adrienne Rich's (1996) supposition of 'white solipsism'. Rather, I would suggest that white writing about whiteness exhibits the potential for resulting not only in the reification of the 'good' white self through claims to being 'anti-racist', but also in the ongoing enactment of white hegemony. In other words, the white person who writes about whiteness may come to see their/our writing as an act of 'giving up power' – that the speaking of white privilege by white people is inherently subversive, critical or predisposed to changing the power dynamics of race in Western nations (Probyn, 2004). Understood in this way, such acts of white writing can be seen to designate a subject position for white people that is somehow disaffected or othered, a position that may be taken to denote a location of powerlessness. However, claims to 'giving up power' in this fashion (where power is taken as referring to a property held primarily within subjects), may be understood to be far more disingenuous than simply claiming a disaffected subject position (Moreton-Robinson, 2006). There is also the potential that such claims may implicitly attribute blame for this disaffected position to those who call for the challenging of white privilege: if those of us who are white are called to account for our privilege, then surely those who call us to account are in some way (negatively) implicated in the responses that result from this call?

What can often happen, then, when white people write about whiteness, is that such writing performs a function in the service of white hegemony – it speaks for, and attempts to take the place of, those people who are positioned as being non-white. As a result, and as has been the focus of this thesis more broadly, any understanding of white hegemony must recognise the ways in which those of us who identify as white may be involved in what are considered acts of violence at precisely the moment when we believe we are setting out to challenge or interrogate such violence. Indeed, I would take the notion of white solipsism (defined as the belief that

the white self is the only reality) one step further, in suggesting that white writing can work to reassert the claim that the white self is all we need to know, or that whiteness as a system of representation is sufficient to account for all selves and all experiences of oppression. As I suggested in Chapter Three, this generates a logic wherein difference is understood as an aspect of the same – that all selves are but a variation of a common (white) sameness, and that difference only represents a derivation from this norm, rather than a radical alterity whose incommensurability cannot be subsumed within any particular hegemonic white framework (Hook, 2005; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2005). White writing may thus become one site where the location or the subjectivity of those who position themselves/are positioned as non-white is erased yet again. White hegemony may therefore be played out at precisely the moment when white people attempt to challenge it.

Having said that, however, I do not believe that it must always and only be the case that white writing on whiteness enacts violence (or at least only enacts violence). There is the possibility that such writing may serve to effect, as Sara Ahmed (2004) suggests, “a double turn... [where] in turning towards their role and responsibility in histories of racism, as histories of this present, [white people may] turn away from themselves, and towards others” (p. 59). Ahmed suggests that rather than white people claiming an ‘anti-racist’ subject position, or indeed even attempting to posit what ‘anti-racism’ may look like, “whiteness studies should instead be about attending to forms of white racism and white privilege that are not undone, and may even be repeated and intensified, through declarations of whiteness, or through the recognition of privilege as privilege” (p. 58). This has been the work of scholars such as Fiona Nicoll (2000), and Jane Haggis and Suzanne Schech (2000), white women in Australia who have sought to attend to some of the complex ways in which ‘declarations of whiteness’ may serve to mask the work that is yet to be done on examining white privilege as a turn towards another. One central focus of such work,

particularly as it is informed by the theorising of Indigenous scholars (e.g., Moreton-Robinson, 2000a), is the need to develop an understanding of power that sees it not as a possession of the autonomous subject, one who can take or give power at will, but rather as an effect of subjectification itself. This was of course my central concern in Chapter Two, the implications of which I have returned to throughout this thesis

I was reminded of the importance of examining how power operates in the writings of white people in a recent talk by Pakeha New Zealander/Aotearoa scholar Avril Bell (2005), who suggested that when particular identities are used in the service of politics (such as white people engaging in anti-racist practice or writing about whiteness), it is important that there is accountability around how such identities operate, and how they come at the expense of others, particularly those who are understood to be the objects of 'goodwill'. Thus whilst there may well be some benefit to be gained from white anti-racist practice (in the form of challenging racism amongst white people), my suggestion is that we should not assume that this is inherently the case. Otherwise, the outcome can be that Indigenous people are depicted as 'objects of power' (Luke, 1997).

By continuing to examine the ways in which white belonging is founded upon the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty, and yet at the same time how white subjectivities evidence anxiety about Indigenous sovereignty, it may be possible for the analyses conducted by those of us who identify as white to attend to the issues facing Indigenous people. This would not entail white researchers speaking for Indigenous people or attempting to 'save' Indigenous people through our analyses, but rather by looking at and being accountable for the ways our very being as white people in Australia contributes to the systemic oppression that Indigenous people face.

Similarly, writing within and through the discipline of psychology requires a very clear degree of accountability in regards to representation. My intention in this thesis has not been to outline the problems with existing psychological approaches to racism, only so as to prove the worth of my own approach. Rather, my interest has been to map out a radical reconfiguration of how we understand the psychological, and why this is of such importance for white people (psychologists or otherwise) who wish to engage in some form of challenge to racism and race privilege. My central concern has thus been to understand the practices of subjectification as thoroughly social practices, and to do this in order to suggest a very different starting place for psychological research on racism.

This desire for a different starting place also holds important implications for anti-racism. In examining how anti-racist rhetoric functions at times in the service of white hegemony, I have sought to speak of what it means to claim an 'anti-racist subject position' as a white person. In so doing, my interest has not been to spell out a prescriptive approach to anti-racism for white people, but instead to suggest something disarmingly simple – that before anti-racism, before coalition and before we attempt to 'move beyond race', there is a far more pressing need: to acknowledge and be accountable for *ongoing* histories of white violence. Speaking as though this were already done is, in my view, part and parcel of the problem as to why racism is so pervasive. The separation of individual behaviour from institutional discrimination allows for an understanding of racism that would see it as a relatively simple issue to fix: identify the causes, and remove them. This is not the solution that I have sought within this thesis. Rather, my concern has been with the very foundations of this formula – my aim has not been to present 'empirical findings' to either support or disprove any particular 'type' of racism or interpretation of it. My aim instead has been to show that racism operates via networks of power through which white people

cannot help but benefit from racism. This is not a politically fatalistic account but rather a politically realistic account, and one that is increasingly difficult to voice in the context of a nation that would pride itself on the 'goodness' of white people.

So, to conclude, my wish or intent is not for a world free of racism *per se*, nor one in which 'bad racists' are exposed for 'what they are'. Rather, the position I claim as a white person speaking about racism is one that recognises the importance of discomfort when challenging white privilege, the need for accountability, and a willingness not to search for proof or 'real answers', but more importantly to talk about those things that 'we aren't supposed to talk about anymore'.

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