BEYOND BLACK AND WHITE:
ABORIGINES, ASIAN-AUSTRALIANS AND
THE NATIONAL IMAGINARY

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Aboriginality, ‘Asianness’ and whiteness have been imagined from Federation in 1901 to the present. It recovers a rich but hitherto largely neglected history of twentieth century cross-cultural partnerships and alliances between Indigenous and Asian-Australians. Commercial and personal intercourse between these communities has existed in various forms on this continent since the pre-invasion era. These cross-cultural exchanges have often been based on close and long-term shared interests that have stemmed from a common sense of marginalisation from dominant Anglo-Australian society. At other times these cross-cultural relationships have ranged from indifference to hostility, reflecting the fact that migrants of Asian descent remain the beneficiaries of the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Despite the long history of contact between Indigenous and Asian-Australians, these cross-cultural alliances have been largely expunged from the white Australian consciousness. By charting white ideological, political and legislative responses to these engagements, the thesis shows why this historical experience has been repressed in dominant narratives of nation. It argues that the Anglo-Australian desire to maintain racial supremacy, economic dominance and exclusive possession of the nation and its resources has motivated attempts to quarantine these communities from each other.

This thesis argues that Indigenous and Asian-Australian people’s shared experience of exclusion from one another and from the dominant narrative of nationhood has been a source of agency and of extra-governmental self-determination and cultural exchange. It provides the first scholarly overview of a new wave of cross-cultural literary, artistic and theatrical production that is rewriting the national geographic and social imaginary. The thesis thus offers a new non-Anglocentric account of the national narrative and its fictions. It shows that Asian/Aboriginal cross-cultural alliances problematise ‘Black/white’ and ‘migrant/settler’ dichotomies and, as such, contest dominant narratives of nation, challenge accepted versions of Australian historiography and expose the limitations of the discourses of multiculturalism and reconciliation.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

i. the thesis comprises only my original work,

ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

iii. the thesis is less than 100 000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, footnotes, citations, bibliographies and appendices.

Signature --------------------------     Date ---------------
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Introduction

From ‘White Australia’ to ‘Part of Asia’?: Anglo-Australian Imaginings of Nation, 1901-2001

You sleep with black women too … My woman’s got my kids (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 43).

Shotgun in hand, Ah Hong, a Chinese cook and market gardener shouted these words at the police. It was in Alice Springs in the early twentieth century, and Ah Hong had committed the ‘crime’ of fathering three ‘mixed-race’ children. Ah Hong met Ranjika, a Western Arrernte woman, after the white man who stole her from her tribal husband abandoned her. Ranjika and Ah Hong’s children were targeted for removal by government officials because they were of mixed Aboriginal-Asian descent (Giese, Astronauts 43). The hypocrisy of white officials deporting or fining Chinese and other Asian men for engaging in sexual liaisons with Aboriginal women was not lost on Ah Hong. This family was fortunate because, unlike many others, the authorities did not forcibly remove the children. After Ranjika’s death, Ah Hong travelled with his children back to Zhongshan. One of his daughters Gloria Lee recalls being tutored privately in Chinese until she was proficient enough to join the other students at school (Giese, Astronauts 44). In China her extended family and the local community respected and welcomed Gloria and her siblings. For Gloria, the contrast when she returned with her family to Australia years later in the 1920s was striking. After the freedom and openness of being in China, she lamented, “I felt queer—I wasn’t accepted by anybody … They made me feel I was a different person” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 44).

Also in the early twentieth century, but this time in Queensland, another relationship was negotiated within a complex frame of triangulated group relations (Aboriginal-Chinese-white). Princy Carlo, a mixed-race woman of Wakka Wakka (from the Eidsvold district of southern Queensland) and Chinese descent, established an identity within the confines of the Aboriginal settlement of Cherbourg (formerly Barambah). The forced removal of ‘fringe-dwelling’ Aboriginal families by white authorities necessitated the reshaping and relocating of identity within new geographical spaces (Ramsay, "Cherbourg" 110). Forcibly removed from their home country to the nearby
government settlement, Princy Carlo and her descendants established a camp they called ‘Chinatown’. An appellation conceived and imposed by a dominant white society on a newcomer Chinese population was appropriated by Princy and her family in the claiming of a third space (Ramsay, "Cherbourg" 110-111). According to Guy Ramsay, within the confines of a government settlement established to subjugate Indigenous cultural expression and self-determination, “an oppressed group appropriated an out-group label (Chinatown) from another subjugated minority, and successfully asserted their distinctive group identity” ("Cherbourg" 109-110). To Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, ‘Chinatown’ conferred newcomer status, and the adoption of this name was clearly symbolic for these new arrivals at the government settlement.

In the twenty-first century complex entanglements between Indigenous, Chinese and white identities are still being negotiated. In 2001 Indigenous sportswoman and national icon Cathy Freeman supported Beijing’s bid for the 2008 Olympic Games because of her Chinese heritage. Freeman’s great-great grandfather moved to northern Queensland and worked on sugarcane farms. She hoped Beijing would be successful in its bid “for sentimental reasons because I have ancestry there” (qtd in Reuters Online). When asked if human rights were an issue in her consideration, Freeman replied by insisting that Australia’s human rights record might be no better than China’s: “I can only draw parallels between China and Australia. You look at our human rights. Our record in the treatment of my ancestors, the Aboriginal people, is horrendous” (qtd in Reuters Online). Given the widespread publicity Freeman has received, one wonders why her Chinese ancestry has not been more widely discussed, especially when—according to his analysis of Chinese-language media in Australia—Edwin Tsung-Rong Yang has noted that Freeman’s Chinese heritage is widely celebrated. Indeed, many Chinese-Australians hoped Freeman would win gold in the Sydney Olympics because of her Chinese ancestry (Edwards 21 and personal communication 2 Dec 2000). However, in the Australian national press Freeman’s Chinese heritage has scarcely been reported, despite media coverage in China and in other international publications. Why is Freeman’s Aboriginal-Chinese heritage not celebrated in mainstream media in the same way as her Indigenous ancestry?
These events are culturally and symbolically significant. The fact that the majority of (Anglo) Australians remain ignorant of such incidents is equally important. Complex cross-cultural alliances and relationships between Indigenous and Asian peoples predate the arrival of the British, and they continue to this day. However, the complex entanglements between Aborigines and Asians are largely missing from the dominant national narrative and from dominant renderings of Australian historiography. Indigenous and Asian connections constitute lost, invisible and repressed elements of Australia’s ‘national’ history.

This thesis recovers a rich but hitherto largely neglected history of twentieth century cross-cultural interactions between Indigenous and Asian-Australians. It charts white ideological, political and legislative responses to these unions, highlighting the manifold ways in which they have been written out of national memory over the last hundred years. The constructed nature of Australia’s national memory involves a process of forgetting as well as remembering. In recovering some of the stories that have been lost or forgotten from national consciousness, this thesis contributes to a new narrative of Australian nationhood, and a new reading of Australian historiography. It also provides new insight into the workings of the white collective imaginary.

This introduction is divided into six parts. The first section explores the extent to which discourses on Aborigines and Asian migrant communities are separated in Australian ideologies, in the governmental and legislative arena and in scholarly writing. It provides a literature review of writing on Australian race relations, showing that the vast majority of publications rely on Black/white and Asian/Anglo dichotomies. The second section shows that the interconnectedness of Indigenous and Asian-Australian identities is being increasingly documented in recent Australian writing. Part three argues that these recent accounts have paid scant attention to the white colonial anxieties that resulted in the prohibition of Indigenous/Asian unions, and have largely overlooked why these cross-cultural alliances have been forgotten from Australian historiography. The fourth section defines a number of keywords and explains the particular way in which they are used in the thesis. Part five provides a rationale for the methodology I have adopted in the dissertation, and the final section outlines each of the six chapters.
Identifying the Separation

In Australia there have been for a long time two distinct yet connected public and intellectual debates concerning the significance of descent, belonging and culture. One revolves around the cleavage between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, and especially the status of indigenous claims deriving from a history of colonisation … The other debate … focuses on the non-British immigrant and the notion of multiculturalism, and is about cultural diversity, ethnic politics, and immigration policy (Curthoys, "Uneasy" 21).

Despite a long history of association between Indigenous and Asian peoples, especially in the tropical north and north-west of this country, Indigenous/Asian engagements remain firmly outside the dominant white national self-consciousness. The partitioning of Indigenous and Asian-Australian identities extends beyond the ‘everyday’ level of plain speech. It is also manifested in the governmental and legislative spheres, in academia and in scholarly writing on Australia and Australian race relations.

The partitioning of ‘the Indigenous’ and ‘the multicultural’ is evident in the clearly differentiated departments of government that have been established since the 1940s—at Federal and State levels—for the development and implementation of policies relating to multicultural Australia on the one hand and Aboriginal Australia on the other (Bennett and Carter 254). When new, ostensibly non-racist discourses on majority-minority relations emerged in the 1970s, they were completely separate for migrant and Indigenous peoples. For migrants there were the principles of multiculturalism and access and equity, administered through bodies like the Office of Multicultural Affairs and state ethnic affairs bodies (Vasta 50). For Indigenous people there were policies founded on improvement of socio-economic conditions and self-management, administered through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and then through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (Vasta 50). Debates on reconciliation and Native Title centre largely on a dialogue between Black and white Australians, and discussion on multiculturalism, immigration and asylum seekers rarely includes any consideration of Aboriginal issues or any mention of Indigenous people’s viewpoints. Instead, discussion centres on ‘Anglos’ and ‘ethnics’ and is indicative of the bifurcation between discourses on ‘the Indigenous’ and those pertaining to ‘the immigrant’ that my thesis seeks to challenge.
The separation of ‘the Indigene’ and ‘the immigrant’ in dominant Australian ideologies and policies is also evident in the university environment. Courses are often divided between ‘Indigenous Studies’ and ‘Multicultural Studies’ so that the relationship between these fields of inquiry remains vastly under theorised. Ghassan Hage believes that such an academic division of labour is a result of the white governmental tendency to treat ‘white-Aboriginal’ and ‘Anglo-ethnic’ relations as mutually exclusive spheres: “the Whites relating to Aboriginal people appear as totally unaffected by multiculturalism, while the ‘Anglos’ relating to the ‘ethnics’ appear as if they have no Aboriginal question about which to worry” (White 24).

Aborigines and Asians are also quarantined in much academic and intellectual inquiry. Rather than a tripartite or triangulated view that explores the intersections between Aboriginal, Anglo- and Asian-Australian communities, the usual approach is to explore Black/white, or Asian/Anglo dichotomies. Many Australian historians have focused their attention on the genocide of Indigenous people, investigating how Anglo-Celtic Australians have defined and positioned the Aboriginal ‘Other’ in ideology and policy. Non-Indigenous writers such as Anne McGrath (Born 1987), Henry Reynolds (Dispossession 1989; With 1990; Other 1992; Aboriginal 1996), Gillian Cowlishaw and Barry Morris (1997), Ros Kidd ("Powers" 1993; "Price" 1996; Civilise 1997), Bain Attwood (1989), Heather Goodall (1996) and David Hollinsworth ("Discourses" 1992) have all undertaken vital research into the dynamics between Black and white Australians. But their dichotomous analyses pay scant attention to the way non-Indigenous, non-Anglo-Celtic Australians are positioned in relation to this binary. Indigenous theorists such as Ian Anderson ("Black Suffering" 1993; "Black" 1994; "Aboriginal" 1995; "Hybrid" 1997) and Jackie Huggins (Sister 1998) have also focused on the way Indigenous subjectivities have been constructed in relation to white Australianness. Titles such as F.S. Stevens’ Black versus White (1972), Sharman Stone’s Aborigines in White Australia (1974), Reynolds’ Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders (1989) and With the White People (1990), Anderson’s “Black Suffering White Wash” (1993) and “Black Bit, White Bit” (1994), Cowlishaw and Morris’ Race Matters: Indigenous Australians and ‘Our’ Society (1997) and Kidd’s The Way We Civilise (1997) demonstrate this central concern with understanding the relationships between Black and white Australians.
Other Australian scholars have explored how non-European peoples are positioned vis-à-vis white Australianness. Much attention has been paid to the varying ways in which Chinese and other people of Asian descent have negotiated their subject positions in Australian society, both formerly and in the contemporary era. Anglo- and Asian-Australian historians and sociologists from the late 1960s to the present day have focused their attention on the binary relationships between white settler and Asian migrant peoples. Many texts have centred on Asian peoples themselves, granting the Chinese and other Asians agency by uncovering the varying ways in which they responded to, coped with and sought to subvert white Australian racism. Some of these include A.T. Yarwood’s *Asians in Australia: The Background to Exclusion 1896-1923* (1964), Arthur Huck’s *The Chinese in Australia* (1967), C.Y. Choi’s *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia* (1975), Bill Hornadge’s *The Yellow Peril: A Squint at Some Australian Attitudes Towards Orientals* (1976), C.F. Yong’s *The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia* (1977), Christine Inglis et al.’s *Asians in Australia: The Dynamics of Migration and Settlement* (1992) and Shirley Fitzgerald’s *Red Tape, Gold Scissors: The Story of Sydney’s Chinese* (1997).

Other sociologists and historians have not only been concerned with Asian experiences of white Australian racism and society, they have also researched how Anglo-Australians have understood and responded to Asian people, and how they have imagined ‘Asia’ in a wider regional sense. David Walker’s *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939* (1999) examines the various symbolic meanings white Australians have attached to ‘Asians’ and ‘Asia’ in the collective imaginary as well as in Australian literature. Chinese-Australian poet and cultural critic Ouyang Yu has made a valuable contribution to our understandings of Anglo-Australian literary constructions of China and the Chinese. Ouyang researched this topic in his doctoral thesis ‘Representing the Other: The Chinese in Australian Fiction, 1888-1988’ (1994) and in his article “Australian Invention of Chinese Invasion: A Century of Paranoia, 1888-1988” (1995). In his PhD dissertation ‘The Representation of Chinese People in Australian Literature’ Dai Yin has also examined how China and Chinese people have been imagined in white Australian literary interpretations (1994). These studies provide important insights into the way people of Asian descent have experienced Australian society, as well as deepening our understanding of white Australian perceptions of Asia,
but their narrow focus on Asian/white relationships excludes any consideration of the positioning of Indigenous peoples within this binary dynamic.

Much of the above research has centred on understanding and explicating how Anglo-Celtic Australians have defined and positioned a range of ‘Others’. Increasingly, however, white and non-white theorists are ‘returning the gaze’ and critically examining how these relationships might also produce greater comprehension of the constructed nature of white Australianness. A recent development in Australian writing on race relations involves the identification and exploration of ‘whiteness’ as a racialised and socially constructed identity formation. The colour of one’s skin might be described as ‘white’, but whiteness refers to those ideologies, institutions and practices that guarantee (in Australia and in ‘the West’ generally) the dominance of those with white skin. One of the insidious properties of the dominance of whiteness, and thus of race privilege in Australia, is its seeming normativity, its structured invisibility. Recent research—especially in the United States—has identified whiteness as a temporally and spatially specific construct, and it is this naming of whiteness that can assist in displacing it “from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance” (Frankenberg 6). White race privilege is not merely located within the individual, but can also be enshrined in social institutions, laws and policies. In other words, whiteness operates on an individual and interpersonal level, but also manifests itself institutionally to guarantee and maintain systemic or structural (in)equality.

Since the late 1970s, white writers have been investigating whiteness, with the burgeoning whiteness literature coming largely from the United States. Increasingly sophisticated accounts of whiteness have emerged there in the last few years including Paul Kivel’s *Uprooting Racism* (1996), Michelle Fine et al.’s edited text *Off White: Readings on Race, Power and Society* (1997), and Mike Hill’s edited text *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (1997). Whiteness has largely been theorised in the United States in terms of the racial politics of slavery and the social and cultural positioning of white

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1 Historically, Black theorists of race have written about both Blackness and whiteness; but it is only relatively recently that whites themselves have begun to analyse their racial positioning within their writing. African-American writers including Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1993) and bell hooks [sic] in “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination” (1992) have challenged whites to acknowledge their own racial and social locations.
Americans relative to those of African-American descent.

By comparison, the literature on whiteness that has emerged in the United Kingdom has been much more preoccupied with Empire and colonisation. Sociologists and cultural critics including Paul Gilroy in There Ain’t no Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation (1987) and Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line (2000) have analysed the racial dynamics between white and Black Britons. In 1991 Stuart Hall also emphasised situated and highly disparate forms of racial identities in “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities” (1991). In his 1996 essay “New Ethnicities” Hall argues for the displacement of the ‘centred’ discourse of the West by “putting into question its universalist character and transcendent claims to speak for everyone, while itself being everywhere and nowhere” (446). In Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History (1992) and “Island Racism: Gender, Place, and White Power” (1996) Vron Ware has also contributed to the growing body of knowledge on whiteness in the United Kingdom, paying specific attention to the way white British women’s racial identities have been historically constructed.

In Australia where the racial dynamics and geopolitical conditions are different again, relatively more research has been conducted into the complex interplay between white Australianness and Indigenous subjectivities. Belinda McKay’s edited collection Unmasking Whiteness: Race Relations and Reconciliation (1999) remains one of the most comprehensive analyses of the various ways in which whiteness is manifested in the Australian national psyche and in Australian institutions. Hage’s White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society (1998) and Jennifer Rutherford’s The Gauche Intruder: Freud, Lacan and the White Australian Fantasy (2000) have both used psychoanalytic frameworks to gain greater insight into the mechanisms of the white Australian national imaginary.

The naming of whiteness as a racialised identity has marked a crucial shift in recent theorisations of race in Australia, but whiteness still remains the norm against which other non-white racial and ethnic communities are compared. A recent example of the tendency to relate Indigenous identities and subjectivities to whiteness includes Wendy Brady and Michelle Carey’s article “‘Talkin’ up Whiteness’: A Black and White Dialogue” (2000). This article seeks to problematise “the supposed normativity and
neutrality of whiteness” by placing it “within the historical continuum of colonisation” (271). However, in its narration of the binary drama between Black and white Australians, the article is unable to address the problematic positioning of ‘the multicultural’ in Australian society. Similarly, while Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s text Talkin’ up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism (2000) makes an important contribution to our understanding of the ways in which Indigenous identities are positioned in relation to whiteness and white Australian feminism, it provides no insight into the way whiteness impacts upon the lives of non-white, non-Indigenous minorities.

On the other hand, Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis’ examination of migrant or diasporic identities in relation to whiteness leaves Indigenous subjectivities out of the equation. Their article “Migrancy, Whiteness and the Settler Self in Contemporary Australia” (2000), is a reflection on the life-history narratives they have collected as part of their ongoing study into the social construction of whiteness in contemporary Australia. Schech and Haggis acknowledge that Asian-Australians are absent from their pilot study, an interesting omission considering their research centres on the positioning of migrants in relation to nation and their different abilities to “read themselves into and out of dominant whiteness” (233). Perhaps more than any other diasporic community in Australia, migrants of Asian descent have been debarred from making an unproblematic claim to Australian national belonging, precisely because they remain ‘beyond the pale’ of whiteness. Schech and Haggis’ research provides a valuable contribution to studies on whiteness and Australian national identity, but their focus on the positioning of various European migrants in Australian society overlooks the subject formation of Asian and Aboriginal identities.

Ien Ang’s work on the constructed nature of Asian-Australian identity formation has provided very useful insights into the continuing anxiety that Anglo-Australians feel towards Asia and people of Asian descent. In “Racial/Spatial Anxiety: ‘Asia’ in the Psycho-Geography of Australian Whiteness” (1999), she investigates white constructions of ‘Asia’ and ‘Asians’ in order to provide a fuller account of Australian whiteness and white race consciousness. Ang’s article “Asians in Australia: A Contradiction in Terms?” (2000) recognises that, like Asians, Indigenous peoples are spoken about en masse as a singular and distinct racial category (116), but she does not
explore these connections further. As such her work remains caught within the paradigm of an Asian/Anglo binary. Of course there might be important and pragmatic reasons for looking at Indigenous relationships with white settler peoples in isolation from Anglo-Celtic and Asian relationships. After all, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are Indigenes, and migrants of Asian descent constitute a diasporic collectivity. Asian migrant communities also have different experiences and political agendas than Indigenous people. The need to respect the differences as well as the points of overlap between these communities is a point I return to later.

Making the Connection

So far we have seen that much academic writing on Australian race relations has invoked the same binary oppositions that underpin dominant notions of Australian historiography. In other words, the majority of Australian historians, educationalists and sociologists have been preoccupied in their writing with Black/white and Asian/Anglo dichotomies. But in a growing number of recent accounts the connections between discourses on Indigenous and Asian peoples have been articulated. Since the 1970s more scholars and cultural critics have begun to see the interconnectedness of racism against Aborigines and racism against Asian and other non-European migrant communities. In F.S. Stevens’ (1971-72) three volume edited project *Racism: The Australian Experience, A Study of Race Prejudice in Australia*, a number of the contributors made explicit links between frontier violence between Indigenous and white peoples, and the subsequent treatment of Chinese and other Asian émigrés. Essays by H.O. McQueen (1971), R.V. Hall (1971) and S. Encel (1971), in particular, suggested a causal and sequential connection between white settler treatment of Aborigines and other non-European peoples. McQueen’s discussion centred on literary and cultural production that dealt with Aborigines and Chinese subjects, while Hall explored the representations of Aborigines and Chinese peoples in late nineteenth and early twentieth century press reports. In “The Nature of Race Prejudice in Australia”, Encel challenged the tendency of Australian historians to see the treatment of Aborigines as a separate issue from the exclusion of Asians, arguing that these are “connected aspects of the one central question of racialism” (39).

Two further texts on Australian race relations written in the 1970s discussed Indigenous and Asian communities together. While these analyses made important contributions to
our understanding of the many points of intersection between the treatment of Indigenous and Asian communities, they covered these issues in separate chapters. In 1975 Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin published *Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*. It marked an important break from tradition in its analysis of racism against Aborigines and migrant communities in the one book. But it still dealt with the ‘Chinese question’ largely without reference to the ‘Aboriginal problem’. Evans mentioned the similarities between the positioning of these minority collectivities in his introduction to the book, but the remainder of the text dealt with these issues in isolation from each other in separate chapters (“Keep” 1-23). In 1978 Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus’ edited text *Who Are Our Enemies?: Racism and the Working Class in Australia* considered racism and class-based discrimination against Aboriginal people and migrants in separate chapters.

In 1981 a special edition of the journal *Aboriginal History* was devoted to exploring various relationships between Indigenous and non-Anglo-Celtic migrant collectivities. A range of articles explored the various exchanges and cross-cultural traffic between Indigenous communities and Chinese, Macassan and Afghan sojourners and settlers (Anderson and Mitchell; Chase; Urry and Walsh). The majority of accounts emanated from research conducted in areas including north Queensland, Cape York Peninsula and the Kimberley region. Greater contact between Indigenous, Asian and other non-white minorities has historically occurred in northern and north-western Australia, with places like Broome and Darwin still famous for their ‘poly-ethnic’ communities. In 1990 Annette Hamilton’s article “Fear and Desire: Aborigines, Asians and the National Imaginary” explored the contradictory and ambivalent attitudes white Australians have towards Aborigines and Asia/ns. Her work discussed the various ways in which the term ‘Asia’ signifies in the national imaginary, but she did not explore how Asians in Australia are constructed, nor did she consider the cross-cultural engagements between Aboriginal and Asian-Australian peoples.

Australian historians and scholars are increasingly recognising the importance of examining the interrelated nature of Indigenous and Asian-Australian subjectivities. In her groundbreaking essays “An Uneasy Conversation: The Multicultural and the Indigenous” (2000) and “Immigration and Colonisation: New Histories” (2001),
Curthoys examines the way Indigenous and multicultural discourses have been assigned separate and mutually exclusive spheres in public and intellectual debates. Her work makes a vital and influential contribution to this growing area of research, and she is one of the very few Australian scholars who insists upon the importance of taking the fraught and ambiguous relations between Indigenous and Asian diasporic communities into account. Curthoys also makes the very important point that histories of migration should be read within the ongoing process of colonisation, rather than in isolation from it.

In his recent book *Race: John Howard and the Remaking of Australia* (2001) Markus also challenges the bifurcation of ‘the Indigenous’ and ‘the multicultural’ through his exploration of Aboriginal and immigration policies from the early 1980s to the present. Some of Markus’ earlier work has also sought to interrogate this complex relationship. His books *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California, 1850-1901* (1979), *Australian Race Relations, 1788-1993* (1994), and his article “Land Rights, Immigration and Multiculturalism: The Assault from the Right” (1987) have all sought to uncover the interconnecting parallelisms between debates on Indigenous politics and those on Asian migration.

John Docker’s criticism of Sneja Gunew’s contention that the preponderance of Anglo-Celtic writing in Australian literature is another form of colonialism—in his article “The Temperament of Editors and a New Multicultural Orthodoxy” (1991)—has also highlighted the complexities of the relationship between multicultural and Indigenous debates. Aboriginal and migrant discourses have been further problematised in recent writing by Peter Read. In his book *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (2000), and his article “Pain, Yes; Racism, No: The Response of non-British Australians to Indigenous Land Rights” (1997), Read conducted a series of interviews with Australians of non-British descent, asking them (among other questions) how they perceived the issues of Native Title and Indigeneity. From a complimentary perspective, Nyoongar writer Rosemary van den Berg interviewed Indigenous people from Western Australia about their feelings on immigration and multiculturalism in *Nyoongar People of Australia: Perspectives on Racism and Multiculturalism* (2002).

Regina Ganter has examined the complex interactions between Indigenous communities and Asian seafarers in *The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait* (1994). Ganter’s edited text
Mixed Relations (forthcoming in 2003) will make a further contribution to this growing body of knowledge, with a number of the contributors considering the cross-cultural relations between Aborigines and Asians on mainland Australia. Malaysian-born Christine Choo has worked as a social researcher and historian for and with Aboriginal people since the 1970s and has published widely on the cross-cultural alliances between Aboriginal and Asian communities, especially in the Kimberley region of Western Australia ("Impact" 1994; "Challenge" 1999; Mission 2001). Choo and Aboriginal scholars Pat Dudgeon and Hannah McGlade have recently collaborated in editing Reconciling Identities (forthcoming in 2003). Here the contributors use oral histories and archival evidence to reclaim the hitherto largely unexplored alliances and partnerships between Indigenous and Asian diasporic communities. A number of the writers are of Aboriginal-Asian descent, and they recount important and compelling personal testimonies of their experiences.

Anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli has spent more than seventeen years living and working on behalf of Indigenous people on the Cox Peninsula, west of Darwin. She has adopted an anthropological approach to social analysis in her recent exploration of the politics of Indigeneity and the positioning of Indigenous people in relation to multiculturalism. In The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism (2002) she makes a very important contribution to this emerging field of research. Povinelli has written a comprehensive and original account of the complex relationships between the Australian national imaginary, and how Indigenous peoples are positioned within (or without) a multicultural form of liberal nationalism. For Povinelli, Australia’s historical and economic relationship to Asia provides one side of a “double margin between which a multicultural national imaginary was to be constructed” (21), while Indigenous people’s relationship to multiculturalism lies on the other side. Her analysis of the way the Australian national imaginary seeks to defend and reassert its homogeneity and unity in the face of perceived Asian and Aboriginal incursions is of vital importance in understanding the Australian collective psyche.

Recent conferences, colloquiums and workshops have also explored the relationships between Indigenous, Asian and other culturally diverse migrant peoples and their contingent claims to national belonging. The colloquium ‘Lost in the Whitewash:
Aboriginal-Chinese Encounters from Federation to Reconciliation’ at the Australian National University in 2000 sought to uncover the significant, but to date largely invisible human encounters, spiritual exchanges and cultural traffic between Indigenous peoples and Asian sojourners and settlers (Shen and Edwards 4). The publication *Lost in the Whitewash* (forthcoming in 2003) edited by Shen Yuan-fang and Penny Edwards is based on the proceedings of the colloquium, and will be another of the very few detailed and comprehensive studies of cross-cultural relationships between Aboriginal and Asian diasporic communities in Australia.

Other workshops and conferences attempting to undermine the simplistic Black/white binary in dominant renderings of Australian historiography include the ‘Double/Edged 2000’ conference held at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). This conference sought to explore ways forward for dialogue between those engaged in Aboriginal Studies and Multicultural Studies and aimed to counter the way these areas of inquiry are predominantly seen as mutually exclusive fields of research. The 2000 UTS postgraduate winter school ‘Subaltern, Indigenous and Multicultural Histories’ was designed to promote discussion about the relationship between analyses emerging from postcolonial writing and those being generated by various decolonising processes in Australia and the Pacific. A selection of the papers from the Double/Edged conference and the postgraduate winter school was published in a special edition of *UTS Review* in 2001. The papers in this collection emanated from two distinct sources, but they explored a number of overlapping themes and are demonstrative of the increasing salience of theories and debates on cross-cultural dialogues. The 2002 postgraduate winter school ‘Race, Culture and Whiteness’ at the University of Queensland brought together a number of cultural critics including Ien Ang who has written extensively on the ways in which notions of Asianness are constructed in Australian society; Ghassan Hage a leading scholar in the field of multiculturalism and Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Geonpul academic (from Quandamooka or Moreton Bay) who has published widely in the fields of whiteness and Aboriginality.

The academic and scholarly publications and conferences detailing the ambiguous and complex cross-cultural unions between Indigenous and Asian-Australian communities have emerged very recently. The vast majority of analyses that engage with such material have been published in the last five or so years. Contemporary scholarship on
Indigenous/Asian unions is thus on the cutting edge of Australian theories and politics of race and identity. Recent publications make a valuable rejoinder to previous discourses and debates on Indigenous and Asian diasporic subjectivities. They challenge the bifurcation of Aboriginal and Asian-Australian discourses in the white Australian national memory, in legislation and in literature on Australian race relations.

White Australianness and Indigenous/Asian Engagements

Aborigines and people from the various regions of Asia have engaged in rich and complex alliances on this continent for centuries. Why is it that cultural critics, historians, sociologists and other scholars have only unearthed these stories recently? Scholarship on Aborigines and Asians—including recent publications—has not considered why the newfound interest in these cross-cultural partnerships is so belated. Recent accounts have rarely moved beyond a descriptive narrative of Indigenous/Asian unions to a deeper analysis of the underlying causes for white colonists’ opposition to them. Why did British Australians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries make such strident attempts to prevent Indigenous/Asian alliances? And why have descendants of the early white ‘settlers’ continued to overlook them in the twenty-first century?

This thesis contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the interconnectedness of Indigenous and Asian-Australian identities by examining why white Australians have historically kept these communities separate, and why such relations have been largely forgotten from white Australian historiography. It suggests reasons why knowledge of these cross-cultural unions has remained largely outside “the construction of that sifted and selected reality we inhabit” (Rutherford 33). In unearthing Anglo-Celtic responses to the cross-cultural exchanges between Indigenous and Asian peoples over the last hundred years, this thesis insists upon the socially constructed and historically produced nature of white Australianness. By emphasising the constructed nature of whiteness, we can better understand the white Australian investment in separating and quarantining Indigenous and Asian-Australian peoples from each other.

When images of the ‘national type’ were forming in the white collective psyche, Aborigines provided one of the starkest examples of what white Australians were not. In perceiving them as irredeemably ‘Other’ and inherently inferior, British colonisers
depended on Aboriginal people to enhance their own self-image. Racist and derogatory images of Aboriginality served to reflect back to the colonising culture what it needed and wanted to see in itself (Mick Dodson qtd in Choo, Mission xxiii). The inferiority of the ‘native’ affirmed the superiority of the British colonists, and Aboriginal primitivism provided proof of the white achievements of ‘progress’ and ‘civilisation’. A similar process of colonisation through language occurred in the relationship between British and Asian sojourners and settlers (Choo, Mission xxiii). Whites were righteous and morally upstanding because the Chinese and other ‘Asiatics’ were morally bereft; British Australians were sober and law-abiding because Asians were gambling opium-addicts. Aboriginal and Asian bodies became the dumping ground for those traits that white colonists did not wish to acknowledge within themselves.

Indigenous and Asian ‘Others’ were thus essential and relational components of the white settler sense of ‘self’. Against the ‘Otherness’ of ‘natives’ and ‘Asiatics’, white colonists sought to construct a more homogeneous and unitary national self. Paradoxically, however, the very presence of these “constitutive outsider[s]” (Mouffe 107) guaranteed that the Australian nation could never be homogeneous. The very existence of Asian and Aboriginal bodies within the Australian landscape unsettled the nation’s commitment to ‘oneness’, making a mockery of Sir Henry Parkes’ national ideal of ‘One People, One Destiny’ (qtd in Alomes 31). White Australia thus set about ridding the national body of Aboriginal and Asian contaminants, and prohibiting Indigenous/Asian social, working and sexual partnerships.

Cross-cultural unions between white Australia’s ‘constitutive Others’² generated intense anxiety in the white colonial psyche because they challenged white racial, territorial and economic dominance. Choo argues that white colonial opposition to the social and sexual intercourse between Indigenous and Asian communities developed because they were identified as “the common enemy of white Australia” (Mission 5). As the thesis indicates, Anglo-Celtic Australians attempted to prevent Indigenous and Asian people from engaging in social, labour and intimate relationships through the

² Borrowing Chantal Mouffe’s notion of the ‘constitutive outsider’, I use the term ‘constitutive Other’ in order to reinforce the fact that Aborigines and Asians were ‘inside’ national borders.
introduction of discriminatory legislation designed to keep them apart. White colonists found a plethora of reasons to justify their opposition to cross-cultural engagements between Aborigines and Asians, but perhaps the major threat was an increase in the so-called ‘coloured’ population within the colonies. The presence of coloured or mixed-race people reminded white colonists of the impossibility of essentialist and singular conceptions of identity.

The first preference of white colonial authorities and the driving force behind much legislation was to prohibit Indigenous/Asian relationships from developing. Where these cross-cultural alliances could not be prevented, we have sought to negate their significance by deleting them from the narratives of nation we tell ourselves. That these cross-cultural relationships have been almost entirely expunged from the collective or national psyche lies in the widespread lack of awareness that they predate white invasion and colonisation. As Mudrooroo suggests, “even when Australia was Indigenous Australia there is enough evidence in our traditions to suggest that our land was never the isolated continent as established in the Master texts” (Us Mob 6).

Commercial and human alliances between Indigenous communities and Asian seafarers have existed on this continent for centuries. Each year between 1,000 and 2,000 men from the island of Macassar, in what is now Indonesia, travelled to the north coast of ‘Australia’ for trepang or bêche-de-mer. The Macassans recognised the sovereignty of northern Aboriginal peoples, and made no attempt to indoctrinate Indigenes with their religious beliefs, or to take possession of the land. Admitting these stories into the collective imaginary would necessitate acknowledging that, unlike the Macassans, British people refused to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty. These cross-cultural relationships also destabilise accepted narratives or orthodoxies of nation because they force us to reconsider our typical conception that places Indigenous peoples on this continent first, with the British assuming a prior right to the land in relation to Asian migrants. Asian émigrés were negotiating complex relationships with Indigenous peoples long before ‘we’ arrived. Acknowledging this historical fact would undermine white claims that we ‘discovered’ this land.

White legislators and ideologues have attempted to prohibit, and then to forget the cross-racial and cultural exchanges between Indigenous and Asian peoples. Of course some knowledge of these cross-cultural relationships has circulated in the public
domain, but these unions have not been inscribed at the level of the collective psyche. To put it another way, they have not been ‘remembered’ and accepted as another story in the national narrative. Because Indigenous/Asian engagements have not been admitted into the collective imaginary as another element of the national experience, they continue to ‘haunt’ the white national psyche as a source of threat. Indigenous/Asian partnerships challenge white narratives of nation because they foreclose every attempt conclusively to define a homogeneous national identity. People of Indigenous-Asian ancestry are living proof of failed white governmental attempts to guarantee racial ‘purity’ on the Australian continent. Mixed-race descendants of Indigenous/Asian unions force ‘us’ to acknowledge that it is impossible to draw absolute distinctions between an interior self and an exterior (and constitutive) ‘Other’ because every identity is irremediably destabilised by its exterior (Mouffe 109).

Definitions and Terminology

This thesis navigates between a number of key social theory/critical terms. These terms have their own genealogies and have been used in different ways in different contexts. Here I define the way in which I am primarily using them in this thesis.

Race

The significations attached to the term race have changed considerably over time; from being a term used to classify plants and animals, the concept of race has also been used to divide the human population according to some notion of ‘stock’, common descent or origin. During the period of ‘scientific racism’ specific races were seen to possess their own collective heredity or traits based on immutable biological or physical differences. Physical characteristics such as the colour of one’s skin, or the shape of one’s nose or eyes are indicators that have been (and still are) commonly used to distinguish between different ‘races’. Previous discourses of race impinge upon and are foundational to subsequent ideologies and policies, including today’s. Even though the scientific racism of prior eras has been mostly discredited, it is still “alive and flourishing in the public imagination” (Larbarestier 149).

The notion of race is invoked in this thesis as a socially constructed and historically produced concept. To assert that race and racial differences are socially constructed is not to minimise their social and political impact but, rather, to insist that their reality is
precisely “social and political rather than inherent or static” (Frankenberg 11). The social significations attached to a particular race can be used to justify racism, or to mobilise a constituency in response to it. In other words, race-based identities are not always imposed, and may be invoked as political resources by subordinate groups themselves. This thesis shows that Indigenous and Asian-Australians have also invoked their own particular racialised identities in the service of political mobilisation.

**Ethnicity**

The term ethnicity is used to refer to those cultural beliefs and social customs or habits that are representative of an identifiable and distinguishable community of people. In the dominant Australian ideology, ‘ethnic’ is used to refer to new arrivals that are of non-English-speaking-backgrounds, and I have adopted this usage of the term in this thesis. In the dominant imaginary, ethnicity is often equated with the more iconic or obvious aspects of one’s cultural identity including food, language, dance and dress (Anthias 155). An ethnic or cultural (as opposed to a racial) identity is characterised in the dominant ideology as shifting and fluid as opposed to fixed and immutable and, as such, I suggest that distinctions in race are perceived as more threatening than ethnic or cultural differences. According to Chilla Bulbeck ‘ethnics’, unlike ‘races’, look and behave more like the ‘us’ that is calling them ethnic, so that Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders, Asians and other non-Europeans are defined as races, but Greek and Italian immigrants are described as ethically different (128).

Cultural and ethnic identification can be ascribed to an individual or group in essentialist terms, thereby functioning similarly to a race-based system of classification. Not just physical appearance, but also language, religion, clothing or any other cultural indicator, “as long as they come to be perceived as the identification of a separate human stock with an immutable heritage” (Anthias 155) come into play. Thus an identifiable ethnic identity or culturalist form of distinction can also serve to mark those so defined as incommensurably different. Even though culturally and ethnically based forms of distinction do not rest on biological differences, they are often utilised in a similar way to scientific or essentialist racism. This is especially the case when ‘racism’ and ‘racist’ are not acceptable terms in mainstream political discourse—hence usage of coded terminology such as ‘queue jumpers’ and ‘boat people’ in recent Australian debates on refugees and asylum seekers.
Diaspora

Associated with minority or migrant populations, diaspora involves experiences of transnational identity, of memory and “longing across time and space” (Docker and Fischer 14). In that diasporic communities maintain an allegiance or connection to a homeland or community elsewhere, diasporic identities can be antithetical to claims to unity of the nation state. Diasporic communities may also be defined against, or in tension with, Indigenous identities (Curthoys, "Uneasy" 21). Diasporic communities can experience racist hostility and derision from the majority society, but in the history of settler colonies, diaspora—"whether European or Asian—are migrants in a more general sense just like the migrants of the majority society” (Docker and Fischer 15). In recent conceptualisations however, the connections or similarities between Indigenous and diasporic identities have been stressed. In particular, for those Indigenous people who have been forcibly removed from their homelands, the feelings of displacement and exile usually associated with diasporic communities are a constitutive part of their self-identities. While Torres Strait Islander people who now reside in mainland Australia, for instance, are Indigenes, they might also be characterised as diasporic.

Anglo-Celtic

The term Anglo-Celtic was used more than a hundred years ago by Irish Catholic Australians as an emendation to ‘Anglo-Saxon’ in order to assert their insider status in Australia (Stratton, Race 38). It did not gain widespread currency at that time, but usage of the term increased rapidly in the 1980s and has since become the popularly accepted nomenclature for ‘settler’ or ‘old Australians’. ‘Anglo-Celtic’ is also utilised to describe the so-called ‘core-culture’ of Australia that existed prior to the massive influx of European migrants in the post-war era. While it was previously invoked as a tactic of inclusion of Irish people within the Anglo-Saxon dominated power structure, it now often serves as a strategy of exclusion of those who are not of British or Irish descent (Stratton, Race 38).

In its current usage, ‘Anglo-Celtic’ has become devoid of any reference to the historical domination of English Protestants over Irish Catholics, and is thus a term that denies the cultural diversity that exists within ‘old Australia’. Moreover, it is a term that overly homogenises settler or old Australians by obscuring the fact that early migrants to
Australia not only came from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, but also Germany and other northern European countries. I use the term with these shortcomings in mind. In the thesis ‘Anglo-Celtic’ is used interchangeably with ‘white’ and ‘Anglo’ Australian to refer to those descended from the early ‘settlers’. I have used the lower case when referring to ‘white’ Australians to indicate that it is a generic term that does not necessarily refer to a distinct and identifiable group of people who share a common history or language. Where I have referred to the ‘White Australia’ policy I have used the upper case because I am speaking about a particular policy.

National Imaginary/Consciousness

Benedict Anderson’s groundbreaking work on the rise of nationalism defined the nation as an “imagined political community” (15). Like any other nation, ‘Australia’ is a socially constructed and historically produced concept. The Australian nation cannot be defined so much by what it is, but by what people believe it to be. Thus ‘Australianness’ is known intuitively and unquestionably; it is a matter of attitude, not of fact (Connor 37). It is important to stress the largely psychological bond that gives Australians a sense of national homogeneity, but the power and primacy of national loyalties and attachments should not be underestimated. The concept of nationhood distinguishes insiders from outsiders; it is predicated on a hierarchy of national belonging where some and not ‘Others’ are granted membership in the ‘imagined community’. The idea of the Australian national imaginary or consciousness is not so much an invention or fabrication, but a reconstruction and reinterpretation of the dominant group’s stories and narratives. To insist that the white Australian definition of the nation is a particular imagined construction in no way diminishes its salience. The term ‘white national imaginary’ refers to a broadly held conviction concerning Australia’s singular origin and destiny. White Australian narratives and imaginings of nation attempt to establish continuity with an assumed past, which necessitates imposing an artificial and particular version of Australian nationhood upon a diverse landscape and population (White viii).

Asia/n

Edward Said drew attention to the Eurocentrism inherent in the Western construct of ‘the Orient’ in his seminal text Orientalism (1978). Like ‘Oriental’, the terms Asia and
Asian are Western constructs that invoke a problematic binary opposition between ‘East and West’. In the dominant white Australian imaginary, the term ‘Asian’ has been used to refer to the variety of people from the number of countries that constitute the landmass commonly known as ‘Asia’. Asia exists in the dominant ideology as an amorphous entity—it is an artificial construct with indistinct and uncertain boundaries (Ang, "Asians" 116). The discursive nature of the term ‘Asia’ is demonstrated by the fact that until 1990, the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ definition included the Middle East (Lo, Khoo and Gilbert 2).

‘Asians’ have come to be defined as those with a single eye fold (Ang, "Asians" 116). We can thus see that commonsense notions of ‘Asianness’ are racialised, that is, they are continually associated with the notion of race. The foundational role played by the ‘White Australia’ policy in the formation of Australia’s national identity has meant that in the white popular imagination Asians continue to remain the objects of anxiety. The menace of the ‘yellow peril’ was formerly located outside the nation, but with the rescinding of the ‘White Australia’ policy and the increase in Asian immigration, the ‘Asian threat’ has now been internalised and resides within the nation (Perera and Pugliese, "Racial" 11). But as I have suggested previously, racialised identities can also be invoked as a political gesture. The term Asian-Australian can be mobilised by people from ‘Asia’ or by those born in Australia to Asian parents to insist upon their insider status in Australia, and to give political solidarity and critical purchase to people of various Asian ethnicities. When I use the generic term ‘Asian’ I refer largely to those from South, South-East and East Asia including people from the various islands that now make up Indonesia and the Philippines, China and Japan. In line with its common or general usage in Australia, I do not use ‘Asian’ with reference to people from the sub-continent of India. Unlike the United Kingdom where ‘Asian’ includes Indian and Pakistani people, Australians tend to use the term ‘Asian’ largely with reference to those from East and South-East Asia, particularly China.

Aboriginal/Indigenous

In this thesis, I use the word ‘Aboriginal’ as an adjective, and ‘Aborigine’ as a noun. The term ‘Aborigine’ is one not favoured by many Aboriginal people because it is reminiscent of the labelling and dividing terms such as ‘half-caste’, ‘quadroon’ and ‘octoroon’ endorsed in the early nineteenth century (Huggins, "Writing" 88). Many
Aboriginal people use the word ‘Indigenous’ instead. The terms ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Indigeneity’ refer to a political form of self-definition invoked by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in order to reinforce their identity as the original custodians of Australia. It is used as a means of separating or demarcating the particular political struggles of Indigenous Australians from other sections of Australian society, and may also function to strengthen the corporate identity of Indigenes in Australia (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous* 208). While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have their Indigeneity in common, many of the specific and identifiable concerns of Torres Strait Islanders differ from those of Aboriginal people, and will not be discussed at length because of space constraints.

Throughout this thesis the words Aborigine, Aboriginal, Black, Indigenous, Indigenes and Indigeneity are capitalised to indicate that they refer to specific and identifiable groups of people. Many people of Aboriginal descent prefer to use self-defined terms that denote their regional affiliations including Murri in Queensland, Koori(e) in southern New South Wales and Victoria, Nyoonga(h) in south-west Western Australia, Yolngu in the north-west of WA or Nyunga in South Australia. Where this information has been provided by the writer, I have referred to individual Aboriginal people as descendants of particular language groups in order to account for the important distinctions that arise from different ‘country’, community and familial affiliations. Where I have not had access to this information I have used ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’ interchangeably.

**Thesis Rationale**

South-East Asians were by no means the only non-white migrants to Australia in the colonial period. South Sea Island or Kanaka peoples, Indians and Afghans were among some of the other migrant communities forced to Australia as indentured labourers or lured by the prospect of accumulating wealth. But Chinese and other migrants from the various regions of South-East Asia formed the largest non-Anglo-Celtic constituency and, indeed, the desire to keep them ‘at bay’ was a critical catalyst in the unification of the separate colonies into a Federated Australia (Edwards and Shen). The Asian presence is also particularly important in any study of Australian race relations because much of the legislation directed towards Indigenous peoples was a response to it. Thus Aboriginal policy, especially in the north and north-west, cannot be understood in
isolation as a Black-white issue (Ganter, "Living" 13). It is important to explore the relationships between Indigenes and people of Asian descent because in both the colonial and contemporary eras, they have been perceived in the white collective imaginary to pose a highly symbolic threat to white racial, territorial and economic dominance. Relationships between Indigenous and various Asian communities also merit further analysis because these communities have been negotiating complex alliances and cross-cultural exchanges in the northern and north-western parts of this continent since the pre-invasion era.

In examining the way white Australians have responded to the complex engagements between Indigenous and Asian-Australians, I explore how each of these communities has been discursively constructed in published accounts. To this end I draw on a wide range of literary and cultural production and have utilised not only historical and socio-political accounts, but also auto/biographical, literary and fictional texts. My use of heterogeneous source materials is important because the thesis makes a provisional reconnaissance into a largely unknown area of the national experience and into the functioning of the white collective imaginary—areas that have been dispersed and remembered (as well as forgotten) in multiple sites. In consulting fictional narratives as well as objective historical ‘facts’, my analysis is better able to uncover the ‘commonsense’ notions or ideologies that prevailed in a given era—after all, ideologies are political fictions too. This thesis also examines the particular legislation and policies implemented by the government of the day. As notions of race, ethnicity, identity and the ideological requirements of nation have shifted over the last century, so have the policies that have been introduced.

As an Anglo-Celtic Australian I contribute my knowledge, experiences and insights in turning the spotlight on white Australia and the particular way in which the white Australian consciousness has responded to Indigenous/Asian engagements. I have relied on the experiences of Aboriginal and Asian peoples to provide greater insight into the workings of the white collective psyche, but I do not speak for Indigenous or Asian communities. The voices, experiences and agency of Aboriginal and Asian-Australian people are recorded in the novels, poetry, theatre, visual arts and other cultural production they have written. Indigenous and Asian-Australian peoples have also distilled their own historical experiences through participation in cross-cultural
collaborations. This thesis provides the first scholarly overview of a new wave of Indigenous/Asian cross-cultural and literary production that is rewriting the national geographic and social imaginary. These accounts are based on oral histories and other evidence from the communities involved, but they also use mythology and fictional representations. I do not use these stories as an alternative to, or substitute for, historical ‘facts’. They function more as a reflection on or interpretation of the dominant white narrative, and thus augment the historical testimony.

This thesis uses a very wide range of sources for strategic reasons, and out of necessity. It utilises the various forms of literary, theatrical and cultural production written by Indigenous and Asian-Australians as a tactical manoeuvre or political gesture, showing that these communities are recounting their own experiences in their own words. But this thesis also relies on these recent testimonies as evidence of the cross-cultural unions established between Indigenous and Asian-Australians, because—notwithstanding the very recent accounts mentioned previously—these alliances are not often addressed in academic and political publications. I have had to look outside ‘mainstream’ writing on Australian culture, society and race relations and beyond the dominant version of Australian historiography to pay homage to the enduring as well as new cross-cultural alliances between these communities. This thesis thus uses a cross or inter-disciplinary approach that is partly a work of history combined with cultural studies and literary criticism in conjunction with an examination of the political and legislative arenas.

By using the personal narratives and reminiscences of Indigenous and Asian-Australian peoples, these communities have ‘voice’ in the thesis. Jong Ah Siug’s autobiography A Difficult Case (2000) and Shen Yuan-fang’s exploration of the self-portraits of more than twenty Chinese-Australians over the past 130 years in Dragon Seed in the Antipodes: Chinese-Australian Autobiographies (2001), have provided extremely useful insights into the images of Chinese immigrants in Australia from a Chinese perspective. Interviews with Chinese-Australians conducted by Diana Giese in Beyond Chinatown (1995), Astronauts, Lost Souls and Dragons (1997) and Courage and Service (1999); those conducted by Sang Ye in The Year the Dragon Came (1996) and Chek Ling’s interviews in Plantings in a New Land (2001) have all provided an important supplement to mainstream histories of Chinese migration to and settlement in Australia.
Other oral historians have conducted interviews with people of mixed Asian-Aboriginal ancestry. Writers such as Regina Ganter ("Living" 1998; "Wakayama" 1999), Yuriko Nagata (Unwanted 1996; "Japanese-Australians" 1999), Guy Ramsay ("Myth" 2000; "Family" 2000; "Contentious" 2001; "Cherbourg" 2003), Christine Choo ("Impact" 1994; Mission 2001), Julia Martinez (1999) and Sarah Yu (1999) have based their findings on archival evidence of these contacts as well as personal testimonies from individuals descended from Aboriginal/Asian unions. I have used these interviews to show that people of Indigenous-Asian ancestry adopt a wide range of subjectivities and identity formations, with some people identifying more with their Asian extraction, others privileging their Indigenous ancestry, and still others identifying with both of their heritages equally. Other oral histories I have utilised include the interviews with Indigenous women conducted by Mary Ann Bin-Sallik in Aboriginal Women by Degrees (2000) and autobiographical narratives by Indigenous writers such as Ruth Hegarty (1999), Marnie Kennedy (1985), Ruby Langford Ginibi (Real Deadly 1992; Bundjalung 1994; Don't Take 1988) and Sally Morgan (1987).

This thesis also makes use of a number of images to show that these communities have and still are representing each other in paintings, drawings and photographs. Asian and Aboriginal Australian voices might not be heard in dominant ideologies or in mainstream publications, but these various images attest to the myriad of other ways in which these communities are voicing their experiences. Much of the artwork and music being produced by Indigenous and Asian-Australians emanates from the north and north-west of Australia, with the majority of it appearing very recently. Thus Indigenous/Asian artistic and cultural production is not uniform, and there is wide variation and diversity in the experiences of these communities across Australia. Much cross-cultural artistic production emanates from Broome because of its very particular history and regional specificity. In the colonial and early Federation periods Asian labourers were permitted to work in Broome and along the pearling belt relatively freely because the pearl shell industry could not survive without the exploitation of cheap Asian labour. Asians thus mixed with people of Aboriginal descent in Broome with greater ease than in other parts of Australia. The fact that Indigenous/Asian unions are being represented and dramatised now is also an indication of contemporary politics, where Indigenous and Asian-Australians are answering to the erasure they have historically suffered in dominant narratives of nation.
The contexts in which Anglo-Australians have responded to the cross-cultural engagements between Indigenous and Asian-Australians have shifted over the past century. But this thesis shows that there have also been many points of continuity between colonial and contemporary representations of Indigenes and Asians. During the colonial period, white racial and cultural identity was dependent upon and intimately tied to the symbolic meanings ascribed to the so-called ‘native’ on the one hand, and to the assumed potential invaders characterised as ‘aliens’ or ‘Asiatics’ on the other. In other words, ‘white Australia’ was defined foundationally against the Indigenous owners and in opposition to the ‘yellow hordes’ who might, in turn, become invaders themselves. While the language and, therefore, the meanings of debates were somewhat different in the nineteenth century, they are “not as different as perhaps some present-day Australians would wish” (Curthoys, "Uneasy" 22). While ‘native’ or ‘black’ has been replaced by ‘Indigenous’ or Koori(e), Murri and other regional terms, and the potential invaders are now cast as migrants more generally (although unease about ‘Asian’ and other non-white immigration persists), white Australianness is still imagined within these symbolic terms. The determined conviction of white colonists to steal and then claim exclusive ownership of the land has played a founding role in the formation of contemporary white Australianness.

Beyond emphasising the racial and territorial anxieties evident in Anglo-Australian responses to Indigenous/Asian relationships, this thesis highlights the complex nature of these cross-cultural alliances. Colonial accounts of Indigenous/Asian engagements typically characterise these relationships in terms of immorality, exploitation, debauchery and ruination, charges that could just as easily be made of white relationships with Indigenes. I do not wish to replace a wholly negative evaluation of these unions with an entirely positive one, but to provide a more balanced analysis that accounts for the rich and varied relationships that Indigenous and Asian peoples have and continue to share. I provide a challenge to the negative characterisation typically ascribed to unions between Indigenous and Asian peoples by showing that these relationships were also based on trust, love and mutual self-interest and dependence. The very fact that such cross-cultural relationships survived at all attests to the agency these communities exhibited in the face of institutionalised surveillance and control.
This thesis locates Asian émigrés as both agents in and victims of the colonial endeavour. Many Chinese and other Asian sojourners and settlers encountered exclusion and marginalisation from the Anglo-Australian dominated power structure but, like their white counterparts, they were also pioneers or ‘invaders’ who shared the Anglo-Celtic ambition of exploiting Indigenous waters, land and labour for personal profit. However, via their cultural and spiritual exchanges and inter-marriage with Indigenous communities (and the cultural diversity these relationships helped to bring to the colonies), these same Asian immigrants provided a challenge to the British colonial endeavour.

In the contemporary era, the relationships between Indigenous and Asian-Australians are still characterised by ambiguities. Many Asian-Australians have difficulties identifying themselves as beneficiaries of Australia’s colonial legacy, and reflect some perceptions of Aboriginality that exist in dominant Anglo-Australian ideologies. On the other hand, those Asian-Australian refugees and migrants that have also been displaced from their countries, languages and cultures might share some common experiences with Aboriginal people and a greater understanding of Indigenous politics. However, regardless of the racism and other forms of discrimination and prejudice migrant communities have encountered in Australia, all immigrants remain the beneficiaries of the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. “Immigration, then, whether British or non-British, European or non-European, lies within rather than after a history of colonisation, within the history of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples” (Curthoys, "Immigration" 172).

My research focuses on the fear and anxiety that Indigenous and Asian racial identities engender in the white Australian cultural imaginary. But just as there is fear, there is also desire. The ambivalence of this fear/desire complex can be seen in the contradictory and ambiguous ways in which whites have imagined their Indigenous and Asian counterparts. The deep ambivalence towards these ‘imagined communities’ stems from their positions respectively “at the ‘empty heart’ and ‘fragile boundaries’ of the Australian consciousness” (Hamilton 18). Within the fear of something at the heart and outside national and cultural boundaries, there “is also a lure and a fascination, which can be neutralised not by retreat but by appropriation” (Hamilton 18). Aborigines have symbolised and embodied the worst fantasies of white Australianness,
including drunkenness and laziness, but these characterisations have intersected with others extolling the virtues of an Aboriginal spiritualism and mysticism that white Australians feel they lack. More non-Indigenous Australian novelists and artists are turning to Aboriginal culture as a source of inspiration; and Aboriginal art, dance and performance are being increasingly absorbed and renegotiated by the nation to symbolise an iconic ‘Australianness’.

These “two circuits of meaning” (Hamilton 21) are also evident in white imaginings of Asia/ns. Asia has long existed in the white collective psyche as a source of threat and contagion. The spectre of teeming masses of potential Asian invaders has always “animated important strands of the Australian imagination” (Ang, Not Speaking 15). But Asia has not been consistently regarded with hostility and animosity; there has long been advocacy of closer engagement with the region, which was canvassed much earlier than is commonly recognised. Alison Broinowski suggests that it “has been characteristic of Australian responses to Asia since the last century to oscillate between wide extremes” (40). Just as Asia was seen as watchful, enduring and threatening, by the 1930s some commercial agents and trade commissioners sought to publicise the growing importance of Asian markets. This was hardly the dominant discourse, but an increasing number of converts subscribed to the view that Australia was an Asia-Pacific nation whose future would be determined by events in the region (Walker, "Survivalist" 326).

Ang points to the way an enduring fear of Asia has been complexly supplemented by a desire for Asia in the contemporary era (Not Speaking 15). The economic prosperity and increasing modernity of East and South-East Asian ‘dragons’ and ‘tigers’ in the 1980s and 1990s, and speculations that the twenty-first would be the ‘Asian Century’ precipitated a new Australian infatuation with Asia—after more than a century of rejection (Ang, Not Speaking 7). There was a flurry of interest in various Asian languages, in Japanese and Chinese management styles, business culture and in so-called ‘confucian capitalism’—the social and cultural values putatively at the basis of the Asian miracle economies (Povinelli 20). Asian cuisine is increasingly popular, and fashion, music and animation from various Asian nations have been appropriated by Anglo-Australian youth culture. But lack of confidence in ‘Asian values’ following the
financial crisis in Asia in 1997 and the politics of Independent MP Pauline Hanson are pertinent reminders of the volatility of Australian engagements with Asia.

Thesis Structure

The chapters are arranged chronologically and, beyond an exploration of the cultural orthodoxies that predominated at a specific point in time, each examines the government policies of the day. The transitions that have occurred in dominant conceptualisations of race and ethnicity have been exemplified by corresponding shifts in government policies designed to manage and control Indigenous and immigrant peoples. The chapters are thematically linked in two ways. First, they are underpinned by an account of white Australian attempts to govern Indigenous and Asian peoples to guarantee white dominance. Second, each chapter seeks to convey the very rich, complex and multifaceted flow of inter-ethnic, racial and cultural exchanges between Indigenous and Asian diasporic peoples.

Most of the chapters supplement the historical testimony with images, literature and other creative and artistic works produced by Indigenous and Asian-Australians to provide an important rejoinder to dominant narratives of nation. Indigenous/Asian cultural production has largely emerged relatively recently, but it is interspersed throughout the chapters according to the particular time it re-imagines as a way of giving voice to these communities in eras when they had little social, cultural and political purchase. Each chapter ends with the ambiguous and sometimes uncertain cross-cultural engagements fostered between Indigenous and Asian-Australian communities. The chapters are structured in this way to give Asian and Aboriginal Australians the ‘final say’ and to emphasise their response to the white stereotypes and negative characterisations that have circulated in the dominant ideology. This approach has also been adopted to show that despite the various governmental attempts to quarantine these communities from each other, they have been able to maintain the cross-cultural unions established in the pre-invasion era, as well as forge new ones.

The first chapter examines white Australian historical consciousness in novels, journalism and public and political debates, exploring the particular ways in which race and racialised identities were characterised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I examine Anglo-Australians’ characterisations of themselves, and the
native’ Aboriginal and ‘alien’ Asian races in order to understand the cultural meaning behind the colonists’ desire to achieve independent nationhood. I show that a set of popular, religious and scientific beliefs in the inherent inferiority of non-white peoples was matched by a set of practices of exclusion, control and discrimination (Castles and Vasta 1). Chapter one also indicates that within and beyond the white Australian policing of national and cultural borders, Asian and Indigenous communities were striving to continue the cross-cultural dialogue they had initiated long before the arrival of the British. Contemporary novels by Kim Scott, Alexis Wright, Alex Miller and Di Morrissey serve to augment the official history of Australian Federation, adding a new interpretation and dramatisation of the historical ‘facts’.

Chapter two shows that essentialist and Social Darwinist discourses of race were still operative in the Federal government’s refusal to allow Indigenous and other non-European individuals to fight for Australia in World Wars One and Two (although many did). I compare the oral histories and life narratives of Indigenous and Asian-Australians that were denied the opportunity to defend their country in times of war. Anglo-Australians clearly perceived Australia as ‘ours’, and thus its defence was seen to rest solely in the hands of white men. I show that Japan largely replaced China as the locus of white anxiety, and that government officials were paranoid that Indigenous people might collaborate with the Japanese to overthrow white hegemonic rule. Recent novels by Michael Page and Bruce Pascoe indicate that anxieties of a possible Indigenous/Asian military alliance continued to resonate long after the cessation of World War Two.

Chapter three indicates that while the category ‘white Australian’ was broadened after World War Two to include a more diverse range of people, it did not undermine the racially based distinction between Europeans and their non-European counterparts. In the 1950s and 1960s the discursive construct of the (white) ‘Australian way of life’ was the basis of government policy to assimilate migrants and Aborigines (Stratton and Ang 145). I compare the oral reminiscences of Indigenous and Asian Australians who encountered high levels of government surveillance and intrusion into their daily lives. Such personal testimonies illustrate the government’s strident attempts to guarantee the cultural indoctrination of these communities through efforts to house them alongside white families. Beyond its attempts to absorb racial and cultural difference within an
amorphous white Australianness, the government also sought to isolate Indigenous and Asian peoples from their own communities. In other words, there was a dialectical movement between isolationism and absorptionism. A resultant effect of this initiative was to curtail cross-cultural collaborations between Indigenous communities and non-white migrants.

Chapter four examines the shifts or transitions in dominant ideologies surrounding the introduction of the policy of multiculturalism. In particular, this chapter reveals how whiteness, Aboriginality and Asianness function in the Australian multicultural imagination. It shows that despite the official rhetoric of a ‘tolerant’ and culturally pluralist society, both Indigenous and Asian collectivities are located largely outside the multicultural imaginary on the basis of their assumed membership in distinct racial groupings. The chapter explores the complex relationships between Asian diasporic and Indigenous communities by highlighting how the discourses and policies of multiculturalism overlook the legacy of colonialism in Australia. I use oral and written testimony to show that many Aboriginal people wish to distance themselves from multiculturalism, emphasising their status as the Indigenous custodians of Australia.

Chapter five examines the articulation of racial and spatial anxieties in the white Australian imagination one hundred years after the Federation of the Australian nation. I look at the politics of Hansonism and examine the cultural logic behind the fear that Native Title and ‘Asianisation’ engender in the white national psyche. This chapter also highlights the complex and ambiguous relationship between Asian diasporic and Indigenous peoples through an exploration of the role Asian-Australians have played in the process of reconciliation. Using evidence from Asian-Australian community groups and organisations, I show that many Asian-Australians have shown political solidarity with Indigenous people in their support of the reconciliation process. This chapter also examines how Indigenous peoples feel about the involvement of (more recent) migrants in reconciliation debates.

Chapter six explores how individuals of mixed Aboriginal-Asian descent identify in cultural and racial terms. I show that Indigenous peoples are increasingly (re)connecting with their Asian heritages by retracing lost or hidden family histories. This chapter also examines how Indigenous and Asian-Australians characterise themselves in a range of recent cross-cultural, artistic and literary production. I show
that a number of Indigenous and Asian artists are exploring the complexities in their relationship in recent theatrical dramas, musicals and operas, fiction, poetry and the visual arts. This diverse range of artistic and theatrical production testifies to the fact that there is no common or uniform Indigenous experience, and no unitary Asian-Australian experience. The localised specificity of this cultural production also highlights the regional and historical differences between the States and Territories.

The conclusion argues that the swapping or borrowing of ideas and beliefs, the spiritual interchanges, cultural traffic and political solidarity between Indigenous and Asian peoples invite us to reconsider the rather fixed and rigid identity constructs that were invoked in the establishment of the Australian national identity. I suggest that a new narrative of the Australian nation is needed to account for the experiences of Aboriginal and Asian peoples—one that does not centre on ‘Black/white’ and ‘settler/migrant’ dichotomies. Indigenous/Asian cross-cultural partnerships also work to remind us that, despite over a century of white Australian attempts to prevent, forget and disavow them, these alliances have prevailed.
Chapter One

Federation and other National Fictions

Racial bigotry ... went hand in hand with emerging Australian nationalism (Russell and Chubb 90).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, racism and nationalism had become almost synonymous... (Hollinsworth, Race 99).

This chapter deals with the Federation period. It looks first at the ideology of racial superiority and shows that widespread and virulent opposition to non-white and non-European peoples characterised the period preceding the birth of the Australian nation—informing and motivating the desire for Australian Federation and nationhood. The white settlers’ search for a separate identity as Australians was “inextricably intertwined with a sense of themselves as Anglo-Saxon and fundamentally superior to other racial types” (Grimshaw et al. 179). Essentialist and Social Darwinist racial ideologies that assumed the inherent superiority of whites operated in conjunction with white colonists’ belief that they were the rightful ‘heirs’ to the nation. ‘White Australia’ was imagined in both racial and spatial terms that conferred not only racial dominance and superiority, but also the exclusive possession of the nation and its resources.

‘White Australia’ was dependent upon the symbolic meanings attached to Indigenous and Asian ‘constitutive Others’ for signification. Indigenes were configured as an internal presence to be denied from national belonging, while Asians were largely seen as an external entity that was to be excluded at all costs. In relation to Indigenous people, the widespread belief in Social Darwinism predicted the eventual demise of the Aboriginal remnant. However, in relation to people of Asian descent, the belief in a struggle for survival between the races resulted in anxiety over white colonists’ ability to maintain their stronghold on the nation.

A strong groundswell of popular support for biologically determinist and Social Darwinist views can be seen in the literature of the time. This chapter also explores the fictions of race that were written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It looks first at the varying ways in which the ‘yellow peril’ was imagined in a number of Asian invasion narratives, before examining the relative absence of Indigenous people
in ‘Australian literature’. This is followed by an investigation of Anglo-Australians’ perceptions of themselves in popular ‘lost race’ or Lemurian novels. An analysis of the literary and creative texts of the period provides a clearer view of the prevailing dominant ideologies than a narrow focus on the campaign literature and debates of the inter-colonial conventions and conferences. Indeed, the debates in the constitutional conventions of the 1890s rarely mentioned ‘coloured’ immigration (Russell and Chubb 111), and this has led some historians such as Ronald Norris to conclude that the notion of white Australia was “at best no more than a peripheral issue in … the Federation movement of the 1890s” (59). However, the relative silence in Federation campaigns and convention debates on the matter of non-white immigration is perhaps more an indication of the level of consensus reached by politicians with regard to the preferred racial composition of the emerging nation.

The difference in the level of threat Indigenous and Asian peoples were seen to pose to white hegemony is also evident in the introduction of discriminatory legislation targeting Asians in particular. Racist sentiment then, did not operate solely at the theoretical level. It was also institutionalised in restrictive and discriminatory policies, most notably in the Federal government’s first piece of legislation, the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901—commonly referred to as the ‘White Australia’ policy. This chapter also examines the politics of racial separation and divisionism. It analyses the institutionalisation of racist and white supremacist beliefs in three sites—first in the systemic exploitation of Indigenous and Asian labour; second in the introduction of policies designed to curtail Asian immigration; and third in the formal exclusion of Indigenous people from the Australian constitution.

Unlike their Asian counterparts, Indigenous people were not seen to pose a sustained challenge to white racial superiority and economic dominance. However, in their commercial, personal and intimate relationships with various Asian communities, people of Indigenous descent contested white racial and territorial dominance. This chapter also explores white colonial authorities’ attempts to outlaw Indigenous/Asian partnerships—not so much to protect Aborigines, but to protect white economic endeavours. Legislation preventing these cross-cultural unions was also introduced to stop foreign nationals using ‘our Aborigines’ to further their own economic initiatives,
and to prevent an increase in the ‘coloured’ population that represented a moral and administrative problem.

Colonial officials made strident attempts to prevent Indigenous/Asian unions by forcibly separating Aborigines and Asians. Indigenous and Asian communities thus shared the common experience of being excluded from the national project and being isolated from each other. However, Aboriginal and Asian peoples resisted government-sanctioned efforts to keep them separated by forging new cross-cultural relationships, as well as maintaining others that were initiated prior to white settlement/invasion. Colonial and Federal governments did not succeed in quarantining Aboriginal and Asian communities from each other. But they did succeed in making Indigenes and Asians—who subsequently responded by initiating their own cross-cultural alliances—aware of their common isolation. This tradition of extra-governmental co-operation continues to be represented in contemporary literary and cultural production that relates to this historical experience.

Ideologies of White Racial Superiority

So firm was the conviction that the embryo Australian nation had a right to build up the kind of society it wanted, … that …[e]ven the aboriginal did not fit in with the new democracy … [White colonists] took the aboriginal as a comic or hostile figure, and shut the doors of their coming commonwealth upon him as definitely as upon the Chinaman (Palmer 17).

“For Australia to become a nation, Australians had first to imagine a nation” (Irving 25). As Helen Irving indicates, Australia could not come into being as a national entity until the perimeters or boundaries of nationhood had been conceptualised. At a time when definitions of Australia were first being formed, dominant ideologies centred the nation by narrating the limits of its territory and civility. The discursive formation of Australian nationhood was thus premised upon the construction of boundaries, both internal and external. The “role of dreaming” in the genesis of the nation” (Irving 33) involved a process whereby Australia had first to distinguish itself externally from other nations, and then to inscribe “an internal hierarchy of identities” (R. Dixon 198). In the formation of the white Australian nation, boundaries were constructed between those that were granted national membership, and those that were not. As Irving suggests, the “identification of who was not in the imagined community was just as important as who was” (33). In external terms, the Australian nation and its community were defined
against the Chinese and ‘Asians’ more generally. In the example of the ‘Chinaman’ or the ‘Asiatic’, “Australians believed they had found the starkest example of what ‘Australians’ were not” (Irving 114). In demarcating Australia’s internal boundaries, constant references were made to the obvious civilisation of whites as opposed to the primitivism of the ‘natives’.

In the first part of the nineteenth century, racial difference did not necessarily signify racial or cultural inferiority. During this period, racial and cultural characteristics were subject to change and variables such as climate, location and religion were all seen to play a decisive role in determining racial characteristics. Racial character in the early nineteenth century was thus attributable to external factors and, underlying the great differences in custom and behaviour between racial collectivities, “there was a bedrock of human equality” (Reynolds, With 86). Indigenous people were not considered innately different or inferior, and many colonists thus sought to ‘civilise’, ‘uplift’ and ‘Christianise’ them. Since it was assumed that there were no fundamental barriers or obstacles to Indigenous ‘advancement’, amalgamation or assimilation was advocated. While there were critics of the perceived ability or even desirability of the colonists’ attempts to inculcate Aboriginal people with the language, culture and values of British Australians, one factor remained constant—Aboriginal people were told they could be ‘just like us’ (meaning white); but it was never suggested that white people were ‘just like’ them.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, “recurrent frontier skirmishes and hardening racial attitudes” (Reynolds, With 85) culminated in a change in racial thinking. Racial thought had previously allowed that sources of racial difference lay in external factors such as climate and location but, by the late 1800s, racial characteristics were increasingly located in internal differences. With the advent of biological determinism, racial difference and inferiority came to be located within the body itself. Since racial inferiority was attributable to intrinsic or inherent differences, no amount of training or education could ‘civilise’ the ‘savages’ (Reynolds, With 87). The amalgamation of Aboriginal people was no longer seen as a desirable or, indeed, realisable goal and segregation and confinement on the fringes of society became the preferred way of dealing with the ‘white man’s burden’.
One reason for the intensification of racist sentiment during the mid to late 1800s was the ready acceptance by white colonists of Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution, and his principle of natural selection.\(^3\) Theories based on notions of ‘blood’ and common descent in combination with the so-called ‘scientific proof’ offered by Darwinian thought culminated in non-white peoples being defined as ‘naturally’, inherently or intrinsically inferior to their white counterparts. White Australians saw little reason to doubt the superiority of the white race—the expansion of the British Empire into Asia, Africa and the Pacific was hailed as conclusive evidence of this undoubted racial destiny. Since the white race was destined for superiority, colonisation itself could be defended as ordained by God and necessary for the advancement of humanity (Curthoys, "Expulsion" 14). Essentialist thinking that ‘fixed’ and dictated the character(istics) of different races worked in conjunction with Social Darwinism to convince white colonists of their right to exclude both Indigenous and Asian peoples (and other non-whites, for example, the Kanakas)\(^4\) from national membership.

Such racial thinking also gave rise to the popular belief that white colonists were the rightful ‘heirs’ to the Australian continent (Webb and Enstice 72). According to Curthoys, white colonists considered that the land had been won through suffering and was therefore theirs ("Expulsion" 18). The defining of a group or individual according to a unitary and unchanging characteristic or ‘essence’ was the foundation upon which Australian nationalism and the desire for Federation were based. This system of racial thought predominated both ideologically and structurally until the 1940s (W. Anderson 244) and the remainder of my discussion centres on it.

Belief in the ‘survival of the fittest’ also culminated in widespread acceptance of the notion of Aboriginal extinction. Scientific thinking and evolutionary theories of

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\(^3\) In Darwin’s *The Origin of the Species by Natural Selection* (1859), his theories were delineated without a single reference to human beings. However, his ideas were used “by self-elected evolutionary superiors everywhere to justify rampage”, and what “Darwin the individual meant hardly mattered” (McDonald 9). Darwin himself was not particularly concerned with the application of such ideas to society, and what has been termed Social Darwinism may be more accurately called Spencerism. It was in 1850 that Herbert Spencer, the leading English exponent of positivist sociology coined the phrase ‘the survival of the fittest’ a statement that was widely used by white imperialists to rationalise the hatred and conquest of non-white peoples (Evans, "Keep" 13).

\(^4\) The ‘Kanaka’ or South Sea Islander workers in the Queensland sugarcane fields were faced with repatriation or deportation in the years following the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act.
Aborigines fated to be displaced by a superior culture supplanted Enlightenment ideas of the ‘noble savage’. Agents of Darwinian evolution believed that the superiority of the white ‘heirs’ to Australia was guaranteed, not so much as God’s destiny, but through the destiny of Nature. It was widely felt that the decline in the Indigenous populace was a result of an inevitable law of nature rather than being attributable to the atrocities committed by whites. The demise of weak and inferior ‘racial types’ was not only considered unavoidable, but as desirable for the forward march of humanity (Evans et al. 47). As Webb and Enstice maintain, genocide was “rationalised as genetic improvement” (74). Aboriginal people were heralded as a doomed race, and their passing as inevitable. This was a convenient argument whereby colonists were absolved of any guilt for their mistreatment of Indigenous people. The following editorial from the Melbourne Age in 1888 is indicative of the way colonists were able to justify and rationalise their part in the demise of the Aboriginal remnant:

It may, upon the whole, be taken for granted that the aboriginal race is doomed, and is fated to disappear entirely within a few years … That the readily contracted vices of the Europeans would swell the mortality amongst the blacks was natural, but it seems a law of nature that where two races whose stages of progression differ greatly are brought into contact, the inferior race is doomed to wither away and disappear. …and we need not therefore lament his disappearance (qtd in Evans et al. 47).

The belief in white racial superiority and supremacy also affected Anglo-Australians’ interactions with other non-white races, most notably the Chinese and others of Asian descent. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Chinese constituted the largest group of non-European or non-Indigenous peoples, and it was largely their presence that forced British Australians to clarify their attitudes to non-European races. While Chinese indentured labourers had earlier migrated to Australia to relieve severe labour shortages in the agricultural and pastoral industries, they did not arrive in large numbers until the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in the 1850s. As Kathryn Cronin suggests, it was significant that the Chinese arrived in the colonies at a time “when ancient popular ideas of folk racism were elevated to the status of an indisputable scientific theory which declared them non-assimilable on biological grounds” (“Plodding” 241). Cronin asserts that, apart from the ‘natives’, most white diggers were not acquainted with any other non-European races. Trusting that the language was intelligible to all coloured peoples, white gold miners attempted to
communicate with the Chinese in a “vernacular of fractured English and Aboriginal words, scolding the Chinese as ‘no good black fellows’” (Colonial 42).

The common feature of white responses to Indigenous and Asian peoples in the nineteenth century centred around colonial racism, “in one case justifying the taking of land and in the other being a cause for keeping that land for Europeans” (Curthoys, "Uneasy" 22). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were denied access to the nation through their confinement on reserves and in fringe settlements on the outskirts of towns and cities. People of Asian descent, on the other hand, were excluded from Australia by racist and restrictive immigration policies that prohibited them from entering the country altogether (where Asians were granted entry to Australia, they were also confined in specific areas like ‘Chinatown’ and ‘Jap-town’). While Indigenous people were perceived as an ‘internal’ presence to be denied and oppressed on the margins of Australian society, Asians were viewed as an ‘external’ presence that was to be excluded from physically entering the Australian nation. As Henry Reynolds suggests, the ‘White Australia’ policy always had two faces: “[o]ne looked outward prohibiting the entry of non-Europeans. The other looked inward controlling the movement and marriages of Aborigines and Islanders” (With 127).

There was substantial overlap in the ways in which Indigenous and Asian racial minorities were constructed and characterised by whites. Indeed, as Raymond Evans suggests, early frontier racism and violence against Aboriginal people and the subsequent emergence of anti-Chinese opinion and rioting “seem part of the same continuum” ("Keeping" 177). Indigenous, Chinese and other Asian men were routinely accused of being the sexual predators of white women (despite the fact that many British Australians sexually exploited Aboriginal women). Aborigines and Asians were not only regarded as sexual competition, they also competed with whites for limited resources such as jobs, land, gold, pearl shell and trepang. Fear of economic

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5 Not long after the Chinese arrived in large numbers in the Victorian colony, Governor Hotham devised a plan in which Chinese Protectors (who were also Gold Wardens) were appointed to ensure that the Chinese remained within segregated villages or ‘Chinese Camps’ (Moore and Tully 9). Some years earlier in 1838, a Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate had been established, and Hotham drew inspiration for his scheme from it. While Aborigines had to be protected from oppression and injustice, the Chinese were not seen as helpless victims of colonialism, and “the Chinese plan was therefore overlaid with restrictions and became a device to contain Chinese” (Cronin, Colonial 82).
competition fuelled worker hostility to Indigenous and, in particular, to Asian labourers. The common assumptions underlying the characterisation and treatment of Indigenous and Asian racial minorities (which were subsequently confirmed by the Federation movement) were that the white race was destined or preordained to dominance and superiority, and that whites possessed the exclusive and unquestionable right to occupy the land (Yu 62).

But unlike their Indigenous counterparts, the Chinese were not vilified so much for their inability to prosper, as for their capacity to compete successfully with whites for the same limited resources. According to Markus, while Aborigines “could be ignored once they had been subdued, the Chinese could not be ignored, for it was believed they would triumph if allowed to compete in a free market environment” (Australian 240). By the time the Chinese arrived in significant numbers, Aboriginal people had been declared a doomed or dying race, and whites had assumed what they considered to be their ‘proper’ place in the economy and society. The major form of contestation between Aborigines and whites had been over struggles for the control of land. Whites had largely succeeded in wresting the continent from Indigenous peoples, but now they had to fight the Chinese for access to its mineral reserves of gold. The essence of both situations, as Evans points out, involved “a battle for vital economic assets over which whites sought an absolute monopoly” ("Keeping" 172). In Cronin’s words, the contest for resources “became a clear racial struggle between the ‘white, yellow and black men’” ("Fast" 257). By the mid to late 1800s Aborigines had been “largely relegated to a forgotten or inferior status” (Webb and Enstice 123) and were not imagined as a threat in the manner of the Chinese. A Chinese or ‘Asian’ invasion was a much greater threat than Indigenous resurrection as the Age warned in 1896:

The aboriginals [sic] were of too low a stamp of intelligence and too few in number to be seriously considered. If there had been any difficulty, it would have been obviated by the gradual dying out of the native race. What we have to be afraid of is that, from our geographical position, we shall be overrun by hordes of Asiatics (qtd in Hollinsworth, Race 103).

Sexual Politics: ‘Ah Sin’ and the ‘Black Rapist’

Anxieties of racial and cultural decline were compounded by the white male perception that Indigenous and Asian men were sexual competition. White men sought sexual domination over the lives of white women, and while they saw it as their duty to protect
their jobs from non-whites, they also appointed themselves the protectors of white womanhood. Like the Australian territory, white women were considered the ‘property’ of white men, who sought to maintain their exclusive possession of both.

The vast majority of Chinese who migrated to Australia in the nineteenth century complied with Chinese cultural traditions and Chinese government regulations by not bringing their wives or families with them (white colonial authorities also restricted the entry of Asian women). On the goldfields, there was a marked sexual imbalance; the all-male Chinese camps aroused suspicion and Chinese men were widely accused of indulging in the ‘Chinese Vice’ (sodomy) (Horndage 32). As more and more Chinese entered major towns and cities for industrial and commercial pursuits, they were not only perceived as an economic threat, but as sexual competition. Unable to consider that any white woman would want to associate with or marry a Chinese of her own volition, clergymen and religious bodies took it upon themselves to ‘recover’ white women living near the Chinese quarters (Cronin, "Orientals" 299). White women who did marry Chinese men often found that they were socially ostracised and regarded as being of ill repute. Upon hearing in 1910 that the white wife of a Chinese man had burnt herself to death with kerosene, the Bulletin responded: “Chinaman’s wife /It was well you died…/Only by flame/Can such as you/Be purified” (qtd in Evans, "Keeping" 173). Not only did such women face exclusion on a social level but, by law, they were deemed ‘Chinese by marriage’ and lost their rights as Australian citizens (Loh and Winternitz 104).

The Chinese were widely accused of using opium to seduce white women and girls. At the height of anti-Chinese agitation in 1888, the Bulletin produced a special issue on the ‘Chinese threat’ and, besides the numerous anti-Chinese cartoons and images it contained a story by Edward Dyson called ‘Mr and Mrs Sin Fat’. Mr Sin Fat and his white wife’s business premises were ostensibly those of a Chinese cook, but beyond the facade, they ran “a gambling-hell and something worse” (qtd in Russell and Chubb 105). While Mrs Sin Fat (who had previously been an alcoholic on the brink of starvation) procured the young girls with promises of “gorgeous dresses all bespangled and glittering” (qtd in Russell and Chubb 106), her husband gave them opium to ensure that they could not escape his clutches until they were of no further use:
Girls of sixteen, decoyed in at the front door by the sheen of silk and the jingle of gold, and then left to percolate through that terrible den, to be finally cast out amongst the slime and rottenness of the lane—horrible creatures, with nothing of humanity left within them, and hardly the semblance without (qtd in Russell and Chubb 106).

White women who associated with Chinese men were ostracised by the broader community, and this was also the experience of those white women who established intimate relationships with Aboriginal men. The following account of Jimmy and Ethel Governor shows that white women who engaged in sexual partnerships with Aboriginal men were also the objects of much derision. In 1898 Jimmy Governor, an Aboriginal man, married a white woman called Ethel Page, and the marriage became a source of outrage for the white community. The couple suffered constant harassment, and Ethel declared that she “had to put up with a great many taunts because of [her] marriage” (qtd in Reynolds, With 115). Mrs Mawbey, the wife of one of Governor’s white employers, was reported to have said to Ethel that “a white who married a black was not fit to live” (qtd in Reynolds, With 115). Such insults were a major reason for Governor’s murder of his employer’s family, and his subsequent trial and execution. In The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (1972), white Australian author Thomas Keneally provides a fictional recreation of the life and death of Jimmy Governor (1878-1900), a ‘half-caste’ Aborigine who “declared war” (86) on his employers and their families. Jimmy’s life, trial and hanging have been recounted more recently in Laurie Moore and Stephan William’s The True Story of Jimmy Governor (2001).

Relationships between Aboriginal men and white women elicited shock, outrage and contempt from whites, but Aboriginal women were routinely seen as ‘fair game’ for “rape, barter, seduction and concubinage by white male colonists” (Evans, "Keeping" 173). Aboriginal women were popularly cast as wanton or licentious, thus legitimating their widespread rape and sexual assault. In 1884, squatter and parliamentarian, Sir A.H. Palmer maintained that it was impossible to “ravish” an Aboriginal woman, for “anyone who knew anything about the blacks knew that the[y] … had no idea of chastity—that a fig of tobacco would purchase any woman” (qtd in Evans, "Soiled" 13). White rapists also “conveniently believed that native women were merely subject to capture and brutal oppression by their own menfolk” (Evans, "Harlots" 106). The “stealing of gins”, followed by their “forcible detention” thus became a “matter of frequent occurrence and a recognised custom” (Evans, "Harlots" 105). ‘Gin busting’
and ‘gin sprees’ were also justified as it was believed that Aboriginal women were the legitimate spoils of colonisation (Goodall and Huggins 415): “the men frequently saw the necessity to conquer the women as an integral part of their colonial adventure” (Huggins, "Firing" 17).

Sexual relations with Aboriginal women were also often viewed as a side benefit of working on remote cattle stations. Ann McGrath, for example, relates a story of how a station manager induced white men to enter his employ by offering them the pick of the best “black velvet” ("Aboriginal" 16). Since sexual service was another “built-in component of their labour services” (Evans et al. 55), the position of Aboriginal women could be construed as being even more difficult than that of their menfolk. This pattern of sexual exploitation continued well into the twentieth century when young ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal girls were sent as domestic labour to white homesteads.

The level of agency exhibited by Aboriginal women in their dealings with white men is an extremely contentious issue. Many Aboriginal women entered into liaisons with white men willingly, not least because of their novelty value, but also for food and other useful goods. Aboriginal women learnt how to manipulate the system, “they were astutely aware of the extra personal and family advantages of being the boss’s ‘stud’ for it could mean protection and economic security” (McGrath, Born 82). In other instances however, Aboriginal women were definitely victimised through their sexual relations with white men. Alexis Wright, a Waanji writer (from the southern Gulf of Carpentaria), offers a fictional recreation of this history of sexual exploitation in her novel Plains of Promise (1997). In her re-imagining of the abuse Aboriginal women and girls historically suffered, Wright describes a sexual relationship between Reverend Errol Jipp and Ivy, a young ‘half-caste’ girl living at St. Dominic’s Mission for Aborigines. Reverend Jipp, the missionary in charge at St. Dominic’s sexually and physically abuses Ivy and when she gives birth to their baby, it is immediately taken from the mission.

A Triangle of Fiction

Imperial relations may have been established initially by guns …but they were maintained … largely by textuality, both institutionally … and informally (Tiffin and Lawson 3).
The notion of white racial superiority evident in the dominant Anglo-Australian imaginary was also apparent in the popular writing of the period. Fictional narratives, that is, a nation’s legends or its ‘dreaming’, can provide just as many clues to the ‘commonsense’ notions of a period as so-called objective historical ‘facts’. After all, historical narratives are never innocent of ideological content (Webb and Enstice 5), and “fiction is not purely imaginary” (Lerner 337) but, rather, draws on evidence and data that is normally associated with history. In exploring the ‘cultural zone’ that existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “the distinctions between history and fiction that so exercise professional historians and literary critics mean little” (Curthoys, "Expulsion" 3). Indeed, Janeen Webb and Andrew Enstice indicate that many novelists of the late nineteenth century were also those in positions of political power (3). For Irving, the frequency with which “individual politicians and activists themselves pursued literary sidelines was remarkable” (34).

The ‘Yellow Peril’: Fantasies of an Asian Invasion

Political figures like William Lane and Kenneth Mackay produced vitriolic invasion narratives that warned against the ‘Asian menace’. Invasion narratives enjoyed immense popular appeal and widespread circulation, thus playing a crucial role in shaping and informing white colonists’ paranoid responses to China and their fear of an Asian invasion. Invasion scare novels operated as cautionary tales designed to alert the nation to its vulnerability, and convince readers of the dangers they could face if action were not taken to avert disaster. In the texts of imagined invasion, the Chinese and Asian constitutive ‘Others’ upon whose exclusion the myths of Australian nationhood depend, “contest the centre by breaching their boundedness” (R. Dixon 135). While working to convince the country of the need to overcome its defenceless position, this extremely pervasive genre of writing also incited hostility and animosity to the national enemy (Meaney 230). Invasion scare novels bespeak the nation’s racial and territorial “survivalist anxieties” (Walker, "Survivalist" 319) and reflect a mood of increasing crisis. They are emblematic of a nation that is decidedly insecure about the future and its ability to maintain the country against external forces.

The racial concerns of white colonists were also imagined in terms of spatial anxieties. Invasion literature represents a distinctively Australian concern where the British
invaders are threatened by ‘yellow hordes’ that might, in turn, become invaders themselves. As Meaghan Morris has noted, this scenario has evoked a “chain of displacement”, where “something we did to others … could happen all over again” (qtd in Ang, "Racial/Spatial" 198). With their superior weaponry, the British had conquered the Indigenous population but, due to their relatively small numbers and Australia’s vast coastlines and open spaces, white colonists feared that they could be just as easily overpowered by China. The ideologies surrounding ‘white Australia’ were about a particular claim of ownership of the Australian land, and a “strident sense of entitlement adhering to that ownership” (Ang, "Racial/Spatial" 190). ‘White Australia’ was thus imagined in both racial and spatial/national terms and it not only symbolised a particular racial identity, but was also imagined in terms of an assumed ownership of the land—one that was exclusive to whites.

A sub-plot common to many of the invasion narratives is Britain’s unwillingness to come to Australia’s aid in its attempt to resist the Asian menace (Meaney 231). White colonists felt betrayed by Britain’s treaty agreements with China and Japan and its reluctance to allow legislation based solely on racial considerations. An emergent Australian nationalism thus sought independence from British interference in managing its own internal affairs (such as immigration) without being totally denied the benefits of imperial military protection or denying British cultural links (Webb and Enstice 143). The resentment of Britain is well illustrated in William Lane’s “White or Yellow? A Story of the Race War of A.D. 1908” (published under the pseudonym ‘The Sketcher’), which appeared in the Brisbane weekly the Boomerang from February to May 1888 (Meaney 229). In the radical labour leader’s projected future, ‘imperialist traitors’ undermined the independence of the Australian colonies by quashing their anti-Chinese legislation and “the gates of Australia had been thrown open to the yellow men” (qtd in Meaney 233). Lane’s portrayal of Britain’s rejection of the colonists’ anti-Chinese legislation (which thereby allowed the Chinese to become so numerous), reinforced many popular anxieties about unchecked Chinese migration, and played upon fears of ‘Chinese competition’ for jobs and other resources. In positing Britain’s betrayal of the colonies, “White or Yellow?” provided a powerful motif of the need for Federation. Lane portrayed his Chinese characters in a stereotypical fashion, using such familiar tropes as the cunning and scheming Chinaman who lusted after and sexually exploited
white women. Before his departure to Paraguay to found a ‘new socialist Australia’, in both his politics and his fiction (and as the editor of the Boomerang), Lane successfully perpetuated negative and damaging images of Chinese people and Chinese migration.

Another invasion narrative that echoed well-established fears about British indifference to the colonies was Kenneth Mackay’s The Yellow Wave: A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia published in 1895. While Lane’s “White or Yellow?” centred on the need to monitor and control Chinese immigration, Mackay’s account was more concerned with an imagined Chinese invasion. Mackay too, was politically active, and was a member of both the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and Council, so that, once again, political rhetoric closely resembled the rhetoric of fiction (Webb and Enstice 3). In addressing the New South Wales Parliament in 1896, Mackay repeated the beliefs expressed in his novel by declaring that: “[u]nless some step is taken to prevent an invasion of coolies and aliens into [north Queensland], it will be a very poor buffer to put against an invasion of Asiatics in the future” (qtd in Webb and Enstice 159-69). Like Lane, Mackay echoed widely held anxieties about Australia’s isolation and vulnerability. Mackay’s account is also replete with the usual stereotypes and images applied to the Chinese—they are “enduring as dogs”, “rapacious as wolves” and “cunning as foxes” (qtd in Evans et al. 197) and, in response to their treatment at the hands of imperialists, have come “to avenge past insults and win new possessions” (qtd in Webb and Enstice 161).

The 1887 visit of a group of Chinese Commissioners investigating the conditions of Chinese living in Australia prompted widespread fears of retaliatory punitive action from China. In describing the Chinese desire to ‘avenge past insults’, Mackay’s The Yellow Wave reflected this fear. But an earlier invasion narrative that expressed this popular sentiment was the anonymous novella The Battle of Mordialloc, or How We

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6 Lane’s and Mackay’s texts also served as commentaries on the damaging impact of Australia’s high rates of urbanisation, and each powerfully rejected the moral and physical degeneration associated with the city (Walker, Anxious 101, 107). See Warwick Anderson’s The Cultivation of Whiteness (2002) for an analysis of the fears of white racial degeneration associated with urban life from the 1880s. Anderson shows that whiteness in Australia was not only threatened by urban social pathologies, but that an exhausting, depleting tropical environment also jeopardised the white triumph of Antipodean Britons.
Lost Australia published a year after the Chinese Commissioners’ visit in 1888. In the novella’s scenario, “[t]he Chinese government and people had long resented the treatment of their countrymen in the colonies, and had determined to exact vengeance at the earliest possible opportunity…” (Webb and Enstice 147). In The Battle of Mordialloc, Chinese and Russian troops form an alliance for the invasion and partition of Australia, but in The Coloured Conquest written by ‘Rata’ (a pseudonym for Thomas Roydhouse) in 1904, it is the Japanese who have joined the Chinese to attack Australia (Webb and Enstice 172). In this account too, invasion is largely a response to the appalling treatment ‘the yellow races’ have received at the hands of white imperialists. But this novel differs from those narratives written in the pre-Commonwealth era because it was one of the first to locate Japan as the source of military threat.

Coinciding with Japan’s victory over Russia in 1905, the theme in post-Federation invasion literature gradually changed from fear of the Chinese to fear of the Japanese. In the first decade of the twentieth century Japanese invasion was a major theme in a number of novels including A.G. Hales’ The Little Blue Pigeon (1906), Ambrose Pratt’s The Big Five, serialised in the Lone Hand from 1907, and Charles Kirmess’ 1909 The Australian Crisis (Walker, Anxious 110). These novels echoed the public and political sentiment of the time by predicting the infiltration of northern Australia by a Japanese colony. Australian political leaders were not reassured by the British renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1905 and reached a consensus about the meaning for Australia of Japan’s growing military might. Allan McLean, deputy prime minister in the Reid government expressed the need to “awake the people of Australia to the fact that we have been living in a fool’s paradise … Japan has astonished the world … We now find one of the great naval and military powers within a very short distance of our shores” (qtd in Meaney 251). George Pearce, Labor spokesman on defence issues, argued that Japan had shown itself to be an aggressive nation desirous of “pushing out all round” and wondered whether there was “any other country that offers such a temptation to Japan as Australia” (qtd in Meaney 251).

The Aboriginal Remnant in ‘Australian Literature’

It has been argued that following the decline in frontier violence, Aborigines were largely relegated to a forgotten and inferior status and, unlike the ‘hordes’ of Asia, were
not perceived to threaten white dominance or white economic endeavours. Economic concerns did feature in white antipathy to Aborigines, especially when pastoralists expanded into the remote areas of the continent and came into contact with hostile Aboriginal groups (Webb and Enstsic 130). Punitive raids against Aboriginal people often resulted from their spearing of white livestock, but in general terms, the Indigenous presence was regarded as a temporary nuisance or inconvenience, rather than a lasting threat to white economic imperatives. This was an enduring form of cultural logic that continued to find expression in literary production years after Federation. Kirmess’ *The Australian Crisis* was published as a novel following its serialised format in the *Lone Hand* between November 1908 and April 1909 under the title ‘The Commonwealth Crisis’ (R. Dixon 143). In this novel, the Australian Federal parliament passes the Coloured Inhabitants’ Registration Act in which all ‘coloureds’ (except Aborigines) are required to carry a pass. While the “stigma of outlawry” was affixed to Japanese, Chinese, Afghans and others, it was “with the single exception of the native aboriginals, who were not credited with sufficient intelligence to be dangerous” (Kirmess 89-90).

According to Social Darwinist thought, human beings were ranked in a hierarchical order of racial superiority, and “Australian Aborigines were immediately relegated to the bottom of the human evolutionary ladder” (Webb and Enstsic 12). Indigenous peoples were described as ‘living fossils’, and as curiosities of scientific study until their inevitable demise and extinction. Many believed that Aboriginal people were ranked so low on the human scale of evolution that there were frequent comparisons between Aborigines and our primate ancestors. The New South Wales poet and politician, William Charles Wentworth (yet another example of the intimate relationship between popular writing and politics), argued against admitting Aboriginal evidence in courts of law on the grounds that it would be “quite as defensible to receive as evidence in a Court of Justice the chatterings of the ourang-outang [sic] as of this savage race” (qtd in Reynolds, *Frontier* 111).

In the newspapers and literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Aborigines were virtually ‘written out’ of existence altogether. R.V. Hall argues that as the frontier continued to recede, so too did the obtrusiveness of the Aboriginal remnant: “[o]ne can scan the pages of the press of the early twentieth century for years without
finding any reference to the nation’s first inhabitants” (129). In fiction, too, it was possible to rewrite the past so that the ‘Aboriginal problem’ was completely erased. According to an editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald the Aboriginal was “not an interesting savage about whom poems and romances could be written” (qtd in Markus, Fear 257). Novelists wrote of Australia as a land of innocence, as a new land, or virgin continent like a “bride adorned for her husband” (Webb and Enstice 113-14). In writing the Aboriginal presence out of Australian fiction, novelists also denied the past of dispossession and extermination. Where Social Darwinism was applied to the position of Aborigines, it predicted their ‘passing’ and inevitable demise. As I argue later, however, when applied to the Chinese and other Asian immigrants, visions of a struggle for survival between the different races served to justify the introduction of restrictive immigration laws and high tariffs. One NSW newspaper put the difference very succinctly in 1861: “[a]lthough we may as Anglo-Saxons be strong enough to wipe out aboriginal tribes … [we are not] strong enough to wipe out four to five hundred million Chinese” (qtd in Curthoys, "Race and Ethnicity" 672).

The Lost Civilisations of Australia

The proliferation of hybrid identities in [Lemurian texts] suggests that the Australian identity is trapped between a nostalgia for the purity of Englishness and the vortex of otherness that defines its opposition to Britain, yet which must be kept safely outside the boundaries of Australian civility (R. Dixon 11).

Prior to Federation, white survivalist anxieties of ‘contamination’, ‘pollution’ and ‘hybridisation’ disclosed popular fears about racial and cultural decline, resulting in what Robert Dixon has called a “uniquely colonial identity” (63). Fears of miscegenation and the attendant racial and cultural decline were exacerbated by a concern that “the loss of an originary Englishness would not be replaced by a fully-formed colonial identity” (R. Dixon 63). “Whiteness in Australia, like its accompanying modernity, was ‘on endless trial’” (W. Anderson 247). The threat of white racial degeneration that it was feared would result from Australia’s tropical climes and harsh landscapes; and the persistent threat of racial contamination from non-white races repeatedly returned to unsettle white possession, both of self and territory (W. Anderson 247).
The various examples of Lemurian literature published in the 1890s display common anxieties about the rise and fall of civilisations. Influenced by the writing of Henry Rider Haggard, Lemurian texts share an “end-of-century concern for civilisation in crisis” (Docker, *Nervous* 228), revealing the anxiety at the heart of the white national psyche concerning an ability to maintain white dominance and supremacy in the New World. This uniquely colonial identity crisis found its most intense expression in examples of imperial romance where white adventurers encounter a ‘lost race’. The following explores the parallels between Lemurian novels, the invasion of Australia by whites, and the potential decline of English civilisation in the New World. Caught between “a lost origin and an undefined future” (R. Dixon 63), ‘White Australia’ was born, not of confidence, but of fear and anxiety.

According to Madame Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), before Atlantis there was another lost continent called Lemuria which included a vast area ranging from India, to South-East Asia, Australia and the Pacific (Docker, *Nervous* 173). Volcanic action, however, submerged both the antique continent and the ancient Lemurians. Tales of lost races can suggest the instability and fragility of all civilisations but, for white society, they present a frightening spectre that there is no guarantee of permanency and superiority. Doubts and uncertainties about the maintenance of white civilisation and supremacy found expression in a number of Australian texts. Borrowing largely from H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), examples of imperial romance associated with Australia include J.F. Hogan’s *The Lost Explorer* (1890), Ernest Favenc’s *The Last of Six: Tales of the Austral Tropics* (1893) and *The Secret of the Australian Desert* (1896), and G. Firth Scott’s *The Last Lemurian* (1898).

In general, these novels possess recurring themes or plot lines, sharing a number of common tropes. In most cases, a group of white, male adventurers journey into previously unexplored regions, they come across a group of ‘natives’ and discover a white(ish) civilisation that lives in caves or underground (R. Dixon 62). If one of the white adventures should fall in love or have sexual relations with a woman from either the native or the lost race, she invariably dies. The death of the native or ‘lost race’ woman serves as a reminder of the perils of miscegenation, of ‘polluting’ pure white blood with that of an inferior race. Her death functions as a metaphor for anti-miscegenation, and works as a warning against the production of the racial hybrid. Not
only does the fictional convention of the lost white race serve as a reminder of the way continents and races can rise and fall, it also functions to question and displace the indigenous status of the ‘natives’. Such “narratives of reversal” (Curthoys, "Expulsion" 14) work to position the Indigenous people as the invaders of the lost whites, and thereby question the legitimacy and authenticity of Aboriginal people’s claims to land in Australia. In this way, invasion and colonisation could be overlooked, and white Australians reinstated as the rightful heirs to the nation.

The Politics of Racial Exclusion

The institutionalisation of ideologies of white racial superiority can be seen in the exploitation of Aboriginal and Asian labour. Indigenous people were largely dismissed as incapable of being absorbed into a European economic model, but “the Chinese were vilified for the very efficiency with which they fitted it” (Webb and Ensticte 131). British colonists found it difficult to induce Aboriginal workers to stay in their employ. The majority of Aborigines sought, wherever possible, to maintain their traditional ways of life and worked only when they wanted tobacco or when they could not procure enough food from hunting and fishing. In New South Wales, for instance, it was estimated in the 1880s that about one quarter of the Aboriginal population combined working with hunting and gathering (Reynolds, With 162). Aboriginal people strenuously resisted the imposition of restraints that curtailed their ability to lead their lives in a manner in which they were accustomed. On Cape York Peninsula at the turn of the nineteenth century, Jack Maclaren—a colonist who ‘employed’ Aboriginal labour on his coconut plantation—complained that his employees only worked depending on their own inclination. According to Maclaren, even during ‘working’ hours, his labourers would go to sleep if they saw fit, with sexual intrigue, hunting and foraging being other disruptions to the working day. Maclaren declared that: “[t]o my remonstrances concerning these interruptions they paid little heed, save to remark that … because they worked for me was no reason why they should no longer dig yam, dig out bees or hunt wallabies” (qtd in Reynolds, With 94).

Unlike Australian Indigenes, Asian and, in particular, Chinese racial minorities were granted a cultural base. The Chinese were seen to have high civilisation in their past with militant hostility and success in their history (Giese, Astronauts 38). Whites occupied the top rung of the evolutionary ladder, Aborigines were assigned the bottom
and Melanesians were located a step above them. The Chinese were accorded a higher status, but were still ranked well below Europeans (Russell and Chubb 99). This system of racial classification was reflected in the wages paid to workers. In Queensland, for example, the wage scale paralleled a particular group’s place on the racial ladder, as described by Cronin:

even though the Chinese were pictured as decidedly inferior to the European, they were still regarded as superior to other coloured groups in the Colony. In keeping with the idea of a racial hierarchy, workers were paid wages commensurate with their racial status. On the plantations the unskilled Chinese field worker was generally awarded about £30 per year, which was £22 less than that given to a European, but £18 more than a Melanesian received, while Aborigines were usually given only their rations ("Plodding" 245).

The colonial social hierarchy based on class and race that prevailed in Queensland in the nineteenth century was also evident in other parts of Australia. In Broome, for instance, the seating arrangements at the ‘Sun Picture Theatre’—the first open-air theatre opened in Western Australia in 1901—also graphically reflected this dominant mentality. According to Sarah Yu ‘Blacks in the back’, a common Broome expression, refers to the Aboriginal patrons who had to sit on the high rise benches at the back of the theatre. “Asians, divided into cultural groups were in the front, and the European pearling masters, magistrates and government workers, sat comfortably in cane chairs in the middle of the theatre” (60).

In the Commonwealth parliamentary discussions on draft legislation for restricting Asian immigration, one member of parliament claimed that it was not Chinese “vices or the uncleanliness” that were feared, “but rather their virtues … their industry, their indomitable perseverance, their frugality, and their ability to compete against European labour” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 9-10). The differing levels of threat Indigenous and Asian peoples were seen to pose to British dominance were exemplified in legislation. The Amalgamated Shearer’s Union at first permitted the entry of non-Europeans, but by 1890 Chinese and Melanesians were barred from membership, and were even prevented from becoming shearer’s cooks. When shed labourers formed the General Labourer’s Union in 1891 they excluded “Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Kanakas and Asiatics” (Markus, Fear 172). Aborigines, on the other hand, were allowed into the union without the payment of a membership fee. Other unions adopted the same model. In 1894 the southern bush trade unions amalgamated to form the Australian Worker’s Union. In
this union too, Chinese, Kanakas, Japanese, Afghans and South Sea Islanders were to be excluded from membership. By 1895 all ‘other coloured aliens’ were to be prohibited, with the exception of Maoris, Negroes and Aborigines (Markus, Fear 175).

Unlike their Aboriginal counterparts, Chinese and other Asian workers encountered a vast array of restrictive and discriminatory legislation designed to impede their economic success. White resistance to the employment of Chinese labour was first voiced in opposition to Chinese ‘coolies’ or indentured labourers, then to Chinese diggers on the gold mines and to ‘free’ labourers after the alluvial gold deposits petered out. White labourers, trade unionists and other agitators for the exclusion of the Chinese were largely successful in persuading political and legislative bodies to enact laws to restrict Chinese immigration in order to undermine their economic endeavours. Those Chinese who remained in Australia after the decline in alluvial gold yields found a limited range of work prospects available to them. In the most densely populated centres including Sydney and Melbourne the workforce was almost entirely European, and few trades were open to the urban Chinese. However, Chinese storekeepers in these busy centres who had started their businesses during the period of the goldrush were often able to continue with such work. The influx of Chinese diggers onto the goldfields had generated a great demand for Chinese goods such as rice, tea, silk, porcelain, ginger and other delicacies. In response to this demand, many stores conducting import and export trade between Sydney, Melbourne and Hong Kong were established. Even after the alluvial gold mining petered out and the majority of Chinese left the goldfields, Chinese storekeepers were still able to supply the increasing urban Chinese population with necessities.

The furniture and cabinet-making industry also provided the Chinese with an avenue of employment. During the goldrush period the Chinese made boxes for the dispatch of gold bullion to China. The decline in gold yields in Victoria and New South Wales, coupled with the subsequent economic boom in the 1880s, stimulated a larger demand for manufactured goods (Yong 41). The Chinese concentrated on producing a cheaper class of goods, while European manufacturers monopolised the production of more expensive articles. During this period of relative prosperity, the cabinet-making industry flourished, and both Europeans and Chinese enjoyed full employment. But during the great depression in the early 1890s, when Europeans were forced to produce
cheaper goods, white workers’ sensitivities about ‘Chinese competition’ were revivied. Chinese cabinet-makers provided a convenient scapegoat for European workers suffering economic hardship. The white unionised workers in the furniture industry did not attribute their suffering to a general trade contraction that inflicted hardship on all workers, but to Chinese labourers who ostensibly engaged in unfair competition. White labourers could not conceive of inviting Chinese workers to join the union—thereby binding them to accept union wages and conditions—but, instead, agitated for their exclusion (Markus, *Australian* 80). European workers called for legislation against Chinese labour, arguing for the prevention of further entry of Chinese into the colonies, and for Chinese-made furniture to be labelled as such.

The furniture trade was not the only industry in which European workmen agitated for increased restrictions on Chinese labour. The rise of Chinese laundries also served to fuel European resentment and discontent. The Chinese laundry trade started during the economic depression when the services of Chinese cabinet-makers and domestic servants were no longer needed. European labourers also accused Chinese laundrymen of unfair competition. They were routinely charged with undercutting white living standards by working longer hours for less money. Australian laundry workers voiced strong opposition to Chinese labour by demanding that no new Chinese workers be allowed to enter the laundry trade (Yong 61).

Widespread agitation by European workers opposed to Chinese competition in the furniture and laundry trades resulted in the introduction in New South Wales and Victoria in 1896 of the *Factories and Shops Act*. The Act defined any workshop employing one or more Chinese as a factory, as opposed to European businesses that did not come under the Act until they employed more than four workers. As such, every Chinese workshop was brought under the supervision of the Factories Inspectors, and industrial regulations concerning wages, conditions and hours of work were applied to small Chinese businesses (Choi 53; Yong 59). Chinese cabinet and laundry traders were already experiencing difficulties because they were not permitted to sponsor Chinese migrants to help in their businesses, but the introduction of further restrictive legislation marked the beginning of the end of the Chinese cabinet and laundry businesses.
Violent clashes between European and Chinese labourers usually occurred when Chinese workers competed with European labourers for employment they could both follow. The prevailing attitude was that Chinese workers had been brought to the various colonies in order “to perform certain restricted economic functions, not to acquire independent social and economic status” (Cronin, "Plodding" 250). According to the dominant white colonial attitude the Chinese were there to serve European interests, not to compete with them. Where the presence of Chinese immigrants benefited them, colonists were reluctant to impose restrictions (Loh and Winternitz 11). Not all colonies restricted the entry of the Chinese, and expediency governed whether or not colonial governments imposed impediments. In Western Australia and the Northern Territory, for example, where labour shortages were acute, Chinese workers were recruited for the fishing, pearling and pastoral industries. In Tasmania, Chinese labourers developed the tin mining industry after Europeans shunned such work. Market gardening and agricultural pursuits gradually assumed the most important occupations for Chinese workers, which can be understood given the peasant background of the majority of Chinese immigrants. Since wider opportunities in various trades and industries were available to white workers, and few wanted to work the long hours market gardening entailed, the Chinese could concentrate on such ventures with relatively little competition (Yong 36).

Asian Immigration Under the ‘White Australia’ Policy

The idea of Asia was an essential element in the invention of the Australian nation—it played a critical role in defining the limits and possibilities of Australian nationhood (Walker, "Survivalist" 319). White Australia depended on Asia for signification, and its proximity to ‘threatening Asia’ lent Australia an importance it did not otherwise possess, “turning the fifth continent from a distant and forgotten land mass into a strategically vital possession in the war between the races” (Walker, "Survivalist" 323). In the configuration of Asia as a threat, Australia was simultaneously granted value and importance as a possession worth fighting for. The “enemy outside the gates” (Walker, "Survivalist" 322) provided white colonists with an opportunity to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the emerging nation; it also lent relative homogeneity to Australian colonists who were drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and divergent cultures and religions. But the presence of ‘alien’ races within national borders
prevented the Australian nation from being truly homogeneous. As such, white Australia was based on an “eliminationist logic” (Walker, "Survivalist" 321) that sought to prevent Asians from contaminating the purity of the white Australian nation.

The last few years of the nineteenth century saw the extension of anti-Chinese legislation to virtually all other Asian and ‘coloured’ peoples. In the 1896 Intercolonial Conference, a series of bills was drafted to exclude nearly all non-white people from the colonies, without regard for Indian or most other coloured British subjects (Choi 27). Grounds for restriction from the colonies were thus based firmly on racial considerations. The recurring fear of an ‘Asian invasion’ was an important element in the decision for Australia’s Federation. It was widely held that a strong and vigorous nationhood would help to keep China, and Asia more generally, at bay “whereas a weakly expressed nationality would surely encourage and embolden a watching enemy” (Walker, *Anxious* 230). Australia’s proximity to Asia, its distance from Britain, its small population with growing levels of urbanisation and a declining birth-rate were all seen as signs of a vulnerable country at risk of being taken over from a more powerful source. The idea that Australia’s security was under threat seemed logical for those who believed that life was a struggle for the survival of the fittest. As discussed above, this was a powerful motif in public discourse in Australia and it represented a major stimulus to nationhood.

During the 1901 Parliamentary debates on the Immigration Restriction Bill, the overwhelming majority of members sought the complete exclusion of non-Europeans from permanent settlement in Australia (Palfreeman 164). But it was neither practical nor possible to deny completely the entry of non-European people to Australia. After all, in 1901 there were already about 30 000 Chinese in Australia and, with other Asians, Pacific Islanders and non-Europeans, there were almost 47 000 coloured people living here (Choi 38; Palfreeman 165). These people could not all be persuaded to leave, and their wives and families residing overseas could not totally be denied from visiting them in Australia. The 1901 Act was thus forced to allow the exemption of a number of ‘aliens’, while keeping them marginal and temporary (Fitzgerald 37).

In order to uphold humanitarian principles, and to ease Asian and British sensitivities the ‘White Australia’ policy aimed at restriction rather than exclusion. The obviously racist element of the restrictive measures taken by the Federal Government was strongly
opposed by Britain because of its military alliance with Japan and its consciousness of the multi-racial character of the Empire. As a direct result of pressure from Britain, and in order to make it appear that the selection of immigrants was based on education, not race, applicants were required to undergo a dictation test in a language they did not know. The 1901 Act provided for the exclusion of any immigrant who “when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in any European language directed by the officer” (qtd in Markus, *Australian 115*). The highly discriminatory and racist nature of the dictation test was not lost on the Japanese government, and it made strong objections to the use of a ‘European’ language. The Australian Parliament complied with pressure from the Japanese and British governments and, in 1904, amended the Act so that the specification of ‘European language’ was altered to ‘any prescribed language’ (Markus, *Australian 115*). However, no non-European language was ever used in the administration of the test (Palfreeman 165).

It was not long before the question of race was extended beyond immigration policy to include the notion of the internal control of migrants. The dictation test was used as the method of excluding non-Europeans, but white officials also sought to control those who were allowed temporary entry. The Minister was able to grant certificates of exemption from the dictation test (CEDTs) to those non-Europeans who were given permission to enter Australia on a temporary basis. Provisions were made for the temporary entry of merchants, students, interpreters, ministers of religion and workers in local businesses of value to the community. Chinese assistants to businessmen, cooks, market gardeners and pearlers were often permitted entry for specific periods under the proviso that they remained employed in jobs specified by the Minister.

Chinese and other non-European labourers were only granted temporary residency and CEDTs if they were to be employed in occupations that did not present economic competition for white Australian workers. In this way, white Australian workmen and trade union members and officials were largely successful in maintaining the racial homogeneity of the Australian population. As mentioned above, the protests of white workers and trade unionists meant that no new Chinese workers were permitted to gain employment in the cabinet making or laundry businesses. Great care was taken to ensure that those non-Europeans who were granted temporary entry remained in their
prescribed occupations, and left when their time was up. If non-European migrants did violate their exemption from the dictation test by gaining employment in a new position not approved by the Minister, they were required to undergo the test. Upon failing it, they were declared a prohibited immigrant and were subject to immediate deportation (Palfreeman 166). The 1901 legislation guaranteed that Chinese and other non-Europeans remained foreigners, “economically advantaging the host country, with minimal social integration” (Fitzgerald 37).

In 1904 a further impediment to the social and cultural integration of non-Europeans was introduced. The *Nationality Act* that prohibited the naturalisation of non-European migrants functioned in conjunction with immigration restrictions to help make the white Australia ideal a reality. Without securing citizenship papers, non-white immigrants were denied the right to vote and were not able to hold crown lands. As mentioned above, under the Nationality Act, even those British-Australian women who were married to ‘aliens’ lost their citizenship rights. After 1905 the wives and children of non-Europeans were not permitted to reside permanently in Australia, but only to visit for short periods (Loh and Winternitz 18). The government hoped that such restrictions would prevent an increase in the Australian-born alien population and would further discourage immigrants from staying here. The Chinese population in Australia fell from nearly 30,000 in 1901 to less than 10,000 in 1947 (Loh and Winternitz 19). The number of Chinese and other Asians in Australia remained low until 1966 when restrictions on the permanent settlement of non-Europeans were relaxed.

**Aboriginal People and the Constitution**

Like the Chinese and other coloured persons, the place of the Aborigines in the constitution of the nation was a negative one, addressed only as antithesis of the white Australian (Irving 113).

As Evans et al. suggest, it was only a relatively small step for colonists from conceiving Aborigines as a race doomed to extinction, to imagining them as being, “in all practical terms, already gone” (27). While ‘Native administration’ was more of an issue in some colonies than others (in those with larger Aboriginal populations), it was a matter paid scant attention in building the Australian nation. Given the marginalised role that Aboriginal people occupied in Australian society, and the widely assumed belief that they were declining in numbers, it is perhaps not so surprising to find that the position
of Aborigines in the emerging nation was rarely mentioned by the constitution makers (Russell and Chubb 129).

The first section of the Constitution that mentions Aboriginal people is Section 51 which provides that ‘The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to … The people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws’ (qtd in Irving 217). Aboriginal people were thus effectively debarred from inclusion in the wider citizenship of the Australian Commonwealth, and were at the mercy of the protective apparatus of individual States. The other section of the Constitution that dealt directly with Aboriginal people was Section 127, which states that: ‘In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted’ (qtd in Russell and Chubb 129). Aboriginal people were thus not only considered as non-citizens, but virtually as a non-people (Evans et al. 27). It was not until the referendum in 1967 that the Commonwealth was permitted to legislate on behalf of Aboriginal people, or to count them in the census.

Federation did not totally disenfranchise Aboriginal people, but it might as well have. Since Australia was deemed to be *terra nullius*, it was considered ‘occupied’ rather than conquered, and Aboriginal people were legally titled ‘British subjects’. Theoretically, they were therefore entitled to become voters when (male) suffrage was introduced, but this entitlement was rarely exercised (Evans et al. 62). After all, Aborigines had really only been designated as British subjects in order to deny their independent sovereignty and, with Federation, they found that this title “would not guarantee them the franchise any more than it had provided them with equality before the law during the previous century” (Evans et al. 26). In the first *Commonwealth Franchise Act*, in 1902, the right to vote in Federal or Commonwealth elections was denied to ‘aboriginal native[s] of Australia [except those already on the electoral roll in their state], Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific, except New Zealand’ (Irving 113). It was not until 1962 that Aboriginal people were finally granted voting rights in Federal, Northern Territory and

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7 Queensland led the way in debarring Aborigines from voting in 1885, followed by Western Australia in 1893 (Evans et al. 62).
South Australian elections (Queensland did not follow suit until 1965, however) (Evans et al. 283; Povinelli 22).

The Politics of Racial Separation

I have argued that the white colonial response to Indigenous and Asian racial minorities was informed by a belief in the inherent superiority of those with white skin. This assumption underpinned white colonists’ belief that they were the rightful ‘heirs’ to the Australian continent and its resources. Colonists sought to maintain their dominance through the introduction of legislation designed to prevent non-whites from ‘swamping’ the white populace, and to minimise the risk of Indigenous and, especially, Asian communities from establishing themselves economically. Colonists approved of Indigenous and Asian labour only where it furthered white economic and capitalist interests. The following exploration of white responses to cross-cultural alliances between Indigenous and Asian peoples further demonstrates the salience of these white colonial dicta.

In her doctoral research on the relationships between British colonists and Aborigines, and between the British and the Chinese (and other non-British immigrants) in the colony of NSW from 1856 to 1881, Curthoys found that beyond a more general connection based on racism, the two situations were “parallel and analogous rather than consciously related” ("Race and Ethnicity" 654). Despite searching for connections between these two situations in parliamentary debates, the media, and in public and political discussion, Curthoys could only locate two examples where Aborigines and Chinese peoples were discussed together. Curthoys’ analysis was a pioneering study of the race relations that existed in colonial New South Wales. Her findings are important in showing that the particular relationships that exist between different racial ‘groups’ are both temporally and geographically specific.

In contrast, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the colonies of Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, Indigenous and Asian racial minorities were most certainly discussed together. White colonial officials and other administrators discussed Aborigines, Chinese and other Asians in relation to their sexual unions and labour agreements. In her recent reflections on her doctoral research, Curthoys has posited that “[n]o common racial ideology covering both [the Aboriginal
and Chinese] situations was articulated” ("Uneasy" 24). My research has revealed that in this later period in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory there was a common racial ideology underpinning white colonial responses to these communities—Indigenous and Asian peoples were to be separated at all costs.

Indigenous/Asian alliances challenged white racial, territorial and economic dominance in at least five ways. First, Indigenous people who worked for Asian pearlers and trepangers and Chinese businessmen—largely for food and other commodities—were able to survive independently of colonial authorities, and thus ceased to act as a ready supply of cheap labour for white economic endeavours. In other words, white settlers could no longer enslave Indigenous peoples as an exploitable natural resource (Asians were also responsible for exploiting Indigenous labour, however). Second, through the employment of Indigenous workers, Chinese and Asian businesses were able to prosper, thereby undermining colonial assumptions that whites were the only ones entitled to the spoils of Empire. Third, through their cohabitation and inter-marriage with Asian men, Indigenous women added to the ‘coloured’ population. Some government officials even believed there was a greater risk of atavism in so-called ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal children of non-European descent, than those born of Aboriginal/white unions. Fourth, Asian men who were settled with their Indigenous partners and families might attempt to use this as a rationale to remain in Australia as permanent residents. Fifth, the sexual access of white men to Indigenous women was threatened by the women’s intimate relationships with Asian men.

The particular form or shape of the cross-cultural unions between Indigenous and Asian peoples depended on a range of variables including the time and place in which these alliances occurred, how far these ‘groups’ were from the centres of white colonial power, and the particular labour industries that predominated. However, in all cases, colonists sought to guarantee their assumed racial superiority and unequivocal rights to the land and its resources through the introduction of discriminatory and restrictive legislation designed to keep these communities apart. The implementation in Queensland in 1897 of The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act was ostensibly introduced to protect Aboriginal people from being exploited by the Chinese and other Asians. The Chinese were widely accused of using opium and alcohol to seduce Aboriginal women and girls, and were regularly charged with
“harbouring blacks for immoral purposes” (Cronin, "Orientals" 311). The Act interfered with the sexual relations between Asian men and Aboriginal women in its prohibition of the harbouring of an Aboriginal or ‘half-caste’ female. By an amendment to the Act in 1901, Section 9 decreed that: “[n]o marriage of a female aboriginal with any person other than an aboriginal shall be celebrated without the permission of a Protector authorised by the Minister to give such permission” (qtd in May 292). Permission to marry was seldom granted to Chinese or other people of Asian descent, virtually rendering it illegal for Asian men to cohabit with Aboriginal women.

With the 1901 amendment, the Aboriginal protection bureaucracy became a moral arbiter (Ganter, "Living" 17). The association of Aboriginal women with Chinese gardeners and businessmen was seen as sufficient expression of immorality to warrant the removal of Aboriginal women. Up to 1929, Queensland State government removal records frequently cite such reasons as “in the habit of frequenting Chinese dens”, “living an immoral life harboured by a Chinaman”, “frequents Chinese habitations” and “frequenting Chinese quarters for opium and prostitution” to vindicate the removal order (Ramsay, "Contentious"). Anti-miscegenationist sentiment resulted in the removal of Aboriginal-Chinese children. The Queensland Commissioner of Police in 1901 argued that in regard to cohabitation between Aboriginal women and Chinese men, “offspring resulting from such intercourse are … by no means a desirable addition to the population” (qtd in Ramsay, "Contentious"). According to Ganter, as a matter of policy (not of legislation), Aboriginal-Asian children were especially targeted for removal as neglected children ("Living" 13). The colonists’ zealous attempts to remove ‘mixed-race’ children were an indication of the level of anxiety such people engendered in the white colonial imagination.

The growth of the Australian-born ‘coloured’ population which was neither strictly Asian, nor strictly Indigenous (nor ‘white’ enough to escape comment), became a semi-official category for non-white Australians who were not necessarily subject to any particular set of legislation. ‘Coloured’ people threatened absolute distinctions between Black and white and existed legally in the interstices between protective legislation extended over Indigenous Australians, and restrictive legislation extended over Asians as an administrative and ethical problem (Ganter, "Living" 14). The emergence of a ‘coloured’ population was an affront to the notion of ‘White Australia’ (Choo, Mission
4). The ‘coloured’ progeny of Indigenous/Asian sexual unions worked to remind white colonists of the impossibility of racial ‘purity’; their very presence proved that white officials could not prevent miscegenation and racial hybridisation from occurring in Australia.

Beyond debauching Aboriginal women, the Chinese were also indicted for using opium to keep Aboriginal workers in their employ. The 1897 Act was thus also introduced in an effort to ‘protect’ Aboriginal labourers from being exploited by Chinese and Asian men. Despite the rhetoric about Aborigines being lured to moral and physical destruction by opium, the real concern of white colonists was to prevent Aborigines from being attracted to Chinese, rather than white employers, or rendered less efficient by opium addiction (May 228). Through the employment of Aboriginal and Melanesian workers, Chinese businesses were making some challenges to white capitalism. Many Chinese-run businesses (such as the banana plantations around Johnstone in northern Queensland) were forced to relocate after whites repossessed their farmlands. Chinese farmers also often paid higher wages to Aboriginal people, and treated them much better than most of the whites who employed them. But this aroused “the jealousy of white farmers who found it difficult to obtain and to keep the services of the other coloured groups” (Cronin, "Plodding" 252). In the 1901 amendment to the 1897 Act, officials sought to prohibit all Asians from employing any Aboriginal labour. However, the Home Secretary feared royal assent would be withheld and strenuously opposed this. After much debate, the upper and lower houses settled upon excluding the Chinese specifically—“a permit to employ an aboriginal or half-caste shall not be granted to any alien of the Chinese race”—because, it was mentioned, China was on its knees and would not lodge a formal complaint (Ganter, "Living" 16).

Queensland was not the only state to legislate against Indigenous/Asian unions. The pearling industry in the Northern Territory and the northern coast of Western Australia relied heavily upon indentured Asian and local Aboriginal labour for its development and success (Choo, "Impact" 295). The pearling industry was so reliant on Asian indentured workers that CEDTs were granted to Asians employed by master pearlers, though they were barred from ownership of boats, businesses or land, and from naturalisation (Ganter, "Living" 22). The white population was vastly outnumbered and in order to provide security for the ruling whites, a firm system of social and legal
controls was introduced (Bailey xiv). The presence of large numbers of Asians in Australia’s north and along the Kimberley coast had a significant impact on State and Federal legislation “designed to keep Asians and Aboriginal people apart” (Yu 59). Asian crews who worked the Australian coastline traded with local Aborigines, and sexual liaisons often developed between Asian men and Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women were sometimes offered to the visitors, establishing the initial links with the foreign men and bringing back goods and food that the Aborigines wanted (Choo, "Impact" 299).

The presence of luggers with Asian crews enabled Aboriginal people living in the bush to secure necessary rations without having to associate with white authorities, or to work for white colonists (Yu 65). In other words, Indigenous people were able to maintain a degree of autonomy and independence in their lives, and could thus evade both working for harsh station managers and dealing with the police. Some white colonists were concerned that Aborigines who were not willing to work for them (because they could procure food and other tradeable commodities from Asian crews), would become a financial burden on the State. In a letter to the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Perth in 1900, the postmaster at La Grange Bay expressed this concern:

[Aborigines] simply hang around creeks waiting for boats to come in. Although there are many able-bodied natives around here it is hard to get one to accept legitimate employment even with the most humane treatment … There can only be one result from this life of debauch. The natives will continue to become a burden on the State and in fact get worse every year (qtd in Choo, Mission 106).

In Broome, Aborigines Department records indicate that contact between Asians and Aborigines was to be restricted in order to prevent Asian crews from employing Aborigines, and thereby creating “unfair competition for the European pearlers and pastoralists” (Yu 64). Legislation ostensibly introduced to ‘protect’ Aborigines had the effect of restricting Asian economic enterprises. White colonists were opposed to Asian foreigners having any access to resources rightfully belonging to them. Government officials also disapproved of Aboriginal women mixing with Asian men because it meant the women were unavailable to work for whites. A memorandum entitled ‘Indentured labourers marrying or living with local women’ from the Sub-Collector of Customs to the Department of the Interior is typical of the official attitude towards Indigenous/Asian unions in the early 1900s:
Broome is acquiring an undesirable coloured population in which Malay, Japanese, Manilla men and others are being intermixed with aboriginal [sic]. It is well known to anyone living in Broome that half caste girls are unobtainable for domestic services during the ‘lay-up’ season (qtd in Jones 157).

Government officials also made attempts to separate Asian men and Aboriginal women because of increases in venereal disease and leprosy. Of great concern to those who testified to the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives in 1904 were the effects of Aboriginal/Asian sexual intercourse that resulted in disease, alcohol and opium consumption, the prostitution of young girls, and the possibility of infertility, which could lead to the eventual disappearance of the Aborigines in the area and therefore reduce the “splendid supply of labour now available to develop the Northern region” (qtd in Choo, Mission 113). But, as in Queensland, perhaps the most compelling reason for white opposition to Aboriginal/Asian contact was the fear of an increase in the ‘coloured’ population in Australia (Choo, "Impact" 306). The Asian crews of visiting fishing and pearling boats often met and traded with Aborigines in secluded creeks and bays. In response, the Western Australian government stationed police officers at strategic points along the coast to ensure that Asians and Aborigines did not make contact. In 1904, police officers rounded the Aborigines from the La Grange Bay area up into what they called the ‘Concentration Camp’ during the spring tide when the pearling boats were moored nearby (Choo, "Impact" 305).

Based on the recommendations of Dr Walter Roth—the head of the Royal Commission and a former Protector from Queensland who helped facilitate the introduction of the 1897 Act—the Western Australian government introduced the Aborigines Act of 1905. Like the Queensland Act before it, the Western Australian legislation was introduced to prevent personal and sexual contact and commercial agreements between Aboriginal and Asian peoples. Such liaisons could result in police charges being brought against the men, with the possibility of deportation, while the women risked detention in a state home or incarceration on a reserve, as well as the removal of their children (Jones 158). Because sexual intercourse between Aborigines and non-Aboriginal people was made illegal, long-term cross-cultural relationships were disrupted and brief sexual encounters between Aboriginal women and Asian men became the norm (Choo, Mission 111).
Aboriginal/Asian couples who chose to break the law by living in *de facto* marriages had to endure gross invasion of their privacy due to police surveillance, whether or not the women were exempted from the 1905 Act. Broome police raided the houses of Aboriginal and ‘half-caste’ or ‘coloured’ families in their zealous efforts to enforce the cohabitation laws. Police raided the house of a ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal woman whose mother was a ‘full-blood’ Aborigine and whose father was from the Philippines for cohabiting with her Malay partner (the father of their two and a half-year-old child). Despite providing a secure family life, a steady income and housing for his family, the Malay indentured labourer was charged with cohabitation under the *Aborigines Act* (1905) (Choo, "Challenge" 57). The woman claimed she should not be classed Aboriginal and subjected to the Act because she could not speak any Aboriginal languages and her father was an American subject, and therefore his wife and children assumed his nationality. However, the magistrate found that the woman was deemed to be Aboriginal because she continued to associate with Aborigines (Choo, "Challenge" 57).

In WA, the amalgamation in 1915 of the Aborigines Department with the Department of Immigration was illustrative of the white governmental concern with the impact foreign nationals were having on the local Aboriginal population (Rajkowski 86). A.O. Neville, Secretary for Immigration and Chief Protector of Aborigines, was especially concerned by the effect ‘Asiatics’ had on the ‘natives’. Neville opposed intercourse or marriage between Asians and Aborigines because such unions and their consequent generations of children interfered in his utopian plan to assimilate all Aborigines into the wider Anglo community (and would remove one of his wards from his control since the woman would take on the nationality of her husband). Neville could not conceive that the relationships between Asians and local Aboriginal women could lead to anything but the ruination of the women. He wrote that “there has been the marriage of indentured Asiatics to native women, resulting in their desertion, destitution and prostitution. Afghan and Aboriginal marriages have led to similar ends” (qtd in Rajkowski 90). But Neville was less concerned with the debauching of Aboriginal women than the rising numbers of a “mongrel race” (qtd in Rajkowski 90).

Mixed-race children of Aboriginal background caused Neville “great anxiety as to what means should be taken to prevent the multiplication of them” (qtd in Choo, *Mission*)
According to the doctrine of atavism that was popular at the time, children born of white/Aboriginal unions did not ‘throw back’ in colour. But, according to Neville, if “a white man married a coloured woman of Aboriginal descent, possessing some Negro, Asiatic, Indian or other coloured ancestry, then there is a greater risk of atavism in any children of the union” (qtd in Rajkowski 93). Neville considered unwed Aboriginal women having illegitimate children to white men more desirable than an Aboriginal woman legally marrying a non-European man who would care for the children because the former contributed to the process of the biological absorption and social assimilation of Aborigines into the wider community.

The South Australian government was in charge of the administration of the Northern Territory until its governance became the Commonwealth government’s responsibility on 1 January 1911. The South Australian government’s ending of the Territory’s Macassan trepang (bêche-de-mer) industry was justified on the grounds of Aboriginal ‘protection’. However, as in Queensland and Western Australia, the South Australian government sought to restrict Asian economic endeavours in order to guarantee the material success of white capitalist initiatives. It is very significant that in a letter recommending that the South Australian government regulate the Macassan trepang industry to prevent the exploitation of Aborigines, Captain B.R. Douglas crossed out the word ‘the’ and wrote ‘our Aborigines’ (qtd in Macknight 100). This is a clear indication of the white colonial maxim that, like the land, Aborigines were a natural resource to which the British had sole entitlement. Like their Chinese and other Asian counterparts, Macassans were routinely accused of debasing Aborigines with alcohol, introducing diseases and exploiting Aboriginal labour. The concern was not so much that Aborigines were being exploited, but that foreign nationals were the beneficiaries of this exploitation. As C.C. Macknight maintains, “complaints about the ill effects of Macassan influence on the Aborigines are only too patently a blind for self-advantage on the part of the writer” (124). In 1906 the South Australian government ceased issuing licences to the Macassans as a way of preventing people of Asian descent from challenging white racial and economic dominance.

The 1906 ending of the trepang industry did not signal the end of an Asian presence in the Northern Territory. As Ganter has noted in her book The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait (29, 100), the thriving pearling industry in Darwin relied heavily on Japanese,
Filipino, ‘Malay’ and ‘Koepanger’ indentured crews. The ethnic composition of lugger crews usually consisted of Japanese employed as divers, tenders and engineers, and Malays and Koepangers as crewmen. Casual Aboriginal labour supplemented the Asian crews, usually employed outside Darwin, closer to the pearling beds (Martinez 50) (see figure 1).

In 1911 the Commonwealth government took over the administration of the Northern Territory from the South Australian government. The Federal administration first targeted the Aboriginal population with the introduction of The Aboriginals Ordinance of 1911. The Federal government aimed to establish an essentially white population in Darwin by separating Aboriginal women from Asian men; it sought to curtail the employment of Aborigines by Asians, and to guarantee that Aborigines were kept available as workers for the white elite. The Commonwealth government also sought to implement the ‘White Australia’ policy in its attempt to deport the existing Asian population.

Legislation designed ostensibly to protect Aborigines was framed with Asians firmly in mind, so that Aboriginal policy in the north and north-west of Australia cannot be understood in isolation as a Black/white issue (Ganter, "Living" 17). As we have seen, Queensland took the initiative in introducing legislation designed to ‘protect’ Aboriginal people, and it became the model upon which future legislation in other Australian colonies was based. By the end of the last decade of the nineteenth century, four of the six federating colonies had introduced similar legislation to ‘protect’ Aboriginal people from the effects of colonisation, and to prevent further increases in the number of ‘hybrid’ or ‘coloured’ children (Russell and Chubb 125). But so-called Aboriginal ‘protection’ often amounted to absolute control. While the reserves and missions were ostensibly designed to smooth the pillow of the dying race, in actuality, they opened the way for greater control of the Aborigines’ wages, employment and family lives (Grimshaw et al. 147). Reserves worked to restrict, among other things, the

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The term ‘Malay’ in this context does not refer to the ‘Malays’ of present-day Malaysia, but to the ambiguous colonial construction that was based on notions of racial grouping and included peoples from Singapore, Java, Maluka, Timor and Sulawesi. Another general term used was ‘Koepanger’. Pearling crews were often employed at the port of Kupang in west Timor and, even though many were from the nearby islands of Sabu and Roti, the term Koepanger was applied indiscriminately (Martinez 45).
movement of whites and other non-Indigenous peoples onto reserves, the movement of Aborigines off them, the amount of money Aborigines might have at one time, where and for whom Aboriginal people worked, who they could marry, and the employment and residence of their ‘half-caste’ children (Irving 127).

Extra-Governmental Cross-Cultural Unions

An analysis of Indigenous/Asian cross-cultural engagements not only highlights the obvious agency that Aborigines and Asians exhibited in the face of their apparent separation, it offers a non-Anglocentric perspective that tells the ‘other side’ of the story. So far my research has reinforced Curthoys’ argument that Aboriginal and Asian people were separated, but the following demonstrates that these communities refused to remain isolated from each other. Showing that Aborigines and Asians were legislatively separated is only part of the story—and is necessarily told from whiteness outwards. But such a white centred account does not tell us how Aboriginal and Asian peoples experienced and responded to their enforced separation—in other words, it overlooks that the historical subjectivity of Aborigines and Asians rested on their exclusion from each other. It ignores that Indigenes and Asians responded to their common experience of being excluded from the national venture and from each other by forging complex and ambiguous cross-cultural relationships, as well as maintaining already established ones. By telling the story in this way, I seek to challenge the primacy of whiteness and to show that it is another perspective in a triangulated or tripartite set of negotiations between Indigenous, Asian and Anglo-Celtic peoples.

As early as 1606 the Spanish captain Luis Vaes de Torres reported seeing what he called Malay vessels near the Gulf of Carpentaria (Tucker 16). These vessels, known as praus, were used by the fishermen from Macassar (Ujung Pandang) to visit the land they called Maregé each year to gather and cure trepang. Alan Tucker’s illustrated history book for children and teenagers Too Many Captain Cooks (1994) details the seasonal visits of Macassans who gathered and processed trepang on the north coast of Australia, centuries before the arrival of the British (see figure 2). Tucker notes that while there are records of violent clashes between Aborigines and the Macassans, these annual visits also had reciprocal benefits, and the influence of the Macassan fishermen has left a lasting impression on the Aboriginal art, rituals and stories of the region (16). Tucker’s narrative challenges the accepted version of Australian historiography that
takes the British presence as its cornerstone (Ganter, "Editorial" ii), and if more accounts reconsidered Australian history from the top down instead of the east across (Edwards 24), Aboriginal/Asian contact might not “constitute the underside of Australian historiography” (di Pietro 245).

Eloquent corroboration of the centuries-old contact between Aborigines and Asians appears in painted wooden figures and paintings in rock shelters in the northern coastal regions (Broinowski 30). Further evidence of the historic contact between these communities includes ancient Yolngu tales from Arnhem Land about people ‘with golden skins’, referred to as Baijini who, it is speculated, may have been Chinese. Artistic representation includes a rock painting of Chinese labourers working on the Darwin to Pine Creek railway line during the 1880s. Trains, railway tracks and the men’s ‘pigtailed’ or queues are portrayed on an Arnhem Land rockface (see figure 3). Other Aboriginal tales refer to people coming to fish trepang, and in north-east Arnhem Land cave paintings of smoke houses and praus exist as well as one of a monkey, apparently seen by Aborigines who are believed to have joined the crews on their voyage back to Indonesia (E. Rolls 13, 15). Evidence of the enduring social intercourse between Macassan and Aboriginal communities is illustrated in figure four where the Macassan trepangers are represented as greeting or waving farewell to the Aborigines from their prau. Further evidence of the enduring social relationships between Asians and Aborigines is shown in figure five. ‘Minimini Mamarika’ (The Malay Prau), which also shows the Asian fishermen waving, was painted as recently as 1948.

Munggurrawuy Yunupingu painted ‘Macassan Prau’ in Yirrkala in 1958 (n.a.)⁹ (see figure 6). In this painting a prau and two Macassan fishermen smoking long pipes are represented. A steel knife for cutting trepang is also shown, and dugout canoes with Macassans paddling them. This bark painting is extraordinary in terms of showing that Aboriginal communities continued to represent their social and commercial exchanges with Macassans years after their seasonal visits ceased (in 1906). The enduring influence of Macassans on Aboriginal people is also evident in the transfer of

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⁹ Further information about Yunupingu’s painting ‘Macassan Prau’ can be found in Sotheby’s Auction Catalogue. The entries in this catalogue are written by respected scholars in the field of Aboriginal art, not all of whom are acknowledged by name.
technology such as steel knives and axes. Before the advent of the cross-cultural exchanges with the Macassans, Aborigines used stone axes and knives. Dugout canoes carved out of a single tree trunk were also unknown, the usual method of sea travel being a stringybark canoe (n.a.). The lasting impact of these cross-cultural unions is also evident in contemporary ceremonial practices. For instance, Yolngu or north-eastern Arnhem Land Aboriginal people erect a mast, usually with a flag, to symbolise the idea of departure as a memorial to the dead. This practice stems from the act of setting up the tripod mast of a prau in readiness for the return voyage to Macassar (Macknight 92).

Chinese sojourners and Macassan trepang fishers tended to be short-term visitors to Australia, rather than settlers intending to live in Australia permanently (despite restrictive legislation many did manage to stay). Asian visitors to Australia came to exploit Australia’s rich natural resources and, in Athol Chase’s terms, despite European anxiety at the time were “resource raiders rather than colonists intending to settle the north” (7). But, like their white counterparts, Asian sojourners were also pioneers, or ‘invaders’, who shared the Anglo-Celtic ambition of exploiting Aboriginal waters, land and labour for personal profit (Shen and Edwards 4). Eric Rolls notes that on the goldfields in north Queensland, Aborigines attacked and killed Chinese gold seekers, who lived in “absolute terror of them” (192). Nineteenth-century Aboriginal artist Tommy McRae/McCræe’s (1836-1901) sketch ‘Aborigines Chasing Chinese’ further suggests that Anglo-Australians were not the only ones who objected to the presence of the Chinese in northern Australia (Broinowski 18) (see figure 7). In her analysis of autobiographical accounts kept by Chinese migrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Shen Yuan-fang found that in some cases Aboriginal people were viewed as “unintelligible and irrelevant impediments” to the Chinese colonising mission (52).

For many of the Chinese sojourners and settlers, it was a “struggle for survival, to make a living from land perceived as deeply unpromising” (Giese, Astronauts 49). They had to start all over again “in country that seemed to stretch on and on, uncultivated, seemingly unmarked, unmapped” (Giese, Beyond 2). Like their European counterparts, the Chinese overlooked the fact that for the original custodians of Australia, the land was completely marked and mapped, and provided bountiful water and food supplies.
In their blindness to the complex system of land management practised by Australia’s Indigenous peoples, the Chinese shared with European ‘explorers’ a view of this land as *terra nullius*. For both the Chinese and European pioneers, the land appeared as ‘virgin’ and to “beg for the benefit of both Eastern and Western penetration and mastery” (Shen and Edwards 4). In their shared colonial endeavour, many Chinese émigrés clearly aligned themselves, both economically and politically, with the Europeans rather than “the black people with the spears” (Eddie Quong qtd in Giese, *Beyond* 2). According to Joyce Cheong Chin, Chinese immigrants of the colonial period developed a steely determination “to show the white people we could be as good as they are” (qtd in Giese, *Beyond* 41).

Evidence that some Aboriginal communities also considered the Chinese to be aligned with white colonists and not the ‘black people with spears’ exists in a story collected by the anthropologist Ronald Berndt in 1952. In ‘The allocation of food by Jesus’, Aborigines from the Daly River in the Northern Territory recounted (in part) that:

> Jesus Christ was on the side of the white people—he gave all that food to them. Adam had only native food, for Adam and Riva were Aborigines. They had nothing when they left the garden owned by God. Chinamen grew rice and made grass houses: white men saw these, and the Chinaman saw the iron houses: the white men saw the rice, and the Chinamen saw the flour: each bought from the other. Only the Aborigines had nothing (qtd in Read, "Reconciliation" 30).

This extraordinary story graphically represents some of the differences in power between Aboriginal and Chinese peoples and their varying abilities to negotiate trade and other agreements with the white majority. Chinese sojourners and settlers were not the social or political equals of white colonists, but they certainly did not suffer the same disadvantages as their Indigenous counterparts.

Descendants of early Chinese migrants often use the pioneer status of their forefathers as a way of defining and defending their strong sense of connection to this country. In *Plantings in a New Land* (2001) for example, Chek Ling discusses the strong attachment of the Chinese in Queensland to “the land they had won through hard labour”, calling the Chinese “the real pioneers of the north” (24, 27). Ling notes that through their agricultural pursuits the Chinese constituted “a mobile land-clearing army” (24) receiving official recognition of their efforts in a 1913 Queensland
parliamentary debate: “[t]he north would be a perfect wilderness today if it had not been for the Chinese opening it up” (qtd in Ling 27). In response to claims that the Chinese were short-term residents who did not contribute to the development of the Australian nation, many Chinese-Australians insist that without their efforts, places like Broome and Darwin would not exist today. In her 1995 interviews with Chinese-Australians in Darwin, Giese found that her respondents prided themselves on their pioneer status. Eddie Quong noted of his ancestors that “[b]y dint of industry and determination, they wanted to adopt this country” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 11).

In opposition to claims that the Chinese were only ever sojourners to Australia, Jimmy Ah Toy remarked that his forebears “claimed this as their home” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 2). Like their Anglo-Australian counterparts, many Chinese-Australians base their feelings of entitlement to Australia on the hard work they performed in clearing and cultivating the land, and in the building of the goldfield settlements, and vital infrastructure such as the railway line to Pine Creek (Giese, Beyond 2). As Shen Yuanfang remarks of Taam Sze Pui’s sense of being a pioneer in his autobiography My Life and Work (1925), it is “his labour and the danger involved in the cultivation of wilderness … that accord him rights to this land” (53).

The divergent histories and experiences of Asian populations in Australia however, also include those who had no choice in the journeys they made here because they were indentured labourers (Edwards 23). While Chinese and other peoples from the various regions of Asia are implicated in the colonisation of the Australian nation, we have seen that they were simultaneously exploited by and marginalised from the wider Anglo-Australian citizenry. In their relationships with Aboriginal people, as Curthoys argues, Asian émigrés occupied an ambiguous social location as both settlers and as victims of white settler racism (“Immigration” 175).

According to Chase, as “fellow victims of an authoritarian European government”, many coastal Aborigines of the eastern Cape York Peninsula cooperated with Asians in a “climate of mutual dependence” (8). The Japanese, ‘Manillamen’ and ‘Malays’ who set up temporary coastal camps established peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with local Aboriginal communities in order to guarantee their access to labour, water and wood, as well as sexual relations with the women. The Aborigines, on the other hand, sought food, clothing, knives and tools. For some Aboriginal men, visiting Asian
crews also provided them with the opportunity to embark on great odysseys to distant places. Some Aborigines apparently stayed for years in Macassar and elsewhere before returning home with the Asian crews in the next or following season (Urry and Walsh 95).

White government officials and missionaries routinely accused Asian men of victimising Aboriginal women, but there is much evidence to suggest that Indigenous women chose to be with Asian men. In 1904 three women escaped from the ‘concentration camp’ (where police had gathered the La Grange Bay Aborigines) in order to sleep with some of the Asian crewmen (Choo, Mission 109). Similar scenes along the coastline of the west Kimberley in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicate Aboriginal women’s openness to rather than avoidance of sexual encounters with Asian men (Choo, Mission 110). Some official reports admitted that Asian men treated Aboriginal women much better than their white counterparts, thus explaining why Indigenous women preferred relationships with Asians. For example, in a 1908 report from one of the Native Affairs Department’s travelling inspectors in Broome, it was noted that while Asian and ‘coloured’ men bought clothes, jewellery “and all sorts of finery for black women and girls. White men will not do so. That really explains the difference” (J. Isdell qtd in Yu 63).

Aboriginal women not only made strident attempts to remain with their Asian lovers, many Asian indentured labourers also fought to stay with their Aboriginal wives and partners. For example, when the Commonwealth took over the administration of the Northern Territory in 1911, the Federal government sought to implement the ‘White Australia’ policy by deporting the existing Asian population. Darwin’s population was predominantly Asian and many refused to leave. Filipino pearler Antonio Cubillo came to Australia in 1894 and acted as the spokesperson for a group of local Asian indentured labourers who had been in the country since before Federation and were already settled with Indigenous partners and children (Martinez 48). Based on these relationships Antonio successfully argued for their right to stay, and the Administrator,

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10 See John Bailey’s The White Divers of Broome: The True Story of a Fatal Experiment (2001) for a fascinating account of the Federal government’s various attempts to rid Broome of its Asian residents by insisting that from January 1913 only white divers would be permitted to collect pearl shell.
John Gilruth, eventually granted them some land (known as Police Paddock) away from the centre of town (Martinez 48). Antonio and his ‘half-caste’ Larrakia partner Lily McKeddie had eleven children, and the Cubillo family today is perhaps Darwin’s most numerous and best known family, with more than 400 of their descendants remaining in Darwin (NT Library Online). Antonio and Lily’s fight to remain together has been immortalised in a play written by Gary Lee, their great grandson called *Keep Him My Heart: A Larrakia-Filipino Love Story* (1992).

Gillian Cowlishaw’s edited text *Love Against the Law: The Autobiographies of Tex and Nelly Camfoo* (2000), also details the legislative obstacles an Aboriginal/Asian couple in the Northern Territory endured in their fight to remain together. 11 Tex’s father Jimmy Camfoo emigrated from China in the early 1900s and, as the child of an Aboriginal/Chinese union, Tex overcame police interference and legislation designed to prevent his marriage to Nelly, an Aboriginal woman. Tex was legally and rather arbitrarily classified by government officials at different periods of his life as an Aborigine, and as non-Aboriginal at other times. When Tex’s racial status was officially changed to European, he required permission to marry Nelly, who was subject to the provisions of the *Aboriginal Ordinance*. Tex’s exemption from ‘the Act’ legalised his consumption of alcohol in the pub with his work mates, but criminalised his relationship to his future wife and family (Cowlishaw, *Love* 62). The couple was eventually granted permission to marry and they remain together today. Before their marriage, Nelly worked for a well-known “Chinaman, Dr Moo” who was an eye surgeon in the Northern Territory, and he was the best man at the wedding, while his wife was Nelly’s bridesmaid (Cowlishaw, *Love* 74).

Away from the pearling belt, relatively harmonious relations between Chinese and Indigenous communities prevailed. Guy Ramsay notes that Aborigines with Chinese language skills in north Queensland even acted as translators for the Chinese in their dealings with white Australians (“Contentious”). According to Norman Mitchell, ‘old Jack Lawyer’ an Aboriginal tracker would go to court and translate for those Chinese

11 See Pamela Rajkowski’s *Linden Girl: A Story of Outlawed Lives* (1995), for a very moving account of the difficulties Lallie Matbar, an Aboriginal woman, and Jack Akbar, an Afghan camel driver encountered in gaining permission to marry in Western Australia in the early 1900s.
who could not speak English: “[s]o they got this ol’ fella to interpret them [sic]. He’d talk to them in their kuku [language] first and then … [he] would tell the buliman [policeman] the story” (qtd in Anderson and Mitchell 32). In Queensland there is also evidence that in comparison with many European employers, the Chinese treated their Aboriginal employees in a much more compassionate manner. During debates on the proposal to prohibit the Chinese employing any Aboriginal workers, it was regularly stated that if the Bill became law, Aborigines would be deprived of their most humane employers (May 209). Aboriginal Protector Roth, for example, reported that “reputable Chinamen are amongst the best employers of aboriginals [sic]—they do pay them their wages” (qtd in Anderson and Mitchell 29).

As Yadong Li maintained in his interview with Giese, in both employment and sexual relations, “the treatment of Aborigines by Chinese was better and fairer than that of Europeans” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 39). Anthropologist David S. Trigger found that many Indigenous people’s oral reminiscences also testify to the relatively close relations that Chinese and Aboriginal peoples shared. In his interviews with Aborigines from the Doomadgee settlement in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria—that was administered by Brethren missionaries from the early 1930s until 1983—Trigger recorded oral testimony that the removals of mixed-race children in the 1920s and 1930s were strenuously opposed by their mothers, and in some cases by their socially acknowledged non-Aboriginal fathers as well. However, Chinese fathers in particular, are said to have remained with their Aboriginal women and children much more often than white men (Trigger 40-41).

In recent fiction a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous novelists have re-imagined the historic cross-cultural alliances between Indigenous and Asian peoples. They have dramatised the ambiguous and sometimes fraught nature of these unions, and the complex white responses to them. Kim Scott, a Nyoongar writer (from south-west WA) has used this historical backdrop in his recent novel Benang: From the Heart (1999). Scott portrays an Aboriginal fugitive, Barney Cuddles, who the police are pursuing for stealing from a white storekeeper. A ‘Chinaman’ who has been camping with two Aboriginal women companions is subsequently robbed by Cuddles, who shouts “Ah Ling, I shoot you”, before deliberately missing (235). But for their strong desire to apprehend Cuddles, the police would not have been concerned that the Chinese
man had his life threatened and some of his possessions stolen. The constables agree that “the silly bastard had probably welcomed Cuddles in to help with the women. Serves him right” (235). Indicative of the racism that many Chinese sojourners encountered, the police arrest the ‘Chinaman’ for being idle and without visible means of support. The police arrest the ‘Chinaman’ on the grounds of vagrancy, but their real concern is probably to separate him from the Aboriginal women.

Another contemporary novel that dramatises the cross-cultural relationships between Chinese migrants and Aborigines in the colonial era is Plains of Promise (1997). Alexis Wright portrays a close and long term relationship between the Aboriginal protagonist May Sugar and her Chinese husband Pilot Ah King. Wright acknowledges that these cross-cultural unions were very common in the colonial era, where the “Gulf was filled with Aboriginal Chinese families, a kaleidoscope of colours between black and brown” (134). Pilot learned to speak in the language of the local Aboriginal people, “whose culture of traditional ownership he had no difficulty in understanding. In their country he behaved always as a guest who has been showered with the very best hospitality” (138). Commenting on the parallels in the exclusion of Aboriginal and Chinese peoples from white society, Pilot complains to his wife that white people “[d]on’t let no dirt or dirty people like you and me inside [their big houses]” (89). Even though this Aboriginal/Chinese couple share a close relationship of mutual dependence, Pilot remains very sceptical of some of the practices of Aboriginal people, including those of the local ‘medicine man’: “May Sugar used to go to him, but I’d never let no witch doctor do those sorts of things to me” (92).

Alex Miller’s The Ancestor Game (1992) also re-imagines a close relationship between its Chinese and Aboriginal characters. Miller portrays a close friendship between Feng, the Chinese protagonist, Dorset an Aboriginal character and Patrick Nunan who has come to Australia from Ireland. Inspired by J.C.F. Johnson’s 1876 painting ‘A Game of Euchre’ (see figure 8), which depicts an Asian, a Black and a white man playing cards, Miller represented the historically neglected interaction between those of Aboriginal, Irish and Chinese descent in his novel (personal communication 6 May 2002). Feng, Dorset and Patrick, three shepherd friends, meet at Feng’s hut each Saturday night for a game of euchre where “they enjoyed between themselves friendship and understanding and harmony” (223). These men all share a sense of displacement and alienation in
their adopted homeland. Even though Dorset is of Indigenous descent, he was taken at the age of three to England as “a curiosity from the ends of the earth” by a whimsical duke (221). After the sudden death of the duke, Dorset was sent back to Australia at the age of fourteen, but remains estranged from Aboriginal people and cultures. Commenting on their paralleled sense of dislocation in Australia, Miller remarks that Dorset, like Feng, possessed only one name, which “seemed to be a common condition among those who had become severed from their tribes” (221). The common experience of marginalisation these characters share is further represented by their usage of a language of their own design and invention: “[t]hey dug about in likely corners of Gaelic and Fukienese and English for this and that part of speech, and constructed a lingo comprehensible only to themselves” (222).

The Aboriginal and Asian characters in Di Morrissey’s *Tears of the Moon* (1995) also share very close bonds. Set in Broome during the heyday of the pearling industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the novel portrays a character by the name of Niah who is of Aboriginal-Macassan descent. When Niah reconnects with her Bardi family (from the west Kimberley coast), they show her the remains of the stone fireplaces built by the Macassans for boiling trepang (246). Before Niah’s birth her Aboriginal mother travelled back to Macassar with Niah’s father. Niah’s Aboriginal family tells her the “story of the woman who went to live on the other side of the monsoon winds” (246) before communicating the story through dance. The dance depicts seafarers from Macassar guiding their praus across the sea and being greeted by the local Aborigines. One woman mimed being taken across the sea by the visitors, returning with a baby in the next season. “The long song of the elders told of the unity of family, of how the spirits of the sea and the great ocean birds carried their messages from land to land and kept them all as one” (248). Niah is made to understand that “physical separation could never break the ties that link a family through generations” (248).
Chapter Two

Enemies and Allies: War and the non-white ‘Other’

From the day that Captain Arthur Phillip landed here, until this hour, this land has been governed by men and women of our race … We do not intend that that tradition shall be destroyed merely because an aggressor marches against us. Australians, you are the sons and daughters of Britishers … (John Curtin qtd in Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 74).

This chapter examines the configuration and articulation of dominant constructions of race and nation in Australian society during the First and Second World Wars and explores the wartime experiences of Aboriginal and Asian-Australians. It analyses the particular forms of racial thinking adopted in and around World War One, but since the majority of those Aboriginal and Asian-Australians who were either formally enlisted or worked as civilian labourers did so in World War Two, the bulk of my discussion centres on this latter period. This chapter not only examines the experiences of servicemen and women who were formally enlisted in the Army, Navy and Air Force, but the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of irregular reconnaissance forces and the Indigenous and Chinese-Australian civilian labourers who worked in the industrial defence effort.

At perhaps no other point in time do questions of race, national identity and national loyalty surface more urgently than during periods of war. At such times we can see most clearly how the nation defines itself and its borders, its citizens and their responsibilities to the nation. During the emergency of war, national and racial boundaries take on new significance. In order to incite enthusiasm for the national defence effort, morale is maintained by propagating a “sense of solidarity against a common enemy” (Darian-Smith, "War" 76). National solidarity is also achieved through the exclusion from national belonging of those individuals or groups whose beliefs, behaviour, ethnic or racial identity are seen to challenge the national defence effort. In other words, the strident policing of the nation’s external borders extends to the internal control of the nation’s citizens and residents. As Kate Darian-Smith argues, instead of masking the divisions of class, gender, race and ethnicity that exist within Australian society, wartime conditions operate to accentuate and exacerbate pre-existing differences and tensions ("War" 55).
Prime Minister John Curtin’s 1942 wartime appeal to the nation was directed specifically at the country’s Anglo-Celtic majority. For most Anglo-Australians, it was almost inconceivable that non-white peoples might consider it their shared responsibility to defend the nation against possible invasion. In the dominant white cultural imaginary, Aboriginal and Asian-Australians were regarded as the ‘enemy within’. The same cultural logic that denied these ‘constitutive Others’ a place in the Australian nation informed the government’s refusal to allow non-European peoples to defend it. ‘Australianness’ was imagined in relation to a white (British-derived) racial identity and for Aboriginal and Asian-Australians, their non-whiteness functioned as a sign of their (national) exteriority to the imagined community. This dominant ideology did not remain at the level of ideas, but was enshrined in the government’s refusal to allow non-European peoples to participate in national war efforts. Regulations preventing the enlistment of non-Europeans were not relaxed until severe manpower shortages meant that recruiting officers had to look outside ‘white Australia’.

By building upon “long-standing formulations that emerged from the process of colonial conquest, the rhetoric of racism in Australia was recast and expanded” (Saunders 325) in order to address the crises presented by two major wars. The Social Darwinist ideas of the mental and physical capabilities of different ‘races’ that informed the colonial and Federation eras were adapted to suit Australian wartime conditions in both World Wars One and Two. Even when non-white Australians were able to enlist in the national defence efforts as combatants and labourers, they were still often allocated the most menial and labour intensive tasks, with little or no remuneration, and certainly at levels lower than that offered to white Australians. Other conditions of employment also reflected the racist and biologically determinist colonial atmosphere. During World War Two Indigenous labourers received half a soldier’s food rations while performing the hard manual labour deemed unsuitable for whites. Chapter one argued that essentialist racism or biological determinism was the predominant system of racial classification that characterised the periods both preceding and following Federation. As I have suggested earlier, this type of racial thinking prevailed from around the 1880s and was still prevalent during the 1940s.

Different sorts of Australian nationalism and divergent understandings of Britishness and the rest of the world operated between 1914-18 and between 1939-45. The Great
War answered white Australians’ deeply felt need (at least in official rhetoric) to prove themselves as a nation. As soon as war was declared in 1914, young Australian men eagerly volunteered to help defend the British Empire. Australia followed Britain into the Second World War as unquestioningly as it had rushed into the First (Macintyre, *Oxford* 326). But in World War Two Australians were fighting an Asian enemy and for the first time the country faced the threat of invasion (Beaumont, "Introduction (B)" xx). Not only was this war much ‘closer to home’, but it marked a very different circumstance in terms of understandings of Asianness and also in terms of the civilian and military employment of Indigenous people. These are important distinctions that I expand upon further in the chapter, but there were also many points of continuity in racial and national thinking underpinning both World Wars. The dominant ideology common to both wars was that the Australian continent was the exclusive possession of white Australians and should, wherever possible, remain the responsibility of whites to defend.

This chapter primarily focuses on the wartime experiences of Aboriginal and Chinese-Australians, but Anglo-Australian responses to other non-white individuals and groups including African-American soldiers, and German, Italian and Japanese internees are also examined. During World War Two civilians were subjected to a level of government intervention not seen in Australia before or since the war. All Australians encountered an unprecedented level of government control and surveillance but government regulations impacted most acutely on non-white peoples. Non-European residents were regarded with suspicion and hostility and foreign nationals resident in Australia were interned at alarming rates. The fear and anxiety associated with ‘Asia’ remained, but hostility directed towards the Japanese reached new heights, as indicated by the near wholesale internment of Japanese nationals living in Australia. Other forms of internal control extended to the African-American soldiers stationed here and to the Chinese seamen who were evacuated to Australia in the aftermath of the Japanese advance.

This chapter shows that the internal control of those within national borders also found expression in other ways. After the Japanese bombing of Darwin in 1942, Aborigines in north and north-west Australia were accused of treachery, disloyalty and of being Japanese sympathisers (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 116). Wartime conditions
worked to heighten the anxiety that Indigenous/Asian unions produced in the white consciousness, and renewed efforts were made to ensure that these communities did not form alliances. Fears of an Indigenous/Japanese partnership were evident in both popular fiction and media reportage, and underpinned the government’s wish to keep these communities separate. Once again, widespread beliefs or dominant cultural orthodoxies were matched by a set of practices of exclusion, control and discrimination.

Non-whiteness and the First Australian Imperial Force

The vast majority of (white) Australians in 1914 saw themselves as transplanted Britons. As David Kent argues, Australians in the early twentieth century “basked in the glory of imperial majesty” (27). Coming a little more than a decade after Federation, the First World War gave the ‘young’ country a chance to prove itself in battle. Eager to show Britain (and the rest of the world) that Australia was worthy of its first military challenge, volunteers in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were keen to prove themselves equal to the task of supporting the mother country. More than 58 000 men from a population of less than 5 million people died in the fighting between 1914-18 (Beaumont, "Introduction (B)” xviii). The First World War thus had a profound and lasting impact on Australian political, social and economic institutions, and on Australian national and cultural identity. According to Stuart Macintyre, the tragic loss of life, and the fact that so many Australians “died in vain only enhanced their blood-sacrifice” (Oxford 151).

Despite the traumatic loss of human life, the First World War did not change as much as accentuate already entrenched divisions within Australian society. Although fuelled by the experiences of World War One, the legend of the ‘Anzac’ (that developed around the deeds of Australian soldiers at Gallipoli and on the Western Front) was rooted in the late nineteenth-century values of egalitarianism, mateship and the deeply embedded importance of ‘the bush’ in defining the (white male) Australian character (Beaumont, "Introduction (B)” xix). As Kent suggests, it is easy to see in “the ‘Anzac’ the idealized bushman of the 1890s translated to a military setting” (27). In The Anzac Book (1916), war correspondent C.E.W. Bean played a pivotal role in the evolution of the Anzac legend. In an attempt to salvage something from the appalling waste of life, Bean sought to show Australians that, even in defeat, their soldiers should be a source of pride. In the popular national consciousness the Anzac has been enshrined as someone
who was “tough and inventive, [and] loyal to … mates beyond the call of duty” (Kent 27). However, the ‘mateship’ that is often portrayed as distinctively ‘Australian’ was perhaps more a functional response to the stresses of war than a peculiarly Australian phenomenon (Beaumont, "Introduction" xxi). The bonds of ‘mateship’ extended to non-white combatants during the war, but this was not the case afterwards.

That wartime conditions exaggerated existing tensions and uncertainties is clearly evident in the internment of non-British peoples resident in Australia. Despite the fact that German-speakers were among those who volunteered to join the Armed Services, anti-German sentiment resulted in the internment of those who had settled in Australia decades earlier and in many cases believed themselves to be Australian (Macintyre, Oxford 156). Even the place names that bore witness to the German contribution to Australia were obliterated. In South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, townships with German names were renamed. The Afghans of Broken Hill were subjected to harassment, and the Greek shops of another mining town, Kalgoorlie, were sacked in 1914 because it was thought that Greece was not a wholehearted supporter of the Allies (Macintyre, Oxford 156). The definition of ‘enemy subjects’ was widened in 1916 to include those born in Australia of enemy parentage or grandparentage, resulting in 5000 men from various European countries being interned in the Holdsworthy camp in New South Wales.

The racism that contributed to the formation of the ‘White Australia’ policy “also resulted in the erection of legislative barriers to the military service of non-Europeans” (Robert A. Hall, "Invitation" 107). In the First and Second World Wars, the armed forces maintained policies that excluded Indigenes and other non-Europeans from service. The Commonwealth Defence Act of 1903 made no mention of debarment of individuals from service on racial grounds, but Section 61 (h) of Joseph Cook’s 1909 amendment introduced a universal obligation in respect of naval and military training, exempting persons “not substantially of European origin or descent” (Huggonson, "Dark" 352). The admission of non-European people to the national war effort was deemed by the military board to be neither necessary nor desirable. Medical officers were responsible for classifying volunteers into four categories: Fit, Unfit, Temporarily unfit, or Not substantially of European origin or descent (Huggonson, "Dark" 353). Given that the founding of the Australian nation was premised upon the exclusion of
non-whiteness (at least officially), it is hardly surprising to find that Aborigines and other non-Europeans were excluded from contributing to its defence.

**Black Diggers**

The formal exclusion of non-Europeans from the nation’s war campaigns helps explain in part the relative lack of recognition paid in war and national narratives to the wartime contribution of non-white peoples in Australia. Another reason for the lack of public acknowledgement of this contribution lies in the fact that official military records did not identify or record the racial origins of enlistees (Laughton v). The omission of the racial backgrounds of servicemen is a clear indication that they were all assumed to be of Anglo origins. This omission also provides a telling sign of the prevailing racial attitudes—white Australians were the rightful and ‘natural’ possessors of the Australian nation, and they were therefore solely entitled to defend it against enemy attack.

Another reason for the lack of public knowledge or awareness of Indigenous involvement in World War One arises from the necessity servicemen felt to hide their true racial identities. A number of Aborigines enlisting in the First AIF claimed they were of Maori descent. As we have seen in chapter one, the constitution dictated that Aboriginal affairs were to be governed by the various States rather than by the Commonwealth government (except in the Northern Territory). State Protectors of Aborigines controlled the earnings of Aboriginal workers, and by denying their Aboriginality, soldiers hoped to avoid the Protectors’ control of their pay (Robert A Hall, "Aborigines" 32).

The judges of eligibility for membership of the First AIF were often the medical examiners present at the point of application. Despite census classifications such as ‘half-caste’ and ‘quarter-caste’, what constituted ‘substantial European descent’ was never formally defined (Loh, "Fighting" 60). Eligibility for enlistment was left up to individual recruiting officers whose interpretations of what it meant to be of substantial European origin varied greatly. The inconsistent and changeable approach adopted by the government in relation to Aboriginal recruitment is indicative of a deep uncertainty with regards to whether Aboriginal people were really Australian or not (Curthoys, "National" 180). However, the government’s ambivalence in the recruitment of servicemen, and the fact that these regulations were relaxed later in the war, point
perhaps to the expedient stance adopted by the Military Board. Shortages of volunteers and pressing needs for reinforcements eventually led it to relax its colour bar on active service. The majority of Aboriginal volunteers who served in the armed services had to wait until later in the war when the Military Board started to accept ‘half-castes’ as enlistees (Huggonson, "Dark" 353).

In practice between 1914 and 1918, the racist and discriminatory ruling excluding non-Europeans from military service was often ignored—although official support for it intensified after the war (Loh, "Fighting" 62). Despite their denial of the most basic legal, civic, political and human rights, approximately three to four hundred Aboriginal men enlisted in the First AIF. Nearly three hundred Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria served, with a smaller number from South and Western Australia also enlisting (Robert A. Hall, "Black Magic" 51). The Western Australian Recruiting Committee rarely deviated from military regulations debarring non-Europeans from service, hence the relatively small number of Aboriginal recruits from that State compared to the eastern States (Huggonson, "Dark" 353). By the end of the Great War, Aboriginal enlistees had served in virtually every unit of the First AIF, and in practically every theatre of operations (Huggonson, "Dark" 352). Approximately a third of the Aboriginal men who enlisted in the First AIF became casualties. This rate is similar to that of the AIF as a whole, and indicates that “Aboriginal and Islander soldiers shared the rigours of the First World War in equal measure with their white comrades” (Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 1). Yet, despite their considerable contribution to Australia’s defence, more often than not, Aborigines have been excluded from the ‘digger legend’.

**Asian-Australian Diggers**

As with Aboriginal enlistees, Chinese and other Asian-Australians who wished to contribute to Australia’s war effort were confronted with the military board’s confusing and inconsistent stance on the enlistment of peoples of non-European descent. Like their Indigenous counterparts, Asian-Australians found that they were rejected from one branch of the armed services, but accepted by another (Loh and Winternitz 31). In some cases, particular family members were accepted as servicemen while brothers or cousins were rejected. In Melbourne in 1916, George Kong Meng tried unsuccessfully to enlist in the armed services. He protested his rejection vigorously in the Argus noting that his
brother had been accepted and promoted to sergeant (Loh, "Fighting" 61). As with Aboriginal servicemen, Chinese-Australians who enlisted in towns where the recruiting officer knew them had a far greater chance of being selected for service. James Ah Yee’s family, for instance, had lived in Gippsland for many years and was well respected in the community. Ah Yee enlisted in Gippsland in 1916 and was accepted for service without question (Loh and Winternitz, 26).

The national loyalty of Chinese and other Asian-Australians was demonstrated by their enthusiastic determination to join the armed forces despite the restrictions and formal regulations debarring them from service. As with Aboriginal enlistees, Chinese-Australians who were excluded from military service were angered by their rejection and often refused the decision. Some, like George Kong Meng above, wrote letters of complaint to newspapers, military and government officials. Others tried their luck in other branches of the military services, or went to another depot to try enlisting there. Many Australians of Chinese descent were unaware of the introduction of regulations against their enlistment. Unlike the majority of Anglo-Australians at the time, Chinese-Australians certainly did not see themselves as ‘enemies from within’, but considered it their shared responsibility to defend Australia, their home by adoption and birth. In addition to those Chinese-Australians who were formally enlisted as servicemen, many Australians of Chinese descent supported the national war effort in ‘protected’ industries such as food production and essential services (Armit 18). Other Chinese-Australian civilians assisted the war effort through fund-raising and charity events.

Like their Aboriginal counterparts, Chinese-Australians found that enlistment in the services was easier to achieve later in the war. As mentioned previously, one reason for the relaxation of official policy included the manpower shortages that had arisen due to a decline in the recruitment rate and the high number of Australian casualties. But another reason that might have prompted this temporary suspension of government regulations was China’s declaration of war on Germany in 1917 (Armit 20). Sam Tongway, who died at the age of 94 in 1988 as one of the last veterans of the 1914-18 War believed that China’s entry into the war was important in influencing some recruiting officers to allow the enlistment of Australians of Chinese descent (Loh and Winternitz 26). Morag Loh and Judith Winternitz outline another important factor that might have led to the temporary suspension of the Defence Act—the concern that
Japan’s treaty with Britain would lead to a relaxation of the *Immigration Restriction Act*. Fearing that Japan would use its allied status to seek the admission of Japanese nationals into Australia on less restrictive terms, Prime Minister William Hughes volunteered extra support for Britain to offset any aid that Japan might offer (28). This increased need for combatants possibly led to the admittance of greater numbers of Chinese-Australian servicemen.

As with the enlistment of Aboriginal people, it is very difficult to determine the exact number of Australians of Asian descent who were formally enlisted in the armed services. As previously shown, war records give no indication of racial identity and many Asian-Australians had Anglicised names. As Darryl Low Choy explains: “I think the form of our family name is a genuine attempt by my ancestors to fit into the Australian community” (qtd in Giese, *Courage* 45). Chin Shue Hong changed his name to Henry Quong as a result of his experience working with white Australians in the Army (Giese, *Beyond* 30). Both Aboriginal and Chinese-Australians were forced to deny or ‘down play’ their racial and ethnic origins in order to gain greater acceptance in Australia, and to avoid discriminatory legislation that was based on racial classification. Accurate and precise figures of the participation rates of Australians of Chinese descent in the First AIF might be unattainable but, according to census records, only about 750 Chinese-Australians were eligible to serve in the 1914-18 War—of course whether medical officers judged them acceptable or not was another matter (Loh, "Fighting" 62).

Like their Aboriginal counterparts, Asian-Australians hoped to gain better conditions for themselves within Australian society through their war service. Aboriginal, Asian and Anglo-Australian servicemen shared many reasons for enlisting in the armed services including the thrill of travel and adventure, and improved wages but, unlike Anglo-Australians, Aboriginal and Asian-Australians were also seeking equality and acceptance within the broader Australian community. Unfortunately, non-European enlistees found that, while the racial order may have been relaxed when Australia’s national security was threatened, their contribution to the defence of the country was overlooked in peacetime. Wartime conditions resulted in the *unofficial* relaxation of racist laws, but it was ‘business as usual’ once peace was resumed, and discriminatory rulings were upheld once again. It seems that a blind eye was turned to skin colour only under dire circumstances when the security of the nation was seen to be at greatest risk.
‘Colour-blindness’ was more prevalent later in the war but, on the whole, Aboriginal and Asian-Australians were still largely excluded from dominant notions of ‘Australianness’ and, until relatively recently, found that their contribution to Australia’s defence did not feature within war commemoration.

Notions of ‘Otherness’ and questions over race and (national) identity are revealed most clearly in war commemoration (Curthoys, "National" 175). Much has been written about the Great War and the profound significance that it has had in terms of shaping and defining Australian national character and identity. As we have seen, the First World War generated the powerful and enduring Anzac legend, and it continues to play a central role in white Australian historical consciousness. K.S. Inglis suggests that Great War memorials “mean even more in Australia, 10,000 miles away from where the fighting took place, than they do in France” ("Men" 98). His book Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape (1998) provides further evidence of the crucial and enduring role that Anzac mythology plays in war commemoration. The Anzac legend, a celebration of the supposed character and qualities of (white) Australian manhood, has assumed a central role in white Australian narratives of nation. In both popular and official discourse, the Anzac legend symbolises courage, strength and sacrifice, and the emergence “of the Australian nation, formed only fourteen years earlier, as an independent entity on the world stage” (Curthoys, "National" 175). Fiona Nicoll’s From Diggers to Drag Queens: Configurations of Australian National Identity (2001) suggests that even though the Anzac legend developed at a particular point in time, the symbolic power of the enduring myth of the ‘digger’ derives from the quality of timelessness that has been invested in this icon through the decades (xxiii).

Given that the formation of the Australian nation was premised upon racial exclusion, it is no wonder that Aboriginal and other non-white peoples have been largely excluded from the way (Anglo) Australians commemorate their most profound sense of nationhood. Australian national identity is “built on the exclusion of [I]ndigenous [and other non-white] peoples from foundational historical narratives” (Curthoys, "National" 178). The First World War and the Gallipoli legend it generated played a central role in helping white Australians to define themselves and their identity as a nation. Aboriginal and Asian-Australian veterans of the Great War, however, were excluded from the digger myth and the new national identity upon which it was based. Aboriginal and
other non-European returned servicemen generally found that the “nation turned its back on them” (Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 2), and accorded them an inferior and separate status on their return to civilian life.

Non-Whiteness and World War Two

Australia entered the Second World War as it had the First—automatically. As a dominion of Britain, Australia had no separate capacity to make foreign policy and defence decisions. Britain was at war, so was Australia. However, unlike the recruiting rush in the First AIF, there was less desire to enlist, and none of the Allies was keen to fight (Macintyre, Concise 187). Unlike World War One Australian civilians became casualties of war as Australia was attacked from the air and sea (Beaumont, "Introduction (B)" xx). For the first time the (white) Australian nation was faced with the threat of invasion. Australia’s enduring fear of an ‘Asian invasion’ was realised in 1942 with the Japanese bombing of Darwin, naval losses in Australian waters and an attack on Sydney Harbour. The Asian invasion predicted in much of the popular and very influential invasion literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was finally realised. Australia was dependent on the British for security, but when Britain could not fulfil its undertaking to protect Singapore, the Japanese were able to advance through South-East Asia to Australia’s north.

In The Great Betrayal (1988), David Day argues that Britain’s failure to secure Singapore fundamentally shook Australian confidence in the power it had relied on for generations. “[W]hereas the first sacrifice in the service of empire was glorious, the second was ignominious” (Macintyre, Concise 188). Australia’s experience of Britain’s “inexcusable betrayal” (Curtin qtd in Macintyre, Concise 189) inspired a new sense of independence in Australian foreign policy and initiated its realignment (at least officially) towards the United States in foreign policy terms. Prime Minister Curtin stated that “Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom” (qtd in Macintyre, Concise 189). Rather than join in the defence of Burma, Curtin returned Australian troops to defend Australia under the command of the United States.

The legacy of World War Two for Australia was lasting, but in some ways it has been overshadowed in the Australian collective memory by World War One (Beaumont,
"Introduction (B)" xxii). Australia suffered significantly fewer deaths in the Second World War, and in its generation of the Anzac legend, the First World War has tended further to eclipse World War Two. As Beaumont maintains, no event of the Second World War matched the power of the earlier conflict to “shape perceptions of the Australian male character” ("Introduction (B)"xxii). As opposed to creating a new mythology, soldiers of the 1939-45 war saw themselves as acting within the traditions established in the First World War. According to Reginald Saunders, the first Aboriginal commissioned officer in the Australian forces: “Australia is my country and I’d merely followed in the footsteps of hundreds of other Aboriginals in World War I” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, Fighters 64).

Although perhaps not as potent a symbol as Gallipoli, Australian prisoners of the Japanese provided a very important source of mythology in the Second World War. This is reflected in the popularity of stories published by the survivors. Australian soldiers’ bravery and endurance as well as hatred of Japanese brutality were sustained well after the war in soldiers’ personal memoirs and in fictional narratives. Indeed, in Big-Noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing (1987), Robin Gerster notes that Australian war narratives are so propagandist in their promotion of nationalist sentiment and ideals as to make them the object of special literary interest (ix).

The essentialist racism and biological determinism discussed in chapter one were still operative in dominant white ideologies of race and nation throughout the 1940s. As in World War One, non-Europeans were confronted with the Australian Military Board’s discriminatory and unjust requirement that they be of substantial European origin or descent. This policy tended to class non-Europeans as a group possessing uniform characteristics. It implied that all non-Europeans, regardless of the degree to which they had embraced white Australian ideals and practices, were unacceptable (Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 16). Essentialist racism was also adopted by many senior officers who, according to Saunders, “fully subscribed to the nineteenth-century notion of the mental and physical suitability of different ‘races’ for different occupations…” (335-336). On the assumption that only white people possessed technical and organisational skills, non-European recruits were often allocated the most menial and labour intensive tasks.

But now, let us turn to the experiences of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who served in World War Two as formally enlisted servicemen and women,
members of special reconnaissance units and as civilian labourers in ‘protected’ industries.

Indigenes and World War Two

In the early stages of World War Two, Aboriginal political activists such as William Cooper of the Australian Aborigines’ League used the experience of the Aboriginal community in the First World War to argue for Aboriginal citizenship rights. In a 1939 letter to John McEwen, the Commonwealth Minister for the Interior, Cooper drew on the sense of hypocrisy that veterans of the Great War felt at “defending the land which was taken from [Aboriginal people] by the white race without compensation or even kindness” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 9). Like Cooper, Mr M. Sawtell of the Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship denounced the government’s failure to extend ‘citizen’s rights’ to Aboriginal returned servicemen of the First World War. Unlike Cooper, however, Sawtell and the Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship encouraged Aboriginal enlistment in the armed forces as a way of achieving equality in the Australian community. The moral strength of the argument for Aboriginal ‘citizen’s rights’ depended upon the enlistment of Aborigines, and most Aboriginal political organisations supported their recruitment (Robert A. Hall, Fighters 9).

Despite their service in World War One, Aborigines found that they were still formally excluded from military service in World War Two until strategic considerations led to the temporary modification of attitudes to race. Once again, it was not until later in the war that the armed services turned their attention to those non-Europeans they had previously regarded as of marginal value. Upon its examination in 1940 of the enlistment of those of non-European descent, the Defence Committee recommended that, while the enlistment of such persons was “undesirable in principle” (Robert A Hall, "Aborigines" 35), a departure from this principle could be justified to meet the special needs of individual Services.

Aboriginal participation rates in World War Two were almost ten times as high as those in the First AIF but, in both cases, the official policy barring the enlistment of non-Europeans remained unchanged. In theory, for the Navy and the Army, the admission of persons of non-European descent was “neither necessary nor desirable” (Huggonson, "World" 10) but, in practice, both of these services began to admit non-European
recruits more readily after 1942. Because of the heavy personnel commitments imposed by the Empire Air Training Scheme, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) was permitted to enlist aliens and non-European Australians at the discretion of the Air Board (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 14). Of the three services, the RAAF remained the most open to the enlistment of those of non-European descent, with permission to hold commissioned rank (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 15; Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 12).

By September 1945, more than 3000 Aborigines and ‘part-Aborigines’, and a further 850 Torres Strait Islanders had served in the armed forces. Another 3000 or so Aborigines worked as civilian labourers for the Army, Navy and Air Force in the northern parts of the country (Darian-Smith, "War" 59). For many Aboriginal enlistees, war service provided them with opportunities they might not otherwise have had. Aborigines were able to gain new skills and expertise and to travel to countries overseas and see how other societies functioned. Charles Mene gave over twenty years service to Australia in three wars, and recalled that his enlistment in the Army provided him with valuable opportunities: “I managed to see a lot of the world while I was in the Army … that’s something that mightn’t have happened if I hadn’t joined the Army” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 107-08).

Upon their enlistment in the armed services, many Aborigines experienced a degree of acceptance they had not encountered before in civilian life. Wartime conditions presented opportunities for the formation of close bonds between white and Black servicemen. Mene, for instance, recalled his Army Service in this way: “I had no difficulty making friends and getting on with the white soldiers. We were all in it [together]” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 93). Reg Saunders noted that he “didn’t strike any racism in the Army” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 77), while Leonard Waters maintained that in the Air Force, “there was no discrimination, none at all …” (qtd. in Robert A. Hall, "Black Magic" 79).

For many white recruits, military service presented them with opportunities to work and associate with Aboriginal people for the first time. One Infantry Section Commander said of the relationship that existed between the Aboriginal and white soldiers of his Section: “[w]e depended on each other … there could be no place for any colour barriers … we were forced together by events, and our comradeship was completely necessary”
(qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 69). Other white servicemen were equally insistent that racism did not enter their relations with their Aboriginal comrades. But comments from white enlistees praising an Aboriginal combatant as being “as black as the ace of spades, [but who] acted like and was treated like a real white man…” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 69), or of another Aborigine who was “the whitest black man I have ever met …” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 69) are indicative of white attempts to compliment or praise Aboriginal men, not for their own merits, but for how closely they resembled whites.

The NT Patrol and Reconnaissance Unit

The Northern Territory Coastal Patrol and Special Reconnaissance Unit of 1941-43 was established by anthropologist and Squadron Leader Donald Thomson in order to maintain armed reconnaissance patrols on the coast of Arnhem Land and the Gulf of Carpentaria. In addition to Solomon Islanders, Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal men were included in the Unit because of their knowledge of the local area, their ‘bushcraft’ skills, expertise in guerilla warfare and ability to withstand harsh conditions and climates. ‘Native detachments’ were even found among Arnhem Land Aborigines who were serving prison terms for killing Japanese fishermen (D. Thomson 49). Instead of cash payments, the men received only a weekly issue of three sticks of tobacco, and were given Army rations only during extensive training which prevented them from procuring their own food through hunting or fishing (D. Thomson 44). The members of the reconnaissance unit made their own weaponry from old scraps of metal. As Robert Hall argues, there could be “few units in the Army raised and maintained at such little cost” (*Black Diggers* 98).

The omission of formal enlistment for Thomson’s Aboriginal and Islander soldiers enabled the Army to benefit from their services at a very moderate cost. It also served to set them apart from the rest of the Army and maintained, however superficially, the policy of excluding those of non-European descent (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 98). Because they were not formally enlisted in the Army, not only were the members of Thomson’s unit denied cash payments, they were also ineligible to receive any benefits in the event of injury. Thomson himself perhaps best sums up the important contribution made by the members of the reconnaissance unit:
Freely, and without complaint, they submitted to the rigorous discipline, and without pay, without any guarantee of reward, with only the most primitive equipment, and without arms or weapons, they gave their best in loyalty, unrelenting hard work and sweat, in the stronghold of the people from whom they had known neither justice nor understanding (47-49).

Thomson’s reconnaissance unit had formal Army backing, but a number of Aboriginal de facto units were also created by local Service commanders without any formal Service recognition at all (Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 99). Between 200 and 250 Aborigines were involved in the unofficial patrolling of Darwin and the surrounding coastlines. Navy Headquarters in Darwin knew of the unauthorised patrols, and exploited the Aborigines’ detailed knowledge of areas of tactical and strategic vulnerability without pay or recognition. Navy authorities also knew that white servicemen would not have provided similar services—especially when they were performed without remuneration. They lacked any detailed knowledge of the local area, and would not have been able to endure the harsh conditions without the necessary bushcraft skills. Harry One, a member of one of the unofficial de facto patrols recalled: “We only doing the right thing all the time [sic] … tobacco and tucker, that’s all we got … no money …Hard work for nothing” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 101).

Like the Aboriginal de facto servicemen, Torres Strait Islanders were also used for the cheap military manpower they could contribute to Australia’s defence. To help garrison the Torres Strait, the War Cabinet approved the formation of a segregated unit of approximately 800 Torres Strait Islanders in March 1942 (Robert A. Hall, Fighters 29). Of the ‘natives’ enlisted in the small number of segregated units of the Torres Strait Light Infantry, around 50 or so were mainland Aborigines recruited from north Queensland mission stations (Robert A Hall, "Aborigines" 38). The men enlisted voluntarily, but they had little choice because the Army impressed the pearling luggers and other small craft on which their income depended. The Army was eager to exploit this source of cheap military manpower, and by the war’s end, about one in four Islanders had given formally enlisted military service. This participation rate was higher than that for white Australians for whom one in every 7.5 had served (Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 190).

Despite the Torres Strait Islanders’ impressive contribution to the Australian war effort, their rate of pay was about one-third that of white soldiers with equivalent ranks and
lengths of service (Robert A Hall, "Aborigines" 38). Many Islanders were dissatisfied with the inadequacy of their pay and after the refusal of two companies of men to perform their appointed duties, military officials increased their rate of pay to two-thirds of that enjoyed by white soldiers (Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 182). The Islanders’ resentment at not being paid at the same rate as white servicemen did much to politicise Torres Strait Islanders, and leaders like Ettie Pau and Elia Ware were prominent members of the post-war struggle for full citizenship rights (Huggonson, "World" 11). The rise of militancy among Islanders was also stimulated by other wartime factors. As with Aboriginal enlistees, Torres Strait Islander servicemen enjoyed a measure of equality that was unlike their pre-war experiences. They were also able to learn valuable skills, accumulate savings, travel and exchange ideas with other people, all of which resulted in a modification of their perceptions of themselves and of whites (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 56). For many Islanders, the shared experience of their wartime service lent unity to their growing politicisation.

Unlike their Aboriginal counterparts, Torres Strait Islander enlistees were generally held in much higher esteem by white servicemen and military officials. White military personnel based their assumptions on colonial perceptions from the 1880s that decreed the relative superiority of Torres Strait Islander people. An important reason that led to the higher level of esteem accorded Islanders by whites was the similarities in their cultures. Islander communities were hierarchical, the people lived in permanent villages, gardens were grown and maintained, and the accumulation of wealth and power was also an important component of Islander culture. As Hall maintains, “[i]n short, Islanders were not as alien as Aborigines” (*Black Diggers* 133). The high participation rates of Islanders in the national war effort were seen as evidence of their patriotism and obvious loyalty to the nation and, unlike Aborigines, Islanders were rarely accused of disloyalty (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 132). After Japan entered the war, Japanese pearlers at Thursday Island were interned. Even though many Islanders had worked on pearling luggers for the Japanese in the pre-war era, they were

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12 In 1982 the discrepancy in rates of pay given to Islander and white servicemen was uncovered, and a back-payment of over $7 million was awarded to the Torres Strait Islander servicemen (Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 182).
not seen as Japanese sympathisers and were entrusted with mounting guard over the interned pearlers (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 35).

**Aboriginal Non-Combatants**

Not only those who were formally enlisted in the Services found greater opportunities for advancement; civilian employment also became more open to Aborigines when whites left their jobs to enlist. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the range of employment available to Aboriginal Australians was much more limited than that offered to non-Indigenous people. Pre-war employment opportunities for Aboriginal men were largely found in the pastoral and agricultural industries, while Aboriginal women found it difficult to gain employment in any but domestic service. Wartime employment offered wider training and employment opportunities, and contributed to a level of economic improvement in Aboriginal people’s lives. For many Aboriginal labourers it was the first time they had received cash wages, and it was certainly the first time they had received the same pay and conditions as those offered to whites. According to Oodgeroo Noonuccal (then Kath Walker):

> I had been working as a domestic for two shillings and sixpence a week before I joined the Army. You see, Aboriginals weren’t entitled to any extra concessions of learning and it was the Army who changed the whole thing around … and it was the only way that Aboriginals could learn extra education at that time. And so, that was one of the reasons [for enlisting in the Army] (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 131).

Beyond improved access to employment and training opportunities, many Aborigines who served in non-combative roles found a dramatic difference in the treatment they received once they had enlisted. Noonuccal joined the Australian Women’s Army Service and immediately noticed a dramatic difference between her pre-war and Army employment, especially in the treatment she received: “in the Army they didn’t give a stuff what colour you were. There was a job to be done … and all of a sudden the colour line disappeared” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 118).

The war provided greater job prospects and many Aboriginal people received cash payments for the first time. In the south-eastern states, Aboriginal men were employed in a wider range of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in the manufacturing, industrial and pastoral industries. Aboriginal women worked as orderlies in hospitals or did washing, ironing and other domestic duties. In the Northern Territory, Labour Units were
established for Aboriginal workers and their dependants, providing them with housing, clothing and rations (Darian-Smith, "War" 60). However, Aboriginal men and women were paid the discriminatory rates that existed under the Northern Territory *Aboriginal Ordinance*, and labourers received half a soldier’s ration of meat, bread and vegetables despite the fact that they were performing the hard manual labour that was considered too arduous for whites (Huggonson, "World" 11; Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 135). Army employees only received five shillings a week and, although this was an improvement on the usual rations they received, the rates of pay awarded Aboriginal labourers were indicative of the colonial mindset decreeing that non-white peoples were ineligible for the same rates of pay as white people.

Despite their access to a wider range of occupations, Aboriginal people were still seen as especially suited to the manual labour and servile tasks that were considered too menial for white people to perform. Aboriginal labourers in the Northern Territory were required to undertake those tasks “which are normally carried out in all tropical countries by cheap labour, not being assigned to Europeans for climatic and racial reasons” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 134). Due to a shortage of white manpower in the Northern Territory, and the fact that they could be constructed more cheaply with Aboriginal labour, the Air Force contracted the building of airstrips to outlying mission stations. By the end of the war Aboriginal labour was used to build or assist in the construction of airstrips at over seventeen missions (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 186). In the service of maintaining territorial integrity and control, the RAAF based its airfields and radar stations at isolated northern missions to take advantage of the readily exploitable Aboriginal labour force. Not only did Aboriginal labourers build airstrips, they regularly unloaded cargo from ships, searched for and located downed pilots and salvaged aircraft among other things.

Following the end of World War Two, Aboriginal service personnel and civilian labourers were once again “relegated to second-class status” (Huggonson, "World" 11). The greater opportunities and sense of equality that Aboriginal people had enjoyed during wartime disappeared once the war had finished. The important contribution Aborigines had made as servicemen and women and civilian labourers was virtually ignored by the rest of society. Even though Aboriginal people made a proportionally higher contribution to the war effort than the Australian population as a whole (Darian-
Smith, "War" 60), they were still marginalised and excluded from national belonging and national war narratives. In a society where (white) ex-servicemen were held in high esteem and were seen to embody Australian nationhood and identity, Aboriginal ex-servicemen and their communities were met with a deeply symbolic exclusion (Curthoys, "National" 184). Directly after the cessation of World War Two, the prohibition against the enlistment of persons not substantially of European origin or descent was reapplied.\footnote{It was not until 1949 in the Army and 1951 in the other services that the discriminatory and racially motivated requirement for enlistees to be of substantial European origin or descent was finally scrapped completely (Robert A. Hall, "Black Magic" 80; Armit 18).}

**Aboriginal Political Mobilisation after World War Two**

For many Aboriginal people, their wartime experiences contributed to greater involvement in Aboriginal political activism. Aboriginal people emerged from the war with a greater awareness of their talents, capabilities and potential within Australian society, and many were more prepared to demand their rights. Unfortunately however, as veterans of the First AIF found, improved economic and social conditions did not continue after the Second World War had ended. Reg Saunders served in World War Two as a Lieutenant in command of a platoon of up to thirty white Australians. However, on discharge at the end of the war he was employed in poorly paid and menial jobs including iron foundry worker, tram conductor and tally clerk (Grimshaw 93). For Saunders and many other Aboriginal servicemen, “their obvious competence, personal endeavour and new-found skills counted for little in the civilian work force” (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 68). According to Ken Saunders, Reg’s younger brother: “[i]n all the wars indigenous Australians have fought in, there was a bond that bound them to their white mates. Yet there is no bond when the war is finished and they come back … when they’re still so stereotyped” (qtd in Pottinger 37). Reg Saunders was keen to use his high public profile and new skills to promote Aboriginal advancement, but there were limits to the difference he or other returned Aboriginal servicemen could make.

Many Aboriginal people had hoped that their contribution to the nation’s war effort would guarantee them a place in the Australian nation. They were well aware of the inconsistency in performing the citizen’s responsibility of defending the nation while
being largely denied the citizen’s right to vote (Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 119). It was not until March 1949 that the Commonwealth government permitted Aboriginal ex-servicemen and women to vote in Federal elections. But this right continued to be denied to most Aboriginal people because they were still declared wards of the state. The vast majority of Aborigines was denied adult legal rights and was subjected to the Aborigines’ Protection Acts operating in the various states. In Australia, wartime military service has traditionally conferred benefits upon those who have performed it. Some of these include membership of a powerful political lobby such as the Returned Sailors’, Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Imperial League of Australia, subsidised housing, preferential employment and other benefits. Through the almost universal lack of public awareness and acknowledgement of their contribution to the war, Aboriginal and Islander servicemen were denied most of these benefits (Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 191).

**Chinese-Australians and the Second AIF**

Like their Aboriginal counterparts, Australians of Chinese descent found that they were formally excluded from the national war effort on the grounds of their racial identity. Chinese-Australians were racially ‘marked’ and their ‘Chineseness’ remained a potent symbol of their unabsorbable and incommensurable difference. The Military Board’s refusal to admit people on the basis of racial classification was an example of essentialist racism. Regardless of where they were born, how long they had lived in Australia or adopted white cultural and social mores, their racial difference functioned as a symbol of and reason for their exclusion.

On an inter-personal level, like some Aboriginal Australians, Australians of Asian descent experienced a new degree of equality that they had not previously encountered in their civilian lives. In one sense, wartime conditions led to a gradual easing of racial anxieties and intolerance. Chinese-Australians experienced a new level of acceptance from their white peers, comrades, friends and colleagues. However, on a broader societal level, wartime conditions worked to exacerbate and magnify existing racial tensions and fears. People of Chinese descent were often regarded with suspicion. Indeed, naval intelligence regarded Captain Wang Chih-Kuang, the Chinese Liaison Officer in Australia during 1942-45, as “unreliable and unscrupulous and that it was dangerous to pass him information of a security nature” (qtd in Horner 15). Despite
such difficulties, Australians of Chinese descent (like their Aboriginal counterparts), considered it their duty to defend their homeland, Australia. Given their contribution to the Australian war effort, both of these collectivities also had strong moral cases for expecting equality of treatment with other ex-servicemen and society as a whole in the post-war period.

Like those Australians of Chinese descent who enlisted in the First AIF, prospective enlistees in the Armed Services in World War Two were largely unaware of the racially discriminatory policies barring their enlistment, until they were affected by them (Loh and Winternitz 31). As in the 1914-18 War, individual recruiting and medical officers were given the responsibility of deciding whether or not an individual was eligible for military service. As Morag Loh maintains, Chinese-Australian men and women found themselves “in a lottery-like process” ("Fighting" 63) where they were either accepted or rejected seemingly at random. Chinese-Australians were once again faced with the Military Board’s inconsistency in its enforcement of its racially based and exclusivist policies. Some Chinese-Australians were accepted without question, others were only accepted once they had argued their case, some were rejected earlier in the war but accepted later, while others were rejected from one service, but accepted by another (Loh, "Fighting" 63).

Chinese-Australians were compelled by feelings of national loyalty and patriotism to contribute to the country’s war and defence efforts. Chinese-Australians like Albert Yuen who volunteered for military service felt a strong sense of obligation to the nation: “You went to serve as your duty. You owed it to Australia to be there” (qtd in Giese, Courage 41). Jack Wong Sue always felt Australian first, and then Chinese: “I was always proud of being an Australian. If China had gone to war with Australia, I would have fought for Australia. It was my birthplace…” (qtd in Giese, Courage 42). According to the figures given in the 1933 census, there were only about 2000 Chinese-Australian men and women whose age and citizenship status made them eligible to enlist in the armed forces in the 1939-45 war—at the recruiting officers’ discretion, however (Loh, "Fighting" 64). Once again, precise figures are unknown because data about racial or ethnic origins was not listed in war records, and many Australians of Chinese-descent had altered their names as a way of gaining greater acceptance in Australian society.
Like their Aboriginal counterparts, Chinese-Australians recall the camaraderie they felt with other servicemen and women, and many formed friendships with white Australians for the first time. As ‘Bo’ Liu, President of the Australian Chinese Ex-Services National Reunion recalls: “[w]hen people start to work together and get to understand each other many big differences that they conjure up in their minds disappear” (qtd in Loh and Winternitz 37). Liu’s testimony is important in the link it draws between the involvement and interaction of varying peoples, and their improved social relations. Like the wartime relationships fostered between Indigenous and non-Indigenous enlistees, Chinese and Anglo-Australians both benefited from greater levels of social contact with each other. For many people, the war contributed to their broader outlook on life and willingness to accept others. In Ray Chin’s words: “[b]efore [the war], I think the Australian public, they were ignorant—they didn’t want to know you. Since the War, through mingling and association with other people, they’ve changed their ideas” (qtd in Giese, *Courage* 41).

For many Australians of Chinese descent, their war service instilled in them a greater sense of self-worth and confidence. They learned new skills, earned the respect and trust of their fellow enlistees, and generally considered their wartime service to be a valuable and beneficial exercise. For Kathleen Quan Mane, her “time in the forces gave [her] the experience and courage to venture further afield” (qtd in Giese, *Courage* 31). Jack Goon’s contribution to the national war effort filled him with a new sense of pride that lasted beyond the end of the war: “[d]uring and after the War, you could hold your head up. You were part of the services” (qtd in Giese, *Courage* 42). Lionel Nomchong also valued the opportunities his wartime service provided: “[t]he War for me opened up everything” (qtd in Giese, *Courage* 41). The war encouraged young Chinese-Australians to want a better future for themselves and many went on to further their education, gaining better qualifications and employment opportunities. Unlike the majority of Aboriginal ex-servicemen and women, the war accelerated the process of moving Chinese-Australian people into better jobs in the public service and the private sector.

Some Chinese-Australian family businesses were also able to prosper due to the war. Herb Sang’s family, for instance, established what was to become a major business in Cairns supplying fruit and vegetables. According to Herb, “[t]he War gave us the grounding for further business” (qtd in Giese, *Courage* 13). Ron Tong’s family
business, ‘Tong Sings’ gained a lucrative contract supplying the US forces in New Guinea with fresh produce (Giese, *Courage* 13). But wartime conditions did not always provide improved economic prospects for Chinese-Australians. Some, like Tiger See Hoe and Bill Wing Lun, were commandeered by the Civil Construction Corps to leave their own businesses and assist in the building of airfields, while Oscar Kwong and Ray Low were pressed into service as cane cutters (Giese, *Courage* 12). During early 1942 civilians were evacuated from Western Australia, the Northern Territory and north Queensland (Darian-Smith, "War" 54). Many Chinese-Australians lost their freehold properties, and were forced to give up the market gardens that had been the economic mainstay of their family businesses (Giese, "Diana" 28). Albert Que Noy’s family also lost their business and freehold property, for which they received no compensation: “I was nearly five years in the Army, came back, my house gone, nothing left—and I had no help. Nothing from the Army and nothing from the government at all” (qtd in Giese, *Courage* 30).

**Chinese Labour Corps**

Not only did Chinese-Australian enlistees and civilian labourers participate in the defence of the nation, the government also readily exploited the labour and work skills of Chinese refugees and seamen. The Australian government exhibited an ambivalent attitude towards Chinese-Australians applying for service in the armed forces but, by contrast, when faced with acute manpower shortages in Western Australia, it did not hesitate to utilise the labour of Chinese ‘aliens’ and refugees. Indeed, while Australian-born Chinese were accepted into the armed services with some reluctance, there was little if any opposition to the formation of a Chinese Labour Corps in Western Australia—“a fact that almost the whole country managed to forget as soon as the war was over” (Rankine 67). Once again we see that expediency governed whether or not the labour of non-white peoples would be utilised by government and military officials. As long as national interests were being served, discriminatory regulations based on racial classification could be temporarily suspended.

Chinese evacuees from New Guinea, Ocean, Christmas and Nauru Islands faced little choice in the work they were appointed to by the government. In February 1942, the government introduced the National Security (Aliens Service) Regulation, overriding the requirement that enlistees be of European descent, and compelling aliens to register for
military service (Giese, Courage 16). Apart from not being required to take the oath, Chinese nationals followed the same enlistment procedure as any Australian and received the same rate of pay as other members of the Army (Rankine 68). Refugees were formed into the Chinese Labour Corps and sent to work in the wolfram, mica and tin mines in central Australia (Loh and Winternitz 35). Many refugees were also enlisted in a Chinese Labour Corps of Chinese Aliens in Western Australia, where they loaded and unloaded supplies, worked on ammunition storage areas, and as cooks, gardeners and barbers (Rankine 73). As Jan Ryan maintains, the vegetable gardening and labouring chores these men were required to perform—despite their other skills and capabilities—emphasised the stereotypical roles the Chinese were expected to play (3).

The Army also eagerly put to work those Chinese seamen who were stranded in Australia after the outbreak of war in the Pacific. Chinese seamen were needed to work on merchant vessels to replace Australian crewmen who had joined the services (Loh and Winternitz 35). While the Chinese seamen and refugees met the Army’s labour needs, this influx was tolerated, but it also caused alarm because it was not known exactly how many there were. Loh and Winternitz estimate that there were at least 2,000 seamen, and that around 1,600 workers arrived from Nauru in 1941-42, and between one and two thousand from New Guinea during 1942-43 (33-35). After the war, the Australian government sought to repatriate the Chinese seamen and refugees to their homelands as soon as possible (Robert A. Hall, "Invitation" 115). While the Chinese community, both Australian and ‘alien’ found that their labour was welcomed when Australia’s national security was under threat, this was not the case afterwards.

Having heard of the Chinese Labour Corps in Western Australia, the Americans approached the Australian government with a proposal to enlist the Chinese into the US Army (Rankine 72). The Australian government agreed on discharging the Chinese from the Labour Battalion on the condition that they were not kept permanently in Australia, and would be repatriated to their countries of origin as soon as the war was over. While the majority of the Chinese were enlisted into the US Army, not all of them wanted to go. Many of the Chinese seamen and war refugees were married to Australians, some had families and businesses here, and others had no homes to which to return (Giese, Courage 33; Loh and Winternitz 37). Even though China was an ally in World War Two, when approximately 800 Chinese seamen and refugees refused to
leave Australian shores, they were threatened with deportation. As we will see in
chapter three, the government’s plan to deport the Chinese wartime refugees coincided
with moves to bring, as immigrants, thousands of refugees from Europe, many of whom
were former enemies (Loh, "Historical" 2).

**Chinese-Australian Political Mobilisation after World War Two**

Like Aboriginal political activists, members of the Chinese community saw war service
as an opportunity to press for their improved status in the post-war period. The Chinese
shared some of the disadvantages of Aboriginal people, and both used their contribution
to Australia’s war effort as leverage in their demands for better treatment. As the
Chinese had displayed such “remarkable unity with Australia’s war aims” (Robert A.
Hall, "Invitation" 112), the Chinese Legation made the valid point that they should
expect equality of treatment with other ex-servicemen:

> Chinese nationals in this country cannot but feel that they reside and carry on
business here only on sufferance, and that their status, compared with that of
the nationals of other countries is one of inequality which always places them
at a great disadvantage (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Black Diggers* 28).

For Aboriginal and Chinese-Australians, their attempts to link military service to
‘citizen’s rights’ did not result in an overall elevation of their status.

It has been argued that there were many similarities in the experiences of Aboriginal and
Chinese-Australians who contributed to the nation’s war effort from 1914-18. These
communities also shared many commonalities in the way they experienced World War
Two. On both institutional and individual levels, these communities encountered many
points of intersection in the treatment they received. On a formal or official level,
Aboriginal and Chinese-Australians were confronted with the requirement that they be
‘of substantial European origin or descent’. In both cases, the Army and Navy classified
the admission of non-Europeans as ‘neither necessary nor desirable’, but decreed that
this principle could be overlooked in dire circumstances. As we have seen, the RAAF
could admit non-Europeans at its discretion, but only as ground crew confined to
Australia (Giese, *Courage* 2; Robert A. Hall, "Invitation" 108). In both World Wars,
regulations against the service of non-Europeans were increasingly ignored, and
Aboriginal and Chinese-Australians were admitted in relatively large numbers once the
threat to Australia increased.
Despite the very significant contributions these communities made to the national war effort, restrictions barring their involvement in the Armed Services were reintroduced following the end of the war. After World War Two, like their Aboriginal counterparts, Chinese-Australian servicemen and women were not only barred from military service, they were also excluded from the stories told about the war.

**Black GIs**

Almost ten percent of Americans stationed in Australia were Black. The deployment of African-American servicemen after December 1941 was a cause of much concern for Australian government officials. Commonwealth and State governments negotiated and introduced complex “patterns of segregation to contain this unwanted inclusion in the Allied forces” (Saunders and Taylor 331). Prime Minister Curtin initially tried to oppose the introduction of ‘coloured’ troops into Australia, but was informed by General MacArthur that Black GIs were an integral part of the segregated US Army (Darian-Smith, *Home* 211). While the Australian War Cabinet was unsuccessful in preventing the admission of the Black troops, Australian and American authorities compromised by geographically containing and isolating Black Americans in areas far from the majority of white Australians. For Black American troops stationed in Australia, the ‘colour-line’ was drawn literally.

In order to “uphold and reinforce the tenets of White Australia” (Saunders and Taylor 334), government officials, military and civil police adopted three basic procedures. First, in the cases of Queensland and the Northern Territory, Black soldiers and nurses were to be contained geographically by being confined to remote rural districts. Second, where Black troops were concentrated in urban centres such as Brisbane, their mobility and recreation were strictly segregated along racial lines, with specific zones being designated by US officials as either exclusively ‘white’ or ‘coloured’. Third, racially differentiated patterns of recreation and leisure were devised in order to minimise social and sexual contact between Black American troops and white Australian women (Saunders and Taylor 334). Black GIs were confined to the inferior and less reputable places of recreation where, it was assumed, no self-respecting white women would
Even when the country was at risk of an enemy attack and human and material resources were limited, dominant racial ideologies were adhered to and Australia’s commitment to racial homogeneity honoured.

The arrival of African-American troops contributed to the politicisation of Aboriginal people. For the first time, Aborigines were able to meet and associate with well-educated and highly skilled Black people who received the same wages as their white counterparts. A shared experience of racism and discrimination drew Aboriginal and Black American people together, providing a new model of Black solidarity for Aborigines (Darian-Smith, *Home* 212). As Noonucal recalled: “the black Americans got a very, very good reception from the Aboriginals. There was always this wonderful feeling between the black Americans and the Aboriginals … They were welcomed into our homes” (qtd in Robert A. Hall, *Fighters* 126).

‘Alien’ Internment

The internment of people of non-British descent further illustrates that wartime conditions encouraged and heightened existing racial intolerances and prejudices. Fears about the loyalty of non-British residents and concerns over Australian internal security informed the government’s decision “to suspend the civil rights of civilians on the basis of their ethnicity” (Darian-Smith, "War" 59). Migrants of non-British origin were classified as ‘aliens’ who were either ‘allied’, ‘neutral’ or ‘enemy aliens’ depending on their nationality. In a war with Germany and Italy, many long-term residents were assessed as enemy aliens. Thousands of naturalised and long-established residents as well as many enemy aliens were imprisoned in huge internment camps. More than seven thousand residents were interned, with a further seven and a half thousand foreign nationals being sent from overseas to Australian camps (Bevege xiii). Enemy aliens were forbidden to own boats, cars, cameras or radios, and were not permitted to travel outside their local resident district without first gaining permission from the police (Darian-Smith, "War" 56). Not only did enemy aliens have to contend with officially

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14 Dominant racial ideology decreed that it was unacceptable for white women to associate or consort with Black men—although such social prescriptions were not always followed. Authorities did not oppose sexual relations between Aboriginal women and African-American men however and, according to Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor, Queensland officials even permitted some Aboriginal women temporary freedom from the *Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act 1939* (345).
sanctioned forms of discrimination, they were also subjected to harassment and vilification from the wider Anglo-Australian citizenry.

The national pattern of internments varied according to a number of factors. Incarceration rates depended upon the fluctuating progress of the war—when Australian national security was seen to be most at risk, citizens and officials demanded more internments (Bevege 230). For example, when the Australian and British divisions defeated the Italians in the Middle East in 1941, the internment of Italians in Australia was a non-issue; but by 1942 when fears about Australia’s security were felt most acutely, calls for internment grew rapidly. Internment rates also differed from one state to another. Fears about the loyalty of non-British people were more pronounced in Queensland and the Northern Territory and Italians were interned *en masse* when invasion seemed imminent in early 1942 (Saunders 333). While more than 43 per cent of male aliens were interned in Queensland, rates in the southern States were much lower, with an approximately 12 and almost three per cent internment rate in New South Wales and Victoria respectively (Bevege 231). There was thus a correlation between a State’s distance from the war zone and the number of internees incarcerated.

Another factor in the disproportionate internment rates between the various States and Territories lies in the nationalities of the alien residents (Bevege 232). The varying rates of internment of each national group reflected the degree of risk with which they were regarded by Anglo-Australian society. Queensland and Western Australia both had higher populations of Japanese people, nearly all of whom were interned, thus increasing the overall internment rates for these regions. The concentration of Italians working in the sugar, tobacco and fruit industries in northern coastal areas further added to the sense of insecurity in the north, resulting in increased internments.

**Anglo-Australian Imaginings of the Japanese**

Unlike Germans and Italians, Japanese nationals were considered non-assimilable on racial grounds. According to general perception, their “Japaneseness” ruled out any possibility of their loyalty or allegiance to Australia. Australian authorities were able to classify and intern German and Italian enemy aliens according to their membership in Nazi or Fascist organisations, but for Japanese people, their Japanese racial identity was seen as reason enough to warrant their wholesale internment (Nagata, *Unwanted* 271).
The Japanese were interned almost without exception at a rate of 98 per cent, while the internment rates for Germans and Italians were 32 and 31 percent respectively (Bevege 232). Under the Nationality Law (1920-1930), even Australian-born Japanese were regarded as enemy aliens and were subjected to National Security (Alien Control) Regulations (Nagata, Unwanted 272).

The bombing of Darwin was confirmation of a deep-seated Australian fear of the ‘yellow peril’. As we have seen in chapter one, William Lane predicted in the late 1880s in his cautionary tale White or Yellow? that Asian powers would take advantage of Australia’s isolation and vulnerability, and versions of this fear continue to resonate (Walker, "Writers" 156). The advent of war presented white Australians with a tangible and even more profoundly troubling impression of Asia, especially of Japan. This was particularly so for the thousands of Australians who became prisoners of war (POWs). Warnings of the possibilities that awaited Australia as ‘Asia’ began to stir can be found in Rohan D. Rivett’s Behind Bamboo: An Inside Story of the Japanese Prison Camps (1946). Being submerged beneath a Japanese flood (a favourite metaphor of Rivett’s) is a key theme of Russell Braddon’s The Naked Island (1952)—the best known of the prisoner of war novels—and its sequels, End of a Hate (1958) and The Other Hundred Years: Japan’s Bid for Supremacy, 1941-2041 (1983) (Walker, "Writers" 156). Like Rivett, a central preoccupation of Braddon’s novels is the intrinsic Japanese will to dominate and, given the popularity of these and other best-selling war novels, their influence in shaping perceptions of the war should not be underestimated.

The war novels of World War Two achieved such remarkable sales that it can be safely assumed that their influence in shaping Australia’s involvement in the war was far greater than the official histories (Walker, "Writers" 138). Once again we see the pivotal role played by fictional renderings or literary imaginings of historical ‘facts’ in producing and reflecting accepted cultural knowledge. Australian prisoners of war generated a literature that not only championed the resourcefulness, bravery and mateship of the (white) Australian soldiers, it also served to convince readers of the

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15 For Lane, the threat of an imagined invasion of Australia came largely from the Chinese, but his work still belongs within a tradition of invasion narratives warning of the monstrous possibilities that await Australia at the hands of Asian powers.
cruelty and barbarity of the Japanese. According to Joan Beaumont, memoirs of captivity served to reinforce the ‘national legend’ in a conflict that otherwise offered few opportunities for mythologising ("Australia" 49). Unlike World War One, the fighting of World War Two produced no single dominant experience such as the Western front or Gallipoli with which the majority of servicemen could identity and which could serve as a shared remembrance. This may account, in part, for the symbolic importance of POWs in Australian collective imaginings of World War Two.

Perhaps more importantly in guaranteeing POWs a place in the Australian national memory was both the scale of their death toll and the circumstances in which they died. Over 30,000 Australians were taken prisoner during World War Two, with more than 22,000 of these being held captive by the Japanese in the South-East Asian campaigns (Beaumont, "Australia" 48). Approximately 21 per cent of all Australian deaths in World War Two were prisoners who died in captivity—as opposed to 0.7 per cent of deaths in World War One (Beaumont, "Australia" 48). Captivity narratives served an important role in reinforcing the dominant image of Anglo-Australians as “victims and innocents, glorious battlers” (Curthoys, "Immigration" 171) as well as the dominant image of the Japanese as a ruthless and cruel ‘race’.

An Indigenous/Japanese Alliance?

Given that pre-existing racial tensions and anxieties were accentuated in wartime conditions, the paranoia surrounding Indigenous/Asian unions reached new heights. One of the earliest expressions of the myth of an Aboriginal/Japanese alliance can be found in C.H. Kirmess’ story of a Japanese invasion of the Northern Territory. Published in 1909, Kirmess’ The Australian Crisis (discussed in chapter one), argued that by “presents of tobacco, silver, arms, and especially liquor … the natives might be seduced from their present loyalty” (qtd in Willis 86) to assist the invading Japanese. As we have seen in chapter one, while Kirmess did not credit Aborigines “with sufficient intelligence to be dangerous” (89-90), they became agents of the Japanese, passing on valuable information while ostensibly serving as guides for the ‘White Guard’ (Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 2). Kirmess clearly identified Aborigines with (as?) the enemy, and this enduring myth was to resurface again in World War Two.
Like colonial stereotypes containing the dual representations of Aborigines as ‘treacherous beasts’ and ‘loyal guides’, images of Indigenes in World War Two retained a modified version of this dichotomy (Saunders 329). Aboriginal people in Western Australia and the Northern Territory had been in contact with Japanese pearlers and seafarers since the late nineteenth century. As late as 1937, 70 Japanese vessels carrying approximately 1,000 Japanese fishermen were moored around Cape Arnhem (D. Thomson 13). The crews of these vessels went to great lengths to ingratiate themselves with local Aborigines, trading knives, axes, mirrors and tobacco in exchange for Aboriginal labour, sexual and other services. During the many years Japanese pearlers and fishermen visited the north Australian coast, close and enduring associations with local Aboriginal people resulted. Yet other Aborigines in the north were deeply hostile to the Japanese as a result of the abusive behaviour of some of the crewmen (Robert A. Hall, Fighters 131). Indeed, a report by Donald Thomson on his scheme to organise Aborigines in the defence of the northern coast stated that Aboriginal people were also known to be “notoriously hostile to the Japanese fishermen” (131). Despite attacking and killing most of the Japanese crews of two luggers at Caledon Bay on the Carpentarian coast of Arnhem Land in 1932 (Jones and Meehan 105), accusations of Aboriginal disloyalty “took on a sharper edge of hysteria” (Robert A. Hall, Black Diggers 116) after the bombing of Darwin in February 1942.

Fears of a potential Indigenous/Japanese alliance appeared in public and official discourse. A letter to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald warned that by the use of smoke signals, Aboriginal traitors could give “good information to a Jap [sic] reconnaissance plane up to one hundred miles off the coast of Broome, Wyndham or Darwin” (qtd in Willis 87). Another statement that appeared in the press claimed that “wild blacks … for gifts of tobacco and food would be willing to aid anybody, whether white or yellow” (qtd in D. Thomson 47). Echoing the accusations made in The Australian Crisis, Army reports indicated that in the event of a Japanese invasion all coastal Aborigines should be taken inland because the allegiance of Aborigines could be “bought for a stick of tobacco” (qtd in Willis 87). White fears of an Aboriginal collaboration with the Japanese were founded on an unstated acknowledgement of the dispossession and exploitation Aboriginal people had suffered. Anglo-Australians were concerned that Aborigines would take punitive action against them for the atrocities they had committed. As Curthoys argues, “white Australians had a very good reason to fear...
that they might not hold or deserve the allegiance of Aboriginal people” ("National" 180).

Anxieties about a possible military alliance between Indigenous and Asian peoples resurfaced long after World War Two. In 1979 Michael Page’s A Nasty Little War warned of the dangers Australia could face if Aboriginal and Chinese people became allies. Bruce Pascoe, a member of the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative (from the Geelong region of Victoria) has also used this history of anxiety in a sub-plot in his recent novel Ruby-Eyed Coucal (1996). In Pascoe’s account, white Australian anxiety about a possible Aboriginal/Asian military partnership is directed at the centuries-old alliance between Aboriginal and Macassan people. The relationship between these communities is seen to be so well established that Anglo-Australian government officials are concerned about the “loyalty of the Aborigines to the national cause” (105). In an imagined government report made on the trade between the Aborigines of Arnhem Land and the Macassans at the outbreak of World War Two, Australian authorities argued that “[o]ur war effort could be strategically disadvantaged by the continued economic allegiance of these two peoples” (106).

Despite the many accusations levelled against them, there is no evidence to suggest that Aborigines sabotaged the national war effort in any way (Darian-Smith, "War" 56; Robert A Hall, "Aborigines" 58; Willis 95). Indeed, Thomson organised Aborigines and Islanders to defend the northern coast precisely because of their faithfulness and loyalty and because they “disliked the Japanese” (13). The men chosen by Thomson for reconnaissance work were selected because of their knowledge of the local topography and their superior fighting skills. Others were chosen because they had already killed Japanese men and offered, according to Thomson, “just what was required; they were so notoriously hostile to the Japanese” (13). Aboriginal men who had formerly been imprisoned for killing Japanese fishermen were now told to kill Japanese combatants with impunity. Those Aborigines who had maintained peaceful relations with the Japanese crewmen were of most concern to Thomson, and he strove to “destroy Japanese influence among these natives with whom the Japanese had undoubtedly been able to establish a footing” (13). Thomson was concerned that Japanese enemy forces might use Japanese fishermen who manned luggers to “collect natives with special local knowledge” (19). Anti-Japanese propaganda was employed in an attempt to convince
Aborigines not to cooperate with the Japanese, and ‘Raiwalla’ disseminated anti-Japanese sentiment in the local Aboriginal language.

Public and official anxiety during World War Two concerning an imagined Indigenous/Japanese military alliance echoed concerns about Aboriginal/Asian unions voiced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In both cases, whites expressed concerns that such cross-cultural alliances might deprive Anglo-Australians of possessions deemed rightfully ‘ours’. Chapter one has argued that colonists objected to Indigenous/Asian alliances because Asian labour relations with Indigenes deprived us of cheap Black labour and sexual relations resulted in an increase in the ‘coloured’ population. During World War Two the white national imaginary was also concerned by the prospect of losing the land itself.  

White army and government officials were anxious that Aborigines would aid and abet the Japanese in an act of reprisal against them. In a letter to the Commissioner of Native Affairs, one government official from Port Hedland stated: “there is no secret about it the majority [of Aborigines] openly state that if the Japs [sic] come they would get a better deal than they have had in the past” (qtd in Willis 87). After completing a tour of military posts in the north-west, an Army Chaplain echoed these sentiments claiming that the Aborigines “have been told for years that the Jap [sic] is their friend, and that he will one day save them from the white man who has taken their country” (qtd in Willis 87-88).

Efforts during World War Two to neutralise any Indigenous/Japanese threat to whites’ sole possession of the nation resulted in the introduction of greater impediments to Aboriginal freedom. Brian Willis argues that the unfounded assumptions of a treacherous link between Aborigines and the Japanese contributed to the barriers placed on Aboriginal enlistment in the Services (87). This distrust was also used to rationalise the imposition of high levels of control and restriction of Aboriginal people that were more appropriate to ‘enemy aliens’. Aborigines in Western Australia, for example, were forced to endure an extraordinarily high level of surveillance and intervention.

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16 Army and government officials were concerned about a military alliance between Indigenous and Japanese people, but the report by Donald Thomson also indicated his unease with the sexual unions between Aboriginal women and Japanese fishermen. Like colonial officials, Thomson described sexual contact between these people in terms of the women “becoming demoralised and degraded by their contacts with these crews” (37). This narrow and simplistic characterisation did not account for many other Indigenous/Japanese relationships that were also based on love and mutual self-interest and respect.
Aboriginal peoples in the south-west of WA were interned at the Moore River Native Settlement so that Army and government officials could monitor whether or not the Aborigines tried to make contact with the enemy (van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 32, 70-71). In *No Options No Choice! The Moore River Experience* (1994) Thomas Corbett recalls how the Army kept the Aboriginal inmates under close surveillance at all times, believing they would collaborate with the Japanese if they had the chance (qtd in van den Berg, *No Options* 209).

A number of Aboriginal women in Broome, some of whom had never left the Kimberley, were sent to internment camps in the south and east, and the Aboriginal wives of Japanese men were interned with their husbands and children (Choo, *Mission* 250-51). The *de facto* wives and lovers of the Japanese were left in Broome, to be evacuated with the other Aborigines of the town to Beagle Bay mission. The war provided the Native Affairs authorities in Broome with the opportunity to separate Aboriginal people from the influence of Asian nationals. Claiming that the association of Aborigines and Asians “was detrimental to the national security of Australia” (qtd in Choo, *Mission* 258), Frank Bray—the Commissioner of Native Affairs—was able to use the war to justify the prohibition of intermarriage between Asians and Aboriginal women. A Native Affairs departmental report of 1943 noted that since the removal of Broome’s Aboriginal population to Beagle Bay:

> there have been a number of proposals of marriage from Asiatics and native women. They have been objected to, not only for the purpose of discouraging the breeding of [a] mixed Asiatic and native population, but also because it is now recognised that Asiatic-native marriages are undesirable from the standpoint of national security (qtd in Choo, *Mission* 259).

The Native Affairs Department took advantage of the evacuation of Broome Aborigines to restrict them from re-entering the town, declaring it a prohibited area. The department hoped that in rendering it illegal for Aborigines—except those who were lawfully employed—to enter Broome, they could “prevent the existence of the previous unsavouriness which existed in Broome” (qtd in Choo, *Mission* 259). Every previous effort, including legislation, to separate Aborigines and Asians had proven futile, and by the 1940s, the vast majority of the Aboriginal population in Broome comprised mixed-race or ‘coloured’ people with Asian ancestry (Choo, *Mission* 264). Even though a Japanese invasion of Australia no longer seemed likely by the end of 1943, the Army did
not suspend its control and restriction of Aborigines under National Security Regulations until the war’s end (Willis 94).

It is no wonder that concerns over miscegenation and the “multiplication of multicolour humanity by the mating of Halfcastes with alien coloured blood” (Cecil Cook qtd in McGregor 294) still resonated during World War Two. Like the colonial and early Federation periods, in the inter-war years the spectre of Indigenous/Asian sexual unions still caused anxiety for government officials. For example, in the 1930s, those charged with authority over Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia and the Northern Territory opposed the ‘interbreeding’ between ‘half-castes’ and Asians because it would hinder the biological absorption of Aborigines into the wider community. We have seen in chapter one that A.O. Neville, Western Australia’s Chief Protector of Aborigines (and then Commissioner of Native Affairs), was a strong advocate of the ‘breeding out’ of the Indigenous population. To this end he supported the intermarriage of Aboriginal women with white men, but prohibited Aboriginal/Asian unions. Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of Aborigines in the NT, was also a proponent of ‘breeding out the colour’ as “the only instrument of realizing the objective of … an All White Australia” (qtd in McGregor 294). Like Neville, Cook supported the marriage of ‘half-caste’ women to white men, claiming that part-Aboriginal women “must be married to men substantially of European origin” in order to control “the propagation of the hybrid [of] alien coloured” ancestry (qtd in McGregor 294).

Reproductive control was an important element in guaranteeing the ‘White Australia’ imperative. Those advocating absorptionism sought to maintain the principle of White Australia that had been founded at Federation. Chapter one argued that racial purity was of vital importance in maintaining Australian national identity and national cohesion. Complete exclusion was the means of dealing with external threats to the national-racial character, while absorption provided the solution to internal threats. Perversely—as it seemed to those who envisaged White Australia in terms of racial purity—whiteness on the Australian continent could only be preserved by the diligent pursuit of racial impurity. The threat deriving from miscegenation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people would paradoxically be remedied by instituting even more comprehensive regimes of miscegenation (McGregor 286). The intense state interventionism that characterised the schemes of systematic biological absorption pursued by Western Australia and the Northern Territory in the inter-war years
continued to have ramifications in the policing of Aborigines and Asians during and after World War Two. Like the colonial and inter-war eras, the desire to separate Indigenous and Asian peoples resulted in greater policing of Indigenous peoples’ lives. Once again, this control of Aboriginal people was introduced with Asian people firmly in mind, so that it cannot be seen as a ‘Black/white’ issue.
Chapter Three

‘Two Wongs don’t make a White’: Race and Ethnicity in the Post-War Era

If Australians have learned one lesson from the Pacific war … it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendants unless we greatly increase our numbers … Our need … is urgent and imperative if we are to survive (Calwell 97).

This chapter examines the underlying assumptions or ideologies behind the introduction of the 1947 post-war migration scheme. It outlines some of the motivating forces that contributed to the implementation of such a “bold experiment” (Lack and Templeton xiii) and explores its effect on migrant and Aboriginal communities. This chapter shows that one of the key reasons for introducing the massive post-war migration campaign was to provide a bulwark against a potential ‘Asian invasion’ (Lack and Templeton 12). World War Two and, in particular, the threat of invasion of Darwin and northern Australia convinced the Australian government that mass migration was necessary to safeguard the nation against a future threat of attack (Laurie, "Federation" 21).

Arthur Calwell became Australia’s first Minister for Immigration when a new department obtained portfolio status in the Federal government in 1945. That year, in his statement to the House of Representatives, Calwell insisted that a population increase was needed to discourage potential enemies from invading Australia. In 1949 Prime Minister Ben Chifley echoed Calwell’s assertion by proclaiming: “[w]e must populate Australia as rapidly as we can before someone else decides to populate it for us” (qtd in Laurie, "Federation" 21). The fears and anxieties that prompted the introduction of the ‘White Australia’ policy were still powerfully resonant in the post-World War II era. According to Gordon Greenwood, the “roots of the restrictive [post-war immigration] policy stretch back into the nineteenth century when Australians had experience of large-scale non-European groups in their midst” (150).

In some senses it may appear that the relatively ‘open-door’ policy of the post-war migration programme represented a marked shift away from the restrictive ‘White Australia’ policy. After all, the post-war immigration scheme was premised on the basis of inclusion, rather than exclusion. The campaign was remarkable in introducing
an unprecedented change to Australia’s population. As a result of post-war migration more than 40 per cent of the population in Australia today is comprised of migrants and their Australian-born children (McArthur 15). In 1947 only a tenth of the population were born overseas and less than three percent were of non-Anglo-Celtic origin, but by 1981, almost 30 per cent were born overseas and more than half of these were from non-European countries (Jayasuriya, "Facts" 23). The post-war immigration programme was not only successful in terms of peopling the country, it also had an enormous impact economically. From 1947 to 1973, immigrant labour provided up to fifty percent of Australia’s labour force growth (Brewster 79-80).

However, both the ‘White Australia’ policy and the post-war migration campaign were informed by desires to maintain white Australian norms and values and to limit Asian migration. White Australia did allow entry to a large number and variety of migrants in the years following World War Two, but a closer look at the racial composition of this immigration exemplifies Anglo-Australian attitudes in terms of race and the assumed assimilability of migrants into the Australian nation. Australia conceived of its immigration priorities in terms of maintaining the 98 percent British composition of its population. The continuation of this priority was evident in the signing of two agreements with the British government providing for the resumption of immigration between the two countries (Blakeney 322).

Following an exploration of the determinants that led to the introduction of the post-war migration campaign, the chapter examines the scheme’s impact on British migrants, on European and Asian migrants and on Indigenous people. It shows that these ‘groups’ experienced the migration programme in varying ways, and that each was managed or controlled differently. In response to the changing social, cultural and economic circumstances that resulted from the introduction of large numbers of people from varying countries, a policy of assimilation was introduced. Assimilation was institutionalised to contain the threat of mass migration, and to reassert the primacy of core (white) Australian values.

This chapter also examines the dominant ideologies that prefigured the introduction of assimilationism, and explores its effects on white and non-white migrants and on Aborigines. With the introduction of a policy of assimilating migrant and Aboriginal people, the government sought to reassert white Australian dominance by containing
change within existing structures. Assimilation ostensibly guaranteed migrants and Aborigines equality of access to social services and resources, while placing limits on the special facilities provided for them. Immigrant and Aboriginal communities also faced government surveillance and interference to ensure that they were meeting the prescribed ideal of the ‘Australian way of life’. This chapter argues that the post-war migration campaign and the government’s subsequent implementation of a policy of assimilation represented successive attempts at managing and controlling cultural and social diversity. The post-war migration scheme was designed to ensure that the racial composition of Australian society remained as white as possible, and the policy of assimilation was institutionalised to ensure that it remained ‘white’ in cultural terms.

From Biological to Cultural Determinism?

The selection criterion for the post-war immigration programme was based on a narrow equation of assimilability and skin colour. A hierarchy of national belonging existed, where British people were viewed as the most desirable and assimilable migrants. The preference for British migrants was demonstrated by the way immigrant recruitment in Britain received much higher priority than on the continent, by the assisted passages and financial aid offered to British migrants, and was further evident in the ‘Bring out a Briton’ campaign (Markus, Australian 157). However, by 1949 an increasingly varied source of migrants was deemed eligible to enter the country, culminating in gradually less stringent conceptualisations of who was assimilable. This reflected a shift in the post-war era where race-based differences gradually gave way to culturalist forms of distinction. In other words, the racial, biological and genetic differences between people gradually assumed less importance than cultural, ethnic and social distinctions. This shift is perhaps best exemplified by a comparison between the ‘White Australia’ policy and the post-war migration campaign.

As we have seen, white colonists relied on notions of Social Darwinism and an assumed equation between race and physical or mental capabilities in their interactions with Asian and Aboriginal ‘constitutive Others’. I have argued that biological determinism was the dominant Australian ideology on race, and that such race thinking predominated from about the 1880s to the 1940s. During this period, race was thought to determine culture and, in order to maintain the homogeneity of white Australian culture, non-white people were denied national membership. The underlying
assumption was that people of differing racial origins were incommensurably different, and hence not assimilable. Since whiteness defined Australian national membership, civic benefits were made available only to those meeting this racial criterion (McGregor 295). The eventual outcome was the implementation of a policy that restricted the entry and naturalisation of those deemed racially ‘Other’.

However, in the period following World War Two there was a gradual shift in understandings of race so that a much broader range of people was included in the category ‘white Australian’ (Stratton, "Multiculturalism" 164). The skin colour designated ‘white’ underwent considerable changes to allow for the acceptance of non-British migration. As we have seen, prior to World War Two white identity was understood and symbolised in reductive terms that equated whiteness specifically with Britishness—the ‘British race’ for example (Stratton, "Multiculturalism" 163).

Following World War Two however, there was a demise in the thinking that equated race with culture/nation to a new understanding of race which signified membership of a broader cultural grouping/continent (Stratton, "Multiculturalism" 164). As Jon Stratton suggests, this shift in thinking reflected a new understanding of the similarities of European cultures, and a move away from an emphasis on phenotype ‘white’, “to an emphasis on culture signalled by ‘European’” ("Multiculturalism” 164).

As the intellectual foundations of ‘scientific racism’ were discredited, and people wished to distance themselves from the horrors of Nazi racism, there was less reliance on racism based on biological determinism and Social Darwinism (Jayasuriya, Racism 19). As Markus asserts, the revelation of Hitler’s death camps seems “to have dealt a decisive blow to the possibility of maintaining policies openly based on ideas of racial superiority and exclusiveness” (Australian 155). Lessons learned from the war meant there was a shift from trying to keep Australia white in racial terms to efforts at ensuring it remained white culturally. In other words, there was no longer an expectation that new Australians would be white just in body, but also in behaviour. As Pat Grimshaw et al. maintain, the emphasis had shifted from biology to lifestyle, “from skin colour to what was inside people’s heads” (293).

In drawing a comparison between the Immigration Restriction Act and the post-war migration campaign, I do not mean to equate the ideologies that informed them or the periods they represent. The desire to maintain (white) Australian core values and to
exclude non-Europeans (specifically ‘Asians’) from national membership were common to both, but there were important distinctions between these governmental initiatives. The ‘White Australia’ policy was centred on a very limited and restrictive notion of who was assimilable, one that was based on notions of ‘blood’, descent and racial/biological difference. But by the time the post-war migration campaign was introduced, there was less emphasis on racial homogeneity, and more on cultural compatibility. As such, the post-war migration programme was premised on a much more inclusive notion of who could be deemed ‘Australian’. In the post-war period, the ‘culture’ rather than the ‘race’ of prospective immigrants determined whether or not they could gain access to Australian national membership. As John Murphy suggests, rather than seeing post-war migration and assimilationism as “part of a continuum with an older racist ‘tradition’ that had inspired White Australia”, it is important to take stock of the “complicated transition in which ideas of difference based on race and blood were being replaced by difference based on ‘ways of life’ and cultural values” (8).

However, the shift from biological to cultural determinism was not complete or absolute, and it might be an overstatement to suggest that cultural difference replaced ideas of innate racial difference. People of European descent were now seen to be culturally different—rather than racially distinct—but their non-European counterparts were still characterised in racialised terms. For non-Europeans, rather than cultural differences replacing racially based distinctions, they supplemented them. The reluctance, at least until the late 1950s, to grant national membership to migrants of Asian and non-European descent is indicative of the way ‘race’ continued to play an important role in determining the acceptability of prospective immigrants. In the post-war period, white Australia was prepared to extend its definition of whiteness to include a range of people who had been previously excluded from Australian national belonging. Whiteness was gradually expanded to include those from continental Europe (as opposed to just those of British descent), but ‘Europeanness’ marked the boundary of acceptability, and those of non-European and Asian descent were still denied inclusion in the Australian community.

As Stephen Castles et al. suggest, the “image of the ‘European’ as ‘self’ (or as capable of becoming such) and the ‘Asian’ [and Indigenous] as irrevocably ‘other’ was every day reinforced in public rhetoric and practice” (45). Australia’s post-war immigration
campaign was structured by hierarchies of culture/ethnicity that operated along (often unstated) “lines of racialised/racist thinking—from the ‘potentially-the-same’ to the outer limits of the ‘absolute other’ (Pugliese 241). Instead of “overt racist exclusivity based on the supposed superiority of certain racial-biological features”, post-war Australia substituted a “covert racism based on the proposed incompatibility of certain [non-European] cultures” (Castles et al. 45). ‘White Australia’ was realised in the post-war era through the exclusion from national membership of external non-white and non-European ‘Others’, while racial and cultural absorption provided the solution to non-white internal threats.

The Implementation of the Post-War Migration Programme

The Australian immigration programme has been both assistive and restrictive—assistive in attempting to attract to Australia, often with financial aid, people of British or European origin, and restrictive in ensuring that large numbers of people from societies with different values and lower standards of living did not enter the country and form enclaves within it. The object of the policy in both cases was undoubtedly to preserve the … [white] Australian character of the society (Greenwood 150).

The post-war immigration campaign was first planned during World War Two when an Allied victory seemed eminent. In 1944 an inter-departmental committee was established and assigned the task of drawing up guidelines for the scheme. Australia was finally ‘opening its doors’ to a greater variety of (European) migrants, but it continued to deny the permanent settlement of non-Europeans. European cultural diversity was accepted, but non-European racial diversity was not. The racist underpinnings of the immigration programme are evident from the minutes taken at the meetings: “a priority list was drawn up with white Britishers at the top, followed by Nordics and then, at the bottom, southern Europeans. The idea of black or Asian permanent settlement in Australia was out of the question” (York 2). The Australian government’s determination to reinforce “the distinctly British character of Australian society” (Lack and Templeton 74) is clear from Calwell’s negotiation of an assisted passage scheme with the British government. British ex-service personnel and their dependants were eligible to receive free passages to Australia, while civilians of the United Kingdom who were not eligible under the free passage scheme could receive assisted or subsidised passages (Calwell 100). These British immigrants were commonly known as ‘Ten Pound Poms’ (Laurie, "Federation" 23) because they only
had to contribute ten pounds towards their fare—the rest being paid by the British and Australian governments.\textsuperscript{17}

Calwell aimed for an annual two per cent increase in the population—one per cent was to come from natural increases, and another one (that is, about 75 000 people each year) from immigration. Calwell knew that most voters as well as cabinet ministers preferred immigrants to be British. In late 1946 he tried to assure the Australian people by claiming that it was his hope “that for every foreign migrant there will be ten people from the United Kingdom” (qtd. in K. Inglis 26).\textsuperscript{18} But such hopes proved to be illusory and, at best, a one-to-one ratio of Britons to Europeans was achieved (Laurie, "Federation" 23). A number of obstacles including an inability to secure sufficient shipping from the United Kingdom and a lack of interest amongst ‘racially desirable’ Europeans resulted in the acceptance of an increasingly varied source of migrants. In July 1947 Calwell entered an agreement with the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) to receive European war refugees (known as DPs or ‘displaced persons’). Calwell’s decision was a pragmatic response to his desperation at the shipping shortage and, given the opposition to European migration within Cabinet, the public service and the general community, constituted a major political gamble (Markus, "Labour" 78).

Despite the formal agreement signed by the IRO and the Australian government that migrants would be selected “without discrimination as to race or religion or marital status” and Calwell’s declaration at the signing ceremony that “our policy has no race prejudice” (qtd in Markus, "Labour" 80), selection teams received secret instructions that only Baltic persons were to be selected (Blakeney 324). The first shipload of war refugees to come to Australia came from the Baltic States of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania in the northernmost region of Europe (K. Inglis 27). According to Michael Blakeney, the first shipload of more than 800 DPs or ‘new Australians’ had been hand picked with great care for their ‘Aryan’ features (324). As Calwell recalled in his memoirs, many of the refugees selected in the initial ‘choice sample’ were “natural

\textsuperscript{17} The only ‘catch’ was that British immigrants had to remain in Australia for two years or else pay back the fare (York 3).

\textsuperscript{18} It is interesting to note that, unlike European migrants, ‘people from the United Kingdom’ were not seen as ‘foreigners’.
platinum blondes of both sexes. The men were handsome and the women beautiful. It was not hard to sell immigration to the Australian people once the press published photographs of that group” (103).

The category of acceptable migrants was gradually broadened during the late 1940s. But this was less a response to IRO pressure or humanitarian concern than a pragmatic solution to the dwindling number of Baltic migrants, dictating that selection teams were unable to fill quotas without broadening categories. By the end of 1947 Ukrainians and Slovones became acceptable migrants; in 1948 Czechs and Yugoslavs were deemed eligible immigrants, as were Poles (although guidelines were more rigorously applied) until, by 1949, as the most desirable categories were emptied, all Europeans were deemed eligible to enter Australia. As Markus suggests, despite the admission of large numbers of migrants “from low-status parts of Europe, the traditional hierarchy, which privileged supposed ‘Aryan’ peoples, changed little” (Australian 160).

The reliance on this ‘traditional hierarchy’ was still evident into the late 1950s when selection teams for skilled Italian workers confined their tours almost exclusively to the northern parts of the country. In 1959 the government permitted independent Italian immigration, allowing people without nominees in Australia to migrate if they paid their own fares, but they were again chosen from the north (Markus, Australian 162). The preference for northern Italians was a continuation of attitudes from the nineteenth century when, according to Evans, the swarthier southern Italians were referred to as “the Chinese of Europe”, while the lighter-skinned northern Italians were heralded as “the Scotchmen of Italy” (“Keep" 6). Given the lowly opinion in which ‘Chinamen’ were held by the majority of white colonists, such a comparison was certainly not meant to elevate the status of northern Italians. In referring to darker-skinned northern Italians in terms of their resemblance to the Chinese, the connotation was that they were racially distinct and inferior from southern Italians and Scotchmen.

Calwell knew he would have to convince the Australian people of the merits of mass European migration, and sought to reassure them that their way of life would not be altered by ‘the migrant presence’ through an extensive propaganda campaign that included the publication and distribution of various pamphlets (K. Inglis 85). He employed a number of tactics to convince members of cabinet, public servants, pressure groups and the general public of the benefits of European migration. Through trade
union and labour publications he sought to appease workers and trade unionists by guaranteeing them that migrant labourers would not be employed in occupations held by local workers. National security concerns remained, but immigration had been given an additional rationale of economic development and prosperity (Lack and Templeton 75). Displaced persons paid no fare, being brought in on humanitarian grounds but, in return, they had to sign a contract agreeing to work for the Australian government for two years in any job anywhere in Australia (York 3). Immigrants were threatened with deportation if they left their allocated jobs (Markus, Australian 161).

The terms under which migrant labourers entered the workforce were designed to minimise discord (Markus, "Labour" 89). Immigrant workers were specifically recruited for so-called ‘unskilled’ work irrespective of their educational or work qualifications, and were not to be used to displace Australian labourers. They performed the dirty, arduous and isolated work of an increasingly industrialised and urbanised country, with men being employed as furnace labourers, coalminers, fruit pickers, on road and railway construction and as cane cutters. Women were employed as nurses and domestics in public institutions such as hospitals, and in private homes. Migrant labourers were housed in primitive accommodation in former military camps or hostels and were forced to endure separation from family and friends, and subjection to a paternalistic and overbearing bureaucracy (Lack and Templeton 10). The headline of a report in the Sydney Morning Herald (the source quoted as Calwell) provided an accurate summary of the conditions displaced persons were required to endure: ‘D.P.s to have Only “Unattractive” Jobs’ (qtd in K. Inglis 27). The prevailing view of the government and citizenry at large was that migrants were fortunate to be in Australia, and that inadequate housing, the separation of husbands and wives, the failure to recognise qualifications or the standover tactics of government officials did not constitute adequate or legitimate bases for complaint (Markus, "Labour" 89). Post-war migration was advocated more as a response to capital’s need for labour than as any humanitarian concern to house those displaced by war (Bulbeck 135). Far from being a humane and generous response to those traumatised by war and homelessness,

19 Immigrants from England, whether they had received assisted fares or not, were not subject to the two-year labour contracts (Markus, Australian 197).
“Australia’s post-war immigration scheme was calculatingly and selfishly opportunistic” (Lack and Templeton 2).

After Calwell’s 1946 campaign to explain the immigration scheme to trade unionists in union and labour journals, three pamphlets were produced in 1947 and issued to the general public. The first of these *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, continued the theme from the labour journals, stressing that mass migration would prove beneficial in developing the country’s economy. In *This—or Extinction* Calwell again tried to ‘sell’ the notion of post-war migration, this time by raising the spectre of the ‘yellow peril’ (Fitzgerald 45). Calwell called for European migrants to fill up the vast Australian landscape to prevent it from being ‘taken over’ by Asians (Loh and Winternitz 19).

Pleas were made for tolerance of European immigrants, who were urgently required to defend the country against a possible Asian menace—Australia could not afford “to indulge in racial or religious prejudices” (at least towards Europeans) (Markus, "Labour" 86). Calwell’s famous dictum ‘populate or perish!’ was invoked to convince the general public of the need to safeguard the country against an Asian invasion. The implicit message of this phrase was that (white) Australians had to populate with other ‘white’ people, or perish at the hands of ‘Asian hordes’ (Stratton, *Race* 88).

Public acceptance of European migration was also realised through Calwell’s emphasis on the migrants’ ability to assimilate into Australian mores and social standards. His third publication, *Australians of Tomorrow*, promoted European migration by promising that migrants would adopt the national language, lifestyle and culture in the least possible time. Calwell promoted an imagined model of Australia that was premised on the notion of a homogeneous national Australian identity. In order to maintain this purportedly ‘homogeneous’ or ‘unitary’ Australia, migrants were exhorted to act and behave in ways deemed appropriate or ‘in line’ with Australian values and norms.

Indeed, even before European migrants had been allocated their assigned employment, they were given a short course in the English language and instructions on the ‘Australian way of life’. Local service clubs and the Good Neighbour Council provided detailed advice on how to ‘fit in’, even explaining how to make an Australian sandwich (Laurie, "Federation" 23).

In *Your Introduction to Australia*, migrants were informed that using their own language in public was inadvisable as it rendered them conspicuous, and were
instructed to avoid using their hands when speaking. Men were exhorted to refrain from wearing hairnets, as Australian men regarded “men who do so as effeminate” (qtd in Markus, "Labour" 83). Even though such prescriptive publications were written in ‘simple English’, the majority of migrants had little or no English language skills. When it was suggested that the material would be of greater use if migrants could understand it, the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, Tas Heyes, replied that:

> a knowledge of the English language is the first prerequisite for a European migrant to help his [sic] assimilation into the community. Any obstruction to his learning the language should be strongly resisted. We think that catering for him in his own tongue would constitute such an obstruction (qtd in Markus, "Labour" 89).

The requirement that migrants refrain from speaking in their native tongue recalls the way Aboriginal people on reserves and missions were prevented from using their own languages. Both migrants and Aborigines confronted the expectation that they use English (at least in public), but ‘New Australians’ were not banned from and punished for speaking in their native languages.

Hierarchies of National Belonging in the Post-War Era

Australia must be kept preponderantly British in its institutions and the composition of its people (Harold Holt qtd in Markus, Australian 158).

As the above assertion by Harold Holt in 1952 illustrates, the Australian government was determined to maintain its national and cultural ties to Britain. British migration was viewed favourably by both the Australian government and the majority of Australian people, and migrants of British descent found that, for the most part, they were well received by the nation. As English-speaking migrants, those who emigrated here from England, or the United Kingdom more generally, held a distinct advantage. Dislocation and displacement are experiences with which all new arrivals to Australia must contend. Even those migrating here from English speaking countries have left friends, family and local familiarity behind. But for those lacking competence in English who have come from countries with very different systems and cultural values or, indeed, who may not have left home willingly, the transition to a new country can be very traumatic (Pettman 41).
White Britishers were the most desirable and highly sought after migrants, and they received preferential treatment from the government in terms of the incentives they were offered to migrate here. I have already noted that British ex-service personnel and their families received free passages to Australia, and that civilians were awarded heavily subsidised fares. A greater percentage of British than European migrants received financial assistance to Australia, as illustrated by the following figures. Between 1947 and 1970, more than 85 per cent of British and Irish migrants received assisted passages, compared with 74 per cent of Northern Europeans, 60 per cent of those from Yugoslavia, 33 per cent of those from Greece, and only 18 per cent of Italian immigrants (Markus, *Australian* 162).

British migrants were also the recipients of a variety of other privileges or advantages. In 1948 the government introduced the *Nationality and Citizenship Act* which defined, for the first time, an Australian as distinct from a British citizenship. British citizens had only to register, after twelve months’ residence, to become Australian citizens, whereas European migrants were required to wait for a five-year qualifying period, as well as “renounce previous allegiances in public at naturalisation ceremonies” (Lack and Templeton 13).

The government’s determination to sustain and reinforce the British character of Australian society continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s, evident by the 1957 ‘Bring out a Briton’ campaign that was a response to declining rates of British migration.

Immigrants from the United Kingdom also benefited through their exemption from the indentured labour scheme which, according to former Labor leader Jack Lang, constituted “slave labour under the guise of immigration” (qtd in K. Inglis 27). Unlike their European counterparts, British migrants were freer to live and work where they chose. Greater employment opportunities were also afforded British migrants because their occupational and educational qualifications were recognised by the government. The government took little, if any, notice of the qualifications of European war refugees. It was chiefly interested in providing unskilled labour and, after serving their two-year labour contracts, people were left to make their own way in Australian society.

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20 Non-Europeans were not eligible to become naturalised Australian citizens under the 1948 *Nationality and Citizenship Act*. 
British migrants were also freed from the loneliness and isolation of working in remote rural areas, and were not threatened with deportation if they left their jobs. In relative terms, those migrating here from Britain also had greater job security because, according to governmental guidelines, in the case of redundancy European migrants and DPs were the first to be dismissed irrespective of length of time on the job (Markus, "Labour" 88). According to Markus, a number of the conditions that DPs were obliged to endure were identical to those of Italian prisoners of war employed in the Australian rural industry from 1943-45 ("Labour" 88).

(Southern and Eastern) European migrant workers performed the jobs that Australian-born labourers shunned, and were thus incorporated into other sections of the working class than those employees born in Australia—or Britain (Pettman 39). DPs were introduced to work in the unattractive sectors of the economy, and were not expected to rise above their allotted station in life. Even after European immigrants had finished their two-year labour contracts, they were still over-represented in menial, routine and low-paid jobs. Discrimination in the workforce led to an increasingly stratified and segmented labour market where British (and, to a certain extent, Northern European or Anglophone) migrants occupied labour market positions similar to those of the Australian-born workers, but DP labourers were concentrated in the semi- or ‘unskilled’ occupations in the manufacturing sector (Bottomley 174). Following their employment in the lower echelons of the labour market, Southern and Eastern European migrants were popularly cast as being especially suited to menial and servile work. In the Australian Worker, for instance, Southern Europeans were variously described “as ‘the scum of Europe’, ‘cheap, ignorant and low grade’, ‘backward and degraded’, and ‘miserable semi-slaves’” (Markus, Australian 145).

The labour market was not the only section of society in which migrants of British descent were accommodated with relative ease. The majority of Australia’s governmental institutions were designed or modelled on British systems, so that the legal, trade union, health and education bureaucracies closely resembled those with which British people were accustomed (Lack and Templeton 77). Migrants of British descent experienced fewer disadvantages in accessing Australia’s public institutions and, on an inter-personal level, they were also less likely to be the recipients of harassment or abuse. Of course there were times when British immigrants were the
targets of Australian hostility and resentment but, on the whole, they did not face the same level of discrimination as Southern and Eastern European migrants. Unlike their European counterparts, British migrants were not viewed as ‘foreign’ or ‘alien’ by Anglo-Australian society. Despite becoming naturalised Australian citizens, European migrants and their Australian-born children continued to be regarded as ‘strange’ and foreign. No matter how hard Southern and Eastern Europeans tried to ‘fit in’ or adapt to Australian mores and social standards, their fate was always to “approximate an Australian” (Pugliese 244).

Asians in Post-War Australia

Let me repeat for the last time that while I remain Minister for Immigration no Japanese will be permitted to enter this country. They cannot come as the wives of Australian servicemen for permanent or temporary residence, nor as businessmen to buy from or sell to us; they cannot come as pearlers, nor as labourers to pearlers. … The memory of Japanese atrocities to Australian servicemen is too recent and too bitter to be as easily forgotten as some people would like. … My stand, I feel, is expressive of the thought and sentiment of the overwhelming majority of the Australian people (Calwell qtd in Greenwood 164).

Membership of the ‘white (British) race’ was a prerequisite for national belonging at the turn of the twentieth century, but by the 1950s national inclusion was predicated more on a shared culture/ethnicity. However, the privileging of ethnicity in the post-war years did not mean that racial difference was no longer a determinant of national inclusion. The following two sections indicate that for ‘Asian’ and then Aboriginal communities, the category of race remained a symbolic marker of their unabsorbable difference. The category of Australian whiteness was extended to include much darker skin tones than had previously been considered ‘white’, but Black and Asian bodies continued to demarcate the outer limits or boundaries of acceptability.

The government’s reluctance to allow Asian (and other non-European) peoples to enter ‘White Australia’ or to fight for Australia in World War Two carried over into the post-war period where they were seen as undesirable immigrants. As we have seen, one of the chief ways Calwell gained public acceptance of European immigrants was to insist continually on the importance of a larger population in safeguarding the nation against a possible Japanese or Asian invasion. The Anglo-Australian antipathy to European immigrants was so great that Calwell did not wish to jeopardise the implementation of
his programme by “trying to introduce less popular elements into Australian society” (Kiernan 111). Asia, and the Japanese in particular, provided a convenient symbol of threat that Calwell used in his attempts to persuade the general public of the need for continental European migration.

Calwell’s preference for migrants of European descent was openly displayed by his various comments such as “two Wongs don’t make a white”—a pun on the name of Liberal parliamentarian Peter Wong—(qtd in Encel 39), and “I do not think that an occidental mind can follow the mental processes of an oriental mind” (qtd in Markus, Australian 168). Calwell’s refusal to allow Allied Chinese wartime refugees to remain in Australia after the war was further evidence of his anti-Asian stance. Members of the Chinese community who did not want to leave Australia mounted a successful challenge to the legality of Calwell’s actions in court. When the High Court ruled that those who had not been subjected to a dictation test upon entry were not prohibited immigrants, Calwell replied that “the flag of White Australia will not be lowered” (qtd in Lack and Templeton 12). The Departments of Defence and Immigration were determined to repatriate the evacuees as soon as possible, and Calwell introduced the controversial War-time Refugee Removal Act in June 1949 to enable deportation of those who did not wish to leave (Loh and Winternitz 37). However, in December 1949, the Liberal-Country Party coalition won the Federal election and the contested arrivals were allowed to stay permanently, under the status of ‘wartime refugees’. This ruling meant that the refugees could live and work where they chose, but with no right to nominate families or employees (Choi 60). After the Chinese communist takeover in 1949, a second group of approximately 850 Chinese nationals resident in Australia sought to ‘lower the flag of white Australia’ in their unwillingness to return to their homeland. It was only after Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore had refused to admit them that they were allowed to stay in Australia under ‘liberal attitude status’ (Markus, Australian 167).

Even those Australian servicemen who had been stationed in Japan and married Japanese women were instructed by Calwell that they could not bring their wives to Australia on their return (York 5). According to Calwell, while relatives remain “of men who suffered at the hands of the Japanese, it would be the greatest act of public indecency to permit a Japanese of either sex to pollute Australian shores” (qtd in
Markus, *Australian* 168). Calwell’s claim that the Japanese would somehow contaminate or defile ‘white Australia’ resembled arguments made against Asian immigration at the turn of the twentieth century. In the few years following World War Two, approximately 1,700 Asian and other non-European migrants had scaled the ‘great white walls’. Their numbers paled in comparison to the 170,000 European displaced persons who entered during this same period, but their admission “represented the most significant challenge to the racially exclusive immigration policy since its implementation in 1901” (Markus, *Australian* 167).

**Aborigines in Post-War Australia**

For most of the 1940s and 1950s, Aboriginal people rarely featured in the white Australian consciousness. Since their removal to government reserves and missions, Aborigines were largely considered ‘out of sight, out of mind’. Indeed, in his survey of a number of histories and commentaries published in the post-war years, W.E.H. Stanner found that there was a virtual ‘silence on all matters Aboriginal’. It was this omission of Aboriginal people from the historical narratives of nation that prompted Stanner to make the famous assertion in his 1968 Boyer lecture, that Australians had long engaged in a “cult of forgetfulness” (qtd in Murphy 168).

As a result of the strategic importance of immigration in public policy (if not in terms of sheer numerical weight), post-war migrants slowly began to have some cultural and social influence in Australian society (Murphy 168). However, for Aboriginal people, their claims for justice had little purchase in the post-war years. In the previous chapter we have seen that wartime conditions produced new employment opportunities for Aborigines, but this situation did not continue after the war. For Indigenous people in the post-war era there was little shift in the distribution of power—defined in terms of economic resources, political influence, and the possession and acquisition of skills and qualifications valued by mainstream society (Markus, *Australian* 216). The 1950s were boom years for some non-Indigenous Australians, but this period did not support much Aboriginal employment. In NSW, for instance, the Welfare Board recorded a decline in Aboriginal employment from 96 percent in 1946 to 76 percent in 1952 (Goodall 263). Post-war immigration programs brought many Europeans to rural and agricultural areas. The new immigrants became involved in family farming as well as providing a large number of labourers to work during busy seasonal picking, relegating Aboriginal
workers to the most marginal roles in these industries (Goodall 263). The difficulties of Aborigines were heightened by a lack of formal qualifications, continuing poor educational achievements and their concentration in areas of declining employment. These difficulties were exacerbated by high levels of discrimination in parts of the country and in the private employment market (Markus, Australian 215).

The introduction in the post-war era of tens of thousands of ‘new Australians’, marked another phase in the displacement of Aboriginal people, further promoting the illusion of the autochthonous status of the white invader/settler culture (Pugliese 245). In their ability to specify not only the numbers but also the nationality of post-war migrants, Anglo-Celtic Australians assumed the role of ‘hosts’ of the nation. “[D]inkum Aussies, themselves the migrants of yesteryear but now the hosts to newcomers” (Jayasuriya, "Facts" 24) were positioned as the purveyors of national belonging and entitlement. They assumed responsibility—not only for dictating who and how many people would be granted entry—but also for managing, governing and controlling migrant collectivities once they were here. The emerging concept of culture or ethnicity worked to occlude the Australian colonial history of invasion by promoting the false assumption that Anglo-Celtic Australians were ‘the indigenes’ in relation to ‘the ethnics’ and marked, what became for Aboriginal people, the next stage in a longer history of colonisation and dispossession (Murphy 169).

While some post-war migrants (especially non-British or non-Anglophone ones) faced overt levels of discrimination from Anglo-Australian society, that encountered by Aboriginal people was qualitatively different (Markus, Australian 203). For Indigenous communities the discrimination they faced from white Australians was compounded by the fact that they were still living with the continuing legacy of colonisation. Aboriginal people continued to be denied a place in the nation and were still excluded from receiving basic rights and privileges that post-war migrants were granted as a matter of course. In the post-war years the Australian government encouraged ‘settler’ migration and permanent residency as opposed to guest workers and, as such, post-war migrants were extended various social rights and privileges that have only been granted to Aboriginal people relatively recently. European immigrants found Australian citizenship comparatively easy to attain and, upon their arrival in Australia, were automatically incorporated into the housing, educational and welfare systems.
Unlike the ‘new Australians’ who arrived here in the post-war era, the nation’s Indigenous peoples were not counted in the national census, were ineligible to vote in Federal elections and remained subject to the paternalistic regimes of individual States because the Commonwealth government still could not legislate on their behalf. The privileging of culture in the post-war years did not mean that Aboriginal people ceased being seen in essentialised terms as a distinct and separate group of people with fixed characteristics. Terms such as ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’ were still used in contrasting the ways of life of Aborigines and Anglophone peoples (Hasluck 7). In dominant white Australian ideologies, Indigenes continued to be characterised as shiftless and lazy people with no work ethic.

As the 1940s and 1950s progressed and ideas of innate biological difference lost their credibility, the idea of ‘protecting’ Aboriginal people gradually gave way to notions that they should be ‘advanced’. In the words of Paul Hasluck, Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Policy, 1951-63, “the old tendency at the beginning of the century to regard the Aborigines as an inferior and primitive people from whom little could be hoped started to give place to more frequent assertions that, given the chance, they could do anything the white man [sic] could do” (6). From a contemporary standpoint it is obvious that these promises of equality were predicated on Aboriginal people relinquishing any vestiges of their Aboriginal cultural identity but, at the time, it marked a new phase in thinking, where Aboriginal people were at least seen to possess the same human capacity as other Australians. Government policies that had previously maintained the racial isolation and separation of Aborigines and non-Aboriginal people were replaced with policies of assimilation and integration.

**Assimilationism and the ‘Australian way of life’**

The architects of Australia’s ‘bold experiment’ concerned themselves with what the new immigration would do for Australia, rather than with what it would do to Australia. According to their view, immigration would shore up our defences and bring economic benefits. However, the social consequences of mass European immigration could not be imagined (Lack and Templeton xiii).

During the assimilationist era both migrant and Indigenous communities came under pressure to adopt the assumed monolithic (white) Australian culture, and it operated as the yardstick or “measuring rod” (Murphy 67) against which the assimilation of these
collectivities was assessed. But the notion of a distinct Australian national character proved to be an elusive category that was defined more readily in terms of what it was not. ‘Australianness’ existed by default as “what remained when the boundaries had been mapped or, more precisely, had been patrolled to repel intruders” (Murphy 67). According to Murphy, the preoccupation with national unity that characterised the assimilationist era was also based on a denial that mass migration need change Australian society, and “a reassurance that nothing essential need be lost” (75). Assimilationism gestured towards difference, but it simultaneously guaranteed the reproduction of the same order (Pugliese 235). As Murphy suggests, assimilationism was decidedly “indifferent to difference” (77).

Australian government officials believed, and the general public had been assured, that post-war migration would pose no threat to the maintenance of the ‘Australian way of life’. Indeed, one of the ways Calwell gained public support for his scheme to allow “the large-scale entry of hitherto discouraged people into Australia” (Tavan 80) was to insist that migrants would adopt the national language, culture and identity in the least possible time. Assimilation was largely understood as a one-way process “involving little more than learning English, getting a job, and abandoning an irrelevant past” (Lack and Templeton 77). Unlike the Immigration Restriction Act, the policy of assimilation was based on a presumption of cultural rather than racial superiority. Assimilationism assumed that migrant and Aboriginal collectivities would gratefully relinquish their earlier cultural ‘baggage’ to adopt the values and norms of the dominant group. When policies of assimilation were introduced with attendant promises of equality, it was on the proviso that the ‘Other’ stopped being culturally distinctive. Assimilationism offered a chance for migrants and Aborigines to ‘fit in’, but this was on the proviso that they conform.

Cultural and ethnic diversity was not a foreseen or desired result of the post-war migration programme, but despite the most calculated efforts of the government, migrants could not be easily separated from their previous ethnic loyalties. Indeed, the government’s introduction of a policy of assimilating migrants is evidence of the fact that they were not becoming ‘Australian enough’ and were posing a threat to the homogeneity of Australian society. The official rhetoric of assimilationism assumed that post-war migrant and Aboriginal peoples could be culturally and socially (if not
physically and racially) absorbed, and rapidly become indistinguishable from the existing Anglo-Australian population. Aboriginal and migrant communities were expected to conform to the ‘Australian way of life’; but this was a vague construct, often boiling down to not much more than the suburban myth of “the car, the family, the garden and a uniformly middle-class lifestyle” (White 166). As Bulbeck asserts, the idea of an unfractured or unified national community is an impossible fiction that does not exist as anything other than “a pious dream of the government in Canberra” (251). For Benedict Anderson, a national identity is always an “imagined political community” (6) because it is centred, not on natural similarities, but on the construction of a common culture, based on a shared language.

As I have noted, assimilationism in Australia demanded that the core (white) culture remained the same, while it was migrants and Aborigines who were transformed (Stratton, Race 16). There was an assumption that in the process some changes would occur in the rest of Australian society, but these were minor compared with the changes required of Aboriginal and migrant collectivities. As Kenneth Rivett states in relation to Italian migrants: “Italians were to revise their whole way of life from Italian to Australian, losing their identity in the process, while Australians (or some of them) would sometimes eat Italian food for a change” (199). Cultural adaptation remained the responsibility of migrants and Aborigines themselves, and any failure to achieve the desired social and cultural standard was heralded as a failing on their part. By placing the onus on Aborigines and migrants, the many social, linguistic and institutional obstacles these communities faced were trivialised and ignored. This approach underestimated the severity of the institutionalisation of white supremacy, and simultaneously evaded the question of how individual dominant group members may have perpetuated or been complicit in this imbalance of power.

The majority of Australians were insensitive to the obstacles that prevented migrants and Aborigines from successfully adopting the ‘Australian way of life’. Mainstream Australian society also overlooked that many migrant and Indigenous peoples were not

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21 Anglo-Australians might not have been certain of the precise definition of the ‘Australian way of life’, but it nonetheless operated as a powerful ideological and cultural force in the lives of minority group members.
prepared to forego their ethnic and cultural identities in exchange for white cultural norms. Aboriginal people, in particular, fervently rejected the path of cultural and self-denial they were expected to follow. Unlike some of their immigrant counterparts, Aboriginal people objected to the “remorseless mind-dulling work and the gradual accumulation of money, year after year, which have been the bases of the economic success of working-class immigrants” (Markus, Australian 215).

Aborigines and Assimilationism

The policy of assimilation means that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, as other Australians (qtd in Grimshaw et al. 293).

Despite some similarities, assimilation was a markedly different experience for Aborigines and post-war migrants. One fundamental difference concerned the “degree of intrusiveness of requirements to assimilate” (Murphy 182). Aboriginal communities had to endure the “heated gaze” (Pettman 51) of the state upon them in terms of where and how they lived. An aspect of the assimilation policy involved the dispersal of Aboriginal homes throughout suburban residential areas, as opposed to the development of distinct Aboriginal communities. The South Australian and later Victorian State governments welcomed and encouraged the (sub)urbanisation of the Aboriginal population as the quickest way of bringing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together. Governments made it increasingly difficult for Aborigines to stay in reserve or mission communities, and forced them to obtain special permits to do so. This dispersal of residents endangered both the coherence of Aboriginal communities and their hold over reserve lands (Grimshaw et al. 294).

The closure of reserves could be experienced as freedom from State paternalism, but it also resulted in the loss of familiar places, lifestyles and employment. The Moola Bulla mission in Western Australia was closed without warning in 1955, and former residents experienced an acute sense of loss and displacement:

they just came and told us to go. There was no explanation, we don’t know what happened. We were stunned. There were four kids and no money to feed them. A transport contractor took all the people into Hall’s Creek. We camped around the racecourse for a few days, while asking for jobs on other
stations … We camped, waiting, just like a refugee camp. We were brought to Moola Bulla as children without our consent nor our mother’s and then later kicked off the land after living there for so long. It caused us a lot of pain inside. We were displaced and lost with no sense of belonging (qtd in Murphy 173).

Like South Australia and Victoria, attempts were made in NSW to house Aboriginal people in country towns, and their model homes were scattered among those of whites in a vivid illustration of the idea of assimilation. According to the NSW Welfare Board, the aim of this practice “was to use such houses as behaviour modification tools in themselves, to be inspected constantly to ensure the Aboriginal residents had paid an adequate level of attention and expenditure, made a proper commitment to the material appearances of ‘stability’” (qtd in Murphy 173). The houses or ‘behaviour modification tools’, were ‘pepper-potted’ among white homes. In ensuring that Aboriginal families were surrounded on all sides by white residents, the various welfare boards sought to guarantee that there would be no Aboriginal neighbours (Markus, Australian 165; Murphy 173).

Like the inter-war advocates of ‘breeding out the colour’ of Aborigines, the practice of dispersing Aboriginal families among whites not only facilitated the cultural indoctrination of Aborigines, it also contributed to their biological absorption. For Aboriginal people then, notions of racial and biological distinction were not replaced by ideas of cultural and ethnic difference, they worked in tandem to nullify the internal threat of this non-white ‘Other’. Ruby Langford’s family’s experiences illustrate the assimilationist expectation that Aborigines shed “all attributes, biological and well as cultural, that could set them apart as an alternative ethnic [and racial] community” (McGregor 296). For Langford, the policy of assimilation, which she also labels ‘absorption’:

meant splitting up the Aboriginal communities, and I understand what this policy meant as I had four daughters and only one married an Aboriginal … So as far as the government is concerned, assimilation by absorption is working well, and in the end there’ll be no Aboriginal problem whatever (176-77).

Aboriginal people had to comply with stringent regulations in terms of the number of people permitted to reside in or even visit these suburban homes. Officials disregarded the needs and wants of Aboriginal families, preferring the ideal of the white nuclear norm to that of the extended familial or kin group. For many Aboriginal families
however, these large kin groups remain an important means of survival. In a chapter entitled “Why we didn’t ‘Assimilate’” in *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (1988), Langford described her family’s experiences in a housing commission home in Sadlier Green Valley:

The government’s policy … meant putting us in among whites to see if we could live together … we felt very isolated from our friends and our culture … I found out that you were not supposed to create a nuisance or disturb any of the neighbours. You also weren’t able to have anyone come and stay without permission from the Commission. It reminded me of the missions. The rule was useless in our culture, where survival often depended on being able to stay with friends and relatives (174).

Not only did Aboriginal people experience a sense of alienation from their friends and families, they also found that their white neighbours were unwilling to accept them as equals. Whites’ objections to their Aboriginal neighbours were evidence that assimilation was not a reciprocal commitment. In many country towns in both NSW and Victoria white townspeople objected strongly to the presence of Aborigines, and practiced “forms of petty apartheid in excluding or marginalising Aborigines in cinemas and swimming pools” (Murphy 173-74; Curthoys, *Freedom*). Post-war migrant collectivities were also ostracised by the broader Australian community, but they were not subjected to the same level of exclusion as their Aboriginal counterparts.

Migrant communities rarely experienced the level of government intrusion into their daily lives that marked the surveillance of Aboriginal assimilation. As Murphy maintains, “nobody proposed systematically inspecting the cupboards of migrant households, or taking their children away for speedier assimilation” (182). This marks the most crucial and significant difference between the way migrant and Indigenous communities experienced assimilationism. Aboriginal women were expected to conform to the idealised images of (white) womanhood portrayed in the advertisements of magazines like the *Australian Women’s Weekly* (Grimshaw et al. 294). But Aboriginal women rarely placed the same importance on such housekeeping ideals, nor did they possess the necessary appliances or labour-saving devices. Not only were Aboriginal families subjected to restrictions on who could stay and visit, and their houses inspected for the level of cleanliness, their parenting practices also came under scrutiny. The white nuclear norm was the standard against which Aboriginal families were judged and if they did not meet the prescribed ideal, they were often deemed to be
‘unfit’ parents, and the children—especially if they were mixed-race—were removed ‘for their own sake’ (Haebich 21-22; Povinelli 43).

The various State governments took on a collective responsibility for Aboriginal children and “a more intrusive fathering if children had ‘European blood’” (Grimshaw et al. 295). It was widely thought that those children who were of partly European descent, and who thus had “an admixture of the ‘blood’ of the superior race” (Markus, *Australian* 157) were more assimilable than their ‘full-blood’ counterparts. The removal of Aboriginal children from their parents meant cutting them off from their country, language and customs, and thereby “bleaching aboriginality [sic] from Australian society” (Bird 1). European difference in the post-war period was seen to stem from environmental and cultural factors and not biological heritage, but the assimilation or absorption of Aborigines indicated the still pervasive appeal of the eugenicist and organicist thinking that had shaped Australian society and subjectivity in the pre-war period (Tavan 81). In his usage of the term “assimilation colonialism” (I. Anderson, "Re-Claiming" 11), Ian Anderson makes this link between assimilationism and its reliance on the colonial and Social Darwinist mentality explicit. He notes that assimilationism functioned as a colonial regime that aimed to strip away Aboriginal otherness “by disarticulating the black bits from their bodies, historical consciousness and practices” ("Re-Claiming" 11). Marnie Kennedy characterised the Aboriginal experience of life under the policy of assimilation in this way: “…the whites had pounded every bit of our lifestyle, culture, language and our identity out of us, which left us a mass of bruised and broken humanity…” (24).

Like their Aboriginal counterparts, post-war European migrants came under pressure to relinquish their cultural and ethnic identities and adopt the values, beliefs and lifestyle of the dominant group. But for Aboriginal communities, the systematic removal of their children meant that they were actively denied any knowledge or understanding of their Aboriginal heritage. Not only did Aboriginal peoples encounter pressure to let go of an ‘irrelevant past’, but many were excluded from learning about it in the first place. Even those Aboriginal people who did have the opportunity to grow up with their extended kin on the reserves and missions found that they were ill-equipped to take their rightful place in Australian society. Huggins contends that the policy of assimilation was hypocritical when the various State governments “made it near impossible for
Aboriginal people to live as equal members of the ... community. What kind of possibility for assimilation was there, especially for those Aboriginal people whose only experience was on the missions” (Auntie 85)? Aboriginal people were also not equipped with adequate literacy or numeracy skills. The ‘education’ of Aboriginal children on the reserves and missions consisted of very basic instruction in reading and writing, with a rudimentary introduction to monetary values. Usually an unqualified or untrained ‘teacher’ was responsible for instructing more than one hundred pupils of varying ages (Sabbioni 16). Additionally, until 1935 when a standard curriculum was developed for government reserve schools, “much of the schooling provided on Aboriginal settlements and missions was, at best, haphazard” (Scott and Evans 141).

Assimilationism did not mark a decisive shift or break from the historical privations Aborigines had endured, it functioned within an ongoing history of dispossession and exclusion. This is another important distinction that differentiates migrants’ experiences of assimilation from those of their Aboriginal counterparts. Beyond similarities that included a common public language and policies stipulating adherence to a unitary way of life, a fundamental difference rested on historical memory. Immigrants brought their own personal and national pasts and were met with an expectation that they assimilate to the ‘Australian way of life’, but they were joining their own histories with an Australian past. However, Aboriginal personal and national pasts were deleted or disremembered from the Australian imagined community, so that assimilation was another step in a “procession of measures reordering their place in the nation and in the land” (Murphy 182). Assimilationism sought to foster in migrants a sense of belonging to this nation, hence the emphasis on citizenship rights, but in requiring Aboriginal people to belong to this imagined community, few inquired whether they already belonged by prior right (Murphy 183). Migrant communities can thus be seen as complicit in the continuing dispossession perpetrated against Aborigines, “even as they themselves were subject to a different but concurrent assimilationist regime” (Pugliese 232).

Another significant difference between migrant and Aboriginal experiences of assimilation concerns the degree of reciprocity imagined between Australians. At least in some discussions of immigration there was recognition and acceptance of a newer and more diverse culture emerging, and “a sense that Australians stood to gain from a
cultural exchange” (Murphy 182). Anglo-Australians gradually started to acknowledge the benefits of the introduction of new ideas and beliefs—they at least appreciated the range of food now available to them—but they remained inflexible to the merits of Aboriginal cultures and what they could learn from them. Assimilationism assumed that Aboriginal cultures and ways of life were without value and that ‘we’ conferred “a favour on them by assimilating them into our ways; even to the point of taking their children and removing them from family” (qtd in Markus, *Australian* 159).

### Asians and Assimilationism

As we have seen, despite the (selective and incomplete) post-war shift from biological to cultural determinism, in the 1950s Aborigines who were partly of European descent were seen to be more assimilable than their ‘full-blood’ counterparts. Similarly, while Asians were formally excluded from the nation, people of ‘mixed’ Asian descent had some prospect of admission. Mixed-race descendants of Asian/European unions were acceptable if they could convince officials that racially they were predominantly ‘white’. There was great reluctance in the 1950s accepting the idea that a ‘pure’ non-European should ever be granted permanent residence in Australia (Markus, *Australian* 157). Thus for Aborigines and Asian and other non-European migrants, organicist and eugenicist thinking still prevailed.

Factors beyond the required ‘percentage’ of European ‘blood’ gradually assumed more importance. In 1956-57 the government was more concerned with admitting Asians who could demonstrate experience in qualifications useful to Australia. ‘Distinguished and highly qualified’ Asian immigrants were admitted on the basis of their ability to contribute to Australia’s economic needs, but only on temporary permits of ‘indefinite’ duration (Markus, *Australian* 169). The changes of 1956-57 did not represent a renunciation of total exclusion, but the continuation of the practice established in 1901 where certain categories of Asian migrants were granted temporary entry on economic grounds. Once again it was up to the government’s discretion to select particular ‘types’ of Asians as suitable for entry, there had simply been a shift in the category of those admitted (Markus, *Australian* 170). Unlike the majority of Chinese and other Asian workers who were permitted temporary entry in the Federation era, Asian applicants were chosen according to their ability to contribute to Australia’s economic needs rather than those of Asian businesses. During this period increasing numbers of
Asian students—coming predominantly from Malaysia and Hong Kong—also gained temporary entry to Australia, sponsored under the Colombo Plan and similar programs.

In 1957 Asians and other non-Europeans who had been resident in Australia for fifteen years became eligible to apply for Australian citizenship. Discrimination remained, however, since British people could gain registration as Australian citizens after only twelve months’ and Europeans after five years’ residence. Furthermore, non-Europeans were subjected to more stringent English language tests and had to demonstrate involvement in ‘normal Australian life’ to become eligible for naturalisation (Markus, *Australian* 171). In 1958 the government finally abolished the dictation test with which it had previously excluded Asian immigrants by giving them a test in a European language they did not know (Murphy 156).

The biggest shifts in policies towards Asian immigration occurred in the mid-1960s. These legislative changes were also exemplified in opinion polls showing that those prepared to endorse the idea of limited immigration from Asia had doubled from about 30 per cent in 1954 to almost 60 per cent in 1960 (Murphy 156). In 1964 the rules governing the entry of persons of mixed Asian descent were eased with the abandonment of the requirement of 75 per cent European descent and European appearance (Markus, *Australian* 178). In 1966 the qualifying period for citizenship was reduced from 15 to five years’ residence, the same as European immigrants. By 1973 the qualifying period for all immigrants—British, European and non-European—was three years’ residence (Choi 62; Fitzgerald 50). Acceptance of Asians came more slowly than British and European migrants, but each was better equipped than their Aboriginal counterparts to take advantage of employment and educational opportunities. The government’s decision to secure the admission of ‘better types’ of Asian migrants that were well educated, highly qualified and proficient in the English language also guaranteed their relative access to social and economic resources denied Aboriginal communities. Even those people of Asian descent who were born in Australia had greater access to employment than their Indigenous counterparts. As we saw in the previous chapter, many Chinese-run businesses were able to capitalise on wartime conditions to establish successful businesses.
Notwithstanding their relatively restricted access to social and material resources, both Australian-born Chinese and Aboriginal communities were expected to coexist with whites. Chinese-Australian and Indigenous peoples both confronted the assimilationist and absorptionist requirement that they “should not live in enclaves or form their own organisations but should merge with the mainstream of Australian life” (Markus, Australian 159). In post-war Darwin, for example, the Northern Territory government introduced the *Darwin Lands Acquisition Act 1945* as a way of ridding the town “of undesirable elements which Darwin has suffered from far too much in the past” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 33). The ‘undesirable elements’ underlying post-war reconstruction were the Chinese businesses and residences in Darwin’s ‘Chinatown’.

As the Administrator C.L.A. Abbott asserted: “[t]he acquisition of this area by the Government will give control over all people returning and will entirely prevent the Chinese quarter from forming again” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 33).

Of 500 acres in the town area, 53 had been registered in the names of 80 Chinese residents, but under the *Acquisition Act* they were denied access to their land and property. Endorsing the policy of assimilation, the government sought the dispersal of Chinese families within the broader Australian community. According to A.R. Miller, the NT Chief Surveyor in 1946: “it is undesirable that persons of the one nationality (non-European) should be permitted to congregate in a particular area” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 33). In words reminiscent of the Aboriginal people removed from Moola Bulla mission in WA, Darwin’s post-war Chinese-Australian community described their experiences of privation and internal exile. “Everybody had nothing”, remembered Charles See-Kee, the “[g]overnment had taken over everything” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 32). Eddie Quong recalled some elderly Chinese returning to Darwin after the war to the place they had previously lived and worked: “[w]hen they saw it bulldozed, they just sat down and cried. They had buried their valuables in the backyard. Their fortunes were gone” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 32).

The personal testimonies of Aboriginal and Chinese-Australians forcibly removed from their homelands illustrate the government’s strident attempts to guarantee the cultural indoctrination of these communities by preventing them from ‘congregating in a particular area’. Beyond attempts to destroy ‘Otherness’ by absorbing racial and cultural difference within the ‘Australian way of life’, the government sought to isolate
Indigenous and Asian peoples from their own communities. Assimilationism thus rested on a dialectical movement between internally isolating and absorbing non-whiteness and difference. The Australian-born Chinese displaced from their homes and businesses in Darwin’s Chinatown obviously lost vital economic assets. Beyond the government’s acquisition of their businesses, Chinese-Australians were denied access to their properties, as Lily Ah Toy says: “[w]e had land here, and our roots were here” (qtd in Giese, Beyond 33). However, those Aboriginal people forced off the reserves and missions were once again dispossessed of lands to which they had cultural and spiritual ties. Even where the reserves were not located on the residents’ traditional ‘country’, they had fostered new links and ties to the land during their years of living there. Aboriginal attachments to place underscore an intimate connection between land, identity, law and culture that is fundamentally different to non-Indigenous attachments to land and place.

Attempts to isolate and absorb racial and cultural difference also resulted in the absorption of the threat of cross-cultural solidarity. Government officials wanted to guarantee that any cross-cultural relationships were between minorities and the white majority, not between different minority groups. Assimilationism sought to negate cross-cultural collaborations between Indigenous communities and non-white migrants. That these alliances were a source of concern for the government is clearly evident in Calwell’s opposition to the introduction of non-Anglo immigrants because of a fear that they might band with Aboriginal people in an act of solidarity against white Australia. Calwell justified his desire to prevent non-white immigration on the grounds that “coloured migrants would tend to congregate in ghettos [and] form the nucleus of ‘black power’ in Australia” (124). He feared that non-European migrants “would try to identify themselves with the Australian Aborigines who have been maltreated from the earliest days of white settlement in this country … form[ing] hard core, anti-white, ‘black power’ pressure groups (124). Calwell did not stipulate precisely who ‘coloured migrants’ were, but his animosity to Asian immigration has been shown earlier in the chapter. Like the military officials who feared an Indigenous/Japanese alliance in World War Two, Calwell’s fear of reprisal stemmed from an awareness that Indigenous and non-white migrant peoples had justifiable reasons for protesting against their treatment.
Chapter Four

Culturalist Racism and the Australian Multicultural Community

… one problem with the discourse of multiculturalism as it has been constructed in Australia [is that] it is incapable of providing a convincing and effective narrative of Australian national identity because it doesn’t acknowledge and engage with a crucial concern in the national formation’s past and present, namely that of “race” (Ang and Stratton 27).

This chapter examines the implementation of multicultural policies, and the ideological and ‘commonsense’ notions that underpinned them. It has been argued that despite the apparent post-war shift from ‘phenotype to culture’, racial difference remained a more absolute marker of national exclusion than cultural or ethnic distinctions. As I have shown previously, European migrants had to wait longer than their British counterparts to gain entitlement to Australian citizenship, but Asian and other non-European peoples were debarred from claiming the title ‘Australian’ until much later. This chapter shows that the difficulty faced by the national imagination in accommodating racial—and not just ethnic—difference has endured despite the cessation of assimilationism. Like the assimilation policy, multiculturalism can overlook or obscure the symbolic importance of race in the national consciousness, as well as the racist power hierarchy operative in Australia. As Ang suggests, post-war immigration provided “the seeds of multiculturalism some three decades later” ("Racial/Spatial" 195) and, as we have seen, this scheme was premised on European immigration. However, the most markedly or visibly ‘raced’ (non-European) migrants in Australian society have tended to come in large numbers subsequent to the introduction of multiculturalism. The policy of multiculturalism was introduced to manage (European) cultural diversity, not (non-European) racial diversity, and race still “patrols the limits of the inclusiveness of multiculturalism” (Stratton, Race 200).

As Mark Lopez suggests, the origins of multiculturalism emerged from critiques of assimilationism (46). As such, comprehending anti-assimilationist criticism is a necessary benchmark for understanding the emergence of multicultural ideologies and policies. This chapter thus begins by analysing the movement away from assimilationism towards a realisation of the impossibility of the sort of cultural conformism required of migrants and Aborigines. It then explores the resultant
introduction of the policies of integration and multiculturalism. While the latter policies could be seen to denote a more tolerant or humanistic approach, I show that their emergence did not completely displace assimilationism nor eradicate racial thinking. As I indicate below, exclusion on the grounds of race can indeed coexist with cultural pluralism.

Despite an expansion of white Australianness to include Europeanness, whiteness remains at the core of contemporary multiculturalism. Policies of multiculturalism ostensibly ensure that, rather than furthering the interests of a particular culture, the government caters for the interests of a plurality of different—but equal—cultures. But the rhetoric is far from reality, and the official discourse that surrounds the policy of multiculturalism serves as a rhetorical device masking a very different truth. The state supposedly functions as the neutral arbiter of a diverse range of equal cultures, but this belies the fact that white Australian culture occupies a position of relative dominance in Australian society. The fact that the omnipotence of white Australianness remains unacknowledged is precisely how its dominance is manifested and maintained. Detached from the sphere of difference—within which a range of ‘constitutive Others’ are confined—“Anglo-Australian culture becomes associated with the ‘neutrality’ of the liberal state” (Nicoll, Diggers 115). As we will see, ‘blindness’ to race contributes not only to the fact that multiculturalism and Australian national identity are predicated on the dominance of whiteness, but that non-European and non-white ‘races’ continue to be positioned outside the multicultural imagination.

This chapter shows that Australia’s ‘rich’ cultural diversity is increasingly invoked as an important defining quality of Australian national identity. This new national narrative begins with a progression from the ‘bad old days’ of the ‘White Australia’ policy, and ends with a triumphalist arrival at an enlightened and culturally diverse Australia. But the discourse of multiculturalism in Australia does not recognise the notion of race, so much as repress it. As such, a very significant tenet of Australian historical experience—which was replete with a concern, if not an obsession with ‘race’—has been cast aside as if it were not a formative aspect of Australian national identity (Ang and Stratton 27). This chapter argues that the focus on cultural diversity is inadequate as a way of defining or narrating the nation because it overlooks that the
concept of race has been of crucial constitutive importance for the very creation and formation of the Australian nation (Ang and Stratton 34).

Anti-Assimilationism

During the 1950s and early 1960s, assimilationism came under attack from a variety of sources for a host of reasons. The doctrine gradually gave way to the notion that Australian society had a responsibility to accommodate and accept Aborigines and newcomers, rather than just expect them to modify their ways to Anglo-Australian norms (York 8). As shown in the previous chapter, under assimilationism the responsibility to change and adapt to the ‘Australian way of life’ lay entirely with Aboriginal and migrant communities themselves. Indigenous and ‘new Australians’ were expected to shed their cultural affiliations and customs and conform to the cultural identity and social institutions of white Australian society in the least possible time (Jayasuriya, "Australian" 2). Such an expectation was informed by the belief that Anglo-Australian cultural traditions were superior to those of Aboriginal and migrant peoples. However, as we will see, changes in dominant ideologies precipitated by political activism and domestic and international pressure meant that this type of thinking was gradually modified to include a level of recognition of the worth of non-British cultures and social mores.

It was gradually accepted that through their interaction with new cultural traditions, Anglo-Celtic Australians would benefit and Australian society would change in the process. With the understanding that ‘Other’ cultures and traditions had value, came an acceptance that Aboriginal and migrant communities might have something to ‘offer’ Anglo-monoculturalism. This was a discernible trend in the thinking of many Anglo-Australians from the 1950s, but it should not be overstated. As late as 1969 for instance, Billy Snedden, the then Minister for Immigration, stated: “[w]e must have a single culture … if immigration implied multi-culture [sic] activities within Australian society, then it was not the type Australia wanted. I am quite determined we should have a monoculture … We don’t want pluralism” (qtd in York 8). Snedden’s insistence that Australia ‘should have a monoculture’ suggests, however, that ‘multi-culture activities’ were already posing a challenge to Anglo-Australian monoculturalism.
The government’s decision to move away from assimilationism and towards a greater acceptance of cultural pluralism was not inspired so much by goodwill, but by necessity. A number of external factors made it untenable for the government to maintain its unaccommodating stance. One of these included the booming European economies, and the resultant difficulty of attracting European immigrants to Australia. In order to entice European migrants to come and live in Australia, the government was required to provide incentives, and it came under pressure to be more accommodating and less arrogant in its treatment of migrants (Markus, *Race* 16).

Another reason for the shift away from the ideology of assimilationism involved Australia’s standing in the global arena. The United Nations had enshrined the principle of racial equality in its Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and, between 1949 and 1951 embarked on a programme of education to counter racism (Markus, *Race* 6). By the mid 1960s campaigns against racial discrimination were under way in most western societies. In counties such as the United States, Canada and New Zealand, for example, institutional racism was being challenged, and many racially discriminatory laws were repealed. In this context it became increasingly obvious that Australia could not afford to practice overt racial discrimination in immigration and Aboriginal policies. In maintaining its racially discriminatory stance, not only would the nation’s developing trade and other international obligations be adversely affected, Australia would be seen as insular and unprogressive in an increasingly modernised world.

The Australian government faced pressure to rescind its racially discriminatory polices from the international community, but critics within Australia were also lobbying for reform. By the early 1960s attitudinal shifts in Australian society became apparent and, according to opinion polls, only a minority of Australians continued to favour a racially exclusive immigration policy (Markus, *Race* 17). Lobbyists such as the Immigration Reform Group contributed to the shift in Australian attitudes to non-white immigration, and Aboriginal political mobilisation helped change Australian thinking in relation to Indigenous rights. Not only were the majority of Australians now opposed to racially discriminatory polices and ideas, but the new generation of political leaders including Harold Holt, Gough Whitlam and Don Dunstan were aware “on the grounds of both principle and expediency of the need for change” (Markus, *Race* 17).
Integrationism

By the early 1960s assimilationism was increasingly replaced by ‘integration’, with provisions for Aborigines and migrants to retain some of their cultural differences and a less rapid adoption of Australian traits (Hollinsworth, Race 244). In terms of immigration, integrationists recognised that the migrant presence resulted in changes in the nature of Australian society and culture and, perhaps most importantly, regarded this as a positive outcome. It was an increasingly accepted notion that newcomers would not only benefit the economy, but would also enrich Australian cultural life (Markus, Australian 160). The concept of ethnicity came to be more widely included in the language of political discourse, and governments began to incorporate aspects of cultural and ethnic differences in policy development (Jayasuriya, "Australian" 2).

There was a growing belief that Commonwealth and State governments were responsible for migrant welfare, especially the expansion of English-language tuition (Lopez 59).

Integrationists also accepted the notion that ethnic group organisations could serve a positive role in assisting the orientation of new arrivals. It was largely understood that more-established migrants could help newer arrivals to navigate their way through unfamiliar social, cultural and institutional processes. The approval of these ethnic community clubs and societies however, was contingent on the proviso that migrants did not import political differences or disputes from their homelands, or remain isolated from the broader Australian society (Lopez 59). Foreign-language publications were also accepted as a way for newer migrant peoples to familiarise themselves with Australian society and institutions. Furthermore, letters-to-the-editor columns were understood to provide a forum or ‘safety-valve’ for alleviating migrant frustrations (Lopez 59). Once again, as long as these initiatives proved to be positive in assisting the orientation of migrants to Australian society, the wider Australian citizenry accepted them.

The adoption of a policy of integration also resulted in changes in Aboriginal affairs. Criticism of the cultural arrogance inherent in the policy of assimilation led the 1965 Native Welfare Conference to amend the assimilation policy towards integrationism. The requirement that people of Aboriginal descent must adopt the same manner and standard of living of other Australians, was replaced with an expectation that Aboriginal
peoples would choose to attain a similar manner and standard of living of non-Aboriginal Australians (Hollinsworth, Race 158). In other words, the policy of integration included an element of choice, and permitted individual Aboriginal people to decide on their style of living, or “at least the pace at which the desired changes were implemented” (Hollinsworth, Race 158). But the degree to which such changes in policy terminology resulted in actual improvements for Aboriginal people is highly debatable.

Despite the (largely cosmetic) shift from assimilation to integration, the desired result was still the same—Aborigines and new migrants would be absorbed into the nation with minimum disruption to Anglo-Australian society. While it was conceded that Australian society would have to alter to accommodate Aboriginal and migrant peoples, there were limits to the degree of change that was considered desirable. As Markus argues: “[t]he state could tolerate but not welcome, certainly not foster, separatist development” (Race xi). According to Laksiri Jayasuriya, the dilution of assimilationism “was more apparent than real” ("Facts" 24). As with assimilationism, national unity was still the desired result, and integration was merely another means to achieve that end (Lopez 60). There was an understanding that Aboriginal and migrant adaptation to Anglo-Australian culture and society might take longer than originally thought, but absorption of minorities was still the ultimate goal. Although the route might be more circuitous than formerly thought, Aborigines and migrants were still required to merge with mainstream Australian society and, according to such logic, there was almost no scope for the provision of special minority rights.

Under assimilationism minority group members received no special consideration or assistance from the government. Singling out a particular ‘group’ or sector of society for special provisions or targeted programmes was seen as an impediment to assimilation: “it was up to the individual to assimilate and failure to do so indicated individual inadequacy, not failure of policy”(Markus, Race 16). Unlike assimilationism, where the onus to adapt to Australian social and cultural mores was solely the responsibility of Aboriginal and migrant communities, integrationism gradually came to be seen as a ‘two-way street’. In other words, the government recognised that it and the broader Australian community had to accommodate the needs of Aboriginal and migrant peoples. According to Billy Snedden, integration implied
and required willingness on the part of the community to move towards minority
groups, just as it required them to move towards the community. Despite this admission
of the obligation of the Australian government and people to assist and accept
Aboriginal and migrant communities, the notion of a unified and homogeneous
Australian nation remained unchallenged: “[t]hose of different ethnic origin must
integrate and unite into our own community so that it will become a single Australian
community” (Snedden qtd in Markus, Race 17).

Proto-Multiculturalism: Migrant Policies

A number of factors contributed to the demise of integrationism during the 1960s and
1970s, factors that played a vital role in the eventual adoption of a policy of
multiculturalism in 1973. During the 1970s a range of policies made available for the
first time programmes specifically targeted for non-Anglo minority groups (Markus,
Race 12). This represented a significant ideological and institutional shift because, as
we have seen, government policy and public opinion had earlier decreed that migrants
and Aborigines were solely responsible for adapting to (Anglo) Australian standards.

Most Anglo-Australians in the 1950s and 1960s considered that ‘new Australians’ were
fortunate to be accepted into the Australian community and should not expect the
government to make special provisions for them after their arrival (Foster and Stockley,
Australian 24). By the 1970s however, the persistence of migrant welfare problems
served as a catalyst for a critique of assimilationism and integrationism (Lopez 455).
The perceived ‘migrant problem’ created pressures for adequate and new responses.
During this period the responsibility of adjustment was seen to pertain not only to
migrants, but to all Australians.

A number of other factors meant that the government could not continue to maintain its
racially exclusive stance in relation to migration. There were both domestic and
international pressures on the government to reform its discriminatory position, but
perhaps one of the most important considerations involved the rate of return migration.
Research published in the late 1950s and early 1960s revealed that the migrant return
rate was higher than previously assumed, especially among the most desired
categories—the British and Northern Europeans (Lopez 61). By 1966, concern over the
departure rate of migrants was so pronounced that the government commissioned an
investigation by the Immigration Advisory Council (Lopez 92). A number of concerns plagued the government, including the poor return on the expenditure on assisted passages, anxiety that the success of the immigration programme was being undermined, and that the departure rate could be exploited by opponents of the scheme. But perhaps the most significant result of the return rate of migration was that it wounded Australian national pride. According to Lopez this, more than any other concern, was perceived as warranting new ideas and solutions, thus widening the scope for the expression of new approaches to immigration and settlement policy (61).

The way migrants were treated often depended on economic circumstances (Laurie, "Nationhood" 23). When the Australian domestic market was experiencing a period of growth, immigration was no longer viewed in terms of an economic threat. Unlike the troubled inter-war period, the abandonment of a racially exclusive immigration policy could be accommodated in the prosperous 1950s and 1960s (Markus, Australian 214). The ‘Long Boom’—or period of extended economic growth and prosperity in Australia—led to higher living standards and increased work opportunities. The wealth generated by the long boom also resulted in an expansion of the welfare state and an increase in the provision of minority welfare services (Lopez 73).

Due largely to their resulting higher socio-economic status, migrant communities were better able to lobby the government. The emergence of an ‘ethnic bourgeoisie’ enabled migrant groups not only to provide employment opportunities for fellow nationals, but to apply pressure on the government for reform in areas affecting their respective communities (Lopez 74). The growing ranks of ethnic business people and professionals assisted in the debates on migrant settlement and welfare problems, and in representing migrant interests in the wider Australian society. Politicians at local, State and Federal levels became increasingly aware of the need to take non-British migrants into account electorally (York 9). Political expediency and the lure of the ‘ethnic vote’ led political leaders to take migrant concerns into greater account, even to the point of co-opting ethnic leaders to serve as political brokers for the ethnic constituency of voters (Jayasuriya, "Facts" 24).

However, political leaders were not only concerned with courting the ethnic vote. Politicians became increasingly aware that the wider Australian community was also demanding changes to an immigration policy that was based on racial exclusion.
Opinion polls after 1960 showed an unmistakable trend in favour of a small annual intake of non-white migrants with only 20 per cent of those polled favouring total exclusion by the mid 1960s (Markus, *Australian* 188). A new educated professional generation—that emerged largely from the expanding middle-class of the post-war era—gained increasing power in decision making bodies, creating an environment sympathetic to the revision of the ‘White Australia’ policy (Brawley, "Slaying" 2). Those individuals who were at the forefront of calls for changes to immigration policies included a band of Melbourne intellectuals who formed the Immigration Reform Group (IRG). This group, which gained widespread support after 1960, argued for the abolition of the ‘White Australia’ policy in a pamphlet published in 1960, and then republished in fuller form in 1962. Many of the arguments propounded by the IRG were taken up across various university campuses and by fledgling immigration reform associations, the National Civic Council and Apex clubs among others (Lack and Templeton *Bold* 173).

Pressure to reform Australia’s immigration policy did not only emanate from within national boundaries. International influences also played an important role in challenging the maintenance of a racially discriminatory immigration policy. Political activism including the student, gay, women’s, environmental and anti-Vietnam war movements in the United States helped to precipitate growing social consciousness and awareness in Australia. Some of the US social movements were echoed in similar group activities here, attracting considerable academic, political and media attention (Lopez 70). As Lopez suggests, social movements like these might not have had any significant *direct* influence on the dismantling of the ‘White Australia’ policy and the emergence of multiculturalism in Australia, but *indirectly* they contributed to the establishment of a political context where interest group politics gained increased salience (71).

Australia’s trade relations with its Asian neighbours were another important international influence that led to the eventual removal of the ‘White Australia’ policy. Criticism from Asian political leaders and a growing sense that Australia’s destiny lay in the region, contributed to modification of the nation’s immigration policy. Quoting an editorial from the Singapore *Straits Times* (12 July 1948), the IRG used Asian leaders’ disapproval of Australia’s immigration policy to argue for change:
The Asian does not object to Australia or any other country regulating its immigration. What he [sic] resents is the absolute exclusion of Asians … This is exclusion on racial grounds, not economic or cultural as the champions of ‘White Australia’ claim it to be (qtd in Lack and Templeton, Bold 174).

Significant policy and social changes were to follow the widespread agitation for reform. In 1960 Donald Horne, the new editor of the Bulletin, removed the phrase ‘Australia for the White Man’ from the masthead of the influential magazine (Stratton, Race 51). At the Federal Australian Labor Party National Conference in 1965, all references to ‘White Australia’ were removed from the Labor Party platform. Other changes led to the increasing liberalisation of policies affecting Asian migration, in particular. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the policy of refusing permanent residency and naturalisation to Chinese and other Asian migrants was abandoned in 1956 when the Minister for Immigration introduced the category ‘Distinguished and Highly Qualified’ persons (Choi 62). In 1958, the new Migration Act repealed the Immigration Restriction Act and abolished the Dictation Test.

The mid to late 1960s proved to be a pivotal time of change for Chinese communities in Australia. In 1965, for example, an Australian-born Chinese was elected President of the Northern Territory’s Legislative Council and in 1966 became the Mayor of Darwin (Huck 40). As we have seen in chapter one, the Chinese in Australia, at least in the eastern states, had previously arrived mainly as the result of the traditional sponsored commuting or ‘chain’ migration system. The 1966 reduction in the qualifying period for citizenship from fifteen to five years resulted in the phasing out of the means whereby Chinese migrants had been admitted for over half a century as assistants in Chinese-run businesses. Citizenship also carried the right to bring in wives and children so that the sex and age ratio of the Chinese population became increasingly balanced after the 1960s (Fitzgerald 190). After 1966, Chinese migration to Australia assumed a new pattern with students from South-East Asia remaining in Australia after their studies or returning to Australia to work after a brief period back in their home countries (Chan, "Chinese" 54-55).

Proto-Multiculturalism: Aboriginal Policies

Asian and other non-white migrants were not the only ones to benefit from the political activism of the 1960s and 1970s. The attitudinal and ideological shifts that took place
during this period were not only significant in Australia’s history in terms of immigration and settlement policies, but also in terms of Aboriginal policy. The example of Black American civil rights struggles in the United States, and anti-apartheid movements in South Africa helped inspire claims for Aboriginal rights in Australia (Povinelli 45). The increasing militancy and activism of Aboriginal groups and organisations made it difficult to sustain the myth of a ‘homogeneous white society’ (Castles et al. 54).

The 1965 ‘Freedom Rides’—modelled on the US civil rights movement and led by Charles Perkins and other University of Sydney students from Student Action For Aborigines—made the issue of racial segregation in rural Australia more widely known. Curthoys’ recent Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers (2002) indicates that while such activism had mixed short-term consequences, it was significant in stimulating a new kind of Aboriginal politics that had far-reaching consequences. Prior to such activism the forms of petty apartheid practised in many small country towns in excluding Aborigines from cinemas and swimming pools went largely unacknowledged (Murphy 173). Some Aboriginal activists also linked their struggle with opposition to racially discriminatory immigration laws, as in the case of six-year old Nancy Prassad, a Fijian ‘illegal’ who was symbolically kidnapped by Perkins before she could be deported (Castles et al. 54). Political activism such as this gained considerable publicity, making overt racism more difficult to sustain.

The ideological and institutional changes that occurred during the 1960s proved to be very significant in policies pertaining to Aboriginal people where, in most States and the Commonwealth, racial discrimination was removed from legislation. In 1959, the Commonwealth government had extended entitlement to pensions, unemployment, and

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22 When the students returned to Walgett after the Freedom Ride, this time to assist in the desegregation of the hotels and cinema, they found that the cinema was owned by a European migrant from Greece. Interestingly, Aboriginal people often refer to those who invaded their continent as ‘Europeans’, not as British or Anglo-Celts. According to Docker, colonialism “was and is perpetrated by the invaders as a whole, and Continental Europeans are certainly not exempt from this common history” (Docker, "Temperament" 54). However, Marian Boreland argues that such an assertion homogenises the ‘invaders’ as one unified colonising force, “thereby nullifying any calls for recognition of diversity and difference within this body” (179).

23 This case clearly demonstrates the failure of the assimilationist drive to isolate and absorb non-whiteness and thereby contain the threat of cross-cultural political activism.
maternity allowances to all Aborigines except those classed as ‘nomadic or primitive’, and by 1966 this final discrimination was deleted (Markus, *Australian* 177). In 1962 Aboriginal people were granted the right to vote in all Federal elections and, by 1963 in New South Wales and 1966 in South Australia, the last barriers to full citizenship for Aborigines were removed (Markus, *Australian* 177). Ideological shifts produced further institutional changes such as the Arbitration Court’s decision in 1965 to award equal pay to Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry (to be phased in over three years), and South Australia’s implementation of the first anti-discrimination legislation in 1966 (Markus, *Australian* 177).

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The most significant change to occur in Aboriginal policy during this period was the 1967 referendum that gave the Commonwealth the power to legislate for Aborigines and to count them in the census. As we have seen, prior to this Aboriginal people were at the mercy of the various State governments and were excluded from the official numbering of the Australian population. The referendum eventually gained bipartisan support, and received a record ‘Yes’ vote of 90.77 percent of the electorate (Hollinsworth, *Race* 162). The extent to which this ruling actually led to any significant improvement in the daily lives of Aboriginal people is highly debatable, but it did serve as a symbol of the desire held by the overwhelming majority of Australians to usher in a more just and humane period in Australian race relations. The referendum was indicative not only of the growing influence of Aboriginal political activists but also of increasing public support for change. The 1967 referendum is frequently hailed as a turning point in Australian race relations. It is commonly commemorated as the moment when the overwhelming majority of non-Indigenous Australians embraced Aborigines as their equals (Attwood and Markus 13). The referendum has been mythologised by Australian society for a number of reasons. Such commemoration is appealing for it distracts attention from other “potential instruments of reconciliation that pay attention to Aboriginal difference instead of seeking to distinguish it”—for example, High Court decisions that recognise Native Title (Attwood and Markus 13). Through its granting of symbolic equality the referendum works to appease the white national conscience, even though structural or practical inequalities remain.
The referendum gave the Commonwealth government the power to enact, if so desired, ‘special laws’ for members of the ‘Aboriginal race’. Aboriginal policies were now the Federal government’s and not the various States’ responsibility, but decisions affecting Aborigines were still being made externally. In protest at the lack of Aboriginal representation in the government, Indigenous activists continued to bring their plight to the attention of the wider Australian community. The so-called ‘Tent Embassy’ was instrumental in raising awareness of the struggle for Aboriginal self-determination in national and international contexts. The Tent Embassy came into being on Australia (Invasion/Survival) Day in 1972 when four Aboriginal men erected an umbrella on the lawn outside the old Parliament House in Canberra.\(^{25}\) A collection of tents was erected and declared by Aboriginal activists to be the Aboriginal Embassy. The design of the Aboriginal ‘land rights’ flag also evolved during the 1972 protests in Canberra. As well as representing the Embassy, the flag is now recognised as a symbol of Aboriginal identity. The black part of the flag represents the Aboriginal people, the yellow circle signifies the sun, and the red symbolises the land and the Aboriginal blood that has been shed.

These cultural and political developments contributed significantly to establishing the ‘spirit of the times’ that would continue well into the 1970s (Lopez 455). With the 1972 election of the reformist Whitlam Labor government, more changes in Aboriginal and immigration policies were implemented. Migrants were accorded a place alongside the poor, women and Aborigines in the ALP’s list of the country’s most disadvantaged groups (Lopez 127). Whitlam terminated the special privileges and conditions enjoyed by British migrants in terms of their easier attainment of citizenship, visas, and voting qualifications (Theophanous 10). There had been some reversal of the ‘White Australia’ policy towards the end of the Liberal Government’s term of office, but it was Whitlam who completely eliminated the last vestiges of this racially discriminatory

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\(^{24}\) Western Australia and Queensland still retained elements of racially discriminatory legislation until later, however.

\(^{25}\) At the opening of old Parliament House in 1927, the first Aboriginal protest recorded in white history was held. Activists objected to the construction of this symbol of white dominance on land that was a gathering and meeting ground for the traditional custodians - the Ngunnawal people. Old Parliament House desecrates a women’s sacred site, and the new house of parliament is built on a Ngunnawal corroboree site.
immigration programme (Theophanous 6). By 1973 all migrants, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, colour or nationality were required to wait three years to obtain citizenship rights (in 1984 this was reduced to two years).

The marked rise in interest group activities and politically motivated social movements undoubtedly went some way towards the abandonment of racially discriminatory policies. While it is not possible to identify accurately which of these factors was most responsible for policy reform, they complemented each other to produce a favourable climate for liberalisation (Choi 61). Proto-multiculturalists during the 1960s and 1970s were the beneficiaries of a range of international and domestic forces that established the essential preconditions for the rescinding of the ‘White Australia’ policy and the introduction of a policy of non-discriminatory migrant recruitment (Lopez 90); (Jayasuriya, "Australian" 2). Shifts in Australia’s military alliances and trade relations towards the United States and South-East Asia coincided with trends in international immigration that attracted greater numbers of people from Southern Europe and the developing nations to Australia (Lopez 454). The combination of these factors worked to reduce the option of sustaining a discriminatory immigration policy and Anglo-monoculturalism while maintaining a programme of large-scale immigration.

**Multiculturalism and Ethnic Diversity**

Multiculturalism … is the latest solution to the ‘problem’ of ethnic pluralism in Australian society” (Foster and Stockley, *Multiculturalism* 133).

A key to understanding cultural pluralism is to begin by trying to work out just what ‘culture’ in Australia we can be pleasantly ‘multi’ about.” (Castles et al. 121).

Since the 1970s successive Australian governments—Labor and conservative—have supported an unprecedented level of ethnic pluralism and promoted the rights of individuals to assert their cultural difference—but the extent of this diversity has been limited. One of the principal difficulties arising from the celebration of cultural and ethnic plurality involves demarcating the precise limits of this diversity. In the Australian multicultural community, cultural plurality is carefully managed or controlled and remains largely in the private spheres of the family and religious practice. Gesturing towards ethnic or cultural difference in symbolic terms has been much easier than accounting for it in systemic and structural ways. As we will see,
cultural difference is encouraged to the extent that it does not threaten the national unity of Australian society. The chapter now explores the tension between the official desire to promote the cultural diversity and plurality of Australian society while maintaining structural and social cohesion.

In 1973 Whitlam appointed Al Grassby as Minister for Immigration. In what became known as the ‘family of the nation’ speech, Grassby openly rejected assimilationism in favour of a pluralist Australian society. In his speech ‘A Multi-Cultural Society for the Future’, Grassby introduced the word ‘multiculturalism’ to Australia, which became “not only a new Australian word, but also a full-blown ‘ism’” (Bulbeck 270). For Grassby, differences were inevitable within communities and nations, as they were within families, “but such pluralism need not compromise their cohesiveness and integrity” (Hollinsworth, Race 245). According to Grassby, all Australians, “no matter how diverse their origins, beliefs, wealth or ability” possessed an inalienable right to membership in the family of the nation, where the “overall attachment to the common good need not impose a sameness on the outlook or activity of each member, nor need these members deny their individuality and distinctiveness in order to seek a superficial and unnatural conformity”(qtd in Lack and Templeton 143).

The demographic realities of the Australian population by the early 1970s meant that the promise of complete assimilation, however gradual, to a unitary ‘Australian way of life’ had to be abandoned. Grassby explicitly recognised that this ‘Australian way of life’ could encompass a multitude of ways of living and being. He posed the question: “what is the Australian way of life? The lifestyle and values of the suburban housewife in Moonee Ponds, the Italian travel agent in Carlton, the Turkish car factory worker, the Slavic Orthodox priest, or the Aboriginal in Lake Tyers” (qtd in Hollinsworth, Race 245)? As shown above, the ALP’s list of Australia’s most disadvantaged groups and, according to Castles et al. the ones that most challenged national singularity (102), included women, (non-British) migrants and Aborigines, and Grassby was careful to grant all of these collectivities a place in the nation in his speech. As I will make clear, however, the government demonstrated a willingness to celebrate difference, but not the consequences that followed from it.

With the introduction of multiculturalism came an emphasis on an ‘ethnic identity’ or culturalist model of Australian society. A central feature of the discourse of
multiculturalism involved the construction of the concept of ethnicity, based predominantly on cultural characteristics and employed as a mode of interpreting social reality (Jayasuriya, "Australian" 3). The national imagery of multiculturalism in Australia is manifest in officially sponsored cultural, or ‘ethnic’ activities including song, dance, food displays and so on (Castles et al. 79). This ‘culturalist’ interpretation of social reality exaggerates the ‘lifestyles’ of the private domains of family and religious belief, at the expense of ‘life chances’ in the public domain (Jayasuriya, "Australian" 7). The culturalist view of Australian society emphasises the expressive dimensions of ethnicity, trivialising cultural differences as stereotypes, and thus removing the issues of immigration, Aboriginality and cultural difference generally “from the socio-structural realm to the cultural realm defined in colourful, celebratory and apolitical terms” (Castles et al. 128).

While the presence of minority subjects is valued in the discourse of multiculturalism for the cultural enrichment ‘they’ provide, it is precisely this function that keeps ‘them’ positioned in the space of objectified otherness (Ang, "Curse" 40). In Indrani Ganguly’s study of the testimonies of various women who have migrated to Australia, an El Salvadoran interviewee commented that cultural acceptance is only achieved at a superficial level: “[f]ood, music, dress ... If they [Anglo-Australians] go beyond this and want to interact with you as a real person, if both go hand in hand, then I would feel comfortable ... mostly ... it’s like they say, we like the food but reject the cook” (qtd in Ganguly 25). Aboriginal writer Anita Heiss demonstrates the hypocrisy involved in the acceptance of some of the cultural attributes of minority groups, while other aspects are derided or defamed: “[w]hile some [Anglo-Australians] cannot tolerate a turban on a bus driver, they will unashamedly devour a tandoori chicken” (2). Uyen Leowald’s poem ‘Be Good, Little Migrants’, also highlights the expectation that migrants will provide ‘cultural enrichment’ to Anglo-Australian monoculturalism: “Be good, little migrants … /prepare cheap exotic food …/sew costumes, … write music, and dance to our tune/Our culture must not be dull” (118).

Multiculturalism sought to provide a new inclusive definition of Australian national identity, where migrant and Aboriginal communities were not only allowed, but were positively encouraged to keep their cultural traditions alive. However, in its advocacy of cultural pluralism and tolerance, the discourse of multiculturalism assumes a power-
free coexistence between cultures (Hage, "Locating" 25). Multiculturalism has thus tended to obscure the primacy of economic and political structures in determining the limits of the social and economic mobility of Australia’s (racially divergent) migrant population (Bottomley 4). The official concept of ‘productive diversity’—which originated in the Prime Minister’s Department—invited the nation to take advantage of the human and cultural capital offered by ‘our’ ethnically diverse population. But for many migrants, this has constituted an empty slogan which contrasts sharply with the actual structural and everyday inequalities they experience in the labour market—and elsewhere (Vasta 58).

In public discourse the cultures of multiculturalism are often assumed to be homogeneous, as if neither race, class, sexuality nor gender differences characterised these groups (de Lepervanche 83). But ethnic communities are also internally differentiated according to political affiliation, the reasons for migrating and the timing of migration (Pettman 43-44). The discourse of multiculturalism often involves the containment of cultural difference, where ethnic cultures are constructed as “perpetuating the past in petrified form” (Gunew 454), and is premised upon the belief of the separateness of different cultures, each of which is bounded and reified, hermetically sealed off from all others. In reality however, “the culture of any group is dynamic, and changes as it is redefined by each generation” (Brewster 13).

Reifying difference into stereotypic models of naturalised identity has resulted in the commodification of different ethnic groups. By exoticising different cultures, policies of multiculturalism have colluded in their further disenfranchisement (Donald and Rattansi 2). As Trinh T. Minh-ha has argued in relation to Asian migrants, bounded or reified cultures, while putatively valorised, are in fact relegated to ‘reservations’ (or Chinatowns) in the name of ‘preservation’ (6). Despite its apparent relativism, in practice, multiculturalism has defined alternative cultures in terms of how they differ from the normativeness of the dominant culture. ‘Australianness’ has thus been constructed in terms of what it is not, that is, in terms of its difference from a range of ‘constitutive Others’. The tendency to define alternative centres of cultural authority purely in terms of how they relate to the dominant culture has had the effect of reinforcing rather than dislodging the normative ideal. According to Rey Chow, representations of the ‘Other’ often both ignore the class and intellectual hierarchies
within these other cultures, and also involve a renunciation of the material power that enables the comparison in the first place (Writing 13).

In multiculturalism, ethnicity is more often linked to plurality than hierarchy; it is seen as an “apolitical smorgasbord of cultures, where everyone is free to offer titbits or to taste them” (Gunew 452). In its commitment to ethnic diversity this pluralist approach ostensibly recognises the equal validity of all cultures. However, this denies the fact that Anglo-Celtic Australian culture occupies a position of relative dominance in Australian society. Discourses of tolerance and diversity can play an important role in changing people’s attitudes, but they are largely directed at transforming inter-personal relations, so that structural inequalities remain. In concentrating on the level of ideas, this ‘tolerance model’ is individualistic, and pays scant attention to the way inequality is enshrined in systems and institutions. Furthermore, not only does the power of the dominant group remain unchecked, but the agency of minority groups in resisting this power is unacknowledged. The centre remains largely untouched and, just as with assimilationist policies, the onus to ‘fit in’ or adapt to Australian mores and social standards is placed on the minority groups themselves. The official policy of multiculturalism can thus be construed as a covert form of assimilationism (Gunew 453; Donald and Rattansi 2).

Multiculturalism contains assimilatory elements because all migrants, new settlers and Aboriginal people are required to function within the common and universal aspects of the wider society. A core of moral and cultural values based on the central institutions of the Australian constitution, a democratic system of governance, an established system of law and human rights, and English as the national language continue to place limits on what is acceptable behaviour for all members of Australian society (McArthur 20). Questions over how to incorporate migrants and Aboriginal peoples into existing social and political institutions highlight the distinction between cultural and structural diversity. Multiculturalism exists as both a philosophy and a policy, that is, in both ideological and legislative senses. The descriptive or ideological meaning of a multicultural Australia records the demographic reality of the cultural diversity reflected in the Australian population, where over 150 different national and ethnic backgrounds are represented. The prescriptive or policy aspect of multiculturalism entails a consideration of how society should respond to this complex and diverse social
reality to maintain cohesion and equity. The second, more problematic, meaning of multiculturalism involves the fundamental question of how much diversity is to be encouraged and in what areas of social life (Hollinsworth, *Race* 246).

Mainstream Australian multiculturalism emphasises the valuing of ethnic and cultural diversity at the expense of structural plurality. The paradox in multiculturalism emerges because cultural pluralism cannot be achieved or maintained without structural pluralism. Despite the fundamental socioeconomic realities of structural incorporation/exclusion, governments have sought to reconstruct the issue simply as one of maintaining, supporting and celebrating cultural diversity. “Respect, tolerate, even support the differences, and cultural autonomy and equality of opportunity will supposedly be ensured” (Castles et al. 78). Culturally specific structures such as ethnic schools, places of worship and clubs and societies are all necessary to the maintenance of cultural pluralism, but these ‘ethnic structures’ are seen to compete with mainstream institutions, challenging social cohesion and the stability of society (Jayasuriya, "Australian"

The Lippman Committee of 1975 first drew attention to the dilemma of celebrating cultural pluralism without implementing the necessary structures to cater for the maintenance of such diversity (Jayasuriya, "Australian" 3). The committee provided one of the earliest public expressions of this difficulty, noting that ‘equality of respect’ for different cultural activities did not result in ‘equality of opportunity’. Superficial and ‘primordialist’ notions of culture were encouraged as contributing to the ‘richness’ of Australian culture, thereby diverting attention from the social and economic inequalities that arose from ethnic difference. If cultural diversity did not require any response other than inaction or tolerance on the part of the state or ‘mainstream’ population, minority groups would remain unaware of, or unable to access state institutions. Furthermore, the ethnic and cultural attributes of Aboriginal and migrant communities were defined (without acknowledgement) by their departure from some imagined centre that was so ‘natural’ as not to be recognised as ‘cultural’ (Hollinsworth, *Race* 247).

To the surprise of some of its supporters, the Fraser government decided to foster and develop multiculturalism in Australia, affirming cultural diversity and programs for its maintenance as its central principles (Theophanous xxiii). In 1977 the Fraser
government commissioned the most comprehensive inquiry (chaired by Frank Galbally) into post-arrival services. ‘The Review of Post-Arrival Programmes and Services to Migrants’ or Galbally Report was tabled in parliament in 1978 and was to be a point of reference for government initiatives relating to migrants for much of the following decade (Castles et al. 67). According to the report, settlement is:

…the complex process of adjusting to a new environment following migration. It is a long-term process affecting all immigrants, and in particular those coming from cultures different from that dominant in Australia, or without a well-established ethnic group here. Its end point is the acceptance by, and the feeling of belonging to the receiving society. It implies change both in the individual migrant and the host society (qtd in Theophanous 16).

The Galbally Report was based on principles of equity and access that were previously unheard of in relation to non-Anglo people and cultures including the expansion of ethnic broadcasting and English language instruction (Hollinsworth, Race 245). Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Radio was introduced by the Whitlam Labor government in 1975, and in 1980, SBS Television was ushered in as an initiative of the Liberal Coalition government. Beyond arguing for the importance of a radio and television service that broadcast in many languages, the Report went some way towards shifting the emphasis further away from assimilationism and towards a recognition that minority group ‘problems’ were of relevance to all Australians.

According to the findings of the Galbally Report, while all migrants had to face a period of adjustment, this was exacerbated for those migrants who had come from non-English-speaking-backgrounds. Migrants’ lack of proficiency in the English language was seen as the cause of their difficulties in accessing social and cultural institutions, and policies of social intervention evolved to combat this problem. But, because difficulties in migrant adaptation were blamed on the migrants’ lack of English language skills, and not the institutions themselves, migrant policies were “characteristic of a ‘blaming the victim’ ideology…” (Jayasuriya, "Australian" 8). Galbally’s findings were important in strengthening the ‘cultural pluralism’ or ideology component of multiculturalism, but they did little to promote the prescriptive or policy aspect of ‘structural pluralism’. Although the Report promoted multiculturalism, cultural identity and diversity, it avoided confronting the essential institutional and economic inequalities being experienced by migrant communities. Australian multiculturalism as exemplified in the Galbally Report was tilted in favour of
“satisfying identity needs and demands while soft pedalling the striving for equality, access and equity” (Jayasuriya, "Australian" 9).

New Imaginings of the Nation?

Multiculturalism is represented as the externalized political testament to the nation’s aversion to its past misdeeds, and to its recovered good intentions (Povinelli 18). The increasing influence of the vocabulary of cultural diversity is sustained and manifested in self-congratulatory narratives of a successfully ‘post-colonial’ nation “from which all traces of racial and ethnic conflict have been removed, located firmly in the past” (Perera and Pugliese, "Wogface" 43). According to developmental accounts of national identity that narrate a steady progression from intolerance to tolerance, modern multicultural Australia has freed itself of the shadow of racism and colonisation. The following statement was made by a Vietnamese-born migrant and is illustrative of the (mis)conception that many migrants, new and old, share, that “multicultural Australia is truly Australian Australia which, untramelled by the ghost of colonial relationship, can focus more clearly on Australian identity and interests than an Anglo-Australia could” (qtd in K. S. Inglis, "Multiculturalism" 19). The rhetoric of national progress from ‘White Australia’ to ‘Multicultural Australia’ relies on a regime of historical discontinuity, a regime in which the nation has thrown off the shackles of racial discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation. But power relations are the universal fact that undermine any notion of the journey of historical discontinuity away from intolerance and towards tolerance (Nicoll, Diggers 128).

Celebratory and triumphalist discourses that stem from the notion of historical discontinuity are presented for both domestic and international consumption. A central component of Sydney’s bid to host the 2000 Olympics, for example, rested on the promotion of the Games as the ‘Multicultural Olympics’. In the words of Nick Bolkus, former ALP Minister for Multicultural Affairs, “Australia has more to offer the world than sunshine, sand and sport—it is also a rich source of cultural diversity” (461). Here Australia’s ethnic/cultural ‘mix’ functions as another tourist attraction or marketable commodity to add to the list of naturally occurring wonders. Australia’s ‘rich’ cultural diversity has also been used as a saleable commodity internationally by writers such as Australian expatriate Robert Hughes, for whom Australia is a place where “intelligent
multiculturalism works to everyone’s advantage” (89). Such rhetoric also has cultural and ideological currency in domestic narratives of nation. For Bolkus, the “dimensions of multiculturalism … apply equally to all Australians” (458).

Discourses of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism not only rely on the rhetoric of historical discontinuity, they also depend on culinary metaphors. According to Nicoll, culinary metaphors work to reinforce the belief that cultural difference is capable of being consumed by and absorbed into an Anglo-Celtic ‘mainstream’ (Diggers 135). Government and public rhetoric on multiculturalism almost always makes reference to the vast array of international cuisine now available for ‘our’ consumption. In describing the “recipe for success” in “the multicultural flavour” of Australian society, Bolkus invokes the culinary model of multiculturalism (462). Bolkus further adds “we are immensely proud of the way in which the massive post-war influx of immigrants from Europe and Asia has been achieved without significant social conflict” (462, emphasis added). In order to make this statement Bolkus necessarily overlooks the significant resistance that post-war European migrants faced, as well as the anti-Asian sentiment that accompanied large-scale Asian migration. Furthermore, in the immediate post-war era there was no ‘influx’ of Asian migrants because, as we have seen in chapter three, Asians were denied permanent settlement in Australia until 1956. The multicultural success story, that ostensibly marks a radical break with a previously racist Australian past, has “more than a few missing chapters” (Perera and Pugliese, "Wogface" 45). In order to guarantee a happy ending to Australia’s tolerant and ethnically inclusive ‘multicultural success story’, the central facts of Asian exclusion, the continuing dominance of whiteness and the ongoing effects of colonisation must be denied.

**Multiculturalism and ‘Asian’ Migration**

It is very difficult to get the white Australian population to extend usage of ethnic to Chinese or Vietnamese because, in addition to the national designation, there is a racial assumption. In the functioning of Australian cultural pluralist multiculturalism the rhetoric of ethnicity is inclusive and that of race exclusive … cultural pluralism … works most effortlessly for white, European ethnic groups who are thought to already share the moral order which enables ethnic diversity to flourish harmoniously (Stratton and Ang 171).
...although the grounds of debates shift there is some continuity in processes of inclusion of previously excluded collectivities into an imaginary core of Australianness as ‘white’ ... Such social morphing, however, does not include people from all designated collectivities, as some have remained beyond the pale: the Chinese in the nineteenth century and ‘Asians’ in the twentieth (Larbalestier 150).

How have immigrants of Asian descent experienced multiculturalism? The policy of multiculturalism has been empowering for many minority constituencies, and has enabled migrant communities to argue for the maintenance of their cultural practices and traditions. But multiculturalism overlooks the importance of race and can thus be seen as helping in the creation of ethnicity, so that ultimately, it privileges the more established and richer migrant groups that are not as visibly different. Many ‘racially marked’ migrant communities from the various regions of Asia are over-represented in menial, routine and low-paid jobs. As Jayasuriya suggests, there is not only a strong ethnic middle class or ethnic petite bourgeoisie, but a considerable number of migrant unskilled workers whose interests may not coincide with those of other migrants ("Facts" 24).

In 1973 the adoption of an immigration policy that rejected discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or nationality was a belated response to a changed post-war world. Despite claims that Australia’s immigration policy was no longer racially discriminatory, the reality was different from the rhetoric. Much stricter selection criteria continued to be applied to non-European applicants in a “systematic effort to ensure that non-European immigration was restricted in number and class background” (Castles et al. 58). Indeed, the government was very sensitive to accusations that it would allow the ‘Asianisation’ of Australia. According to one ALP member, “to suggest that ...[a non-discriminatory immigration policy] ... indicates an open door to Asiatic migration or the breakdown of the Australian way of life is malicious in the extreme” (qtd in Castles et al. 58). These comments were made in 1974, and are indicative of the importance placed on the maintenance of the ‘Australian way of life’ despite the introduction of a non-racially discriminatory immigration policy and a policy of multiculturalism.

As a way of easing the problems caused by racist reactions to Australia’s increasing racial diversity, the Whitlam Government introduced the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975. The purpose of the Act was to outlaw all forms of discrimination on the basis of
race and ethnicity, and to pave the way for Australia to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Theophanous 12). Yet it was to be the Fraser government that became the first twentieth-century Australian government to permit large-scale Asian immigration. Ironically, the traditional fear of the ‘yellow peril’, or an invasion from Asia, was the factor that precipitated the final end to a racially biased immigration policy. Australia’s military alliance with America was powerfully linked to this insecurity following the decline in British influence and the spread of communism in South-East Asia after World War Two (Hollinsworth, Race 239). Fear of the spread of Asian communism drew Australia into a war that she and her allies lost and, ironically, this defeat delivered the coup de grâce to ‘White Australia’ (Lack and Templeton, Bold 150). As an eager participant in the Vietnam War, the government was obliged to give sanctuary to more than 5000 Indo-Chinese refugees. The admission of large numbers of Indo-Chinese people was the key factor that finally removed any possibility of identifying Australia as “a transplanted piece of Europe” (Castles et al. 70). By 1979 formal emigration arrangements from Vietnam had been negotiated, with Australia accepting 14,500 mostly ethnic Chinese, or nine percent of the total migrant intake for that year (Hollinsworth, Race 239).

Increasing numbers of Indo-Chinese refugees and migrants brought into question the efficacy of multicultural policies in catering for the needs of ‘racialised’ minorities. The functional value of the ‘culturalist’ version of multiculturalism, essentially a conservative first generation strategy designed to accommodate and appease (European) migrants, may have little relevance to groups with different needs. In its emphasis on ethnic and cultural diversity, multiculturalism has denied the significance of the social and economic meaning of race. In its disavowal of race, the policy of multiculturalism is unable to take account of the social, cultural and economic effects of racial difference. Indeed, after the fall of Saigon in 1975, the integration of Vietnamese migrants, supported by the policy of multiculturalism, was never discussed openly in terms of racial difference. “Officially, the Vietnamese were simply added to the growing list of ‘ethnic groups’ making up the multicultural mix” (Ang and Stratton 33).

In reality, the admission of large numbers of hitherto excluded Asian racial minorities meant that the days of Australia as a purely white European outpost were well and truly
over. The influx of Asian migrants represented a qualitative turnaround of magnificent proportions—“an historical shift which completely overturned Australia’s crucial and longstanding self-definition as a ‘white nation’”(Ang and Stratton 34). But the official ‘colour blind’ discourse of multiculturalism deprived the Australian people of any way of comprehending the overwhelming cultural and racial heterogeneity produced by the settlement of these new groups. Not only was the government unable to explain the shifts in the racial composition of Australian society to the public, but it disallowed the fact that these groups had previously been denied admission precisely because of their race. As Ang and Stratton suggest, the extension of the cultural diversity sanctioned by official multiculturalism to non-European and non-white racial ‘groups’ was accompanied by “a tacit denial, or an embarrassed silence, that these groups until very recently were not allowed to enter the country because of their ‘racial’ difference” (33).

In 1979 the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) was established to develop awareness and acceptance of the multicultural nature of Australian society. AIMA sought to foster in the Australian community an appreciation of the contribution of the various cultures in Australian society, to promote tolerance, understanding and cohesion throughout society (McArthur 16). I have shown previously however, that notions of tolerance and acceptance, while important on an inter-personal level, do not remove systemic, structural or institutional inequalities. The notion of tolerance might prove useful in convincing (white) individuals of the need for acceptance and an understanding of difference, but it acts to disguise and thereby reproduce relationships of power in society. According to Hage, tolerance constitutes a “form of symbolic violence in which a mode of domination is presented as a form of egalitarianism” (Hage, White 87). “Being apparently blind to race enables the policy of multiculturalism to appear very progressive” (Stratton, "Multiculturalism" 179). Not noticing race is heralded as polite and humanistic; it is advocated in terms of respectability, generosity and tolerance when in fact “it only reinforces the existing racist power arrangements” (Hurtado and Stewart 299).

Apart from introducing cultural and racial diversity, the most significant aspect of immigration is economic. Australia has a segmented workforce where Northern European or Anglophone immigrants occupy labour market positions similar to those of
the Australian-born workers, but non-Anglophone labourers are concentrated in the semi- or ‘unskilled’ occupations (Bottomley 174). Migrant workers are over-represented in menial, routine and low-paid jobs—the jobs shunned by Anglo-Celtic Australian workers (Jayasuriya, "Facts" 23). This has prompted some theorists to argue that multiculturalism has been used as “a strategy to reconstruct and to sustain the established power bloc” (Brewster 80). According to Jakubowicz, Morrissey and Brewster for instance, during the Fraser Coalition government’s term in office, the ruling class used multiculturalism to perpetuate the system of class relations from which it benefited (Lopez 14). Andrew Jakubowicz contends that nationalist constructions of multiculturalism became policy in order to sustain social order and guarantee economic productivity ("Ethnicity" 29-30). The loyalties activated by appeals to ethnic cultural bonds were enacted to facilitate the successful management of a racially segmented workforce but, given that the majority of the ethnically/racially diverse workers were labouring for white Australian companies, we can thus see that multiculturalism was implemented to reduce the threat to Anglo-Celtic structural domination and cultural hegemony (Foster and Stockley, Multiculturalism 105). Indeed, Lois Foster and David Stockley argue that the key to the multicultural strategy was to achieve an acceptable ideology that “would obscure the use of social control to maintain social cohesion” (Multiculturalism 105).

Multiculturalism and ‘Whiteness’

…far from challenging the hegemonic position of white cultural and political power in Australia, official multiculturalism has entrenched it” (Stratton, "Multiculturalism" 163).

This section examines the social construction of whiteness in Australia, showing that white people are ‘raced’, just as men are ‘gendered’. Recognising the ways in which white race privilege is enshrined in Australian society, its culture(s) and institutions is important because this dominance is often overlooked in Australian multicultural society. One of the insidious properties of the dominance of whiteness, and thus of race

\[\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\] Mark Lopez refutes these claims, arguing that there is no empirical evidence to support the contention that the Fraser government adopted multiculturalism to mitigate the working-class struggle or perpetuate a class system from which it stood to benefit. See Lopez, The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975. pp. 14, 453.
privilege in Australia, is its seeming normativity, its structured invisibility. Because whiteness is the norm in Australia, white people are frequently oblivious to the fact that a white perspective is not the only one. The white American lesbian poet Adrienne Rich terms this tendency to generalise specifically white cultural practices and perceptions of the world as normal ‘white solipsism’. To think, act and speak as if whiteness described the world does not necessarily entail consciously believing that one race is inherently superior to all others; it can be a “tunnel-vision which simply does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant” (Rich qtd in Spelman 36). Whiteness is the normative ideal in Australia because it is unrecognised, unacknowledged and therefore unchallenged. This failure to recognise whiteness explicitly allows white individuals to ignore how race shapes their lives and thus, how racial privileges are accrued (Hyde 88). Although whiteness remains unacknowledged as the cultural norm, it continues profoundly to shape and affect white people’s lives and experiences. This denial of whiteness is one of the key means by which white supremacy is maintained.

The dominance of white Australians is reinscribed within Australian multiculturalism, and is reproduced by the advocacy of tolerance and cultural pluralism, ideologies that ostensibly deny this dominance. The advocacy of ‘tolerance’ and calls for the ‘acceptance of difference’ do not change the power relations in Australian society and, if anything, the promotion of tolerance is really about asking white Australians to accept this inequality. The discourse of tolerance constitutes a major tenet of multiculturalism, and serves to promote a sense of historical discontinuity with Australia’s racist past (and present). But the notion of tolerance is problematic. When those who are intolerant are asked to be tolerant, their power to be intolerant is not disrupted—they are simply requested not to utilise it. As Hage argues, the advocacy of tolerance is not about making the powerful powerless, it is about inviting them not to exercise their power (Hage, "Locating" 25). Hage highlights the way these notions of tolerance are clearly applicable to those in a position of dominance when he asks:“[w]hy would anyone bother asking someone who has no power to be intolerant to be tolerant” (Hage, White 88)? To him, the very idea “that a newly arrived migrant is tolerant of White Australians is clearly ridiculous” (White 88).
Multiculturalism was primarily introduced to manage the various cultures of the European and thus white race. In other words, multiculturalism was institutionalised to govern and control “cultural diversity within a single ‘white race’: it was ‘white’ multiculturalism, not multiculturalism” per se (Ang and Stratton 32). The official policy of multiculturalism thus caters for the cultural and ethnic plurality of the white/European race, not the cultural and ethnic diversity of non-white and non-European races. In this way, multiculturalism promotes the variety of cultural expression that exists among those people who are, or who can pass as white in Australian society. Of course not all Anglo-Australians benefit equally from this privileging of whiteness in multicultural discourse. White people in Australia are not all located in an equal position of dominance, and most do not individually possess the economic or social power to effect any substantial change. In order to highlight the distinctions between the various ‘shades of whiteness’ and thus the allocation of social and material resources in Australian society, Stratton refers to those Europeans who entered the country in the post-World War Two period as “marginal whites” ("Multiculturalism" 179). Not all whites gain benefits (equally) from the dominance of whiteness in multiculturalism; however, while differences in gender, class and sexuality work to fracture the notion of a homogeneous grouping, as a whole, white people in Australia do possess more economic resources and more cultural capital than their non-white counterparts.

Because of its blindness to race, the policy of multiculturalism in Australia is often assumed to be non-racist (Ang and Stratton 32). But, as I have argued earlier, the promotion of cultural pluralism does not mean that race ceases to play an important role in the bestowal or denial of social and economic resources. The omnipotence of whiteness is manifested in Australian multiculturalism in a variety of ways. The multicultural celebration of difference exhibited at multicultural fairs and festivals (usually supported and endorsed by local governments) provides a graphic representation of a collection of ‘Otherness’. Ethnic minorities are required to dispense with those ‘unexhibitable’ parts of their history (hence the focus on cooking and costumes) “and become living fetishes deriving their significance from the White organising principle that controls and positions them within the Australian social space” (Hage, White 161). The fact that the policy of multiculturalism ‘allows’ non-Anglo-
Celtic ethnics to ‘maintain their culture’ “does in no sense make it less of a fantasy of total control” (Hage, White 162).

**Multiculturalism and Aboriginal Peoples**

Discourses of multiculturalism, whether as official policy, media reportage or as academic discussion, are frequently narrowly focussed and problematic. The import of the history of the Indigenous presence for these discourses is often neglected or marginalised (Larbalestier 146).

Multiculturalism is only for all the nationalities of people who migrated here one after another and we the Aboriginal people, are not part of that multiculturalism. It came to us. We were here first (Robert C. Bropho qtd in van den Berg, Nyoongar 275).

Not only was Grassby’s ‘family of the nation’ speech significant in terms of its rejection of assimilationism, it also sought to grant a sense of Australian national membership to Aboriginal peoples. In recognition of their prior exclusion and marginalisation from national belonging, the ALP’s response was to include them in the ‘family of the nation’. According to Grassby, it had been:

all too easy to overlook the pre-existence of the original Australians, millennia before the advent of us ‘white ethnics’ … [A]ny theory that fails to accord these people an equal place in the family of our nation is out of the question today and in the future. Likewise other ethnic groups introduced to this land by our migration programs may not be denied an equal place in our future society (qtd in Lack and Templeton, Bold 144).

The Labor government’s desire to include Indigenous people in the Australian national community was inspired by the same type of thinking that had informed the 1967 referendum. The majority of Australian citizens and the Federal government considered that Aboriginal people should be given every opportunity to be the equals of non-Aboriginal Australians. But the political demands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples cannot be easily incorporated in a policy that deals with cultural and ethnic difference. In its focus on cultural and ethnic plurality, multiculturalism has enabled the production of a new national narrative that is ill-equipped to deal with the ramifications of racial difference, or the needs of those who have suffered dispossession and colonisation. A policy that caters for cultural difference cannot meet the needs and political demands of those who have suffered exploitation precisely because they are racially distinct.
Successive Labor and Coalition governments’ attempts to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the vast cultural mosaic of Australian society have had the effect of negating their Indigenous status and their experiences of colonisation. As Curthoys maintains, the discourse of multiculturalism in Australia remains remarkably inattentive to the past and present colonial features of Australian society ("Uneasy" 34). The government’s willingness to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the nation’s ‘cultural mix’, involves a renunciation of the fact that these people are Indigenous and, as such, have specific and identifiable political claims unlike any other community in Australia. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have thus resisted inclusion in the multicultural agenda and, instead, emphasise their Indigenous racial identity as a means of maintaining their difference from normative ‘ideals’.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their concern is to reassert the primacy of race for purposes of political mobilisation. Invoking an image of themselves as distinct from the dominant group that habitually subjugates them, Aboriginal people may define themselves in their own terms. This move towards self-definition can be an empowering step for those usually defined solely in terms of the dominant white supremacist ideology. Minority group members who share similar subject positions may formulate a more cohesive group identity than people who occupy different social and material locations. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the shared experience of living in Australia as an Indigenous person may be important in the formation of group solidarity.

For Aboriginal people the affirmation of a racial essence can be the “source of an identity which has the potential to subvert racial discourse” (Cowlishaw, "Where" 190-91). Essentialism as it is endorsed here may thus act as a strategy of resistance and provide a source of empowerment for many Aboriginal people. Invoking an essentialist identity as a strategy of political mobilisation echoes Gayatri Spivak’s advocacy of ‘strategic essentialism’ (Other 206-07; Outside 13). However, one of the risks involved with the construction of an Aboriginal identity is that the more visible Aboriginal culture becomes, the greater the danger that it will be appropriated and commodified by the dominant white culture into which it is inserted (Brewster 72). Danielle Juteau-Lee argues that fighting for your right to be different from normative ideals can also mean
fighting for your subordination. She further contends that maintaining your difference “renders invisible the social construction of the naturalist discourse and perpetuates it. It occludes that women, blacks and other dominated social groups are not categories existing of and by themselves; that they are construed in the context of a social relation of domination and dependence” (17).

As we have seen, the policy of multiculturalism in Australia avoids the concrete differences that race makes in people’s lives. This tendency to overlook the consequences of racial difference is widely practised in Australian society. In her analysis of the race relations operating in a rural Australian community in Black, White or Brindle (1988), Gillian Cowlishaw found that many white people believe that in order to be non-racist, they must be ‘colour blind’, that is, not recognise or place significance on a person’s racial background or heritage. This colour blind racial perspective, in their view, allows them to interact with people presumably without regard to colour. “I never look at a person’s colour”; ‘There’s no racism in this town’; ‘The law is the same for everyone’. It is difficult for comfortable urban dwellers to imagine how hypocritical these phrases, often repeated in the construction of rural respectability, are to the Aboriginal population” (Cowlishaw, "Where" 52). This type of thinking was also invoked when Aboriginal servants were told that they were ‘just like one of the family’. Daisy Corunna’s story in Morgan’s My Place (1987) offers a critique of this comfortable fiction, often employed in the exploitation of domestic labour:

Alice kept tellin’ me, “We’re family now, Daisy.” Thing is, they wasn’t my family. Oh, I knew the children loved me, but they wasn’t my family [sic]. They were white, they’d grow up and go to school one day. I was black, I was a servant. How can they be your family? (qtd in Morgan 334).

Indigenous people, in conjunction with other ‘racialised’ minorities have had to confront the tendency within Australian society and policies to overlook the ramifications of racial difference. The shared knowledge of being located on the margins of white Australian society has enabled Aboriginal and non-white racial minorities to see many similarities in their circumstances and experiences. Both Aboriginal and non-Anglo migrant collectivities have been largely excluded from dominant ideologies of Australian national belonging. Those migrants who have come to Australia as refugees can often have a better understanding of the feelings of cultural
domination and loss that many Aboriginal people experience on a daily basis. Aboriginal and non-Anglo collectivities have also come under pressure to adopt the assumed monolithic Australian culture, and both communities experience ongoing structural disadvantages in Australian society and its economy. These collectivities can also suffer discrimination and hostility in their social relations with fellow Australians.

Despite these similarities however, it is clear that there is often a lack of identification between Aboriginal and migrant collectivities. Australian Indigenous and immigrant peoples have very divergent histories and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often resist being drawn into the rubric of multiculturalism. Instead, many Indigenous Australians have attacked multiculturalism, claiming that the idea of the equal validity of every culture “reduces them to the status of just another ethnic minority” (Bulbeck 273). Rosemary van den Berg’s concern with Aborigines being considered ‘only another ethnic group’ is that white Australians will be given the status as the ‘real Australians’ (Nyoongar 162). Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people object to being labelled ‘ethnic’, and wish to reinforce their status as the ‘first’ or Indigenous peoples of this country. According to van den Berg:

Aboriginal people may be a minority who are dominated by the white Australian culture now, but they are the indigenous race; they are not intruders in their own country. The term ‘ethnic’, in regards to the indigenous people, is another white Australian construct belittling Aboriginal people and, in a sense, trying to remove all traces of Australia having a ‘black’ history (Nyoongar 144).

Aboriginal people reject the label ‘ethnic’ because it implies that they migrated from another place to settle here. Many Indigenous people vehemently object to hypotheses that Aborigines crossed from Asia to Australia in dugout canoes in the Ice Age, and some believe they are contrived to discount the timelessness of Aboriginal habitation in this land. If all people in this country migrated here (at one time or another), then Aboriginal people would have no basis for claims that they are Indigenous and deserve to be treated as such. According to Toogarr (Jerry) Morrison, one of van den Berg’s interviewees in her study of Nyoongar perspectives of multiculturalism:

Racism still exists. Because of government policies in trying to let people of Australia believe we all arrived here from overseas and that we are all equal in that context. The High Court rules out terra nullius, but the governments do not want to listen (qtd in van den Berg, Nyoongar 3).
The common experiences of racism that many Asian and Aboriginal Australians share do not automatically guarantee understanding or political solidarity between the two groups (Perera and Pugliese, "Detoxifying" 14). Charles Perkins, for example, objected to South-East Asian migration because he believed that members of triads and other organised crime gangs found it easier to enter Australia than the country’s traditional European migrants (Read, Charles 280). According to the Sydney Morning Herald’s editorialist, “Mr Perkins’ distaste for ‘greedy’ Chinese” was well known (qtd in Read, Charles 280). During the 1980s Perkins continued to complain about Asian immigration, claiming “every third face in the street is Asian … The humanitarian aspect of the boat people is bullshit” (qtd in Brunton 1). In another interview Perkins called for an indefinite ban on migrants from South-East Asia (Brunton 1). Some Aboriginal people have rejected the equation of Asia with Australia’s future and, by implication, the relegation of Aboriginal cultures to a primordial past. In 1993 Race Commissioner Irene Moss stated: “Australia must work through its identity crisis. Its an Asian nation with a European Heritage” (qtd in Muecke 4). Aboriginal leader Shirley Smith (Mum Shirl) retorted: “[t]here is only one way Australians can belong here. This is not part of Asia … We are your only true connection to this continent, to this entire region. We are the land, and we are here forever” (qtd in Muecke 4).

In ‘Mad Souls’, a poem by Lionel Fogarty, a Murri writer (from south-east Qld), people of Asian descent or heritage are positioned alongside Anglo-Australians as unwelcome invaders and migrants. By clearly aligning Anglo-Celtic and Asian-Australians as intruders, Fogarty’s poem presents, as Perera suggests, an unambiguous rebuke “to any vision of many-coloured hands linking across Australia”(Perera, "Futures" 4). In its denunciation of any common bonds between Aboriginal people and Asian immigrants, Fogarty’s poem acts as a denial or refutation of liberal aspirations of multicultural togetherness: “I am the moody Murri/don’t like Aussies/don’t like Asians. You’d love to meet me/I’ll tell you/go live where you come from. /I am the Murri black/her forever” (qtd in Perera, "Futures" 4). Fogarty’s poem clearly emphasises his status as a descendant of the Indigenous custodians of this country, representing himself and his people as the autochthonous ‘hosts’ of the nation. Unlike much multicultural rhetoric that seeks to position Anglo-Australians as the ‘gatekeepers’ of Australia, Fogarty’s words provide a powerful reminder that except for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we are all visitors to this country.
In a 1992 edition of *Farrago*—the University of Melbourne student newspaper—entitled ‘Whose Multi-Culturalism?’, the Yuroke Aboriginal Student Corporation refused to contribute to the discussion. They justified their non-participation by stating: “we are sick of being lumped in with other so-called ‘ethnic minorities’” (qtd in Boreland 177). The Indigenous students opposed attempts to universalise the margins, and rejected the false unification of multiculturalism and Aboriginality into a common non-Anglo-Celtic ‘Other’. The Yuroke Corporation contributed a cartoon in which an Aboriginal figure responded, when asked how multiculturalism had enriched his life: ‘[w]ell, I’ve been called a black bastard in about a hundred different languages’ (see figure 9). This sentiment is shared by Edward J. Corbett, another of van den Berg’s interviewees, who claims that “[m]ulticulturalism has only given the Aborigines more people who discriminate against them” (qtd in van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 62). At the ‘Postcolonial Australia’ conference held at the University of Melbourne soon after the publication of the 1992 edition of *Farrago*, Mudrooroo used the cartoon to argue that the policy of multiculturalism and its discussion in academia fail to historicise and contextualise Australian society with regard to Indigenous peoples and histories. Mudrooroo defined multiculturalism as another form of oppression, arguing that so-called ‘white’ and non-Anglo, non-Indigenous Australians were complementary kinds of colonisers (Boreland 178).

The political agenda of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is arguably different from that of other minority collectivities. Indigenous activists have expressed understandable and substantiated fears that the focus on multiculturalism not only overlooks the Indigenous status of Aborigines as ‘first peoples’, but can distract attention from the issues of land rights and Native Title (Gunew 455). Lowitja O’Donoghue recognises both advantages and disadvantages in contemporary multiculturalism: “[p]erhaps Aboriginal people have benefited from the greater appreciation of cultural diversity which has resulted from the admission of other points of view”. However, “we are the original inhabitants of this land, and our sufferings, past and present, make some form of special recognition a moral imperative” (qtd in Bulbeck 274). Robert Eggington agrees with this line of argument, maintaining that “Nyoongar people’s rights should be recognised as Indigenous rights. Nyoongar existence should not be recognised as part of the multicultural policies, but should be
addressed separately as traditional owners of this country” (qtd in van den Berg, Nyoongar 160).

Many Aboriginal communities also feel that because migrants have not suffered cultural domination to the same extent (in Australia at least) they are less disadvantaged. In the words of another of van den Berg’s Nyoongar interviewees, migrant “groups have never experienced the struggle of cultural warfare and survival of over two hundred years” (qtd in van den Berg, Nyoongar 250). Docker argues that each individual in 1788 and since who has come to Australia, however variegated their experiences and “however much there has been racism and ethnocentrism and differential access to power … ha[s] benefited from the original invasion and dispossession of the Aboriginal peoples, and still benefit[s]” ("Temperament" 54). For Aboriginal people then, migrant groups could be seen as another set of invaders, “not brothers and sisters on the margins, not the fellow oppressed and dispossessed” (Docker, "Temperament" 54). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have thus avoided conflating their own political agendas—at the forefront of which are land rights and Native Title—with the very different concerns of various migrant communities (Brewster 16).

Another very significant difference between Indigenous and diasporic communities concerns historical memory or consciousness. The collective or shared memory informing Aboriginal political mobilisation and identity is markedly different from the historical consciousness of migrant peoples. Indigenous people make use of a historical memory that is specific to them to legitimise their contemporary claims and struggles. In its disavowal of Indigenous historical consciousness, the policies and discourses of multiculturalism are ill-equipped to cater for the political demands emanating from this collective memory. To account for Aboriginal historical consciousness and racial difference would involve recognising that Aboriginal people make different political and institutional demands that cannot be met or compensated for without a fundamental shift in the system. It has been much easier for the government to recognise or gesture towards cultural plurality while maintaining structural, institutional and systemic uniformity and in/equality.

Many Aboriginal people contend that because those migrating to Australia can retain their language, and often have families or communities to go to, they are less disadvantaged. Langford Ginibi’s comments are illustrative:
even the people who migrate here are on a higher social level than we are, and we’re the first people of this land! My people were forced to give away using our language and culture, and adopt the ways of the white man, but the people who migrated here don’t give away their language or culture to become Australian citizens (Bundjalung 52).

In her autobiography Born a Half-Caste (1985), Marnie Kennedy makes similar claims:

Every nationality in Australia is allowed to speak its language. They have their own gatherings. These are the things that make Aborigines very bitter because they were made to give up everything that was sacred to them (4-5).

The introduction of multiculturalism has (ostensibly) given all Australians the right to cultural expression, and Aboriginal people have also benefited from this. Older Indigenous people who grew up living under the restrictive and discriminatory Native Welfare policies of previous years have experienced a new sense of freedom in ‘Multicultural Australia’. But Aboriginal people, perhaps more than any other minority group living in Australia, have been denied full access to their cultural practices because they depend on Aboriginal people having access to their ‘country’. In its blindness to the ongoing ramifications of colonisation, the rhetoric and policies of multiculturalism overlook that Aboriginal people do not share equal rights with other Australians to cultural expression. “Aborigines cannot fulfil cultural imperatives without access to sacred sites, to land ownership and to their very Aboriginality” (anonymous interviewee qtd in van den Berg, Nyoongar 235).
Chapter Five

Race and the Politics of Anglo-Grievance

Since the early ‘eighties state support for issues such as ethnic diversity, Asian immigration and more recently, the republic, has generated what I will refer to as a ‘discourse of decline’, emanating from a wide cross-section of the Anglo-Celtic population. This discourse either passively mourns or actively calls for resistance against what it perceives as a state-sanctioned assault on Australo-Britishness as a national cultural formation (Hage, "Anglo-Celts" 41).

By repressing the discourse of ‘race’ rather than acknowledging its power in the Australian cultural imaginary, and dealing with its ideological implications, multiculturalism has allowed the possibility for the conservative renovation of racialising discourses as an aspect of a renewed emphasis on assimilation and on a “mainstream culture” whose whiteness is unspoken but undeniable (Ang and Stratton 38).

This chapter examines the various ways in which nationalist discourses on race and ethnicity have been articulated in the public and political spheres from the early 1980s to the present. It shows that racial discourse still plays a pivotal role in contemporary nationalist rhetoric, but that it ‘hides’ behind the notions of equality and egalitarianism.

The various ways in which the discourse of race is mobilised today—while remaining central to Australian understandings of the nation—differ from its expression in the period of Australian Federation. In 1901 race operated as a reductive concept and was thought to determine culture, but since the post-war era culture has become the more privileged term, and race now acts as an indicator or symbol of cultural difference (Stratton, Race 11). This chapter shows that Prime Minister John Howard (since 1996) and politician Pauline Hanson refute claims that they are racist because they rely on very old notions of racism where one group of people is held to be superior to another on biological grounds. But a different form of signification has emerged where culture is not reduced to race, race works as a visual representation or symbol of an assumed cultural incompatibility.

Even though race largely disappeared from official rhetoric, race—as embodied in the term ‘Asian’—still functioned as a marker of the limits of tolerable diversity (Ang and Stratton 36). In 1982-83 when Asia was the largest source of Australian immigration in over a century (36 per cent of the net settler gain came from Asia, clearly outweighing
the British intake of 27 per cent) (Ip et al. 1), public attitudes to immigration (especially from Asia), turned from broadly favourable to highly critical (Jupp 265). By 1984, immigration from Asia became a subject of intense controversy, marking one of the episodes that witnessed the readmission of race and racialising discourses in public and political debate. However, the process of racialisation was not only mobilised in terms of the peoples of the various regions of Asia. Aboriginality also functioned as a symbol of that which was intractably unassimilable, and Aboriginal people continue to remain ‘beyond the pale’. While the threat of Asia has historically defined the external boundaries and the social and cultural limits of the Australian nation, Aboriginality functions as its constitutive internal other (Perera, "Whiteness" 186).

This chapter argues that race cannot be erased from the national imaginary simply by making it disappear from the textual surface of respectable discourse. As Ang and Stratton suggest, for all of the state’s efforts to re-imagine the nation in the image of a non-racial paradise of ‘cultural diversity’, “the trace of ‘race’ continues to lead a subterranean life that remains effective in people’s everyday understanding of what’s happening in their country (34). Despite the changes that have taken place over the last century, Australia’s national identity still conceives “the Aboriginal as an internal presence to be denied and suppressed through genocidal and/or assimilationist practices; the Asian as besieging other to be held at bay (as in the White Australia policy) or appeased” (Perera, "Introduction" 5-6).

In response to their enduring exclusion from Australian national belonging, Aboriginal and Asian-Australian communities have transformed their domination into memories and voices of resistance that are distinctively their own. This chapter shows that race has also been reinvoked and rearticulated by minority groups as a tactical manoeuvre for the purpose of political mobilisation. Aboriginal and Asian-Australians have been arguing for the right to enjoy not only civic citizenship, but also cultural citizenship. Civic citizenship refers to the multiplicity of local, State and Federal affiliations that confer entitlements and duties on the people residing within the national body. The cultural belonging or citizenship that Aboriginal and Asian-Australians strive to achieve is largely in response to the degree of cultural uniformity that civic citizenship imposes on the nation’s residents. Cultural citizenship, then, is a mode of cultural belonging that is primarily negotiated within national borders, but is frequently informed by cultural
formations other than that of the nation. According to Jan Pakulski, cultural citizenship is a new domain of cultural rights that involves “the right to symbolic presence, dignifying representation, propagation of identity and maintenance of lifestyles” (73).

Indigenous and Asian-Australians have varying degrees of civic and cultural enfranchisement, but these in no way guarantee their access to full political citizenship. As Hage contends, the state “opens up cultural spaces of inclusion as a substitute to effective inclusion in the mainstream political processes” (White 138). This chapter shows that one way Aboriginal and Asian-Australian communities have sought greater cultural and political enfranchisement has been through the formation of cross-cultural political alliances. The new political partnerships between Indigenous and Asian communities challenge both the prevalent Black-white partitioning of race relations in Australia, and the continuing “cleavage of the ‘immigrant’ and the ‘Indigenous’ in contemporary paradigms of reconciliation” (Edwards and Shen).

Asian Immigration and the ‘Blainey Debate’

In order to comprehend this rearticulation of the discourse of race (albeit one that is disguised by culturalist forms of distinction and notions of equality), it is necessary to examine some of the events that precipitated its development. The following sections thus explore the political and social climate of the early 1980s, with respect to both Asian immigration and then Aboriginal politics. In 1984 the ‘Blainey debate’ and the Western Australian Mining Corporation’s response to Native Title legislation marked the turning point in “the [re]introduction of racial perspectives in mainstream political debate” (Markus, Race 59).

The first powerful resurgence of populist racism against a particular section of the Australian community to occur—hardly ten years after the formal abolition of the ‘White Australia’ policy and the arrival of the first Vietnamese refugees—was heralded by Professor Geoffrey Blainey’s accusations that the government was allowing ‘too many’ ‘Asians’ into Australia (Hage, "Locating" 24). When Blainey, a respected historian, spoke specifically of ‘Asians’, he clearly transgressed the preferred ‘colour blind’ discourse endorsed in the assimilationist (and, to some extent, multicultural) era. Blainey (re)invoked a racialist discourse that had supposedly been banished from the
Australian cultural imaginary with the introduction of a non-racially discriminatory immigration policy (Ang and Stratton 35).

In a speech delivered at a Rotary conference in the west Victorian town of Warrnambool in March 1984, Blainey declared:

*The pace of Asian immigration is now far ahead of public opinion, especially the public opinion in those suburbs and workplaces to which many of these Vietnamese and Kampuchean refugees will go … An increasing proportion of Australians seem to be resentful of the large numbers of Vietnamese and other south-east Asians who are being brought in, have little chance of gaining work, and are living—through no fault of their own—at the taxpayers’ expense … The flaw of this new immigration policy is its arrogance, its insensitivity to a large section of Australian opinion (All 25).*

In *All for Australia* published later that year, Blainey characterised the impact of Asian immigration in terms of invasion and warfare prefiguring, as I show later, the politics of Anglo-grievance and resentment used by Howard in 1988 and Hanson in 1996.

In a subsequent newspaper article, Blainey introduced into the political lexicon the idea of the ‘Asianisation of Australia’ (a phrase he attributed to Minister for Immigration Stuart West), highlighting a dramatic shift in immigration policy that led to ‘Asians’ becoming ‘a favoured minority’ (Markus, Race 63). Blainey again expressed concern over the expense that Asian migrants constituted to taxpayers in their receipt of unemployment and social security benefits. He lamented the high tax rates, “and seeing those taxes paying the dole to Asians flocking into my neighbourhood” (qtd in Ricklefs 41). Blainey’s comments received wide media coverage with the controversy continuing for almost a year. According to Markus, the controversy was reported in over 350 newspaper articles from March to September 1984 (Race 63). Blainey’s standing as a respected and widely published historian gave his comments ideological and moral backing.

In his preoccupation with the numbers of Asian migrants to be allowed into the country, and his contention that “too many Asians were undesirable” (qtd in Ang and Stratton 35), Blainey clearly exhibited signs of what Hage has called ‘governmental belonging’. The belief that one has a right over the nation, including the belief in one’s possession of the right to contribute to its management—even if only by having a legitimate opinion regarding the internal and external politics of the nation—constitutes governmental belonging (White 46). For Blainey then, it was not so much that Asian
migrants were permitted to come to Australia, but that they were coming in a process that appeared to him as beyond his control (Hage, "Anglo-Celtics" 60). Blainey was, in effect, mourning what he perceived as his loss of governmental belonging, as clearly demonstrated in the conclusion of a speech he made to the National Press Club in November 1983: “[w]e should continue to welcome a variety of Asian immigrants, but they should come on our terms, through our choosing, and in numbers with which our society can cope” (All 24).

Through his invocation of the binarism of ‘white’ versus ‘Asian’ (or, ‘Australian’ versus ‘Asian’, since they are seen as mutually exclusive entities) Blainey reintroduced precisely the marker of exclusion that was in place during the ‘White Australia’ policy (Ang and Stratton 35). As in the days of ‘White Australia’, Asians were reinscribed as eternal strangers or aliens, underlining the continued ownership of the political and physical ground of protest by Anglo-Australia. Here the relations between Anglo-Australians and Asian migrants were located in terms of host and guest, “simultaneously scripting indigenous people completely out of the picture” (Perera, "Whiteness" 196). Once again, the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians and Indigenous owners of Australia was usurped by the self-appointed guardians or gate-keepers of the Australian nation.

In the ensuing period a number of policy changes were introduced. These included the Hawke Labor government’s decision in its 1986 budget to reduce settlement programs. The funding of English language tuition for migrant children was halved, the Multicultural Education Program was abolished, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs was terminated, and a merger of the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the Special Broadcasting Service was planned (although not executed) (Markus, Race 28). The ‘Blainey debate’ further popularised the notion that Asian migrants were a costly burden to hardworking taxpayers, as well as being ‘favoured minorities’ who were the recipients of special government benefits unavailable to other Australians. Such ‘special benefits’ called into question the notions of equality and egalitarianism, and undermined the assumption that governments should treat all Australians equally.
Native Title and the Western Mining Corporation

The discourse of ‘sameness’ or equality was also widely used in discrediting Aboriginal claims for land rights and the special recognition of their status as the original custodians of this country. The second incident of populist racism aimed at a specific (racialised) group in Australian society to emerge in 1984 was the racist campaign against Aboriginal land rights, waged by the executive director of the Western Mining Corporation (WMC), Hugh Morgan. The mining industry’s attack on Aboriginal land rights was brought into national prominence following a number of proposed changes to land rights legislation in 1983. Some of these included the election in February, in Western Australia, of a Labor government committed to land rights legislation; the subsequent establishment of the Seaman inquiry into the most appropriate means of implementing land rights; and the release in December of the Hawke government’s principles that were to form the basis of national land rights legislation—including inalienable freehold title and the extension, nationally, of the Northern Territory land rights model (Markus, "Land" 21).

Morgan and the WMC responded with a publicity campaign designed to mobilise public sentiment against the modifications to land rights legislation suggested by the Western Australian and Federal Labor governments. Morgan won widespread media attention with his provocative statements meant to undermine the legitimacy of Aboriginal claims to land by questioning the moral basis of Aboriginal society. At an Australian Mining Industry Council seminar in May 1984 (in the presence of Clyde Holding, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs), Morgan proposed that the recognition of Aboriginal land rights also entailed the recognition of a heathen and barbaric culture (Markus, Race 61). He challenged the Australian community to consider whether the granting of Aboriginal land rights would also include the sanctioning of “infanticide, cannibalism, cruel initiation rites, vengeance killing, and child marriage” (qtd in Markus, "Land" 22).

One common theme in Blainey’s critique of the granting of special benefits to Asian migrants and Morgan’s objection to the granting of land rights to Aborigines is that both rested on a notion of the privileging of minority ‘groups’ at the expense of the wider Australian community. Morgan utilised notions of equality and egalitarianism in conjunction with a discourse of the victimisation of white Australians to promote his campaign. That notions of sameness and equal opportunity underpinned his comments
is clearly evident in the advertising material that was funded by the Chamber of Mines of Western Australia, based around the slogan ‘Land Rights should be Equal Rights’. One Western Australian television advertisement posed the questions:

  do you think it fair that less than 3 per cent of the population should claim ownership of up to 50 per cent of our land? Do you think it fair that any one group of people should have greater rights that [sic] any other group? Do you think it fair that any one group should control the future mineral wealth that belongs to every Western Australian? (qtd in Markus, Race 59, emphasis added).

The mining companies’ media campaign against the provision of Aboriginal land rights proved to be very effective. In Western Australia, the newly appointed Labor government rejected the key findings of the Seaman inquiry; the government formulated its land rights legislation in consultation with mining interests and, following defeat in the legislative council, decided against further attempts at legislation, opting to proceed by way of its administrative powers (Markus, "Land" 22). In the Federal arena, the Labor government abandoned plans for the national uniformity of land rights legislation. Another indication of the success of the attack on Aboriginal land rights and the shifting legitimacy of public debate occurred in 1987 when, on the grounds that it was too controversial, the Australian Bicentennial Authority rejected the publication of a commissioned article (by Justice Michael Kirby) on Aborigines and the law (Markus, "Land" 22).

In the ‘Blainey debate’ on Asian immigration and the claims made by Morgan and the WMC on Aboriginal land rights, we can see that both shared a sense of Australia’s dominant culture being under siege. Both Blainey and Morgan vehemently opposed what they saw as the government’s pandering to minority group interests, and its granting of special rights and privileges to some collectivities to which the broader Australian community was not entitled. This breach of the notions of equality and the ‘fair go’ were heralded as putting ‘mainstream’ Australians at a disadvantage even though social, political and material power still rests predominantly in the hands of Anglo-Celtic Australians. Politicians, customs officers, diplomats, judges, and the police all remain largely of Anglo-Celtic descent. Australian myth makers and icons, old and new, are also mostly Anglo-Celtic, ‘from shearers, [diggers] and surfers to TV and radio ‘personalities’, to movie stars and rock ‘n’ rollers” (Hage, "Anglo-Celtics" 44).
Howard and the Discourse of Race

Morgan and Blainey first undermined accepted norms in mainstream public discussion in their breaking of taboos that had been in place for much of the post-war decades. But it was the then leader of the Liberal Party, John Howard who brought racial issues to the forefront of Federal politics, first in 1988 (Markus, Race 82). In a press release in August headed ‘Immigration and One Australia’, Howard indicated his willingness to campaign on issues of race, and was quoted as wanting a reduction in Asian immigration:

> It would be in our immediate term interests and supportive of social cohesion if it [immigration from Asia] was slowed down a little so that the capacity of the community to absorb was greater. I’m not saying that I would end Asian immigration. … But it is a legitimate concern of any community and any government to say that the rate of migration from one particular area is so great that it is imposing social tensions and that it is imposing a lack of social cohesion … (qtd in Ricklefs 47, emphasis added).

By specifying his concern with the level of Asian immigration, in particular, Howard, like Blainey before him, utilised a discourse of race that, as we have seen, had largely been omitted from official debates in the post-war period. Like Blainey, Howard’s concern was not with Asian immigration as such, but with the levels of it. Howard and Blainey both exhibited a sense of loss of control over the numbers of ‘Asians’ who were gaining entry to the country and, in this way, signalled their assumed loss of ‘governmental belonging’. For Howard, the diversity established by the policy of multiculturalism was equated with social divisiveness, and increasing rates of Asian immigration were seen to result in a loss of social cohesion. His attempt to recoup or recover a sense of national homogeneity and cohesiveness was obvious in his usage of the slogan ‘One Australia’.

Howard’s promotion of the vision of ‘One Australia, One Nation and One Future’, in conjunction with his concern over the nation’s ability to ‘absorb’ the growing numbers of Asian immigrants indicated that his was a discourse of assimilation. For Howard, cultural and racial diversity, as well as the provision or allowance for such difference in policy were inimical or anathema to national unity. To maintain what Homi Bhabha has labelled the “impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force” (qtd in Stratton and Ang 124), Howard engaged in a process of suppression and repression (symbolic or otherwise), of difference. In his search for the true essence of Australianness, there
appeared little room for the legitimation of group differences. Howard seemed convinced that all Australians should be granted the same individual equal rights, but was deeply concerned by the idea that certain communities or collectivities had rights because they share a particular experience or history. As Reynolds suggests, “equality, conceived of in terms of the individual rather than the group, can be profoundly assimilationist while seeming not to be” ("Racism" 33). That Howard’s political stance was underpinned by the discourse of assimilation was made even more explicit by the publication of a 1991 letter in which he argued that “Australia made an error in abandoning its former policy of encouraging assimilation and integration in favour of multiculturalism” (qtd in Perera and Pugliese, "Racial" 14).

Howard did not just make use of the politics of race in terms of Asian migration. In 1988 he also embarked upon a crusade to shatter the bipartisan position on Aboriginal affairs, accentuating and utilising racial issues in order to demarcate the Liberal party’s position from that of Labor. Howard’s vision of ‘One Australia’ not only served his interests in terms of arguing for a slower rate of Asian immigration, it was also used to counter calls for a treaty with Aboriginal people and to reject Aboriginal land claims. In September, while claiming to advocate ‘equality of opportunity’, Howard commented that he abhorred “the notion of an Aboriginal treaty because it is repugnant to the ideals of One Australia” (qtd in Markus, Race 87). Earlier in the year at the first meeting in the new parliament house in May 1988, he refused to endorse a resolution declaring that Aboriginal people had been dispossessed of their land (Markus, Race 86). Howard rejected the notion that contemporary Australians should feel any sense of guilt or responsibility for the actions of previous generations against Aboriginal people: “I do not accept the doctrine of hereditary guilt. I acknowledge that, in the past, wrongs were done to Aboriginals, but they weren’t done by me. They weren’t done by my parents. They weren’t done by my generation” (qtd in Markus, Race 86).

In his insistent attempts to disconnect the present from the events of the past, Howard overlooked the enduring legacy of the process of colonisation. Through his claims that the atrocities committed against Indigenous people were not ‘done by him’, he failed to take responsibility for their continuing ramifications in contemporary Australian society. Within this process of ‘disremembering’, Howard attempted to absolve himself of any sense of agency or guilt for the mistreatment Aboriginal people have been
subjected to, both in the past and today. In his calls to forget the past, the links between former events and their present outcomes were hidden beneath an illusion of discontinuity that was generated in the proposition that the past was finished. Such claims reinforce Deborah Bird Rose’s view that in a society built on invasion and colonisation, a seemingly commonsensical orientation towards the future “enables a regime of violence to continue its horrific work whilst claiming the moral ground of making a better future” (99).

Howard’s claim that the notion of an Aboriginal treaty was ‘repugnant’ to the idea of ‘One Australia’ also informed his stance on Aboriginal land rights. Both were seen to violate the notion of ‘sameness’, and undermine the assumption that every individual should be treated equally. The notion that Indigeneity entitles one to a series of privileges and benefits unavailable to other Australians is seen to breach the canons of populist egalitarianism. But for non-dominant group members who have been denied the same access to material, educational or other societal resources, the notion of ‘equal rights’ becomes nonsensical. The treating of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the same way as non-Indigenous Australians can mean that these communities are further disadvantaged. Howard resented what he saw as the unfair privileging of some sectors of the Australian community over others, but this stance necessarily involved overlooking the way cultural, material and social resources have been disproportionately distributed in Australian society. As Hage contends, power in Australia “remains above all an ‘Anglo-Australian looking’ phenomenon” ("Anglo-Celtics" 44).

Despite his very unaccommodating stance on Aboriginal affairs and politics, including his position on Aboriginal land rights and his abhorrence of the provision of a treaty, it was Howard’s comments on Asian immigration that were to prove the most controversial. Howard argued that his intention, if elected, to reduce Asian immigration did not constitute an example of racism because his policy would be ‘non-discriminatory’ in the sense that people from every country in the world would be accepted—even though the composition of the intake would be adjusted in the interests of racial harmony and social cohesion. Press commentators, the Labor government, and even some Liberal Party members interpreted Howard’s statements as an attempt to exploit racism in the community for electoral benefit. In 1989 Prime Minister Hawke
moved that the House of Representatives give its unambiguous and unqualified commitment to the principle that, in determining the composition of the immigration intake, race or ethnic origin never be among the criteria. Howard’s response was that this amounted to a disavowal of the government’s sovereign right to determine who should enter the country. According to political commentators, Howard’s position significantly undermined his leadership and in May 1989 Andrew Peacock replaced him as the leader of the Liberal Party. The opposition to Howard’s attempts to undermine the bipartisan position on Aboriginal policies, immigration and multiculturalism highlights an important element in the broader political and cultural climate of the late 1980s. During this time, the discourse of race in the social and political context was still not totally accepted but, as we will see later, by the mid-1990s, Howard was able to use the notion of race to enhance his political career.

The Bicentenary and ‘Race’ as Resistance

In the previous analysis of the re-emergence and rearticulation of the politics of race over the 1980s, I have discussed instances in which the racialised identity of a minority ‘group’ was designated externally by members of the majority. Not only were these race-based definitions imposed from outside the communities in question, they were usually imbued with a negative valuation. In the following I explore the way in which Indigenous people have sought to reassert the primacy of race for the purpose of political mobilisation. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Aboriginal emphasis on blood lines and biological continuity has been used strategically in the Aboriginal cause for social justice. The framing of Indigenous politics in terms of the discourse of race signifies a positive valuation of racial difference serving, not to delegitimise claims for differential treatment, but to reinforce them.

In the post-war decades when race has been withdrawn from official multicultural rhetoric in favour of discourses of culture and ethnicity, Aborigines have had to fight to have themselves described as a race (Stratton, Race 32). As Colin Tatz observed in 1982, the “establishment of Aboriginality has been a tremendous battle” (qtd in K. S. Inglis, "Multiculturalism" 26). Indigenous peoples’ efforts to racialise themselves were clearly evident in their boycotting of the bicentennial ‘celebrations’ of 1988. The commemoration of two hundred years of national chauvinism centred on an irredeemably white and narrowly national history that depended on the exclusion of
Aboriginality. This was most clearly demonstrated in the staging of the Bicentenary that included, among other acts of validation of Anglo-Australianness, the re-enactment of the landing of the First Fleet in Sydney.

Inclusiveness and respect for Australia’s cultural pluralism were the key organising principles behind the Australian Bicentennial Authority’s scope of the celebrations, evident in their slogan ‘Living Together’.\(^{27}\) In its construction of Australian heritage as an “inclusive patchwork”, the Bicentennial celebrations indulged in what Chris Healy has called “gestural pluralism” (294), where Indigenous people were seen as another element “in a mosaic of diverse cultures sharing the Australian continent” (Curthoys, "Uneasy" 29). By refusing to position Indigenous heritage as yet another addition to an affirming and triumphalist narrative of Australian nationhood, the Aboriginal boycott exposed the absolute limits of this pluralism. For Aboriginal activists, it was not just a matter of supplementing Australian history with an Indigenous component, or simply of “adding some black stories” (Healy 292), it was more a matter of transforming the category of Australian history itself.

For Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the event was not one of celebration at all, but commemoration of the beginning of the desecration of their cultures and cultural sites, the slaughter of their people, and the appropriation of their land. As we have seen in chapter one, Aboriginal people in 1938 protested against the 150\(^{th}\) anniversary of the landing of the First Fleet, with the Australian Aboriginal League and the Aboriginal Progressive Association declaring 26 January to be a Day of Mourning. Indigenous activists and their supporters declared the Bicentennial year of 1988 to be a Year of Mourning (Stratton, Race 121). As one graffitied bill-board in Brisbane at the time indicated, the 1988 ‘Celebration of a Nation’ was really a celebration of genocide. The

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\(^{27}\) However, perhaps the government’s rhetoric was not inclusive enough. At the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council’s annual conference in Canberra in 1988, the then Minister for Immigration, Clyde Holding, opened the gathering in the Great Hall of new Parliament House with the words: “I am very pleased to be welcoming you all as representatives of the ethnic communities to the Great Hall of the Australian people”. Phuong Ngo, a Vietnamese-Australian councillor from Fairfield in NSW retorted “I thought we ARE the Australian people” (qtd in Marion Le 125). According to Ang, ‘ethnic’ subjects highlight the fact that they do not (quite) belong to the ‘host’ country—or at least are positioned as such. The very name ‘ethnic’ “conjures up the received memory of another site of symbolic belonging, a site which is not ‘here’” (“On Not Speaking” 17).
Aboriginal boycott then, was not an absence, but a presence that undermined the authority of the Bicentenary to represent all Australians (Healy 284).

Mabo and Native Title

Indigenous politics received widespread attention in 1992 with the High Court’s passing of the Mabo decision. As Markus contends, analysis of the arguments employed to discredit the court’s ruling shows the extent to which racialised forms of reasoning had become entrenched in Australian public life by this period (Race 72).

When the British arrived in 1788, Governor Philip was instructed by the British Crown to ‘negotiate with the natives’. But instead, the legal and property rights of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were ignored under the legal fiction of *terra nullius*, literally ‘no one’s land’. Through this convenient fiction the British sought to erase the presence of the original custodians of the country, thus enabling settlers and colonists to seize land more freely (Perera and Pugliese, "Wogface" 41). After 204 years, the lie of *terra nullius* was overturned by the High Court by a majority of six to one in the landmark Mabo case, delivered in June 1992. In this judgement the High Court recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ common law rights to land, that is, it recognised their Native Title. Native Title survived on vacant Crown land, state forests, national parks, beaches and foreshores. Critics exaggerated the actual effect this ruling had on the reclamation of land, but Indigenous claimants had to pass a very difficult test to make a successful case. Claimants were required to establish a continuing connection with the land (or waters) in question, according to traditional law or custom, from the time of British invasion to the present. As we have seen in chapter three, in order to ‘smooth the dying pillow’ of the Aboriginal race, Indigenous people were removed from their ancestral lands and taken to government reserves or missions. As such, it has proven very difficult for them to establish a continuing connection with their ‘country’.

In December 1993 the *Native Title Act* was introduced. According to this legislation, Native Title covered the whole continent in 1788, but it had been extinguished by Crown grants of ‘freehold’ title. This effectively left only Crown land open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights claims. In recognition of the difficulty most Indigenous people would have in making land claims under the High Court’s
narrow definition, the Keating government established a fund to assist groups in the purchasing of land. The *Land Fund and Indigenous Land Corporation Act* of 1995 allocated government funding each year, to continue until 2004. Two-thirds of the annual grant was to be invested to build the Fund’s revenue, while the remaining money was allocated for acquisition, land management and general administration (Markus, *Race* 39).

In response to what critics viewed as the unfair privileging of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, a vehement outcry arose across the nation. Markus claims that in the three-month period from June to August 1993, Indigenous issues covered the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on twenty-nine occasions and, for five weeks of this period, on at least every second day (*Race* 74). A number of opponents to the concept of Native Title argued that non-Indigenous Australians were being victimised by the government’s pandering to minority group interests, and rehearsed the argument that the government should treat all of its citizens equally. According to the Western Australian Liberal State President, Bill Hassell, Native Title was based on ‘racial discrimination’: “[y]ou have to be an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander person to be qualified to get native title” (qtd in Markus, *Race* 75). In response to the commonly held assumption that the law should be the ‘same for everyone’, Hugh Morgan complained that Mabo brought “in a separate law for one group of Australians” and that it encouraged Aboriginal Australians “to think of themselves as separate and distinct from their fellow citizens” (qtd in Markus, *Race* 75). Morgan criticised attempts by Indigenous people to exploit notions of ‘difference’ to mobilise support for their own political and moral claims.

**Howard as Prime Minister**

When re-elected as the leader of the Liberal Party in 1995, Howard surprised some of his supporters by taking a less hard-line approach to Aboriginal affairs and Asian immigration. In the Liberal-National coalition’s 1996 election campaign, Howard steered well clear of making any attacks on the orthodoxies of racial policy, something that was probably related to the negative consequences of his 1988 statements. The coalition pledged that it was committed to Australia’s unique and enriching cultural diversity, claiming to stand for the Australian people, as evident in the party slogan ‘For All of Us’. That the slogan was explicitly linked to a sense of Anglo-grievance is clear
from the Liberal Party campaign director, Andrew Robb’s assertion that it was aimed predominantly at ‘middle Australia’:

‘For all of us’ was designed to reach people who legitimately felt betrayed. What we were saying was that in governing, we would not just consider the well being of a select few, but we would consider the broad national interest. We would govern not just for some, but for all of us” (qtd in Brett 12).

According to Raimond Gaita, the words ‘for all of us’ implied that “Aborigines, ethnic minorities and recent immigrants had deprived the rest of ‘us’ of our fair share of goods and opportunities” (qtd in Birch, "Black" 9). Noel Pearson, former director of the Cape York Land Council, spelled out the implicit message of exclusion in this seemingly inclusive slogan: ‘For all of us, but not for them’ (Perera and Pugliese, "Racial" 1; see also Gray and Winter 1).

Another sub-text of Howard’s motto related to a rejection of previous Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating’s politics that were not ‘for all of us’ but were seen to privilege ‘special’ or ‘sectional’ minority interests. Keating’s government had been committed to reconciliation with Aboriginal people. In late 1992 in his historic ‘Redfern speech’ that launched the International Year of Indigenous People, Keating acknowledged the historical conduct of whites in Australia’s ‘settlement’, arguing that reconciliation depended on white ownership and recognition of past injustices:

recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion …(qtd in Nicoll, "Backlash" 175).

The Keating administration was also widely associated with attempts to push for greater Australian integration with Asia. Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke spoke of the importance of Australia becoming ‘Asia literate’, but the push for Australians to see themselves as “a multicultural nation in Asia” (Keating qtd in Ang and Stratton 22) is usually associated with the Keating government. 28 Rhetoric of Australia’s relationship

28 Walker has commented that the government’s ‘pro-Asia’ stance might not differ so much from the anxiety that characterised relations between Australia and Asia in the nineteenth century. Though the new message about Asia emphasised the trading and material benefits available to Australia, there was still a distinct echo of “the old, punitive message that Asia could inflict real damage—this time by locking Australia out of its markets” (“Australia" 135). More often than not, the rhetoric about Australian-Asian relations is couched in terms of taking advantage of the developing capitalist economies in the region and, as such, “there is an opportunistic character to much of the debate” (Robinson 158). It
to Asia was dominated by neo-liberal economic discourse, rather than by reference to history—that is, there was little or no discussion of the Asian presence in Australia that predated the white colonial presence (Robinson 158). But whether the government’s motivation for advocating closer ties with Asia was material or cultural, Keating’s attempts at redefining Australia’s national identity away from its British roots, and towards a region that had existed historically in people’s minds as a source of threat, are widely cited as one source of explanation for the government’s crushing defeat in the election. From one moment to the next, the average Anglo-Australian was told by the Keating government, without much positive explanation, to “ditch their national self-conception” (Ang and Stratton 34). But, as Jakubowicz asserts, “White Australia still has purchase in the consciousness of many current Australians” ("Australia" 33).

The Howard Coalition government won the federal election in March 1996 and this proved to be another pivotal year in terms of the “re-licensing of racism in Australia” (Perera and Pugliese, "Racial” 1)—both in relation to Asian immigration and Aboriginal politics. In his 1995 electoral campaign, Howard vowed that under his government, “the views of all particular interests will be assessed against the national interest and sentiments of mainstream Australia” (qtd in Ang and Stratton 37). As Ang and Stratton suggest, it is reasonable to assume that the sentiments Howard was referring to here were those of the average Anglo-Celtic Australian (37). In his designation of the ‘mainstream’ as white or Anglo-Celtic, Howard implicitly marginalised people of non-Anglo-Celtic descent, and positioned their ‘particular interests’ as being diametrically opposed to the ‘national interest’. Capitalising on the politics of Anglo-grievance in ‘The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach’—his lecture for the Menzies Research Centre’s national lecture series in 1995—Howard again equated the interests of ‘mainstream (white) Australia’ with those of the nation. According to Howard: “[t]here is a frustrated mainstream in Australia today which sees government decisions increasingly driven by the noisy, self-interested clamour of powerful vested interests with scant regard for the national interest” (qtd in Stratton, Race 78).

is thus the dependence of Australia’s economic security upon trade with Asian countries that has prompted the recent reappraisal of our cultural orientation towards Asia (Hudson and Stokes 145).
After the coalition’s electoral victory, Howard remained true to his word and made the interests of ‘mainstream Australia’ his central concern. His former restraint on issues of race was abandoned and in his first year of office he abolished a number of major Commonwealth research and liaison offices. The first agency to be closed was the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the main advisory body to Cabinet on access and equity for ethnic minorities in relation to government services (Jakubowicz, "Australia" 35). The Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research was also abolished, retaining only its statistical function. Funding to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was drastically cut in the 1996 budget and was further reduced in the budget in 1997. Howard severely slashed the migrant intake and shifted the balance of the immigration program from family reunion to skill categories, tightening up English proficiency requirements for prospective migrants (Ang and Stratton 24). Despite the assiduous protests of government ministers that these cuts were not racially based, the categories ‘family reunion’ and ‘non-skilled immigration’ ensure that the effects are felt disproportionately by migrants from Asia (Perera and Pugliese, "Racial" 2). The government has a repeated rhetorical commitment to the value of the family, “but surely, by reducing family migration they must mean that some families are of more value than others” (Kalantzis 19).

The institutions that had been won largely from the political mobilisation of ethnic minorities were discarded, but the attack on Aboriginal communities was even more severe, with more than $400 million cut from Aboriginal programs in Howard’s first budget. The main representative body for Indigenous people, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) lost 40 percent of its funding overnight (Jakubowicz, "Australia" 36). ATSIC’s accountability was the subject of the coalition government’s first cabinet meeting, as well as the Prime Minister’s first Canberra press conference (Newman 2). A sustained ideological attack on Indigenous people was orchestrated by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, John Herron, who accused Indigenous housing, legal and medical groups, businesses and communities more generally of corruption and poor financial management. Both Howard and Herron sought to undermine what they called ‘the Aboriginal industry’, describing the goal of self-determination for Indigenous people as ‘divisive’ (Perera and Pugliese, "Racial" 2).
In December 1996 another public outcry against the assumed privileging of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was heard, this time in response to the passing of the High Court’s Wik decision. In its majority 4:3 decision, the High Court found in favour of the Wik people of Cape York Peninsula, confirming that colonial tenures had not fully extinguished Native Title, and that the rights of Native Title holders and pastoralists could coexist on Crown land covered by pastoral leases. According to the Wik decision, the rights of Indigenous people, including the rights to visit sacred sites, hold ceremonies and collect ‘bush tucker’, could continue alongside a pastoral lease but, where a conflict of interest arose, the rights of the pastoralist prevailed. In the ensuing ‘debate’, the ‘national interest’ of jobs for all (read white) Australians was pitted against the legal right of the traditional owners to decide on the usage of their lands. As Suvendrini Perera and Joseph Pugliese maintain, a “cleverly managed campaign of white hysteria” followed the Wik decision, directed at fears of Aboriginal land claims targeting suburban backyards (a legal impossibility) and of “national progress endlessly stymied by Aboriginal intransigence” (“Wogface" 41).

Howard’s legislative response to the High Court’s decision was to draw up his nefarious ‘10-Point Plan’, which was drafted into the Native Title Act Amendment Bill. His intention was markedly to reduce or diminish the Aboriginal powers of negotiation established in the High Court’s Mabo and Wik rulings. In response to pressure from farmers, the government promised “bucket loads of extinguishment” (qtd in Perera and Pugliese, "Wogface" 41) of Native Title. Howard sought to secure the rights of pastoralists in a number of ways, including broadening the range of activities that could be undertaken on a pastoral lease, limiting the grounds on which a Native Title claim could be registered and ruling out claims on waterways, ocean resources and on land needed for infrastructure such as railways, roads and bridges (Markus, Race 42-43). The 10-Point Plan also sought the introduction of a ‘sunset clause’ or final date for the lodging of a Native Title claim, as well as offering lease-holders an opportunity to upgrade their leases to freehold, thereby adding considerably to the market value of their properties. But the Coalition government lacked the necessary numbers to ensure passage of the Native Title Amendment Bill in the Senate, and it was twice defeated by the combined votes of the Labor, Democrat and independent parties. The government faced the prospect of a double-dissolution election on Indigenous issues until a compromise was reached and the legislation was passed. The government made some
concessions including removal of the ‘sunset clause’ and broadening the basis for registration of Native Title claims but Indigenous leaders, who were excluded from the final round of negotiations, felt that “more was lost than had been gained from Wik” (Markus, Race 44).

Howard’s campaign against Indigenous rights and claims for social justice continued with his refusal to apologise to the ‘Stolen Generations’, as recommended in the Human Rights Commission Report of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. As an aspect of the policy of assimilation, Aboriginal children, especially so-called ‘half-castes’, were forcibly removed from their families by white social workers and either sent to welfare institutions or to labour as unpaid servants in white households.\(^\text{29}\) As we have seen in chapter three, it was hoped that through removing children from the influence of their Aboriginal families, they would be inculcated with the values and culture of white Australia. However, the result was often misery, abuse and a loss of culture and identity. Chair of the report Sir Ronald Wilson stated that “what was done meets the international law definition of genocide” (qtd in Ferrier, "Editorial" 5), but the Howard government stressed the benevolent intentions in the state’s adoption of such policies, and ruled out as too ‘divisive’ any question of compensation for those affected (Perera and Pugliese, "Racial" 3). Senator Herron even argued in a submission to a senate committee that there had been no ‘stolen generation’ as such, because the “proportion of separated Aboriginal children was no more than 10 per cent” (qtd in Markus, Race 110). Exact figures are almost impossible to ascertain, but estimates of the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families and communities range from 10 to 30 percent.

Herron’s critics were quick to point out that the trauma inflicted by the practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families could not be measured solely by the number of children taken, but by the lasting impact on Aboriginal families and

\(^{29}\) See, for example, some of the autobiographical narratives by Aboriginal women who were brought up during the assimilationist era and faced long periods of enforced separation from their families while working for white property owners. Some of these include Marnie Kennedy’s Born a Half-Caste (1985), Elsie Roughsey’s An Aboriginal Mother Tells of the Old and the New (1984), and Glenys Ward’s Wandering Girl (1987).
communities more generally. Indeed, the Inquiry reported that the psychological, social and cultural costs of these practices were cumulative and enduring—children abducted under the policy of removal, and their own children are over-represented among adult and juvenile detainees, deaths in police custody, in child substitute care and as wards of the state (Perera and Pugliese, "Wogface" 49). It was also pointed out that the days of taking Aboriginal children from their families are certainly not behind us. According to the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, “[t]he fact remains that Aboriginal children are still being removed from their families at an unacceptable rate, whether by the child welfare or the juvenile justice systems, or both” (qtd in Bird 11). Aboriginal children are still being forcibly separated from their parents because welfare workers often rely on culturally inappropriate forms of knowledge, resulting in their failure to consider the role of the wider family in Aboriginal communities. Sir Ronald Wilson has argued that perfectly healthy Aboriginal children are “being removed from their families now just as in the days of Australia’s assimilation policy” (qtd in Koch 7).

Once again, the Prime Minister’s reluctance to make reparation for past injustices culminated in a denial of the fact that past policies and actions have profound ramifications in contemporary settings. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra contend that the current style of government, law and property emanates from a chain of juridical acts that leads inexorably back to the advent of colonisation. They lament that many white Australians (including Howard) try to minimise the importance of this history, “claiming that it is something that happened to other people a long time ago, only of interest to Aboriginal activists and a minority of neurotics indulging in White liberal guilt” (24). In Howard’s refusal to make an apology on behalf of the nation to those affected by the practice of Aboriginal child removal, he disavows that the chain that links the present to the past “is fundamental and structural in the current order, not mere nostalgia or sentimentality” (Hodge and Mishra 24).
Howard has characterised his unwillingness to acknowledge Australia’s racist past as his rejection of the ‘Black armband view’ of history, arguing that this view of the nation’s past entails:

the belief that most of Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. I take a different view. I believe that the balance sheet of history is one of heroic achievement and that we have achieved much more as a nation of which we can be proud than of which we should be ashamed (qtd in Healy 290).

In his rendering of Australia’s history Howard constructed the British invasion and dispossession of Indigenous people, and the official racism of the ‘White Australia’ policy as mere ‘blemishes’ in the nation’s past. His extolling of the virtues of white (and largely male) achievement since colonisation effectively silenced Aborigines, Asian and other non-white Australians, reinstating and renaturalising the triumphalist version of Australian history as the only one. Howard’s ‘forgetfulness’ placed an unfair burden on Indigenous and non-Anglo-Celtic communities who are forced to act as the keepers of the nation’s collective memory. Tony Birch argues that the onus falls on Aboriginal people to be the conscience of those unwilling to acknowledge Australia’s history, and to “remember white Australia’s past for it” ("Black" 15).

Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party

As previously suggested, 1996 marked another important year in Australian public and political life in terms of the rearticulation of the discourse of race. With Pauline Hanson’s victory in the 1996 Federal election, race-based discourses reclaimed a central place in Australian nationalism. Following her predecessors Blainey and Howard, Hanson was the latest right-wing commentator to bring the ongoing salience of the discourse of race into sharp relief. As we have seen in chapter one, the two markers of absolute racial ‘Otherness’ that constituted and delimited national membership in the time of the ‘White Australia’ policy were Aborigines and Asians. I have shown that Aborigines were kept ‘out’ of the nation through their confinement on reserves and in

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30 Geoffrey Blainey’s 1993 article ‘Drawing Up a Balance Sheet of Our History’ provides the source of the phrase ‘black armband view of history’, in which he sees a valid parallel between the history of black oppression and the contemporary ‘victimisation’ of Anglo-Australians: “the vilification of Aborigines by Europeans who lived in the nineteenth century is now almost matched by the vilification of those same Europeans at the hands of present day moralists, scholars, journalists and film-makers” (“Drawing” 15).
fringe settlements, and that Asians were kept out by immigration policies that literally excluded them. As Curthoys notes, Aborigines were to be excluded from the towns and cities, while Asian and, more specifically, Chinese people were to be kept out of the country altogether ("Uneasy" 25). In both cases, the ostensible justification for exclusion was that these groups were incapable of assimilating into British-Australian society. However, in both the colonial and contemporary eras, the desire to exclude Aborigines and Asians is more about minimising any challenge they might pose to the sole entitlement of whites to the nation and its resources.

Hanson’s re-racialisation of Australian identity targeted Indigenous and Asian-Australians, in particular, as those who were intractably unassimilable. It is not surprising that Hansonite rhetoric was aimed at those racial minorities that have long existed in the national consciousness as posing the greatest threat to white exclusive possession of the nation. Her naming of Aboriginal and Asian-Australian racial minorities, in particular, was proof of the inability of the white national consciousness to forget completely that these communities have historically posed the most significant challenge to possessions ‘we’ deem rightfully ‘ours’. The incompleteness of attempts to expunge the threat these ‘constitutive Others’ have posed to the national imaginary is obvious from the anxiety they still generate in the white collective psyche. For example, a 1993 national survey of the attitudes of Australian university students “found a disturbing animosity towards Asians and Aborigines” (Coates 7). The following quotation from 2000 further reveals the incompleteness of our attempts to forget the challenge to white racial and economic dominance that Indigenous and Asian peoples have historically made: “[t]here are two major groups of non-white Australians, both of which have been here a very long time and we have had problems with. One is the Aborigines … And the other one is Asians” (anonymous interviewee qtd in Schech and Haggis 233).

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31 As I have shown in chapter one, where Chinese people were granted entry to Australia, they were confined in specific areas or segregated villages that came to be known as ‘Chinatowns’.

32 Chapter one has shown that in the case of the Chinese, and ‘Asiatics’ more generally, it was not so much that colonists resented their inability to adapt to British-Australian society, but the success with which they did so.
Hanson was the owner of a ‘fish ‘n’ chip’ shop in Ipswich who was preselected by the Liberal Party to stand in the safe Labor seat of Oxley at the March 1996 election. She was disendorsed by the Liberal Party, but gained election as the independent member for Oxley following an electoral swing of 22 percent, the largest against the government of any seat in the country (Brett 7). The Liberal Party’s decision to disendorse Hanson as a candidate followed her initial contribution to the public discourse on race through inflammatory comments published in the *Queensland Times* (6 January 1996). Notwithstanding the statistical proof of Aboriginal disadvantage, she argued that white Australians were the ones being discriminated against, because the government “‘showers them [Aborigines] with money, facilities and opportunities that only these people can obtain no matter how minute the indigenous blood that is flowing through their veins, and this is what is causing racism’” (Hanson qtd in Newman 5, emphasis added). As Paul Newman shows, the blame for the emergence of racism was thereby transferred from white Australians to “the profligate Labor government and the recipients of the money—undeserving, because genetically inauthentic Aborigines” (5).

In this same newspaper article, Hanson rehearsed the popularly invoked justification for denying any responsibility in the historical (and continuing) mistreatment of Aboriginal people because ‘she did not do it’: “I don’t feel responsible for the treatment of Aboriginal people in the past because I had no say…” (qtd in Markus, *Race* 152).

Upon her election Hanson declared that she was fighting for the rights of all (white) Australians with the exception of Indigenous people. She claimed that she would represent “the white community, the [Anglo] immigrants, Italians, Greeks, whoever, it really doesn’t matter … anyone apart from the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, you know. I just want everyone to be equal…” (qtd in Markus, *Race* 153). Hanson’s inclusion of ‘Italians’ and ‘Greeks’ within her conception of ‘the white community’ was indicative of the adjustments that have occurred in the process of racial formation as patterns in migration have shifted. It has been shown that (Southern) Italians were positioned in the early stages of the nineteenth century in clearly racialised terms as ‘the Chinese of Europe’ or ‘the olive peril’. Thus we can see that groups that have historically occupied a lower position on the ‘race hierarchy’ moved up the ladder towards the “whiter end of the scale” (Perera, "Whiteness" 186). This shift from the racial exclusion to the ethnic inclusion of continental European migrants in contemporary formulations of Australian whiteness is indicative of the broadening of
the category ‘white’ that occurred in the post-war era, as discussed in chapter three. While some formerly excluded groups were given a part in the ‘fantasy of whiteness’, it still results in the ‘leaving at the bottom end the … categories of ‘Asians’ and ‘Aborigines’ … the two, uncoincidentally, that are the most explicitly targeted by Hansonism” (Perera, "Whiteness" 186).

Race was of central importance in Hanson’s rhetoric in relation to Aboriginal rights. She opposed the Mabo decision of 1992 and called for the abolition of ATSIC. But Hanson also mobilised, and demonstrated the continuing effectiveness of race-based distinctions, in terms of ‘Asian’ immigration, her other major political target (Povinelli 40, 44). In her maiden speech to parliament, Hanson not only discussed Aboriginal people and the way the ‘handouts’ they received were encouraging separatism (Jupp 265), she also called for the immediate abolition of multiculturalism and the halting of Asian immigration:

I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians … They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate. Of course I will be called a racist but, if I can invite whom I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say who comes into my country. A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united (qtd in Markus, Race 157).

In claiming her right to exert the same level of control over the Australian nation as her household, we can see quite clearly that Hanson was concerned about her perceived loss of ‘governmental belonging’. As Hage claims, such a sense of national belonging exists where one seeks to manage the internal and external politics of the nation “such that it remains ‘one’s home’” (White 46).

Hanson’s formulation of unassimilable difference, and the understanding of race that made the introduction of the ‘White Australia’ policy an imperative for the newly formed Australian nation did differ in one respect and, in this way, she was able to claim that she was not racist. In the time of the ‘White Australia’ policy, the discourse of race was used as an expression of racial hierarchy and as a site of biological difference but, for Hanson, race served as a symbol or marker of an incompatible cultural difference, that was not necessarily inferior. Thus in her speech, ‘A Reply to my Critics’, delivered in the House of Representatives in late 1996, Hanson continually asserted that she was not racist:
Let me make one thing clear: I am not a racist by any definition of that word ... I am not opposed to any person or group because of their race, colour or national or ethnic origin. I do not think that anyone is superior or inferior to anyone else because of their origin or background (qtd in Stratton, Race 32).

Hanson’s reliance on a ‘traditional’, biologically determinist definition of racism that saw it as an expression of prejudicial behaviour or attitudes based on a racial hierarchy allowed her to express anti-Asian and anti-Aboriginal views, while at the same time maintaining that she was “not a racist in any sense of that word” (qtd in Ommundsen, "M-Word" 9). In this ‘new racism’ or “culturalism” (Stratton, Race 13), Asians are not racially inferior, they are ‘merely’ too culturally different to adjust to the dominant requirements of the ‘Australian way of life’. For Hanson, as long as migrants changed their culture sufficiently to emulate that of ‘mainstream’ Australia, it was less important if they were racially distinct: “I wouldn’t mind if there were more Asians in Australia ... as long as they spoke English” (qtd in Markus, Race 191). Hanson thus invoked a form of racism without races, based not on ideas of biological superiority but on expressions of cultural difference and incompatibility. While for many, such a stance is the equivalent of racism, hers is more a politics of assimilation, not of segregation or exclusion. Her position could more accurately be described as “multiracial assimilationist” (Ang and Stratton 36), or as the politics of “popular assimilationism” (Curthoys, "Uneasy" 31).

Not only did Hanson seek to undermine claims that she was racist based on her notion of ‘culturalist’ forms of distinction, she also deflected these accusations with a proclamation of the seemingly non-racist position that everyone should be treated in the same manner. In maintaining the anti-racist pretence that “all Australians must be treated equally and the same” (qtd in Lake 122), Hanson’s politics brought to the fore further reactionary populist rhetoric that explicitly denounced the privileging of minority groups, and the attendant victimisation of Anglo-Australians. Beyond a general anxiety about national decline, the underlying reasons for this increased sense of Anglo-grievance were largely economic, but resentment manifested itself in attacks on visible minorities, rather than the “invisible denizens of the banks, boardrooms and bureaucracies” (Lake 119). Australia’s integration into the international markets of the global arena has led to rising unemployment rates, the disappearance of traditional ‘low-skilled’ jobs and growing levels of impoverishment for many Australians. Particularly among the more vulnerable older and working-class Australians, the
perception that minority groups have profited from practices of affirmative action, to the extent that the white majority is now the disadvantaged group, is widely held (Ommundsen, "M-Word" 9).

Like Blainey and Howard, Hanson contributed to the narrative of Anglo-grievance, sharing the belief that ‘ordinary Australians’ (that is, ordinary white Australians) were being victimised through the granting of ‘special benefits’ to minority groups. Asians were condemned for taking ‘our’ jobs, while Aborigines, on the other hand, were rebuked for not working hard enough, and thereby constituting a cost to the hardworking taxpayer (Povinelli 40). Hanson not only decried the access of Aborigines and Asians to the nation’s economic assets, she was also concerned about their claims to the nation itself. In her insistence that the nation was in danger of being ‘swamped by Asians’ she reinvoked notions of the ‘yellow peril’ and the ‘Asian menace’ that debarred Asians from entering the newly Federated nation. The renaming of Australia as ‘Australasia’ by its Chinese-Indian president Poona Li Hung in Pauline Hanson: The Truth (1997) further served to emphasise the threat of future Asianisation. Hanson also objected to Indigenous land rights on the basis that such ‘benefits’ were only available to Aboriginal people, ‘no matter how minute the indigenous blood’. In both cases, Hanson sought to deny Asian and Aboriginal Australians resources to which whites claim sole entitlement. Hanson’s rhetoric reminds us that the white national consciousness is still anxious about maintaining racial supremacy, cultural and economic dominance and sole possession of the nation.

Hanson and her One Nation Party enjoyed much greater popularity and electoral support when her rhetoric consisted of populist simplicities than when attempting to formulate detailed policies. The Queensland election of June 1998 was the first test of One Nation’s electoral appeal, and it won an amazing 22.7 percent of the primary vote (Markus, Race 172). One Nation won eleven of 89 seats in the one-house Queensland parliament, outvoting the previously governing National Party. Hanson’s criticisms of non-discriminatory migration, the policy of multiculturalism and special assistance to Indigenous and Asian-Australians were widely supported, but she faced trouble when trying to construct an economic policy that would appeal to her electorate. In October 1998 Hanson lost her re-election campaign, and by mid-February 1999, support for One Nation had dropped to two per cent of the national electorate, with a number of One
Nation’s Queensland MPs resigning from the party (Wu 8-9). One Nation eventually lost official party status in Queensland due to an insufficient number of MPs. One Nation did not bring into being, so much as tap into an existing constituency of Anglo-grievance, one characterised by its support for racist rhetoric, simplistic ‘solutions’, and the yearning for a return “to Australia’s supposed golden age of equal rights and opportunity, often associated with the Menzies era” (Markus, *Race* 21).

The Centenary of Federation and the Shadow of ‘White Australia’

The world into which Australia emerged 100 years ago is profoundly different from the world we live in today. A constant sense of change in almost every aspect of human endeavour is apparent (Melbourne Federation Festival Brochure 2001).

The Centenary of Federation in 2001 was officially celebrated largely without acknowledging the historic or contemporary preoccupation with the discourse of race in Australian society. As part of their promotional campaign, Melbourne’s Federation Festival organisers emphasised the dramatic shifts or transitions that have occurred in Australian society over the last one hundred years. Numerous Centenary of Federation publications and pamphlets commemorated the nation’s ‘birth’ by highlighting the obvious and profound differences between Australia now and in 1901. In the words of journalist Mike Steketee, “the Australia of today is barely recognisable from that of 100 years ago” (14). Much of the Centenary of Federation propaganda also invited us to take advantage of the cultural and ethnic plurality of contemporary Australian society. In recent imaginings of the nation, cultural diversity has been used as a ‘sales pitch’—as a way of marketing, commodifying and selling the nation back to us. Australia’s cultural and ethnic diversity is lauded or promoted as an intrinsic part of contemporary Australian society, and this diversity is often extolled as a clear sign of how far we have come in the past century. The Centenary of Federation celebrations emphasised how far the nation had progressed in economic or material ways, and in cultural terms. Centenary memorabilia reminded us that we are a democratic, multicultural and ‘fair

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33 Miriam Dixson’s *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity, 1788 to the Present* (1999) is a prime example of the ‘Anglo-grievance’ that many white Australians feel today. Dixson laments her perceived loss of the ‘core Anglo-Celtic culture’, a result of the cultural and ethnic diversity of post-war migration. Her call for an affirmation of this ‘core’ Australian culture is really a call for a return to white racial and cultural dominance.
go’ society. We were told that Australians are friendly and open, generous and, most of all, tolerant. But as Rodney Hall suggested in his Alfred Deakin Lecture—“who we are is complex, who we think we are is often misleadingly simple” (R. Hall).

Rhetoric surrounding the Centenary of Federation celebrations was also replete with an emphasis on the peaceful nature of colonial and political negotiations. Journalist Paul Kelly, for instance, asserted that part of the success of Federation lay in the peaceful and practical spirit of compromise: “[t]here was no blood spilled, no war with Britain, no hymn to liberty” (14). An official booklet by the National Council for the Centenary of Federation stipulated that “[i]n peace, not in anger a new nation was born”. However, these claims completely overlooked the fact that for Indigenous people, the Federation era was by no means peaceful or free of bloodshed. Marcia Langton has argued that it is wrong for Australians to claim that the nation was born of a peaceful process. At the very time constitutional conventions were being held, other white men were simultaneously “engaged in savage frontier campaigns to take territory from Aboriginal peoples, territory that the men at the conventions assumed a new authority over” ("Nations" 517). Langton reminds us that Indigenous peoples were not the only racialised minorities to suffer during this time. “[T]he Chinese people then living in Australia, many near the gold-mining fields that had brought riches to the colonial masters were still under attack” ("Nations" 517-18).

An over-emphasis on how much has changed is made at the expense of acknowledging what has stayed the same. A tendency to highlight the radical shifts and points of departure from the values of Australian society in 1901 involved the neglect of those residual ideologies and assumptions that remained in 2001. Obviously Australian and all other societies in the world have changed over the last one hundred years. Australia now has a non-discriminatory immigration policy that is based on inclusion rather than exclusion, and it currently grants national membership to communities that were formerly denied it. Cultural compatibility and a capacity to contribute to the economy are presently much more important requirements for national inclusion than a shared (white) racial identity. But the point is not so much that we no longer have a ‘White Australia’ policy, but that we did have one, and that its cultural legacy continues to pervade contemporary Australian society.
In Melbourne the Centenary of Federation celebrations revolved around the centenary of the opening of the first Parliament of the Commonwealth government. At the ceremony in the Royal Exhibition Hall, young Australian of the year Hayley Eves opened the proceedings with the lines: “I am young, I am a woman and I’m an Asian Australian. That I am standing here in front of you demonstrates clearly that we have changed” (qtd in Le 124). According to Marion Le, Hayley’s testimony served as a way of “stealing the opening from the celebration of the past and setting the agenda clearly for the future” (124). Undoubtedly Hayley’s assertion was correct—her presence at the ceremony as a young Asian-Australian woman was indicative of an important shift over the past century. But the alibi of symbolism can work to mask enduring social and structural in/equalities.\(^\text{34}\) In Le’s words, Hayley’s role at the ceremony functioned to gesture symbolically that “[t]here is no going back” (124). In other words her presence, in representational terms, was tied to the future, to a mobile, modernising and forward-looking Australia.\(^\text{35}\)

In distinction to this, in the official celebrations Aboriginality symbolised Australia’s past. Indigenous cultures had a relatively fixed value in the representations of Australia as “creatures of the outback—part of our outback identity” (Helen Irving qtd in Steketee 14). Aboriginal cultures were represented as past, traditional and authentic, evident in the dawn ceremony on 1 January 2001 where Arrernte people from Central Australia performed a traditional ceremony that served as a symbolic counter to the fact that Aborigines played no role in drafting the Constitution.\(^\text{36}\) According to Irving, ‘we’ “are not representing [Aboriginal people] much differently than we did at the turn of the 19th century” (qtd in Steketee 14). As in the Federation celebrations in 1901, Aborigines in the Centennial ceremonies of 2001 were “theme-parked” (Irving qtd in Steketee 14),

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\(^{34}\) Without wanting to diminish the importance of Cathy Freeman’s role in the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, her presence also operated more as a symbol of equality than proof of it. In both cases, young, non-white women were used for nationalist and tourism purposes to ‘prove’ that Australia has thrown off the shackles of its sexist, racist and classist past.

\(^{35}\) In maintaining that Australia’s future is linked to Asia, the centuries-old relationship between Australia and Asia—that predated white ‘settlement’ is overlooked.

\(^{36}\) Some Indigenous people objected to the staging of the ceremony in the river bed by the Old Telegraph Station, better known to Aborigines as the Bungalow, because it was once a despised place where many mixed-race Aboriginal children were separated from their families in the 1930s and 1940s (Toohey, "Tribe" 5).
portraying very narrow and limited cultural representations. However, the many Aboriginal people who live in urban centres or large country towns might not have identified with these ‘outback’ representations, preferring to identify themselves in a myriad of other ways (Irving qtd in Steketee 14).

The Politics of Indigeneity

(White) critics of Aboriginal efforts to represent themselves in terms of biological or cultural essentialism have argued that the Aboriginal emphasis on notions of ‘blood’, descent and biological/cultural continuity are damaging to the Aboriginal cause for social justice. The argument is that biological essentialism can lead only to a reinstatement of racial hierarchies and new forms of racism. As detailed in the first chapter, essentialist depictions of individual and group character have often been mobilised by dominant groups to justify oppression and exploitation. But Aboriginal people have been able to appropriate essentialist notions of themselves by inverting the codes that normally subjugate them. Mudrooroo holds that equating Aboriginal attempts at reformulating a self-definition with the way Europeans have invoked essentialist theories of identity is pernicious, especially given that for many Aborigines, it is the Aboriginal ‘essence’ that “states, restates, informs and reforms his/her and our culture and social reality” (157). As Andrew Lattas contends, “essentialism operates and means different things in different contexts” (162). Essentialist thinking, then, is not a fixed political phenomenon. Aboriginal attempts to formulate an identity based on notions of a shared genetic or cultural essence have shown that some forms of essentialism can act as political resources to back particular claims.

The assertion of an essential or unitary identity is also a constructed and assumed rather than ‘natural’ subject position. In order to overcome the continuing history of denial, Indigenous peoples “re-present themselves as coherent people with a sustainable historicised subjectivity” (I. Anderson, "Hybrid" 12). Essentialist articulations of racial identities are thus a characteristic of struggles against colonisation and its aftermath. However, the invocation of an essential or originary form of racialised identity can

37 See, for example, the argument on the representation of Aboriginal difference by David Hollinsworth and the responses by Bain Attwood, Andrew Lattas and Mudrooroo, all in Oceania 63.2 (1992).
serve to repress the range of beliefs, behaviours, attributes and traits that fall outside any such posturing (M. Rolls 10). The fetish of racial authenticity can suppress the development of new cultural structures necessary for colonised cultures to flourish (M. Rolls 10). Indeed, there are as many ways of being an Indigenous person as there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Those Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders that are perceived (by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples) to fall outside the prescribed notions of authenticity can often find their cultural and racial identities challenged.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are ‘unique’ in Australia, and are entitled to be recognised as distinct Indigenous peoples. But many Indigenous people want to be accepted not only as Indigenes, but also as Australians. According to Rosie Ferber, one of the senior Arrernte dancers who opened the official Centenary of Federation celebrations in Alice Springs: “we are asking non-indigenous people to include us Aboriginal people with all Australian people” (qtd in Toohey, "Tribe" 5). The salient point is whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the ability to be both uniquely Indigenous and Australian. Here it is important to recognise the particular historical conditions and specific trajectories through which Indigenous subjects become both similar and incommensurably different, that is, both Australian and unique within that. Rather than having to manoeuvre between a bipolar dichotomy of ‘Australianness’ and ‘Indigeneity’ (with the connotation that being one limits your ability to be the other), a critical cultural politics of Indigeneity might utilise Homi Bhabha’s notion of ‘the third space’—with new forms of culture at the collision/collision of the two (qtd in Ang, "Not Speaking" 16). The third space exists between and within a naturalised form of primordial identity and a completely post-modern identity that is free of historical and racial specificities. A recognition of the third space of hybridity would mean that Indigenous peoples can celebrate both their racial and cultural ‘roots’ as well as the various ‘routes’ they have travelled to and from them. The creative and productive third space thus rests on a shifting and changing relationship between ‘where you’re form’ and ‘where you’re at’ (Ang, "Not Speaking" 16).

Every person in Australia has a unique experience of being Australian and all people simultaneously negotiate differing subject positions and identities. Each person in this
country constantly renegotiates and rearticulates their subjectivity in response to the nation at local, State and Federal levels. But some Australians find they are more able to claim the different constituent parts or elements of their identities without challenging their ‘Australianness’. Unlike their Anglo-Australian counterparts, Aborigines and other ‘visible’ racialised minorities might find they are not able to move freely between different identities and hybridised subjectivities. Hanson’s declaration that she was fighting for the rights of all (non-Indigenous) Australians, ‘Italians, Greeks, whoever’, showed that the invocation of one’s (European) culture or ethnicity does not necessarily negate one’s ability to be authentically Australian. But minority group members whose lives are strongly influenced by the categories of race (as well as class, gender, nationality and so on), can be restricted in the identities they are able to invoke.

The Politics of Diaspora

In short, if I am inescapably Chinese by descent, I am only sometimes Chinese by consent. When and how is a matter of politics (Ang, "Not Speaking" 18). Diasporas are transnational and socio-cultural formations or ‘imagined communities’ of people, who have real and/or symbolic ties to an original ‘homeland’. Now I examine how the Chinese diaspora in Australia define themselves and their links to a lost or idealised ‘m/otherland’. I show that Chinese-Australians, as racialised and ‘visible’ minorities, have found it difficult to move between an internally and/or externally designated racial ascription and ‘Australianness’. Like their Indigenous counterparts, many Chinese-Australians are striving to reach ‘the third space’—that creative and productive tension between roots and routes, or ‘where you’re from’ and ‘where you’re at’ (Ang, "Not Speaking" 16). Whether these communities choose to invoke a racially distinct subject position different from other Australians or one that stresses their

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38 Given the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from their ‘country’, languages and cultures, Indigenous people could also be seen as constituting a diasporic community. While the diasporic or ‘migrant condition’ is structured by histories of displacement, travel and resettlement, Indigenous people frequently “stress continuity of habitation … and often a ‘natural’ connection to the land” (James Clifford qtd in Bennett and Carter 287)—even though of course, in reality, their own historical experiences have included displacement, travel and resettlement. Recent research is exploring the notion that Indigenous people’s life experiences might parallel those usually associated with migrancy or the diaspora. Noelene Brasche from the University of Sydney, for instance, is currently completing her PhD dissertation called ‘Leaving Country: Reading Indigenous Life Narratives as Discourses of Diaspora’.
similarity to them depends on the context. As Ang maintains, “it is and sometimes is not desirable to stress our Chineseness, however defined … the answer is political” (Ang, "Not Speaking" 18).

Australians of Chinese descent have often found it politically expedient and culturally desirable to differentiate themselves from the broader Australian community. In response to marginalisation or a sense of not-belonging in Australia, those of Chinese ancestry have often identified with a real or imagined homeland they have left behind (Ang, "Not Speaking" 15). However, at other times, Chinese-Australians might want to claim the title ‘Australian’, minus the hyphenated addendum. At the level of everyday experiences, Australians of Chinese extraction are often asked the question ‘Where are you from’? The implied assumption behind this question (which equates cultural or racial identity with national identity) is that the person does not belong ‘here’. As I have argued, to be ‘just’ Australian, without any further explanation of where you are really from, is often not possible for those whose racial difference is inescapably inscribed on the surface of their bodies.

Chinese-Australians share with Indigenous peoples an expectation to be authentic or true representations of their racialised identities, and such pressure can emanate from within and without these communities. Those Chinese-Australians who speak only English, or have no connection to their ancestral ‘home’ or the cultural traditions from it, can find they are deemed inauthentic by fellow Chinese-Australians, and their non-Chinese counterparts. Ang recalled a non-Chinese person judging her as an illegitimate Chinese after asking her if she could speak any Chinese languages. When she replied that she could not, he responded, “[w]hat a fake Chinese you are!” (qtd in Ang, "Not Speaking" 11). For the hua ren or ‘Overseas Chinese’, they are either ‘too Chinese’ (in the West), or ‘not Chinese enough’ (when they return ‘home’). But there is a multitude of ways of being an overseas Chinese, evident in the various published interviews with Chinese-Australians that have emerged in recent years, including Sang Ye’s The Year

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39 For a challenge to the equation of Australianness and whiteness, see Hou Leong’s photographic work ‘An Australian’ that subverts white masculine representations of national iconography by imposing a Chinese face onto national semiotic representations (see figures 10 and 11).
the Dragon Came (1996), Diana Giese’s Beyond Chinatown (1995) and Astronauts, Lost Souls and Dragons (1997), and Chek Ling’s Plantings in a New Land (2001).

The Chinese informants in Giese’s and Chek Ling’s accounts tell the migrant success story—they have been in Australia for a long time, and most are prominent members of the community. Racial prejudice is largely referred to in the past tense, equated with the days of the ‘White Australia’ policy and the rhetoric of the ‘yellow peril’. Giese’s oral history books, in particular, seek to establish varied and detailed examples of the ‘good’ citizen that, according to Tseen Khoo “serve to propagate Asian immigrants’ stereotyping as the ‘model minority’” (98). Sang Ye’s interviewees, on the other hand, exist as ‘bad’ or ‘ungrateful’ migrants who protest against the treatment they have received here.  

Linda Jaivin, the editor, commented that the book was “likely to shake up those whose ideas of multiculturalism have more to do with colourful ‘ethnic’ customs … than with the harder issues of ethical and cultural clashes between the dominant and immigrant communities” (xii). Sang Ye’s respondents largely lack the language skills and financial security that Giese’s and Chek Ling’s informants possess. They are much more critical of Anglo-Australians and their indifference towards, or lack of tolerance of newcomers. Anglo-Australians are variously referred to as “uncultured” (45), “not very friendly to foreigners” (122), and as treating Chinese as “just another Chink” (52). Many of his interviewees called Australians yang guizi, or ‘foreign devils’ (viii, 63, 116).

Not only has the socio-economic positioning of the more recent Chinese arrivals shifted, but the notion of a homogeneous Chinese community is also fractured along ethnic, cultural and language lines. Immigrants from Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, for example, represent distinct (but by no means homogeneous) Chinese cultural communities. The differences between these communities is obvious from the personal testimonies of Sang Ye’s interviewees. For those Chinese ‘students’ who

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40 Chinese-Australian poet and writer Ouyang Yu has also been variously described as ‘difficult’, ‘angry’ and ‘ungrateful’ because of his criticisms of Australian society. His poems ‘Being Difficult’ and ‘The Ungrateful Immigrant’ reflect his complex engagement with a society that both welcomes and rejects him. According to Wenche Ommundsen, Ouyang rarely targets “the Pauline Hanson’s of this world but rather the insidious, unconscious racism of liberal-minded professionals” (Ommundsen, ”Not” 596). For a radical critique of the contemporary intellectual culture in the West that she denotes “the new liberal fascism” see Rey Chow’s ‘The Fascist Longings in Our Midst’ (1995).
came to Australia as part of the ‘second gold rush’ after the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing in 1989, their experiences differed greatly from those who came here from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore or other South-East Asian nations as business migrants. In relative terms, migrants from the People’s Republic of China are not only the most recent group, but most of them had rudimentary English, little capital on arrival (indeed, many borrowed money to make the journey), as well as experiencing a lack of recognition of their professional qualifications. Furthermore, they were accustomed to living under a social, political and economic system fundamentally different from liberal democracies of the Western model. According to one Mainland Chinese interviewee, “it’s not just Australians who look down on you. Taiwan immigrants also see you as a lower class” (qtd in Ye 70). Another PRC respondent claimed that “people from Hong Kong and Taiwan are perfectly polite when they meet you, but underneath they despise you” (qtd in Ye 176).

New Partnerships?

We have all inherited the consequences of [Aboriginal] oppression, because we are enjoying the fruits of 200 years of dispossession of the Aboriginal people, the labour and sweat of underpaid Aboriginal pastoral workers, and the virtually unpaid labour of the ‘stolen generation’ … For the Queensland Chinese community—as Australians who understand the acts and attitudes of the past from the point of view of a downtrodden minority, or as newcomers free of cultural ties to Aboriginal oppression—it is a unique opportunity to assist in making restitution (Kwok 200-201).

Migrants—especially those of cultural backgrounds other than Angloceltic—have a different position than Aborigines in relation to the national history … non-white migrants have their own moral obligation to work through their relationship to Indigenous Australia, perhaps by bypassing the transcendent piety of white Australia’s ‘black armband’ version of history. The divorce of multiculturalism from the reconciliation debate has to be undone (Ang, "Intertwining").

The previous chapter examined the difficulty of incorporating ‘the Indigenous’ within ‘the multicultural’, given the blindness of both the policies and rhetoric of multiculturalism to the enduring legacy of colonisation. Rather than incorporate Indigenous people within multiculturalism, the following places (Asian) migration within the framework of Indigenous politics. As Curthoys maintains, even though Indigenous people and Asian immigrants might share experiences of racist hostility and being defined outside the nation, they “occupy significantly different places on the
colonial-post-colonial spectrum” ("Uneasy" 33). Once we consider the act of migration as a process occurring within colonisation, all immigrants (both old and new) are implicated in Australia’s colonial history and within the reconciliation process. The chapter now explores what Curthoys has labelled an “uneasy conversation” between Indigenous and migrant peoples ("Uneasy" 21). The ambiguous nature of Aboriginal and non-Anglo diasporic relationships is perhaps best summed up by Yugambeh/Bundjalung writer Melissa Lucashenko (from northern NSW): “[a]s targets of enormous racism themselves, other [people] of colour in Australia share an affinity with indigenous [people]; as non-indigenous people, however, they too are our dispossessors and must come to terms with their own colonial role” ("No" 24).

It comes as no surprise that the Hanson-led resurgence in racism has been felt disproportionately by Asian and Indigenous Australians. As visible minorities, Aboriginal and Asian-Australians have reported increasing incidents of racially motivated violence and abuse. The Human Rights Commission noted a sharp increase in the number of complaints of racial harassment it received following the 1996 federal election. Even second- and third-generation Asian-Australians experienced overt and covert forms of racial discrimination because of the identifiable difference in their appearance (Rizvi 181). Aboriginal people have the most frequent experience of racism, often at the hands of the police and other government officials, but people of Asian appearance also reported many instances of abuse and violence (while discrimination and prejudice of various kinds still affects immigrants of non-English-speaking background in general) (Castles and Vasta 2).

Hanson’s rhetoric has had disastrous effects on Aboriginal and Asian-Australians, but one positive outcome of the debates on both Asian immigration and Indigenous policies is that these communities have been able to discern some commonalities in their

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41 When asked if the 90 per cent increase in complaints of racial hatred made to The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission throughout 1997 could be attributed to her rise in prominence, Hanson responded by attacking the commission: “I think we can do away with the whole organisation, for what it is costing taxpayers I think it should be wiped” (qtd in McCabe 10). She claimed that the commission was “ignoring complaints by English-speaking Australians. I think they’re only there to look after people from non-English-speaking-backgrounds or the Aboriginal race” (qtd in McCabe 10). Race commissioner Zita Antonios maintains that the racially charged debate (that was lent respectability in the mid-1980s thanks to Blainey, and has resurfaced since Hanson) “is almost inevitable because of the shift we’ve had, in the past 30 years in Australia, to formal equality . . . the gains that were made, have really just been too much change for some Australians” (qtd in Cosic 23).
experiences. One year after Hanson’s maiden speech, at the 1997 Chinese Writers’ Association conference on ‘The Culture of the Chinese Diaspora’, an Aboriginal dance troupe performed the welcoming ceremony. Julie Chang, a Taiwanese-born writer, and one of the convenors of the conference, said that if it had not been for Hanson, the conference organisers did not think they would have had the confidence to invite the Aboriginal dancers to open the conference (personal communication 16 Nov 2001). Hanson’s objectification of Aboriginal and Asian-Australian communities, and her attempts to undermine their claims to ‘Australianness’ assisted Chang and other Asian-Australians to comprehend that they share with Aboriginal people the search for a sense of ‘belonging’ to Australia. As John Docker and Gerhard Fischer suggest, the “attraction of outsiders to fellow outsiders, the stranger (the indigenous made a stranger in her or his own land) to the stranger from elsewhere” (15) can result in the creation of common interests and affiliations.

Stronger political connections and partnerships between Aboriginal and Asian-Australians were forged as a result of Hanson’s attacks on these communities. The Queensland Chinese Community Voice, a group representing more than 30,000 Chinese-Australians lodged a formal objection to the registration of Hanson’s One Nation Party. According to Enoch Choy, “[a]s Asian Australians we reaffirm our solidarity with Aborigines in opposing this type of abuse” (qtd in Fishpool). Spokesperson Dr Anthony Lee noted that Hanson’s rhetoric “lends itself to scapegoating against Asians, [and] Aboriginal people” (qtd in Graham Matthews). Lee reaffirmed the Chinese Community Voice’s solidarity with Indigenous people, claiming: “[a]t the rally last November [1996] in Ipswich, we marched with Aborigines and supported Aboriginal rights. We support the continuation of native title” (qtd in Graham Matthews).

Some Asian-Australian community groups have also clearly aligned themselves with Aboriginal people in their support of a national apology for the ‘Stolen Generations’. The following show of public support from members of the Vietnamese-Australian community in Melbourne was made in response to the Federal government’s refusal to offer a formal apology to those affected by the practice of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their parents. It demonstrated an understanding (often lacked by Anglo-Australians) of the need for Asian-Australians to appreciate
their position as migrants in relation to the Indigenous community; to recognise that, except “for the first and original people, we are all just visitors to this country” (Antonie and Poon 6):

We [Vietnamese Australians] are here now, living in the cities and towns that were their [Indigenous Australians’] hunting grounds, their camping places, their sacred sites. We are the beneficiaries of their dispossession, and we acknowledge their loss. We understand about the loss of home, family and cultural values, and we too would like to express our deep sorrow to all Indigenous Australians for their suffering and offer our support for genuine reconciliation (Le and Nguyen 14).

In his assessment of Chinese language media debates on reconciliation in Australia, Edwin Tsung-Rong Yang noted a high consciousness among Chinese commentators regarding Aboriginal affairs and issues in a general sense, and of the need for Chinese to participate in reconciliation. However, the Chinese community did not necessarily match their support for reconciliation with an active sense of responsibility for past injustices. Yang found that many Chinese migrants supported reconciliation and an apology from the Prime Minister, but they simultaneously constructed themselves as ‘new migrants’ without a participatory role in, or responsibility for the past (Edwards 23). Recent Chinese arrivals often differentiated themselves from earlier settlers by characterising past sojourners as ‘the Other’ or ‘the aberrant’ Chinese, and this tendency might contribute to a lack of accountability felt by newer migrants.

In his study of non-European responses to Indigenous (land) rights, Peter Read found that for “more recent Asian immigrants, Australia seems to have its origins … at their own point of arrival … To them, the history of Australia previous to that point mattered little” ("Pain" 91). In The Year the Dragon Came (1996), for example, one of Sang Ye’s Chinese-Australian interviewees claimed that when the plane from Beijing landed in Sydney, “everyone let out a gasp, as if they felt this was the first moment of a brand new life” (qtd in Ye 23). An interviewee from Hong Kong remarked that coming to Australia was like being reborn: “[y]ou have to start all over again. If you don’t believe me ask anyone from Hong Kong. They can tell you the exact day they arrived here … It was the first day of an entirely new life” (qtd in Ye 152). For new migrants, much of their time and energy goes towards trying to comprehend and navigate their way through a totally new and alien environment (Greco 3). When migrants are struggling to survive against the hardships they face in a new and seemingly hostile environment,
they might tend to “ignore the problems Australia has and just work on improving [their] own lot” (anonymous interviewee qtd in (Ye 197-98). As Jacqueline Lo, Tseen Khoo and Helen Gilbert maintain, “[w]hether they are migrants, refugees or Australian-born, Asian-Australians may have difficulty identifying themselves as beneficiaries of [Australia’s] colonial heritage, especially if they come from countries that were also colonised by White societies in the past” (10).

Many refugees and migrants from the various regions of Asia have suffered great hardships in making the transition from their home countries to Australia. Curthoys has argued that Anglo-Australians fail to recognise our culpability in the process and enduring legacies of colonisation because of a tendency to engage in narratives of victimisation ("Immigration" 171). Asian-Australians can internalise their own versions of the ‘victimological narrative’ in relaying their stories of the trials and tribulations they have suffered both prior to and following the act of migration. Without meaning to diminish or underestimate the various difficulties and traumas that migrant and refugee communities have suffered, they too utilise their own renditions of these historical victim narratives: “telling a story of persecution or economic difficulty in their country of origin, experiences of racism and rejection after arrival, and the gradual building of a new life and making a contribution to Australian society at large” (Curthoys, "Uneasy" 34). Chek Ling described his edited collection of reminiscences of Chinese-Australians in Queensland, for example, as “a short history of how the Chinese came to be here, the ways that racism was fomented against them … and how the Chinese survived and in doing so contributed to the economic development of Queensland” (25). One of his contributors called her personal narrative ‘I just bore it quietly’, while another named his ‘Surviving, haphazardly’ (25).

In relaying their accounts of the prejudices and obstacles they have had to endure and overcome, Giese’s and Sang Ye’s Chinese-Australian interviewees also engaged in the use of victimological narratives. In Eddie Quong’s words, for example, the Chinese in Darwin “stayed, built and suffered. Put up with it, got on with it” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 74). In an interview with another of Sang Ye’s anonymous Chinese-Australian informants, for whom “[e]verything is a burden”, this victim mentality is clearly evident: “[t]here is only one word for what we’ve experienced: suffering” (qtd in Ye 187). The same interviewee argued that Chinese people in Australia are “relegated
to doing the work of draught animals. Then on top of it we’re made the object of derision and ridicule” (qtd in Ye 190). But while migrant or diasporic communities continue to overlook that they benefit from colonisation, and fail to appreciate its ongoing ramifications and their agency within it, they will not see a need to become involved in working towards change.

Read’s *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (2000) was based on a series of interviews with Australians who represent ‘The Third Side of the Triangle’, in other words, those who are neither of Anglo-Celtic or Aboriginal descent. Some of the Asian-Australian interviewees clearly acknowledged their status as migrants in relation to the special claims Aboriginal people have to the land as Indigenes. Elsie Chan for instance, stressed that she did not feel that the unique claim Aboriginal people make as the Indigenous custodians of Australia threatened national unity: “I acknowledge it. Their identity [as the first Australians] is different from mine as a first-generation Australian” (qtd in Read, *Belonging* 81). Despite sometimes feeling rejected from Anglo-Australians, Chan still did not disassociate herself, though of Chinese descent, from the past misdeeds of white settler Australians: “[i]t was a bad thing that we did, as a community” (qtd in Read, *Belonging* 66).

Some of Read’s respondents rehearsed the same rhetoric employed by Anglo-Australians who cannot reconcile the special recognition of Aboriginal rights with the notion of Australia as a multicultural and ostensibly egalitarian society. Elsie Chan showed herself to be sympathetic to Aborigines’ rights as Indigenous peoples, but she was uncertain that Aboriginal people should receive privileges based on their Indigeneity, privileges unavailable to other Australians. “Sometimes I’m not sure that what they want they culturally believe or whether they’re just taking advantage of the situation in which they say ‘We’re Indigenous, we’ve been suppressed, we want this, we want this’” (qtd in Read, *Belonging* 65). A male interviewee with Vietnamese heritage also found it difficult to accept the notion that Aboriginal people might want to try and differentiate their position and politics from the broader Australian community. The equal ethnicities of multiculturalism presuppose equality for all and, in this man’s thinking, Cathy Freeman should therefore not have carried an Aboriginal flag at the Commonwealth Games (Read, "Pain" 91). His Asian-Australian interviewees held
conflicting views on Aboriginal rights, but Read argues that greater understanding between these communities could result in increased support of Native Title.

Newly arrived migrants generally find it difficult to access information on Indigenous Australians, and English language classes run by Migrant Resource Centres tend not to contain Indigenous issues in their curriculum (Sham-Ho 39). Many of the issues surrounding reconciliation and Native Title have been inaccessible to migrant communities because of the complex nature of the legal terminology used in such debates. Even the broader Australian community has experienced difficulties in understanding the government’s changes to Native Title legislation (Giglio 29). But steps are being taken to address this issue. The Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC) in Melbourne provides workshops with migrant peoples on Indigenous issues as a way of forging partnerships or solidarity with “indigenous Australians dealing with the continuing consequences of past injustices and policies” (Greco 2). The special edition of the journal *Migration Action* ‘Reconciliation and Multicultural Australia’ (1998) was another part of the EMC’s contribution to the work of “actively building community relations between immigrant Australians and Aboriginal Australians” (Greco 2). 42

In October 2000, the Ethnic Affairs Commission (EAC) of NSW held its ‘Building the Reconciliation Bridge’ seminar as a strategy towards the greater inclusion of non-Indigenous ethnic communities in reconciliation. The seminar recognised that ethnic communities can be a powerful lobbying force in the reconciliation process in Australia and that a lack of English skills was an important factor in the exclusion of NESB people from the debate. From the seminar, the EAC developed a policy basis and various strategies to encourage migrant communities to participate in the reconciliation process. President of the Chinese Australian Forum, Jon-Claire Lee presented a paper at the seminar, showing how some of these initiatives could be put into practice. As the

42 The EMC also issued a statement of commitment and apology to Indigenous Australians: “EMC’s statement of commitment to the First Peoples of Australia is based in a recognition that the lives of present generations of Indigenous Australians continue to suffer the devastating effects of European settlement, including the dispossession of land, culture and language, and the separation from family and community. We recognise this is a key cause of the intolerable levels of disadvantage still faced today by Indigenous Australians. EMC’s workers, volunteers, and Committee of Management deeply regret and unreservedly apologise for the damage caused by the forcible separation of Aboriginal children from their families. We commit ourselves to the reconciliation process, and through community education we aim to promote understanding and respect amongst ourselves and those new communities with whom we work towards a just and inclusive Australia”.
principal of a Chinese language school, he and his staff selected particular course material so that their students could gain a “better understanding of Australian history, [A]boriginal culture, [A]boriginal concerns” (J.-C. Lee).

A further complication in helping Asian-Australian communities to understand their complicity in the ongoing colonisation of Indigenous Australia is that their knowledge and understanding of Indigenes is invariably mediated by mainstream representations, making them vulnerable to “the distortions, fabrications and stereotypes that circulate in the national media” (Perera and Pugliese, "Detoxifying" 17). Another of Sang Ye’s interviewees, for example, claimed: “[n]early all the Aborigines are unemployed or refuse to take jobs that are available; they’re outside the pubs or on the grass getting drunk on beer” (qtd in Ye 182). These comments illustrate the way in which migrant Australians can reproduce dominant white Australian characterisations of contemporary Aboriginality. According to some of the young refugee people at the Maribyrnong English Language Centre, west of Melbourne, “[w]hen migrants come here they see how Australian people treat the Aborigines so they took [sic] their ideas and treat them badly too” (qtd in Hannan 26). Another respondent claimed that migrants “just come here and pick up the attitudes … and join in the way of thinking and become part of it” (qtd in Hannan 26).

So how do Aboriginal people feel about the various attempts of migrants and immigrant community groups to participate in the reconciliation process? Do they consider that recently arrived migrants have a role to play in reconciliation, or do they perceive it to be an issue of relevance only to Black and white Australians? In her study of the varying ways south-west WA Aboriginal people, or Nyoongars, characterise government initiatives such as multiculturalism and reconciliation, van den Berg interviewed more than forty people of Aboriginal descent. Her interviewees differed in terms of age, gender, occupation, education level and family situation, and how they characterised reconciliation. About a third of the Nyoongar interviewees felt that the reconciliation process related only to Indigenous and Anglo-Celtic Australians because

43 During his role as Artistic Director for the Festival of Nations in Sydney from 1993-97, Lee also sought to put Aboriginal and Chinese communities in touch with each other. One year a Chinese musician who had constructed some replicas of 5000-year-old Chinese flutes rehearsed and performed with an Aboriginal musician who played the digeridoo.
new arrivals were not actively involved in the colonisation of Australia. This response from Peter van den Berg is typical: “[migrants are] relatively [sic] newcomers and I don’t think they had anything to do with Aboriginal genocide. The whites did that” (qtd in van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 103). Others objected to the active participation of migrant Australians in reconciliation because, not only were they not responsible for colonisation, but they do not “understand what it is like being an Aboriginal person who has suffered” (Peter J Narkle qtd in van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 173).

The majority of van den Berg’s interviewees believed that ‘ethnic’ minorities, as Australians, should be actively involved in reconciliation. Some reasoned that “Aboriginal people, being a minority group, need all the help they can get” (qtd in van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 259), while others argued that certain migrants, like “the Chinese were out here in the 1800’s” (qtd in van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 259), and are thus implicated in both colonisation and reconciliation. Still others felt that the common experiences of racism that some migrants and Aborigines shared would facilitate better understanding between the two ‘groups’. For another anonymous interviewee, if migrants “live in Australia permanently then of course they should be involved. Everyone should be learning from each other. Understanding is vital to reconciliation and better relationships between whoever is involved—Asian, Italians, etc.” (qtd in van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 259). These Aboriginal interviewees were divided on the issue of migrant participation in reconciliation, but all agreed that new arrivals to the country should be required to learn about the diversity of Indigenous cultures and the history of colonisation and genocide in Australia (van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 175).

The continuing cleavage of ‘the immigrant’ and ‘the Indigene’ in contemporary paradigms of reconciliation provides little space for discussion on the potential role and contribution of migrant Australians to the reconciliation process. This is compounded by the fact that the discourse of multiculturalism pays scant attention to the continuing legacy of colonialism in Australia. Indigenous and diasporic peoples might not always share common concerns or political agendas, but they do share the experience of living in Australia, and this means living on the land of Australia’s Indigenous peoples. It is this recognition that is missing from current debates on multiculturalism and reconciliation, but is surely the basis upon which dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians depends.
I am not arguing that debates on ‘the Indigenous’ and ‘the multicultural’ should always be examined together; nor am I proposing that these two debates remain entirely separate and discrete. I am suggesting that ongoing research into the positioning of migrant communities in relation to Indigenous peoples could assist in undermining the central conflict of Black vs. white that presently occupies reconciliation debates. Discussion on ‘the Indigenous’ also needs to be carried out in conjunction with debates on ‘the multicultural’ in order to account for the cross-cultural dialogue that is increasingly taking place between Indigenous and diasporic communities. Since the 1990s more Aboriginal and migrant peoples have been answering to the recent rearticulation of racial politics in Australia by forging new cross-cultural political alliances. Any Aboriginal/migrant inter-cultural dialogue would necessitate, however, an understanding on the part of immigrants of their responsibility and implication in the ongoing colonisation of Indigenous Australia. After all, the very presence of diasporic communities in Australia, and the possibility of migration is already predicated on colonial violence and invasion (Perera and Pugliese, "Detoxifying" 5).
Chapter Six

Old Roots, New Routes: Indigenous and Asian-Australian Subjectivities

The history of the survival of the people of East Timor is not so different from those same tragedies that have been experienced by Indigenous Australians. Shared experience of loss—massacre, rape, murder, family break-ups, land dispossession, prohibition of cultural practice, lack of housing, lack of education opportunities, lack of health facilities all serve to draw some common ground on which we can collaborate. Just as there is tragedy, so too can there be found a strength of spirit shared by people who have survived such experiences (Brown and Duarte 8).

Donna Brown, a Gumbainggir artist from northern NSW and East Timor-born Bernardo Duarte recently collaborated on a visual artwork project to produce their painting ‘Two Tribes’ (see figure 12). They worked together as a part of the ?Lost & Found: A Shared Search for Belonging exhibitions that were shown in both the Koorie Heritage Trust and the Immigration Museum in Melbourne 2001 (see figure 13). These exhibitions highlighted the intersecting ways in which Indigenous and non-white migrant communities are seeking a sense of cultural and national belonging in this country. Based on their experiences of displacement and alienation, many of the migrants involved in the project identified strongly with their Indigenous counterparts. For example, after leaving his homeland because of the threat of political persecution, Filipino artist Emmanuel Santos felt “lost and rootless” until he found a “commonality of cultural experience and existence” with Aboriginal people at Cherbourg Mission in Queensland (21). Similarly, after seeking refuge in Australia, Assyrian artist Natasha Brakhya was “startled by the commonality of [her] experience with Aboriginal people. They too have had their land subsumed by another culture” (8).

Indigenous and Asian-Australian communities are increasingly recovering a rich but hitherto repressed history of cross-cultural relationships. Chapter five has shown that Aboriginal and Asian-Australian people have explored their identities through their engagement in cross-cultural political activism. This chapter shows that Indigenous and Asian-Australian people are also recovering their identities through the retracing of family histories and genealogies. Using themes such as place, memory, genealogy and loss, I examine the way people of mixed Indigenous-Asian ancestry identify in racial and cultural terms. Such individuals are not only testimony to the close links and
associations forged between Indigenous and various Asian communities, they simultaneously challenge the notion of ‘fixed’ and essential racial identities.

This chapter also explores the ramifications of such of ‘poly-cultural’ identities for racialised subjects that base their claims to authenticity precisely by excluding other genealogies and heritages. It shows that polyglot and hybridised identities increasingly challenge rigid and fixed racial and cultural subjectivities. The efforts of people of Aboriginal-Asian descent to re-establish links with ‘other culture’ heritages are a clear indication of the incompleteness of governmental attempts to separate Indigenous and Asian communities from each other. The retracing of family histories also indicates that the ramifications of policies of removal and repatriation are still resonating in contemporary Indigenous-Asian communities. This complex but neglected facet of Australian history and culture calls for a new orientation of the historical compass—from Darwin down, not Sydney-side up (Ganter in Affairs).

Beyond an exploration of the way people of mixed Indigenous-Asian ancestry identify in racial and cultural terms, this chapter examines various cross-cultural artistic, theatrical and literary production. I explore the emergence of what Perera has called a new “cultural script” (qtd in Shen and Edwards 5) between Aboriginal and Asian-Australians. Indigenous artists are increasingly collaborating with people from the various regions of Asia in recent theatre and drama, musicals and operas, novels, poetry and the visual arts in both Asia and Australia.\(^{44}\) Much of the recent literary and cultural production has emanated from the north and north-western parts of the country including Broome and Darwin—regions where most of the contact between Asians and Aborigines has historically occurred. Indigenous communities have shared a multitude of relationships with other non-Anglo minorities, but their alliances with Asian peoples are unique because they have prevailed in various forms since the pre-invasion era.

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\(^{44}\) This chapter focuses on the cross-cultural production between Aboriginal and South-East Asian communities, but Aboriginal dialogues are clearly taking place with other non-European racial collectivities. Through its portrayal of the main character ‘Jila’, the daughter of an Aboriginal mother and Afghan father, the recent film *Serenades* explores the complex interaction of Islamic, Aboriginal and Christian cultures in nineteenth century Central Australia. For discussion of the historical links between Aboriginal and Afghan communities, see Luise A. Hercus, ‘Afghan Stories from the Northeast of South Australia’, and Ben Murray and Peter Austin, ‘Afghans and Aborigines: Diyari Texts’, both in *Aboriginal History*, 5.1 (1981), pp. 39-70 and 71-79. For an account of what it was like growing up with her father’s camel team, see the personal reminiscences of Miriam Dadleh who was born of an Aboriginal mother and Afghan father at Hermannsberg in the NT in 1910 (1990).
These collaborative projects draw on a rich history of relationships that were sometimes abusive and exploitative, and on others that were based on mutual dependence, admiration and respect. Indigenous and Asian diasporic communities might not share the same histories, but the dialogue between these peoples is indicative of the many overlapping points of intersection in their experiences. The conversation might still be characterised as ‘uneasy’, but nonetheless, it is a dialogue that seems willing to engage with both its colonial as well as its potentially emancipatory features. The Aboriginal/Asian cross-cultural production explored in this chapter testifies to an honest and sincere attempt to embrace these relationships in their entirety, that is, to recognise that Asian immigration “furthered both the colonising and decolonising processes on the Australian continent” (Curthoys, "Immigration" 172).

**Indigenous-Asian Identities**

Descendants of Indigenous/Asian unions have contemplated and performed their varied identities for centuries, but the unique cultural identity formation of such individuals has been the subject of intellectual inquiry relatively recently. Social and cultural theorists including Regina Ganter ("Living" 1998; "Wakayama" 1999) (and forthcoming in 2003), Julia Martinez (1999), Sarah Yu (1999), Penny Edwards and Shen Yuan-fang (forthcoming in 2003) and Christine Choo (1994) (and forthcoming in 2003), have all used the testimonies and experiences of those of Aboriginal-Asian heritage in their recent work.

Guy Ramsay’s articles based on his extensive interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Chinese descent have also contributed to the growing body of knowledge in this field ("Myth" 2000; "Family" 2000; "Contentious" 2001). His research has shown that descendants of Aboriginal/Asian unions identify in cultural terms in three broad ways, and I borrow this paradigm below. The first form of cultural identification Ramsay describes is “affirmation of singular contracts” ("Myth" 263), where participants choose to identify solely with their Indigenous or their Chinese heritage. Ramsay’s participants also exhibited what he has termed “questioning and contemplation” ("Myth" 263), where the boundaries of the interviewees’ identity constructs are less circumscribed, leading to an interest in ‘other-culture’ heritage. Those informants who enacted a “pluralist embracing of both cultures” (Ramsay, "Myth" 263) strongly identified with their Chinese and Indigenous ancestry.
Singular Identities

I have only recently identified as being an Aboriginal person. You see, where I came from in Queensland, it was not popular to be known as an Aboriginal person. So every Black Australian living in Queensland was Fijian, Samoan, Torres Strait Islander, Indonesian, Malayan—anything but Aboriginal. Aboriginal people in Queensland had a very low status among both Blacks and Whites, so it was a matter of survival not to identify as an Aboriginal (Devow 107-8).

Until recently Lyn Devow, who is of Torres Strait Island and Aboriginal descent, was too afraid to identify as Aboriginal and, as such, privileged her Islander ancestry for most of her life. Devow’s Aboriginal-South Sea Islander husband was also reluctant to claim his Aboriginal lineage, and identified solely with his Kanaka heritage until well into adulthood (Devow 120). Because of the ‘very low status’ Aboriginal people have habitually occupied in dominant Australian ideologies, mixed-heritage children have often identified away from their Aboriginal side. For many people of mixed-race descent, identifying with their ‘other-culture’ ancestry has enabled an identification “away from a more socially devalued culture” (Ramsay, "Myth" 270). Affirmation of a singular identity construct might also stem from familial pressures. Her grandmother’s “cultural arrogance” was the reason identified by one of Ramsay’s interviewees for the predominance of the Chinese side of her heritage. Despite her mother being a Torres Strait Islander, this participant in Ramsay’s study was brought up as Chinese because her Chinese paternal grandmother had “a colonialist attitude … towards the Torres Strait Island people, even though her daughter-in-law was one” (qtd in Ramsay, "Family" 206).

Government rules and regulations have also played a very important role in determining how mixed-race children self-identify. Prior to the 1970s in order to secure the rights of an Australian citizen, and to minimise the risk of the state gaining access to their children, many individuals were forced to deny their Aboriginal heritage. As we have seen in the first chapter, up until the 1940s Indigenous women who associated with local Chinese and other Asian nationals were often forcibly removed to religious missions and government reserves. The way that children of mixed-race couples identified culturally was thus constrained by “dominant anti-miscegenation discourses that were legitimated by government legislation” (Ramsay, "Myth" 267). In order to minimise the risk of removal of the family to the much feared missions and reserves, or
the forced separation of their children, many Indigenous/Asian families were reluctant to pass on cultural knowledge to their children. As Devow claims, “our old people were afraid to speak in case we were taken away according to the policy of the day” (109).

Other families of Aboriginal-Asian descent have emphasised or privileged their Aboriginality rather than their ‘other-culture’ heritages. Previously we saw that some people of mixed-race descent have identified solely with their non-Aboriginal ancestry because of a sense of shame or embarrassment at admitting they were of Aboriginal extraction (or to minimise the risk of government surveillance and control). But some individuals and families of mixed Aboriginal-Asian heritage have discounted their ‘other-culture’ origins because of a sense of humiliation or the breaking of Aboriginal social taboos: “[i]t was a no-no back them [sic] days to marry out of your tribal area” (‘Julie’ qtd in Ramsay, "Myth" 269). Many children of mixed-race extraction have been left disconnected from their non-Aboriginal lineage because of a refusal of Aboriginal relatives to discuss these matters with their children. Some Aboriginal-Asian families chose to disclaim or conceal their ‘other-culture’ ancestry, thus delimiting the ability of future generations to identify with that part of their heritage: “I think my [Aboriginal] Grandmother was ostracised from her tribal area because she married [Chinese] Grandfather, that was … a big hush up thing, we weren’t allowed to talk about it … No-one ever spoke about it, like she was swept under the carpet” (anonymous interviewee qtd in Ramsay, "Family" 203-04).

In more recent settings, people of mixed Indigenous-Asian descent have privileged their Aboriginal ancestry in order to claim legal rights such as Native Title (Yu 72). Some Aboriginal communities fear that their distinct historical, cultural and political claims as Indigenous peoples might be undermined by their identification with any ‘other-culture’ heritages. As we have seen in the previous chapter, for Aboriginal people, the invocation of an Indigenous identity might serve as a powerful tool or tactical manoeuvre for the purposes of political mobilisation and agitation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people might utilise ‘strategic essentialism’ in emphasising pride in their Indigeneity, thus disclaiming any ‘other-culture’ lineage. While some see the move towards the recognition of an Aboriginal-Asian heritage as a positive step for reconciliation, family or community elders do not always approve of these endeavours.
Those who resist identification with non-Aboriginal cultures can perceive the excavation of cross-racial origins as a threat to the hard-won right to preserve and celebrate a distinctly Aboriginal identity (Shen and Edwards 5).

Others of mixed Aboriginal-Asian lineage might emphasise their Aboriginality not so much for tactical or political reasons, but because of limited access to information about their Asian ancestry. For example, ‘Madie’, who is of Aboriginal-Chinese heritage, feels disconnected from her Chinese lineage, claiming: “I’m not really interested in the Chinese side of it, because I know I can’t get the information … I just class myself as being Aboriginal and proud of it” (qtd in Ramsay, "Myth" 267). The forced removal of Aboriginal women and their mixed-race children from their Asian partners often severed any cultural transmission to the younger generation. Tommy Ah Fat, for example, worked as a cook in rural Queensland and when his Aboriginal-Chinese daughter was taken away “probably to Cherbourg or another reserve near Rockhampton. Tommy never saw her again” (Tim 45). However, it was not always that the children were taken from their fathers, but that the Asian fathers were deported for cohabiting with Aboriginal women. Either way, the experience of removal suggests the disengagement of Aboriginal-Asian people from their ‘other-culture’ heritages.

Other Aboriginal people of Asian extraction have reflected upon their ‘other-culture’ heritages, but have related their mixed-race ancestry more as a historical detail than a significant component of their self-identity. Some descendants of Aboriginal/Asian inter-marriages have subsumed their divergent ethnicities and cultures within an Aboriginal identity. Cathy Freeman, for example, has publicly announced her Chinese heritage, but has incorporated this aspect of her genealogy in an inclusive Aboriginal identity (Reuters). In her autobiographical account, Is that you, Ruthie (1999), Ruth Hegarty notes that her grandfather was born “to a traditional Aboriginal mother and a Chinese father” (6) but her Chinese ancestry does not feature anywhere else in her personal narrative and has had limited impact on her and her family’s self-identification as Aboriginal. In her recent study Nyoongar People of Australia: Perspectives on Racism and Multiculturalism (2002), Rosemary van den Berg has incorporated autobiographical details depicting her experiences as a Nyoongar woman. She notes that her great-grandmother was of Chinese descent and that some of her siblings show
signs of the “almond-shaped eyes of our Chinese heritage” (81), but does not elaborate further on the cultural impact her Chinese ancestry has had on her or her family.

Dominant ideologies and legislative obstacles have proven important determinants affecting how Aboriginal-Asian people identify themselves racially and culturally, but other factors have also played an important role. Thomas Vivian Tim’s mother “Annie Ah Fat, was half Chinese and half Aboriginal” (45) and his father Charlie Tim See Foo came from Canton in the late 1800s, but because his “mother’s mother was a tribal Aboriginal woman and her cultural pull was pretty strong”, Thomas and his siblings “largely grew up as an Aboriginal family” (Tim 49). As we saw with the Chinese-Torres Strait Islander woman who grew up identifying almost exclusively with her Chinese heritage because of her Chinese grandmother, the power dynamics within a particular family also play a decisive role in identity formation. While in the previous case the Chinese grandmother was the authority figure, in Thomas Vivian Tim’s family, his Aboriginal grandmother occupied a position of dominance, and the rest of the family identified with her Aboriginal culture. This was compounded by the fact that Thomas’ Chinese father rarely spoke of China because he “thought he was Australian, having been here so long” (Tim 49).

Whether one grew up in an urban or rural setting is another factor that can have a lasting impact on the cultural identity formation of people of Aboriginal-Asian descent. Ramsay found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Asian extraction who were brought up in rural areas tended to identify more with their Indigenous ancestry. There are a number of contributing factors that might lead to this privileging of an Indigenous cultural identity. Historically, Aboriginal people who have lived on the outskirts or fringes of rural centres have tried to avoid government surveillance and control by minimising their contact with the white townspeople (often they have been debarred from entering towns unless they were lawfully employed). Indigenous communities have come under enormous pressure to repress their cultural identity, “leaving little scope for exploration of their Indigenous identity, let alone any ‘other culture’ heritage” (Ramsay, "Family” 208). The marginalisation and ostracisation of Indigenous people from participation within the broader community ultimately led to the maintenance and expression of a distinctly Aboriginal identity.
The numbers of Chinese and other Asian men were once significant in the rural areas of Queensland, and along the pearlizing belt of the Kimberley region, but as we have seen, past Federal and State government policies very effectively diminished the Asian presence. Even when Indigenous women and Asian men did manage to form intimate relationships, such legislation effectively ensured that few remnants of the once strong Asian presence remained, thus severing cultural links for those of Asian heritage. These factors, in conjunction with the dominant society’s intolerance of ambivalence in cultural identity, “(the ‘black and white’ world) [has] made exploration of ‘other-culture’ heritage extremely problematic” (Ramsay, "Family" 208).

**Embracing**

I’m very proud of both of my heritages … I think it was because of the old man that we had a very strong sense of Chinese identity and from our Mum a very strong sense of our Aboriginal identity … Maybe what we’ve done is picked out the best elements … of both cultures and then fused them into the contemporary multicultural Indigenous person of Australia (‘Ken’ qtd in Ramsay, "Myth" 271, 272).

In contrast to those who grew up in rural settings, Ramsay notes that his Aboriginal-Asian interviewees who were raised in urban centres exhibited a distinctly bi- or ‘poly-cultural’ identity. An urban upbringing appeared to be more conducive to the formation and embracing of a dualist or pluralist cultural heritage. Cultural identity formation of descendants of Aboriginal-Asian unions is thus not only affected by spatial dimensions, but is also temporally specific. It is only relatively recently that government officials have supported the notion of non-discriminatory immigration and introduced multiculturalism as policy. These initiatives have resulted in the rapid expansion of cultural diversity in Australian, especially in urban centres. While those of Ramsay’s interviewees that were comfortable expressing their cultural plurality were urban-raised, they were also much younger than those who exhibited singular cultural identities.

The recent shifts in dominant ideology and government policy, in conjunction with an attendant increase in cross-cultural families, has provided “urban-raised mixed-heritage individuals and their families with a myriad of alternative cultural experiences and sources of identifications” (Ramsay, "Family" 208). Olive Veverbrants—whose Chinese grandfather Ah Hong married Ranjika, an Arrernte woman (discussed in the introduction to this thesis)—is proof of this newer generation of Aboriginal-Asian
descendants that is eager to celebrate their family’s “story of a hundred years of migrations” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 47). “My mother married an Englishman. My late husband was Latvian, and one of my sisters married a Norwegian. This makes me very conscious of multicultural Australia” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 47). Chapter four has shown that many Indigenous people seek to distance themselves from multiculturalism. But this might stem from a desire to dissociate their political agenda from those of other minority groups, as well as a rejection of the official policy of multiculturalism. In their daily lives, Aboriginal people negotiate complex and multifarious relationships and engagements with (more recent) migrants that might bear little resemblance to government rhetoric.

Contemplation

I sometimes wonder what would’ve happened if … my Grandmother wouldn’t have married … somebody from another culture, another whole history …There are many times when I think to myself … you should go and find out where … you fit into the line of Chinese people (‘Bruce’ qtd in Ramsay, "Myth" 271).

We’re all born with all this long hair and Asian look about us, all of us in the family, and we’re trying to figure where it came from. We all look at each other and think there’s got to be something there” (‘Julie’ qtd in Ramsay, "Myth" 269).

Contemporary multicultural urban centres might be more conducive to an individual or family’s adoption of a ‘poly-cultural’ form of identification, but places like Broome and Darwin have always emphasised and embraced this cultural pluralism. Along the pearling belt people of Indigenous-Asian descent exhibited multi-cultural identities long before social theorists invented a name for it. In the Gulf country and along the Kimberley coast where contact between Aboriginal and Asian peoples predates white ‘settlement’, mixed-race peoples have found it easier to identify with the various components of their cross-cultural identities. Bobby Ching, the Chinese-Aboriginal character in Di Morrissey’s novel Kimberley Sun (2002), claims that in Broome, there are “plenty people round like [him] (50). Unlike the big cities, which Bobby dislikes because “people want to put you in a box” (50), Broome people accept those of mixed-race heritage without question. Sarah Yu argues that in Broome one only has to glance over a class role list from the local school with names like Bin, Suliman, Bin Rashid, Hajinor, Yu, Fong and Lee to comprehend the shared Aboriginal and Asian history of
that area (71). Jimmy Chi, the creator of a number of Aboriginal musicals; Peter Yu, formerly of the Kimberley Land Council; Kevin Fong, President of the Broome Shire Council; Elsta Foy, Broome Council Member; the band ‘The Pigrim Brothers’; and radio personality and performer Mark Bin Bakar (whose stage name is Mary G) and other Aboriginal-Asians from Broome and elsewhere are further examples of the “vitality of the Aboriginal-Asian heritage” (Choo, "Impact" 307) of north and north-western Australia.

Even in cases where former regulations and government policies have precluded any intimate knowledge of their ‘other-culture’ heritages, Aboriginal people of Asian backgrounds are increasingly questioning their mixed-race lineage, and are seeking to reconcile their Asian ancestry. Some Aboriginal-Asian people have gone to various parts of Asia to meet or reconnect with family members. We saw an early example of cross-cultural journeying in the introduction to the thesis where Aboriginal-Chinese woman Gloria Lee travelled to Zhongshan with her father and siblings after the death of her Arrernte mother. Gloria was well accepted by her extended family, staying long enough to learn Chinese before her family’s return to Australia in the 1920s (Giese, *Astronauts* 41-44). Shown at the 2002 Adelaide Festival, the multi-media sound and slide documentary *The Heart of the Journey* by Japanese-born photographer Mayu Kanamori narrates the story of her friend Lucy Dann, a Broome Aboriginal woman who, as an adult, discovered she had a Japanese pearler father. Until she was 20 years old Lucy believed her father was Aboriginal. Shortly before he died, however, her adoptive Aboriginal father revealed to her the identity of her biological father. Twenty years later Lucy went with Mayu in search of her roots and was reunited in 2000 with Tsutsui Tamotsu in Taiji, a small fishing village in Japan (Jones 158).

Another Aboriginal-Asian person who has made a cross-cultural journey to re-establish family links is Ollie Smith. Ollie grew up in an orphanage in Broome and spent her whole life believing her Indonesian father had abandoned her and her Aboriginal mother, until she read the welfare files kept on them. In fact, despite protests and letters of support from his employer and the Pearler’s Association, in 1951 Ollie’s father was arrested, fined and deported for long-term cohabiting with Rita Smith, Ollie’s ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal-Asian mother.
Ollie was fortunate to re-establish links with her Indonesian family. The first chapter has shown that legislation introduced in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prohibited Asian men from cohabiting with Indigenous women. As we have seen, this legislation was ostensibly introduced to ‘protect’ Indigenous women but, in reality, it resulted in heartache and the breaking-up of families and communities. Regardless of whether or not the men were actively supporting their partners and children, their ‘Asianness’ criminalised them and their relationships. Even though Ollie’s father was gainfully employed, accommodated and fully supported Ollie and was in a loving and long-term relationship with Ollie’s mother, he was used by officials as “an example” to warn others of the consequences of engaging in cross-cultural relationships (Yu 66). For Ollie and many others of Indigenous-Asian descent, such legislation denied them access to their Asian cultural roots, and a sense of belonging to a wider community.

Ollie eventually met her father Wella Kalle in Kupang in 1995. He told Ollie he had loved her mother, and would have had more children if he had been able to stay (Yu 66). On a second trip Ollie and her daughter visited Kalle’s village on Sabu where the “big cross cultural influences between the Koepangers and Broome people” were immediately apparent: “the customs on Sabu are very similar to Aboriginal customs—you get that sharing thing … In Koepang you have your elders. Elders make the decisions, like in Aboriginal society. There’s the extended family but with a strong family structure” (qtd in Yu 67). Ollie was also surprised by the commonalities in their languages, understanding many words, greetings and colloquialisms. For Ollie, discovering that her parent’s (enforced) separation was a result of legislation and not abandonment, as well as reconnecting with her Asian heritage and family gave her a sense of belonging and enabled her to make sense of her life. As in many of the Stolen Generations stories, history repeated itself in Ollie and her mother Rita’s family. Rita’s mother Dora had been removed to Beagle Bay mission after her Asian husband was deported, and Rita grew up in the mission dormitory (Yu 67).

As we can see from the deportation of the Asian men in Ollie Smith’s family, many Aboriginal/Asian couples have faced obstacles in their attempts to marry or form intimate relationships. In the contemporary era Indigenous and Asian couples can encounter resistance to their cross-cultural unions, sometimes from their own
communities. At other times, however, such partnerships are accepted and embraced. One of the main themes of a documentary shot in Darwin in April 2002 was Chinese/Aboriginal inter-racial marriages (Personal communication with Austin Chin, Public Relations Officer, Darwin Chung Wah Society, 30 April 2002, 29 Jan 2003 and Kevin Han, documentary researcher and editor, 29 Jan 2003). The documentary was made as an episode of a 13 part public affairs series called ‘Aussie Chinese’ and was aired in June 2002. It sought to determine the various factors that led people of differing backgrounds to enter cross-cultural marriages, and how the Chinese, Indigenous and Anglo-Celtic communities responded to these relationships. Such projects are indicative of the growing interest in mixed-race and ‘poly-cultural’ communities, and the varying ways in which these people negotiate their hybrid and multifarious subject positions.

Because of the enduring links between Aboriginal and Asian communities and the recent social acceptance of ambiguous and ‘hybrid’ identities, further research into South-East Asian influences on the construction of contemporary Aboriginality is being undertaken. Mary Ann Bin-Sallik, whose mother is from the Djaru people of east Kimberley, and whose father was an indentured Malay pearl diver has recently received an Australian Research Council grant to explore how Aboriginal people of mixed descent self-identify. Given the high incidence of Asian men marrying local Aboriginal women in places like Darwin and Broome, Bin-Sallik is interested in tracing the way contemporary Aboriginality “comprises a blend of Aboriginal, Asian influences from the Malay, Indonesian, Filipino, Chinese and Japanese cultures, and of course European influences” (179). The growing number of requests received by the Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo from Indigenous people trying to trace their Chinese roots has inspired Joan Jack, the museum’s deputy director, to schedule an exhibition on this theme next year (Personal communication, 24 April 2002). Recent initiatives that are seeking to excavate shifting and multiple cross-cultural identities are perhaps a prelude to the future of identity politics, even for Indigenous communities.

Con/Testing Identities

The question ‘Who is an Aborigine?’ is certainly not easy to answer (Fischer 97).
The relatively recent recognition of the constructed nature of identity formation has led many people to reclaim parts of their identities they were formerly estranged from. Postmodernist trends that seek to problematise and contest the implied essentialism of terms such as ‘Aboriginal’, ‘Asian’, ‘Black’ and ‘white’ have operated in conjunction with the recent unsettling of fixed cultural and racial identities in favour of an assertion of more fluid and dynamic subject positions. Contemporary writing by and interviews with Aboriginal and Asian-Australians attest to the multitude of ways in which these people construct their life narratives and ‘perform’ their identities (Bin-Sallik; Giese, Beyond; Giese, Astronauts; Ling; Ye). However, despite current trends that emphasise the dynamic and relational nature of identity formation, Aboriginal people, those living in urban settings in particular, are often forced to prove they are ‘authentic’ or ‘real’ Aborigines. The previous chapter has argued that Asian-Australians also come under pressure to prove their authenticity. It showed that Ien Ang was deemed a ‘fake’ Chinese because of her inability to speak any Chinese languages. But in the following I look at some instances where Aboriginal people, in particular, have been asked to substantiate their claims of Aboriginality. I show that the contestation of one’s Aboriginal status or heritage can emanate from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sources, in fiction and ‘real life’.

Langford Ginibi has argued that the dominant Australian ideology suggests: “[t]he only real Aborigines are the tribal ones out in the desert sitting on a rock! Those of us with a degree of caste have never been defined as real Aborigines” (Real Deadly 23). In Lucashenko’s Steam Pigs (1997) ‘Sue’ the Aboriginal protagonist comments on the irony of this situation:

in the early days, when being a little bit dark was the same thing as being a real true blackfella, the whites got stuck into her mother over it, and now that the country was full of dark-skinned migrants, the Murries like her were told they weren’t black at all, and to claim Aboriginality was all a big con (166-67).

45 As we have seen in chapters four and five, as provisional categories of identification to be mobilised strategically in the face of racist politics, Aboriginal and Asian-Australian communities might invoke essentialist racial identities enabling a degree of political solidarity and critical purchase.

46 I have argued in the previous chapter that it is important to remember, however, that non-white and non-European peoples who are racially ‘marked’ have less freedom in their adoption of particular identities than Anglo-Australians.
Non-Aboriginal people are not the only ones who question the authenticity of one’s Aboriginality. Fair skinned Aboriginal people can also find their invocation of an Aboriginal identity questioned by other Aboriginal people. Some recent novels by Aboriginal authors have openly discussed the divisions among various Indigenous people. In Wright’s *Plains of Promise* (1997) Mary, who was taken from her Aboriginal mother (and thus refused family and land affiliations), “perceived a denial by Aboriginal people wherever she worked to accept her Aboriginality” (240). She found that a ‘hierarchy of victimage’ existed, based on “competition about who was the most oppressed and severely dispossessed”; and that Aboriginal people were reduced “to grovelling after government like a bunch of beggars” (266). Sue also encountered this division in *Steam Pigs*: “[y]ou born black up north, you took what was coming. Human rights were for the middle class blacks, the ones who lived down South, and read books and went to college, and worried about what was said in newspapers” (169).

Despite the economic, geographical, social and cultural differences between Aboriginal people, many Aboriginal writers such as Rosalie Medcraft and Valerie Gee (xii), Langford Ginibi (*Real Deadly 95*) and Lucashenko (*Steam 21*) still maintain that being Aboriginal is not related to the colour of one’s skin, but to how one feels from within. In *Steam Pigs*, Sue is admonished by a friend for:

> confusing colonisation with culture, and blackness with oppression ... What you’ve more or less said is what most whites think, too, that there’s nothing more to being Aboriginal than drinking and fighting and being poor ... but that’s just the garbage we’ve given you since Cook arrived. You could live in a palace and still be a Murri in your heart (147).

Despite the understanding that those claiming an Aboriginal identity might differ in their skin tones, and have had differential access to their countries, families, languages and cultural identities, the ‘policing’ of Aboriginality remains. Sally Morgan, who grew up believing she was of Indian extraction, found that there was resistance to her invocation of an Aboriginal identity after the publication of *My Place* (1987). Morgan’s family did not openly discuss their Aboriginal heritage with Sally because of a fear of government surveillance and interference that might result in her removal. But Indigenous critics such as Mudrooroo have questioned the legitimacy of Morgan’s claims to an Aboriginal identity, noting that she “is not an Indigenous person writing about her community from a position of knowledge, but an outsider discovering that
cultural and identity” (Indigenous 195, emphasis added). Indigenous writer Isabel Tarrago levelled similar criticisms at Morgan’s assumption or ‘acquisition’ of an Aboriginal identity, noting her lack of any ‘real’ experiential knowledge of living as an Indigenous person: “[i]f we are to read the ‘real’ writings of Aboriginal people, then one has to be part of the understanding and to live the life of Aboriginal people” (qtd in Mudrooroo, Indigenous 196).

Murri writer and historian Jackie Huggins has also challenged Morgan’s invocation of an Aboriginal identity, claiming that it was largely her non-Aboriginal readership that granted Morgan the status of an ‘Aboriginal writer’ (qtd in Mudrooroo, Indigenous 196). The notion of non-Indigenous people bestowing or ‘granting’ an individual the right to assume or adopt an Aboriginal identity has not only featured in Morgan’s case. Mudrooroo’s proclamation of Indigeneity has also been scrutinised and contested. Despite Mudrooroo’s claims concerning his Aboriginal ancestry through descent on his mother’s side, his numerous novels and other publications and long-standing involvement with Aboriginal people and politics, research into Mudrooroo’s family history undertaken by his sister revealed he had African-American heritage, but no Aboriginal lineage. Mudrooroo’s youthful uncertainty about his precise racial origins was assuaged by the reactions of people around him who assumed that he was of Aboriginal descent. Mary Durack, who encouraged and helped Mudrooroo (then Colin Johnson) to write and publish his first novel Wild Cat Falling was instrumental in his adoption of an Aboriginal identity (Fischer 100).

In his autobiography An Australian Son (1996) Gordon Matthews has also noted that his invocation of an Aboriginal identity was largely at the discretion of non-Indigenous people. Gordon was given up for adoption by his mother at birth and was subsequently raised by his adoptive Anglo-Australian family. Gordon felt that he “earned the right to be Aboriginal” after continually being “tagged Aboriginal by others” (qtd in Fischer 99). The person perhaps most responsible for Gordon’s decision to claim an Indigenous identity was his non-Aboriginal university lecturer who was convinced that Matthews must be Aboriginal. After researching his genealogy, Matthews discovered that he was actually of Sri Lankan descent. Like Mudrooroo, Matthews’ choice to assume his ‘mistaken identity’ “came about as the result of the philanthropy of liberal, well-meaning European Australians” (Fischer 101).
While non-Indigenous people played an important part in Mudrooroo’s and Matthews’ eventual adoption of Indigeneity, their decisions were also motivated by a need to ‘belong’. Some individuals of non-Aboriginal descent have actively chosen to adopt or claim an Aboriginal identity at their own discretion, not so much to gain a sense of ‘community’ or ‘wholeness’, but to serve their own purposes and interests. While they might be motivated by different incentives, Langton has noted that both “Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people create Aboriginalities” (qtd in Mudrooroo, *Indigenous* 197). Some Aboriginal people perceived incongruities in ‘Wanda Koolmatrie’ s’ novel *My Own Sweet Time* (1995), only to find that Leon Carmen, a non-Aboriginal male, had in fact assumed the literary persona of Koolmatrie believing (he claimed) that it would assist him to get the book published (Stevenson and Hubble 1,4). Other examples of non-Indigenous writers and artists assuming an Aboriginal identity include the adoption by Serbian-Australian writer Bozic Steten of the pseudonym B Wongar for his novel *The Trackers* (1978). Dame Elizabeth Durack appropriated the male Aboriginal identity of ‘Eddie Burrup’ to give her paintings more authenticity and credibility (van den Berg, *Nyoongar* 142).

In official governmental terms, an individual is deemed an Aborigine if they can satisfy three criteria—they must be descended from Aboriginal people, they must identify as such, and be recognised by the Aboriginal community to be so. Difficulties arise when some members of the Indigenous community identify certain individuals as Aborigines, while others contest or challenge these claims. While some Aboriginal organisations and spokespeople refuted Mudrooroo’s claims to an Aboriginal identity, others like Langford Ginibi publicly supported his Indigeneity, claiming him as “a spiritual brother” ("Koori Writer" 12). Even after the Aboriginal community became aware of Matthews’ ‘mis-taken identity’ some still accepted and embraced him as one of their own: “[y]our status may have changed, but you’ll always be one of us” (Gordon Matthews 208).

When ‘self-identification’ was introduced in the 1970s as the means by which Aboriginality would be determined, it was a repudiation of former racist labels such as ‘half-caste’ and ‘quarter-caste’. Unlike the United States and Canada, Australia chose not to impose a ‘blood count’ to determine who could access its Indigenous services. The number of Australians who call themselves Indigenous increased by 55 percent
between 1986 and 1996 and some Indigenous people are concerned that this is “a cultural flowering fertilised in large measure by government money” (Guilliatt 19). In Tasmania (which now boasts the biggest Indigenous population per-capita in the country), Indigenous communities are anxious that the definition of Aboriginality is so broad “that indigenous culture is threatened with a new kind of white invasion, this time from within” (Guilliatt 18). Deliberate fraud is part of the problem, but a far greater number of people are claiming Black heritage based on distant ancestry. As Larissa Behrendt maintains: “[i]f we’re going to talk about treaties and recognition of rights, the question of who’s in and who’s out is going to be the most important issue facing indigenous Australians” (qtd in Guilliatt 21). Those ‘blackfellas’ who cannot prove their Aboriginal ancestry in archival or historical documents or by oral testimony and community evidence might now be subject to more stringent tests of authenticity—including perhaps DNA tests. The spectre of the past looms over this debate, and few want to return to a system of categorising Aborigines according to degrees of blood, especially when such tests have historically been used to deny Indigenous people their culture, land and children. But the question remains, who is and is not entitled to declare they are Aboriginal?

The contestation of Aboriginality raises important and vexed questions concerning the notion of individual and group identity formation in (post)colonial societies. For Indigenous people, the retracing of family histories is of crucial importance, especially for those who were taken away as children. As we have seen, this review of family histories and genealogies can sometimes produce surprising results that generate more questions than answers. Does pressure from the Aboriginal community for Mudrooroo to ‘prove’ his Aboriginality take into account how he has experienced his life and identity, especially when most non-Aboriginal people treated him as though he was of Aboriginal descent? Do accusations of inauthenticity, stem from his political activism, or are they based on notions of ‘blood’ and heredity? If so, how do they differ from previous cases in Australian history where people have been identified by their ‘purity’ or ‘mixture of blood’ (Fischer 97)? If an individual can claim Aboriginal descent by bloodline, does the inclusion of ‘Other’ cultures and ethnicities within an Indigenous identity make one’s claims to Aboriginality less authentic? Is there a difference if Aboriginal people can claim dual-minority ancestry, where these ‘Other’ heritages are Asian or non-European, as opposed to Anglo-Celtic?
Like other identities, modern Aboriginality can no longer base itself on an essential or inherent subjectivity (except, perhaps, for the cause of political mobilisation). Langton has argued that “Aboriginality is a field of intersubjectivity that is remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, or representation and interpretation” (qtd in Mudrooroo, Indigenous 197). In other words, Aboriginality itself is ‘contingent’ and ‘in transit’ (Brewster 7). The construction of an Aboriginal identity will alter from one time period and generation to the next, and undergo transformations in response to changing political contexts. The notion of a dynamic, performative and future-oriented Aboriginality is important in countering the relegation of Aboriginal culture to the past or ‘pre-contact’ era. The history of Aboriginal dispossession guaranteed that Aboriginal people could not retain their culture in the forms that it existed prior to invasion. The ability of Aboriginal people to incorporate new modes and ways of being, and to redevelop and reconstitute ‘traditional’ aspects of their lives “attests to the positive adaptive capability of contemporary Aboriginal cultures” (Langton, "Medicine" 218-219).

The recognition that Aboriginal identity is not static, but rather is fluid and relational, has problematised the popularly held notion that Aboriginal people living in urban centres are ‘inauthentic’ or ‘non-traditional’. As Roberta James contends: “[t]here is always the question of ‘authentic’ Aboriginality. The question of ‘authentic’ non-Aboriginality is never raised in the same way” (211). By relegating native cultures to a primordial past that remains fixed and ‘untouched’, proponents of such thinking underestimate the impact of colonialism. They also deny the agency of Aboriginal people in transforming or adapting their culture to cope with changing environments. The fact that Aboriginal people have been able to maintain a sense of cultural continuity despite more than two hundred years of their attempted annihilation, is proof of the adaptive capabilities of the Aboriginal community.

**New Cross-Cultural Scripts**

I stand on this land that does not belong to me/that does not belong to them either (Ouyang Yu, "Alien" in Moon 28).

The oral testimonies of individuals and families of Indigenous-Asian descent explored above challenge dominant narratives of nation and the Back/white binary of Australian historiography. Now I explore how Indigenous and Asian communities are
reinterpreting and rewriting the national storybook in their collaborative artistic, literary and theatrical endeavours.

Marcia Langton has argued that the “now toxic relationship between many Australians of British background and indigenous people must cease to be the only litmus test for cultural relations” (qtd in Perera, "Futures" 12) in this country. She has urged Aboriginal film makers and artists to try to understand the histories of resistance they might share with people who have survived similar experiences: “[l]et’s forget about this psychotic debate we keep having with white Australia and let’s start talking to Asians and people from Eastern Europe and Africa … we could bring our experiences as human beings together” (qtd in Muecke 8). Many Indigenous writers, visual artists and poets are indeed ‘talking to Asians’ and other non-white migrant collectivities in Australia.

Much of the literary and theatrical production discussed below is semi-autobiographical in nature. Indigenous and Asian-Australian writers, poets and playwrights are articulating their own experiences in their own terms. For minority group members the very act of writing themselves, their histories, identities and stories into existence is a political enterprise or revolutionary act of resistance. Aboriginal and Asian-Australian writers not only question and undermine what has been said about them, they expose gaps in white thinking, consciously addressing the ignorance of the white reader. The telling of these hitherto largely neglected stories can facilitate a broader understanding of the intersecting histories of Indigenous and Asian communities. These recent stories serve an important function in paying homage to the experiences of Indigenous and Asian peoples, to their complex and ambiguous relationships, and the multitude of ways they have responded to the white Australian community.

Not only is this recent literary and cultural production writing Indigenous/Asian experiences into existence, it sometimes resists the dominant ‘literary tradition’ through its usage of a ‘kriol’ or vernacular language that combines ‘Aboriginal English’ with colloquial Asian terminology—deliberately yet nonchalantly misappropriating English language traditions. They are often powerful and innovative texts that combine historical ‘facts’ with oral and community histories, fictitious events, satire, humour and irony. These new stories do not serve as a substitute for historical facts but, rather, provide new interpretations of history and alternative readings of accepted notions of
Australian historiography. These texts do not attempt to replace established histories of Australia so much as build upon and augment them.

Previously I have shown that early Asian émigrés were simultaneously victimised by, and implicated in, the colonising mission. Chapter one argued that Asian sojourners and settlers could be characterised as pioneers, and as playing an active role in the history of colonisation in Australia. But my previous analysis has also suggested that these same immigrants, via their cultural and spiritual exchanges and inter-marriage with Aboriginal communities, provided a forerunner to decolonisation (Curthoys, "Immigration" 170-79). Much Aboriginal/Asian cross-cultural production elaborates on the common experiences these communities share, depicting alliances that stem from a similar (but also different) sense of displacement or marginalisation from Anglo-Australian society. But these new cultural scripts also emphasise the complexities and tensions that arise between these groups because of the implication of all migrants in the dispossession of the Indigenous custodians of this country. As we will see, the collaborative cultural production produced by Indigenous and Asian communities dramatises the ambiguous and sometimes ‘uneasy conversation’ that has been taking place between these peoples for centuries.

Aboriginal Imaginings of Indigenous/Asian Unions

Now I examine the varying ways in which people of Asian descent are imagined by Indigenous authors in a range of poems and novels. In some accounts Indigenous and Asian peoples share a sense of alienation from white Australian society, but in others, Asians are clearly aligned with the colonisers or invaders of this nation.

In ‘Asian Invasion’ (1990) Nyoongah poet Graeme Dixon shifts between portraying the Japanese as victims of oppression, and agents of it. Dixon recounts that the Japanese “tried/once/to take [Australia] by force/Like the Europeans/did/during history’s course” (35). But the Japanese, like their Aboriginal counterparts, were also victimised by the “Babylon nations” for whom “violence is/the traditional Christian way/to wipe/out violence” (35). However, the Japanese are by no means represented as innocent victims. In the contemporary post-war era, the Japanese threat is not represented in terms of an invading army, but businessmen and well-educated financiers. They are portrayed as commercial or economic colonists who “attack/using the power of the
In his comparison of the colonisation of Australia with the “invasion/initiated/by the [Japanese] financial scholar” (36), Dixon reminds us that for Indigenous people, “oppression is oppression/No matter the shape of the eye” (37). To Dixon, the Anglo-Australian fear of losing the country to Japanese investors trying to “gain/ownership/of this Great Southern Land” (36) is hypocritical given their violent dispossession of the country’s Indigenous custodians. As we have seen, the white national consciousness has long indulged in what Meaghan Morris has called ‘a chain of displacement’, where the invader fears invasion in turn. Asia has figured in the white cultural psyche as a source of invasion and contagion and, as we saw in chapter three, in the post-war period Japan largely replaced China as the locale of fear.

In his novel *Below the Line* (1991) Aboriginal writer Eric Willmot also imagines a cautionary tale of Asian invasion. In this account too, Japanese investors are seen as enterprising and avaricious, as commercial or economic colonists. One protagonist complains that the Japanese “own half of Queensland” (32), and another character decries the permission given “foreigners, particularly the Japanese, to buy up Australian land” (41). This invasion narrative shares common themes with a number of other cautionary tales of imagined Asian invasion, and one wonders who the intended audience might be. Like earlier accounts discussed in chapter one, including William Lane’s “White or Yellow? A Story of the Race War of A.D. 1908” (1888) and Charles Kirmess’ *The Australian Crisis* (1909), Willmot’s novel works to reinforce popular anxieties about the perils of unchecked Asian immigration. As we saw in chapter four, Charles Perkins’ concern that ‘every third face in the street is Asian’ was demonstrative of his anxiety about the levels of Asian migration. Willmot’s novel also exhibits anxiety about the rate of immigration from Asia. Beginning in the 1970s when “Vietnamese refugees began to descend on its northern shores” (40), and followed by two successive “waves of refugees [that] were engineered by Indonesia”, Australia was invaded in “an insidious and unrecognisable way” (31). Australia was heralded as “the promised land in an impoverished and overpopulated South-East Asia” (39), and “was overrun by a mix of people, mainly Indonesian” (29). The top half of the country was renamed ‘The Republic of South Irian’, while the bottom half remained Australian territory. Like other popular invasion fictions, Willmot’s account combines racist paranoia with conspiracy theories, accusing a number of government officials including
the “Yanks, Japs, Indonesians and certainly Australians” (190) of allowing the invasion to take place.

The various relationships between the ‘poly-cultural’ characters in Willmot’s novel are very complex, and its Asian characters are not always portrayed in a negative fashion. Somaya, an Indonesian protagonist argues that except for “the generals of Java and Australia”, nobody wanted the war because “[o]rdinary Indonesians are not like that” (177). While the Japanese government is implicated in the plan to create “an Asian banana republic in northern Australia” (190), a Japanese volunteer unit joined the New Zealand force in Australia’s efforts to defend its borders. Other complex inter-cultural relationships include the fact that the President of the South Irian Republic is an Aboriginal man, with some northern Aboriginal groups, as well as non-Aboriginal people joining the new republic. But the Aboriginal characters are not always aligned with the Indonesian invaders because a number of “Aboriginals along the Roper and Daly Rivers were slaughtered trying to defend our native land” (30).

Ruby-Eyed Coucal (1996), by Bruce Pascoe (discussed in chapter two), is also characterised by shifting and ambiguous alliances between its ‘poly-cultural’ characters. Jim Fox, a ‘half-caste’ Aborigine joins the Free Papua Organisation in Irian Jaya to fight the Indonesian occupation. Fox shares with the local Papuans an understanding of “the pain to heart, mind and loin of losing one’s homeland so suddenly to people who treated you with such contempt” (92). The Indonesian characters feature as violent and ruthless invaders, but they are also portrayed as the friends and allies of those Aboriginal people “who had worked for Makassans boiling down bêche-de-mer at Yirrkala” (104). Based on the ancient trade and cultural links between China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Indigenous peoples of Arnhem Land, the novel imagines the possibility of mounting a challenge to the legal fiction of *terra nullius*. The “connection between the Indonesians and Australian Aborigines was the trade they’d shared for centuries before white people learnt to sale boats” (126-27). Based on this trade, Pascoe imagines the Northern Land Council showing the Supreme Court that nations such as China and Indonesia had already recognised the sovereignty of Aboriginal Australia, thereby proving that the British violated the sovereign rights of the original custodians.
Directed by Rachel Perkins, the film *Radiance* (1997) is another ‘text’ where Asian characters are portrayed both positively, and in less favourable ways. In this production too, “‘Japanese’ capitalists are constructed as responsible for pain” (Spark 42). The film narrates the story of three Aboriginal women who return home to bury their recently deceased mother. ‘Nona’ is determined to bury their mother’s ashes on her ancestral land, a nearby island that has been bought by Japanese investors and is now a tourist resort. Although viewers are reminded of the island’s Indigenous history, its white colonial history is largely overlooked, implying that it has “only actually been colonised by ‘external’ Asian forces” (Spark 46). In another scene, Nona wears a cotton kimono or *yukata* while she mimes the words to Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* from a recording made by her famous opera singer sister. She tells the other characters of her affair with a Japanese lover, but speaks of him in disparaging terms, claiming that she is able to confirm the rumour that Japanese men ‘have small dicks’.

Through the introduction of Aboriginal-Chinese character Paul Ah Sung in her novel *Hard Yards* (1999), Lucashenko also makes these cross-cultural connections explicit. In this account too, Aboriginal/Asian relationships are based at times on a mutual sense of exclusion from the broader Australian community, while at other points they are seemingly contradictory and conflicting. The shared objectification of Aboriginal and Asian peoples is portrayed when Pauline Hanson appears on a television in the local pub, with the ‘yobbos’ who support her claiming: “be voting for her, before the fucken boongs and slopes take the place over” (55). 47 Here we can see white Australians rehearsing their often-voiced objection to Aboriginal and Asian peoples on the grounds that ‘they’ might deprive ‘us’ of our sole possession of the nation. The theme of Indigenous and Asian people’s marginalisation and victimisation is a trope that reappears further in the novel with one protagonist claiming, Chinese people “copped it, same as Murries” (122). Aboriginal and Chinese-Australian communities can share a similar sense of exclusion from Anglo-Australian society, but the obvious disparity in the socio-economic levels of these communities is portrayed when a character describes Chinese people as “loaded” and “dripp[ing] gold” (122).

47 ‘Boong’ is a derisive term used with reference to Aboriginal people, and ‘slope’ is derogatory terminology used to denote someone of Asian descent.
Asian-Australian Imaginings of Indigenous/Asian Unions

The Australian Fiancé (2000), a novel set in the post World War Two era by Singapore-Australian author Simone Lazaroo, contains a number of ‘poly-cultural’ Broome characters whose relationships stem from different as well as shared experiences. The central protagonist is a Eurasian woman from Singapore who forms a bond with an Aboriginal-Asian woman. Her “mother’s Nyul Nyul tribe; some of [her] father’s people Indonesian, Japanese” (91). These characters have both shared the experience of living under a British colonial government, and while the Eurasian woman refers to living under such a repressive regime “[s]wallowing the boss”, her Aboriginal-Asian friend “laughs hugely, her laugh that understands”, replying “[e]ating shit, we call it” (92). These women have many experiences in common, but their friendship is fractured along lines of power because the Aboriginal-Asian woman is also the maid in the house of the Anglo-Australian fiancé. As the future marriage partner of the heir to a successful pearling business, the Eurasian woman is exempted from many of the hardships other characters face. In the picture theatre, for example, she sits with her husband-to-be in “the more comfortable cane chairs in the centre”, away from her housemaid friend and the other “Aboriginals sitting on long hard wooden benches”, and the “Chinese and Malays on the canvas seats” (103). More importantly though, the Eurasian woman’s relationship to the well-known and respected Anglo-Australian fiancé results in her exemption from the immigration requirement that she “be at least fifty-one per cent European” (8). In the short-term, at least, she is able to avoid being one “of the latest deportations of Asians: fishermen, market gardeners, cooks” (97) that she continually hears about on the radio.

In Lazaroo’s The Australian Fiancé the Eurasian protagonist is only able to partake of those privileges and advantages accorded the Anglo-Australian characters while she remains engaged to a powerful and influential white man. But her access to ‘whiteness’ remains partial and provisional because she is “so marked by where she comes from. Her … skin. Her slanting eyes, untrustworthy. Such eyes” (106). Once the relationship dissolves governmental rules and regulations reposition her as ‘Asian’ and she is treated accordingly. Without the protection and influence of her intended white marriage partner, the Eurasian woman joins the ranks of the other characters of Asian lineage who are unable to “satisfy the Department by their appearance that they will
have no difficulty in being accepted as Europeans in Australia” (81). In the post-
World War Two climate of a revived paranoia of Asia where the “newspaper headlines
are full of Australia’s leaders warning of the dangers. The inscrutability of Asia. The
yellow peril. The spies to the north” (106), the Eurasian woman is forced to return to
Singapore.

In Drift (1994), a novel by Brian Castro—whose origins are Chinese, Portuguese,
Scottish and French—essentialist notions of race are unsettled and the characters adopt
various racialised identities during the course of the narrative. Castro was born and
raised in Hong Kong, but now lives in Australia, and the hybridised identities of his
characters are perhaps a reflection of his own ‘poly-cultural’ heritage. Drift’s Thomas
McGann, for instance, is a ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal character who is represented
physically as an albino. McGann’s paleness enables him to move or drift between
Aboriginality and whiteness with relative ease compared to his Aboriginal great–great-
grandmother WORÉ (as her name appears in the novel) and his sister Emma. The novel
narrates two parallel stories, one that recounts the experiences of WORÉ’s abduction by
whalers in the 1820s, and another that portrays the lives of some of her descendants in
the contemporary era. After the violent murder of her family WORÉ, meaning woman,
is forced to become the concubine of Sperm McGann who entertains the idea of starting
a tribe of hybrids that he calls The Intercostals (106). WORÉ attempts to sabotage his
scheme through the infanticide of her babies, and in doing so, tries to save them from a
fate like hers: “I kill them because they will be like me. They will be women which
McGann will take and thrust his seed into them” (118). The repetition of WORÉ’s rape
in descendent Emma’s rape (also by white men) is confirmation of WORÉ’s fear that
white heritage will not protect her (great-great-grand) daughters from sexual abuse at
the hands of white men.

The “white hair and pink eyes” (174) of Emma’s albino twin brother Thomas enable
him to ‘pass’ as white and at times he revels in his uncertain and duplicitous racial
categorisation: “my ambivalence, ambiguity. I could cross the floor at any time” (188).
While Thomas looks white, he identifies with his Aboriginal heritage and is politically
active in Aboriginal affairs. But his ability to assume ‘whiteness’ leads to a questioning
of the authenticity of his ‘Blackness’: “I’m black, but maybe not quite; not entirely …
and that’s much worse” (194). Thomas’ “ambiguous hybridity of his (white) albino
appearance and his (black) Aboriginality” (Lo 74) is contrasted with the British character Byron Shelley Johnson who injects himself with ‘melanotan’, turning his skin from white to Black. The instability of phenotypic categories and cultural identities is revealed in Thomas’ observation: “Byron and I walked along the mall and people stared. That was how I had always experienced myself, but now I had his skin to prove it” (Castro 235). With the change in his skin tone, the locals stop talking to Byron and the barman will no longer serve him: “[f]rom shades of invisibility he has suddenly become noticeable” (232). The destabilisation of the physical identities of these two characters does not enable an escape from racial categorisation. Rather, it highlights the impact of biological racial categories upon the way people are positioned, by themselves and others, in racial and cultural terms.

Indigenous/Asian Visual Arts

The poems and novels I have surveyed depict various points of divergence and intersection in the relationships between the Aboriginal and Asian characters. Cross-cultural alliances between Aboriginal and Asian-Australian artists can also reflect this complex and dynamic parallelism. When Chinese painter Zhou Xiaoping started working with Aboriginal artists, he became very conscious of the cultural differences between them. In his eagerness to understand Aboriginal art forms, Zhou asked the Indigenous painters he met in Alice Springs in 1988 many questions, only to discover that this was not the most culturally appropriate way to learn. He came to realise that “the Aborigines never answer your questions. They only give you an answer that is very simple … You can ask them again and again and again. Ask them ten questions, and maybe they answer five” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 68). After years of working and painting with Aboriginal people in remote areas of Arnhem Land, the Kimberley region and north Queensland, “sit[ting] close to them as friends” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 71), Zhou came to comprehend the multiple meanings of Aboriginal art and life: “[r]eally understanding these people is important. Understanding from the inside, not just the outside” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 69).

Zhou, now based in Melbourne, regularly shows his paintings that have been inspired by the Aboriginal people he has met on his journeys through the country (as well as taking his work, photos, slides and videos back to show the communities). His pieces have been exhibited from Beijing and Taiwan to Darwin, the Museum of Chinese
Australian History and the National Gallery of Victoria (Giese, *Astronauts* 73). His work has been shown recently as part of the multimedia exhibition *The Lie of the Land* in Melbourne 2001. At the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery in February 2002, Zhou showed his paintings at the *From China to Arnhem Land and Beyond* exhibition. Zhou has also worked closely with the late Walmatjarri artist Jimmy Pike (from the Great Sandy Desert of WA), whose work has been exhibited in France, Germany, the UK, Japan and China. Figure 14 is a photograph taken of Zhou and Jimmy in Australia, while figure 15 was taken when they were together in China. In 1996 Zhou and Pike held a joint exhibition in Zhou’s home town, Hefei, and in 1999 *Through the Eyes of Two Cultures*, another collaborative exhibition (including their drawings of each other holding hands) was held at the National Gallery of China, further demonstrating the spiritual dynamism of an encounter “between two ancient, sophisticated visual traditions” (Giese, *Astronauts* 73) (see figures 16 and 17).

Giese notes that Zhou’s paintings of his Aboriginal subjects are enthusiastically attended in smaller centres, but in urban Australia they are not always well received: “[t]here are those who would deny Zhou, as a Chinese man who has been in Australia only eight years, the right to paint Aborigines at all” (*Astronauts* 69). As Khoo notes, the essentialism implied in such a judgment warrants closer attention. It seems that critics oppose Zhou’s ‘right’ to paint Aboriginal portraits as subjects because he is a *Chinese* man: “[i]n these arguments Zhou is, and always will be, ‘not-Australian’” (100). The prejudice against Zhou’s paintings might also stem from the particular way in which Zhou paints his portraits. Many viewers prefer softer, more picturesque depictions of Aboriginal people that fit their stereotypes: “[t]hey like little children with big smiles” (Zhou qtd in Khoo 70) (see figure 18). The fact that non-Indigenous art critics find Zhou’s depictions too brutal, and the misguided liberal response of attempting to defend the ‘poor Aborigines’ from Zhou’s representations (Khoo 100), are signs of ‘white guilt’. Such reactions are an indication of how uncomfortable urban dwellers feel when reminded of the living conditions many rural Aboriginal communities must endure.

Chinese-Australian artist Shi Xiaojun (Simon Cee) came to Australia in 1989 from Nanjing following the student protests in Tiananmen Square. To help him comprehend his feelings of social and cultural dislocation, Shi completed a series of more than
twenty paintings entitled ‘Red’. For Shi the colour red symbolised both Communist China and the red dirt or earth of his adopted homeland. According to Shi Aboriginal ‘dot art’ is a form of cultural expression that is readily recognised in China (and elsewhere) as being emblematic of (Indigenous) Australia. Shi juxtaposed quintessentially Australian imagery with readily identified iconography from his motherland. In much of his artwork Chairman Mao appears alongside Australian national images that are painted using a style similar to that used by many Indigenous artists (see thesis title page and figures 19, 20 and 21). Like other contemporary Chinese artists, Shi has rejected ‘traditional’ Chinese art in lieu of a post-modernist or ‘pop art’ style. Much of his work satirises the images of Chairman Mao that were popular during the Cultural Revolution.

By juxtaposing iconographic images of China with uniquely Australian national images in his paintings, Shi gained a better understanding of the meeting of these two ‘worlds’ in his own life. His artwork not only shows the influence that foreign art forms have had on Chinese painting but, for Shi, the influence that living in Australia has had on him personally, and on his views of China. By painting images of China against a backdrop of (his version of) Australian Indigenous art, Shi symbolically represents his attempt to belong to this country as a Chinese-Australian, and his efforts to understand his relationship to Australia’s Indigenous peoples. Unlike other non-Indigenous artists who have taken advantage of Aboriginal cultural heritage, Shi adopted a generic form of ‘Aboriginal’ art, not for financial reward, but to help him make sense of his new life in Australia. Shi does not characterise his interpretation and usage of an art form that is particular to some Aboriginal communities as appropriation but, rather, as his attempt to use art to integrate aspects of China with parts of Australia—a practice he has been involved in everyday since migrating to this country (Personal communication 3 Dec 2002).

‘Steel Axes’ (1976), a bark painting by Galpu artist Mithinari Gurruwiwi (from eastern Arnhem Land) shows a dugout canoe and Yolngu receiving metal axes from Macassan spirit people (see figure 22). This painting provides a graphic display of the incorporation of Macassans within the Aboriginal cosmos or universe as insiders rather than outsiders. Aboriginal art provides a means of understanding and controlling the world and all social relations by reproducing them in particular representations that hold
meaning for specific Aboriginal communities. Thus particular elements of Macassan life—such as the use of steel axes and dugout canoes—are taken out of their own world and reordered, contained and ‘controlled’ as part of Aboriginal systems of meaning (Morphy 223). Incorporation of the Macassans as part of the Dreamtime creation narratives of eastern Arnhem Land Aborigines was a means of adjusting to changing circumstances, while simultaneously ensuring the inclusion of new information about the world within traditional frameworks of knowing. Change was accommodated in such a way that it did not disrupt Aboriginal belief systems, or the core relationships between the people and the land, and Macassans "became part of an Aboriginal history of place rather than imposing their own history and identity on Arnhem Land (Morphy 224).

The era of Macassan contact with Arnhem Land Aboriginal people lasted for approximately 300 years, from about 1600-1900. As previously shown, the last visit by Macassan fleets took place in 1906, but Macassan mythology has been kept alive in various ways, including a recent set of paintings by Ganalpuyngu artist Johnny BulunBulun (from central Arnhem Land) (Morphy 225). Painted between 1993-94, BulunBulun’s ‘Marrukundja Manikay Cycle’ represents the life and ritual of the Ganalpuyngu as well as themes associated with the Macassan voyages (see figure 23). On the right hand side of the canvas geese, fish and tortoises represent the food eaten by Ganalpuyngu people, and to the left are material objects from the Macassans including knives, guns, pots, lengths of rope and people climbing in the mast and rigging of the prau (Morphy 225). The particular style in which this work is painted combines elements of both cultures in a single form. The geometric and triangular patterns are a design specific to people of the Yirritja moiety, but it is also used to represent the wind of the wet season that the Macassans relied on to make their journey to the Arnhem Land shores (Morphy 227).

Cross-Cultural Events in Asia

Zhou has suggested that people in China “do not have any knowledge of Aboriginal visual arts, performance, music or lifestyle” (qtd in Giese, Astronauts 72), but a

48 Peter Pugsley has also discussed the relative lack of information on Aboriginal peoples and issues in China, noting that the only novel by an Aboriginal writer that has been translated into Chinese is Sally
A growing number of Aboriginal artists are showing their work in China and other regions in Asia. Since 1995 at least twelve exhibitions featuring the work either solely of Indigenous artists or in conjunction with non-Indigenous visual artists have been shown in a very diverse number of Asian countries and cities. The organisation Asialink was formed in 1990 to foster cultural understanding between Asia and Australia through artists’ residencies and travelling exhibitions. It worked in tandem with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to sponsor the *Seasons of the Kunwinjku: Aboriginal Art from West Arnhem Land* exhibition in which eight Indigenous artists exhibited their work (Asialink, "Asialink Touring Program").\(^{49}\) In the exhibition *Between Remote Regions*, a large collaboration with artists from Australia and Malaysia focusing on art made in the regional towns of both countries, eleven of the fourteen Australian artists were of Aboriginal descent (Asialink, "Asialink Touring Program").

*Voices of the Earth*, an exhibition of ‘traditional’ and contemporary Aboriginal art showed the work of fifteen Indigenous artists, and toured through Seoul in 1996 (Asialink, "Asialink Touring Program"). *Unhomely*, an exhibition of eleven Australian artists, including Indigenous photographer and filmmaker Tracey Moffatt, toured to Seoul and Kyongju in 1998, and in 2001 *Tracey Moffatt*, a solo retrospective exhibition of her artwork toured through Korea and Taiwan (Asialink, "Asialink Touring Program"). This exhibition included her photographic series ‘Something More’ (1989) where Moffatt is pictured wearing a *cheongsam*, posing with a young Chinese man with a queue, or hanging plaited tail of hair (see figure 24).

The National Museum of Ethnology (known as Minpaku) in Osaka, Japan has been displaying cultural artefacts from the Ainu people, the Indigenes of Hokkaido colonised by Japan in the nineteenth century since 1979—when Ainu culture was still not recognised by the Japanese as a separate entity (Turner 21). The Museum holds

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\(^{49}\) Nicoll warns that the support of such cultural programmes is tied to fiscal returns. As such, these ‘exchanges’ might have less to do with promoting cross-cultural dialogue than with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade policy “searching for Asian markets for the products and expertise of an array of Australian ‘cultural industries’” (*Diggers* 140).
numerous symposia, and its staff are engaged in extensive fieldwork in many countries including research into Aboriginal cultures in Australia. Masatoshi Kubo, for example, has been visiting Aboriginal communities for over a decade to study their languages (Turner 21). Contemporary Australian Indigenous art and cultures are also represented, including artwork by Gordon Hookey, a member of the Waanji people (from the highlands of the southern Gulf of Carpentaria). Minpaku not only acknowledges the language group of the artists—which is not always done in Australia—but the information sheet has the artists’ own words, rather than being mediated by a Museum curator (Turner 27). Paintings by Lin Onus, a Yorta Yorta artist (north-east of Melbourne) are also exhibited at Minpaku. While not on show at the museum in Japan, the influence of traditional Japanese ukiyo-e or woodblock print art is evident in Onus’ painting ‘Michael and I are just slipping down to the pub for a minute’ (1992) (see figure 25). The tsunami or tidal wave in Onus’ painting is adopted from Katsushika Hokusai’s coloured woodblock print ‘The hollow of the deep-sea wave off Kanagawa’ (1829-33) which is perhaps the most famous Japanese image in ‘the West’ and part of the series ‘Thirty Six Views of Mount Fuji’ (actually 46 prints).

While an increasing number of Aboriginal visual artists have had their work exhibited in various parts of Asia, other Indigenous writers have visited the region. In 1999 Lucashenko, for example, went to Indonesia on a literature residency (Asialink, "Asialink Residencies"). Oodgeroo Noonucal (Kath Walker) and Mudrooroo gained inspiration for their poetry from their visits to China and other Asian countries. Noonucal’s collection of poems Kath Walker in China (1988) was inspired by the poetry she wrote during a trip there (see figure 26). After her visit to Reed Flute Cave in Guilin, Noonucal wrote a poem depicting Aboriginal creation stories in a Chinese setting: “I didn’t expect to meet you in Guilin/My Rainbow Serpent, /My Earth Mother, /But you were there/In Reed Flute Cave” (52). Some of the poems in Mudrooroo’s Dalwurra: The Black Bittern (1988), such as ‘Samye Ling’ were inspired by his time in Singapore, while others are a reflection of his travels in Thailand. One of the poems in this collection comments on the practice of ‘Blackbirding’, where Melanesian or Kanaka indentured labourers were brought to work on the sugarcane plantations in north Queensland in the late nineteenth century: “Blackbirds summing up the white Pacific crimes/…I know deir lies” (52).
A number of Indigenous actors have also performed in theatrical productions in various parts of Asia. At the Tokyo International Performing Arts Festival in 2002, the Indigenous plays *Stolen* and *The 7 Stages of Grieving* were shown. In November Japan’s Rakutendan theatre company gave performances of both plays in Japanese, with a Japanese cast. These performances were followed in December with the original Australian production of *Stolen*, produced by Melbourne’s Playbox Theatre Company and the Ilbijerri Theatre Co-operative (Australia Web). The Australian production of *Stolen*—written by Jane Harrison, a Muruwari playwright (from northern NSW)—was performed by an Australian Indigenous cast with the Japanese translation projected on a moving scroll. Both pieces provided unique and varied perspectives on vital concerns surrounding Indigenous culture and identity. *The 7 Stages of Grieving* is a story that interweaves personal and family history with instances of public grief. It links Elisabeth Kubler-Ross’ ‘Five Stages of Dying’ to the seven phases of Aboriginal history—Dreaming, Invasion, Genocide, Protection, Assimilation, Self-Determination and Reconciliation. *Stolen* is a play about the Stolen Generations. It narrates the story of five young Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their homes and families and traces their journey of seeking a sense of belonging in themselves and the alien world around them (see figure 27).

**Theatre**

Perhaps one of the first theatrical performances to make an explicit link between Indigenous and Asian identities was *Bran Nue Dae* (1990), created by Broome-based Aboriginal-Asian writer and musician Jimmy Chi. For Chi, his mixed-race heritage is a source of pride, and he resists identifying solely with his Aboriginal ancestry, “because I also know I’m Chinese and I’m Japanese and I’m Scottish” (qtd in Laurie, "Bran" 25). In the initial stages of production Chi collaborated with a working group headed by Peter Yu, another famous Broome personality of Aboriginal-Asian descent (Bibby viii). Members of the cast and the band ‘Kuckles’ were also of mixed Aboriginal-Asian heritage, including Rasidah Bin Omar, Brian Saaban, Pat Bin Amat and Johnny Sahanna. Demonstrative of Chi’s ease with his multi-ethnicity, his musical was written in kriol—a language that combines Chinese loanwords with Malay and Aboriginal terms.
Bran Nue Dae is about ‘Willie’s’ journey from a Catholic mission school in Perth back home to his beloved Broome. At the end of the play the leading characters come to a new and richer understanding of their Aboriginality through the revelation of family ties. The play challenges narrow and simplistic definitions of Aboriginality based on racial purity through a self-conscious parody of Aboriginal kinship systems. The impact that various South-East Asian cultures have had on Broome’s Aboriginal community is reflected in the play in a number of ways. In the publication of the script and music score, the title of the play is also written in Chinese characters (see figure 28). Act one begins in Broome’s historic Sun Pictures, where Aboriginal and Asian patrons “watched white filmstars from the inferior seating reserved for non-whites” (Shen and Edwards 5). The second act starts in Broome’s Chinatown, and when Willie is on his way back there, one of the things he most looks forward to is his mother’s home cooked “fish soup and rice” (Chi and Kuckles 29). Bran Nue Dae toured extensively in Australia, and plans are now being finalised for a film shot entirely in Broome.

According to Chi the ‘poly-cultural’ community of Broome is “an example to the rest of the world—and Australia—on how to live with each other” (Laurie, "Bran" 25). In Chi’s (1996) musical production Corrugation Road, the audience is led on a journey between Broome and remote Beagle Bay, further exploring the lives and “chaotically blended bloodlines” (Laurie, "Bran" 24) of Kimberley people, as the line “we are all one mongrel breed” attests. While Chi claims that he resists “being called black” (qtd in Laurie, "Bran" 25) because of his pride in his mixed Aboriginal-Asian ancestry, he tends to associate “with the Aboriginal side more” (qtd in Laurie, "Bran" 25) because he has had greater access to his Aboriginal culture. Chi’s father was of Japanese and Chinese parentage, and was interned during World War Two. James Chi, a prominent Broome businessman and identity was allegedly a Japanese sympathiser, and all of his possessions were confiscated (Choo, Mission 250). His father’s culture and experiences are topics Chi is eager to “know more about” (qtd in Laurie, "Bran" 25), and he plans to base his next musical production on the life of his father and others like him who were penalised for their ancestry.

Some recent theatre productions that have illustrated the many joys and hardships cross-cultural couples have faced include Keep Him My Heart: A Larrakia-Filipino Love
Story (1992), by Darwin-based artist and writer Gary Lee, a Larrakia man with Japanese, Chinese and Filipino heritage (see figure 29). Lee’s play is based on the love story of his great-grandparents. Gary’s great-grandmother was descended from a Larrakia mother and Scottish father, and his great-grandfather Antonio Cubillo came from the Philippines to work as a pearl diver in 1894. The couple had eleven children and today there are more than 400 of their descendants in Darwin. In an oral history project one of their grandchildren Mary (Gary’s mother) was asked what it was like to grow up in Darwin amidst such a ‘poly-cultural’ community where, as she stated, the “majority of children there were coloured or part coloured—Chinese, Japanese—you name it. All grades of colours” (Oral History Project). For Mary, because the people were “all different colours … everybody was the same” (Oral History Project). Such oral testimony makes a mockery of the black-white binaries of traditional historiographies of the Australian nation.

In its portrayal of the sexual attraction between the Aboriginal woman and the newly arrived Vietnamese man, the play Conversations with Charlie (1996) by Binh Duy Ta further explores the language of desire between these two disenfranchised groups (Lo, Khoo and Gilbert 10) (see figure 30). Conversations with Charlie is a production that explores themes of human love across racial and cultural divides, but it is also about (new and old) homelands, memory, displacement and loss. The young Vietnamese-Australian artist conjures Charlie (Chaplin) to help him reconcile his past and negotiate a new life in Australia. The Aboriginal Spirit of the Land is also called upon as an ally in this process of resistance and reconciliation, welcoming the Vietnamese newcomer: “I am the Spirit of the old Land. Come here my new child. Come here and I will teach you all its secrets” (Binh 96). Like Bran Nue Dae, this production also challenges fixed notions of race and racial identity, and this is particularly evident in the transformation of the Vietnamese mother into the Aboriginal lover.

A more recent production that investigates cross-cultural alliances between Indigenous people and Vietnamese migrants is Black and Tran (2001), a live theatre performance featuring Hung Le (originally from Saigon) and Ningali Lawford, a Walmajarri woman

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50 In 1996 Gary Lee was a History Award Recipient for researching the Aboriginal-Filipino links in Darwin since 1870 (http://www.nt.gov.au/dcis/nta/7_history/7-3_past.htm).
(from Christmas Creek in the Kimberley region) (see figure 31). “Created by an Aboriginal woman who has endured the horror of having her land and culture torn away and a Vietnamese immigrant whose homeland was subject to war” (Melbourne Federation Festival Brochure 17), *Black and Tran* also revolves around themes of the m/otherland, homelessness and diaspora. This production does not attempt to equate Aboriginal dispossession with the experiences of Vietnamese refugees, but it draws many poignant parallels between the feelings of displacement and alienation these peoples share. Le and Lawford skilfully use satire and humour to broach many controversial and difficult topics and to challenge some of the mis/conceptions of Aboriginal and Asian peoples that circulate in the white cultural imaginary. Set in a pub, the satire and irony in this production even extend to the title, which is a pun on the popular drink ‘black and tan’, a mix of black stout and amber lager.

Impressed by Chi’s musicals, Aboriginal writer and performer Trevor Jamieson co-wrote with Scott Rankin the theatre production *The Career Highlights of the Mamu*, portraying intersections or connections between different countries, cultures and histories (see figure 32). Shown at the Adelaide Festival in March 2002, *Mamu* (meaning devil) paralleled the experiences of Aboriginal people displaced from their Maralinga homeland because of atomic testing with Japanese survivors of the atomic bomb blast in Hiroshima (H. Thomson 6). The connections between Hiroshima and Maralinga are made explicit by imagery portraying Jamieson together with one of the Hiroshima survivors, and by a young Japanese woman Asako Izawa’s telling of the horrific human damage her people suffered.

Another Adelaide Festival performance piece that drew haunting parallels between countries and cultures was William Yang’s *Shadows*. Through photographs and storytelling Yang documented a journey of dispossession and reconciliation in a moving account of two communities: Indigenous people in Engonnia, an Aboriginal settlement in north-western NSW and German migrants in South Australia. With imagery and a series of monologues Yang recounted stories of people who have endured the ignorance and fear of racial intolerance. In Germany, Yang explained that unification, “or let’s call it reconciliation, happened because both sides wanted it” (H. Thomson 6), thus rendering Australia’s failure to achieve unification or reparation with Indigenous peoples obvious.
Music

As founding members of the rock/reggae band ‘Scrap Metal’, Indigenous-Asian brothers Alan, Stephen and Philip Pigram released four albums and toured extensively around the country. As some of the members of ‘Kuckles’, the three brothers also performed the musical accompaniment to Jimmy Chi’s *Bran Nue Dae*. More recently Alan, Stephen and Philip have been joined by brothers David and Gavin (as well as Paul Mamid) to form ‘The Pigram Brothers’. Many of their songs are testimony to the ‘poly-cultural’ and ‘multi-ethnic’ character of Broome’s population. Their song ‘Saltwater Cowboy’ from the album *Saltwater Country* (1997)—which is dedicated to “all the deep sea divers of the hard hat pearling days …”—recalls the history of Broome’s thriving pearling industry. The lyrics combine Indonesian, Japanese and Indigenous words, acting as a reminder of the many nationalities, races and cultures that have influenced contemporary Broome. “Stand back you shallow water man/ Let a deep sea diver through/ Selamat tingal, nakula jarndu/ Sayonara, slo’n’, galliow nyundu/ These lugger sales are moving too slowly/ For this saltwater cowboy sailing home” (Pigram and Pigram 1997).

Six of the nine children and teenagers in the band ‘Little Piggies’ are directly related to the Indigenous-Asian Pigram Brothers. The other three members Candice and Phillip Sibosado and Kaleb Bin Sali are also of mixed-race descent. ‘Olanji’, one of their songs on their album *Dreaming in Broome* (1997) recalls the days when Chinese fruit and vegetable hawkers would sell oranges and other fresh produce to the local Broome residents. “Shuffling on down from Chinatown/ In his squeaky orange cart/ … Mr Chinaman don’t turn your back on me/ Might take your oranji for free”. Songs and music provide another way for Indigenous-Asian people to tell the stories of their communities, and to communicate the spirit of places like Broome and Darwin.

Cross-Cultural Events in Australia

Asialink and the Australia Council have recently formed a partnership to support creative and cultural relationships between communities in Australia and Indonesia, some of which have a particular focus on the cross-cultural connections between Aboriginal and Indonesian peoples. In recognition of the ancient history of migration and trade between the people of Macassar and the Yolngu people of the Northern
Territory and Crocodile Islands, the *Milingimbi-Macassar Exchange Program* was initiated. This project sought to build upon these historical ties, and re-establish links between the two communities through a series of artistic exchanges. Six artists from Milingimbi undertook a four-week residency in Macassar, and a reciprocal visit from Macassan artists to Milingimbi followed. Those involved in the program represented a diverse range of artistic disciplines and included painters, dancers, basket weavers, musicians, storytellers and ceremonial practitioners. The project also included an exhibition and a documentary on the shared history of the Macassan trade from each perspective, providing a model for the re-establishment of cultural relations that have existed for thousands of years (Asialink, "Australia-Indonesia").

Another project included in the Australia-Indonesia Arts and Community Program was *Green Turtle Dreaming*, which explored the migration patterns of the green turtle between Australia and Indonesia. The project was launched on World Environment Day in June 2002 and resulted in the production of a giant scroll that recorded Indigenous and Indonesian communities’ relationships with the turtle. The project had many aims, and addressed the concerns of education and conservation, Indigenous rights, historical and contemporary relationships to the turtle as well as the ancient patterns of trade and migration between Aboriginal people and Indonesian communities. The project demonstrated that the green turtle has played an integral role in the cultures of many coastal peoples in both Indonesia and Australia, and will tour to venues in both countries in 2003 (Asialink, "Australia-Indonesia").

As part of the Centenary of Federation celebrations, Queensland Indigenous and Chinese communities and organisations assisted in the design, construction and performance of the Carpet Snake. The *Carpet Snake Dreaming* project team worked in North Queensland for three months undertaking cross-cultural workshops with Indigenous and Chinese communities to construct the 50-metre long Carpet Snake frame and hand paint its skin. The world’s largest illuminated Carpet Snake celebrated the Chinese ‘Year of the Snake’ and its significance as a common totem for Indigenous communities along the east coast of Australia. The Carpet Snake made its debut at the Hughenden Show in June 2001, accompanied by Indigenous performances. In Townsville a local Chinese dragon that had been restored for the event accompanied the Carpet Snake. Local Indigenous and non-Indigenous children painted the Townsville
dragon and developed new designs based on their interpretation of what Chinese culture and its celebrations meant to them. The Carpet Snake also featured in Brisbane at the Hua Contemporary Asian Festival, before its final performance at the Woodford Folk Festival in December 2001.

**Multi-Cultural Collaborations**

Recently non-Indigenous, non-Asian peoples have been collaborating with Aboriginal and Asian communities in documenting these cross-cultural connections. We have seen that in both the colonial and contemporary eras Indigenous/Asian unions have produced anxiety in the white consciousness. However, other white Australians have sought to uncover the repressed history of Indigenous/Asian alliances, and have based their literary and theatrical production on these cross-cultural partnerships. Playwright Julie Janson, for example, went on a literature residency to Indonesia in 2001 where she worked on her play *Arafura*, tracing the stories that have developed along the trade routes from Macassar in Sulawesi to northern Australia. Janson’s project is a collaborative piece that not only draws on her research of Indonesian tales of the Macassan traders, but on her work with the National Aboriginal and Islander Dance Academy and Indigenous artists from the Torres Strait Islands (Asialink, "Asialink Residencies").

*Trepang*, an Indigenous opera produced by Andrish Saint-Clar in 1997, was the result of much research into the oral and ceremonial histories of both Aboriginal and Macassan people. In consultation with Aboriginal elders and cultural practitioners in Ujung Pandang, the opera depicted a cross-cultural marriage, with some of the performers being the actual descendants of those in the original marriage ceremony. Saint-Clar also initiated the Trepang Project, which involved a company of Macassan performers visiting Elcho Island off the Arnhem Land coast for a month of workshops and community events, and television and festival appearances in Ujung Pandang (McRae 18-19). Saint-Clar’s most recent collaborative theatrical production is *Fire, Fire, Burning Bright*, shown at the 2002 Melbourne Festival (see figure 33). He worked in conjunction with the Neminuwarlin Performance Group and other Gija people from east Kimberley in this retelling of an Aboriginal massacre in the early 1900s. The performance also includes Chinese and Afghan characters whose long
associations with Indigenous people are symbolised in the play through their sharing of food.

Another recent collaborative production is *The Grand Feeling: Stories of Love from Three Elders* (2002). This play grew from a project called ‘All My Love’, where members of the Paradigm Productions team interviewed, recorded and filmed a number of elders from diverse communities over a period of two years. Women and men who, because of their age, felt isolated and marginalised recounted their experience and history of love. In *The Grand Feeling* Indigenous, Anglo-Celtic and Asian-Australian elders gave very personal and intimate accounts of their lives. Frances Barton, a Yorta Yorta woman, Lesley Coles an Anglo-Celtic Australian and Bambang Soemardjo who moved here from Java in 1967 relayed (largely unscripted) personal narratives of loss, grief, memory, desire and love. Frances and Bambang (or Djo as he is called in Australia) both shared their experiences of being involved in cross-cultural marriages and relationships. The performers’ personal accounts functioned as a symbol or metaphor of global relations between people of varying nationalities, races and cultures. Djo wanted to participate in the project and share his life experiences to show that ‘East and West’ can meet in love and harmony.

Sound artist Ros Bandt recently recorded ‘Kim’s Song’ (2002), a piece that includes Aboriginal and Vietnamese-Australian girls singing ‘traditional’ songs. Kim is a young Vietnamese-Australian, and the recording begins with her singing a ‘traditional’ Vietnamese song her parents taught her. A landscape of place is created with an extra layer of voices that includes some young Aboriginal girls singing ‘Inanaya’, a ‘traditional’ Indigenous song taught to them by their family. The song ‘Kookaburra sits on the old gum tree’—representing the dominant English speaking culture in which the children live—comes in and out of the layers of girls’ voices. The introduction of this ‘traditional’ (Anglo) Australian song that weaves through the Aboriginal and Vietnamese-Australian singing symbolises the way these children must negotiate their identities and subject positions, not only in relationship to each other, but also in terms of the dominant Anglo-Australian culture.

An increasing number of non-Indigenous and non-Asian artists are becoming involved in collaborative projects with Aboriginal and Asian-Australians. There is not only a growing awareness of Indigenous/Asian cross-cultural alliances in the arts
community—there is also evidence that these connections are being celebrated in publications with tremendous popular and commercial appeal. For example, in Tim Winton’s seventh novel Dirt Music (2001) there is a Bardi character (from the west Kimberley coast) called Menzies who describes himself as a “[h]alf-Chinese fulla” (303). This novel enjoyed remarkable success and was the number one best seller in Australia, being reprinted four times in 2002. Di Morrissey’s novels Tears of the Moon (1995) and its sequel Kimberley Sun (2002) also sold widely. Both novels were reprinted twice, and both had characters of Aboriginal-Asian descent. Morrissey has recently written an article on Broome in the very popular women’s magazine The Australian Women’s Weekly (2002), where she described Broome as “more Asian than Australian” (“Heart” 299). She detailed the seasonal visits of the Macassan trepang traders who “mingled with Aboriginal women” (“Heart” 300), discussed the visits of the Japanese, Malay, Chinese and Indian indentured labourers and sojourners, and recommended people to see Jimmy Chi’s musicals, Mary G’s show (created by Mark Bin Bakar), and live performances by the Pigram Brothers. In January 2003 InStyle, another popular women’s magazine, published a photograph of young Indigenous actor Everlyn Sampi wearing a cheong sam. When asked whom she would most like to meet in the world—dead or alive—she replied Bruce Lee! (see figure 34)

The recent artistic, theatrical and cultural production examined in this chapter indicates that Indigenous and Asian-Australians are voicing their own experiences in their own ways. Through their cross-cultural production Aborigines, Asian-Australians and those of mixed Indigenous/Asian descent show that dominant narratives of nation and accepted versions of Australian historiography do not speak for their experiences or identities. In response to the recent rearticulation of race based discourses—that have attacked both self-determination for Indigenous Australians and increased Asian immigration—Aboriginal and Asian-Australian people have formed new cross-cultural political affiliations. In tandem with these new political alliances, recent cultural production not only reformulates Indigenous and Asian-Australian subjectivities, it imagines a new mapping of Australia as well as the realignment of its identity.
Conclusion

‘A whole other story vibrating within it’: New Mappings of the Australian Imaginary

Until Aborigines and [Asian] immigrants form their own alliance outside any state apparatus in order to combat racist structures and cultures, then the struggle against racism will continue to be fragmented (Vasta 52).

Indigenous and Asian communities have been engaged in complex cross-cultural negotiations on this continent for centuries, and the very fact that they have taken place outside the governmental sphere is precisely why officials have sought to regulate and control them. As Anglo-Australia’s ‘constitutive Others’ Aboriginal and Asian identities played an important role in the genesis of the Australian nation. It was largely in juxtaposition to these racialised ‘Others’ that ‘White Australia’ gained symbolic meaning and signification. In opposition to Indigenes and Asians white colonists—who differed in terms of national origin, religious beliefs, language and culture—were granted homogeneity. Paradoxically, however, while Indigenous and Asian ‘Others’ were necessary to ‘constitute’ a homogeneous ‘White Australia’, their very presence precluded the nation from ever achieving its stated goal. Through processes of exclusion and/or absorption, ‘White Australia’ sought to rid the white national self of contaminants.

Given the opposition to Aboriginal and Asian ‘constitutive Others’, it is hardly surprising that their cross-cultural unions have produced intense anxiety in the white Australian consciousness. Indigenous/Asian social, sexual and commercial intercourse threatened white racial supremacy and territorial and economic dominance. Individuals of Aboriginal-Asian descent were a potent signifier of white colonists’ inability to maintain racial purity on the Australian continent and to prevent miscegenation. The presence of mixed-race or ‘coloured’ individuals was an indication that, despite State and Federal legislation, Aboriginal and Asian communities were continuing to negotiate their own cross-cultural unions and partnerships.

In the contemporary era Indigenous and Asian-Australians are still engaging in cultural connections and alliances that are ‘outside any state apparatus’. Despite the officially sanctioned fragmentation of Indigenous/Asian families, Aborigines of Asian descent are
increasingly reconnecting with their Asian heritages by retracing silenced histories and initiating contact with extended families in various parts of Asia. Recent political partnerships and alliances between Indigenous and Asian-Australian community groups have also taken place without official backing. Indeed, such cross-cultural political mobilisation has been initiated in order to expose the lack of monetary and other support these communities receive from State and Federal governments.

Bodies like the Australia Council are increasingly funding non-Anglo-Celtic literary and theatrical production, but many of the plays, novels and poems written by Indigenous and Asian-Australian people have been created outside any state apparatus. Often the desire of Aboriginal and Asian-Australians to produce literary and artistic work stems from their sense of exclusion from belonging to this nation. Indigenous and Asian-Australians have used their cultural production as a way of writing themselves and their communities into existence. These people are seeking more than a sense of civic citizenship, they are also trying to secure their cultural and political enfranchisement. The new ‘cultural scripts’ that Indigenous and Asian-Australians are producing point to the need for a new ‘national script’. In other words, a new imagining of the Australian nation is needed to account for the cross-cultural partnerships between these communities, and the experiences of people of Aboriginal-Asian descent.

The dialogue between Aborigines and Asian-Australians contests the ‘Black-white’ and ‘Anglo-ethnic’ dichotomies upon which Australian narratives of nation are based. Through their cross-cultural production and political partnerships, Indigenous and Asian-Australians challenge ‘us’ to acknowledge that there is “a whole other story vibrating within” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd in Ferrier, "Whole" 118) these limited and narrowly defined binaries. The partitioning of ‘the Indigenous’ and ‘the (Asian) immigrant’ in Anglo-Australian ideologies and policies is not able to accommodate the very complex and multifaceted relationships that have existed between these communities since the pre-invasion era. The quarantining of ‘the immigrant’ and ‘the Indigenous’ leaves the question of Aboriginal/migrant relations virtually unexplored, thus inhibiting the emancipatory potential of such alliances.

The seemingly neat separation of academic discourses into those on ‘Aboriginal Studies’ and those addressing ‘Multicultural Studies’ also occludes any
consideration of the various ways in which immigration has furthered both the colonising and decolonising processes in Australia. The continuing cleavage of ‘the immigrant’ and ‘the Indigenous’ in contemporary paradigms of reconciliation provides little space for discussion on the potential role and contribution of migrant Australians to the reconciliation process. This is compounded by the fact that the discourse of multiculturalism pays scant attention to the continuing legacy of colonisation in Australia. I have thus argued against the quarantining of Indigenous and (Asian) migrant communities and discourses in dominant narratives of nation, but nor do I recommend an unproblematic equation between them. As Curthoys has suggested, debates on ‘the Indigenous’ and ‘the multicultural’ “can neither be conceptualised together nor maintained as fully distinct” ("Uneasy" 21).

An example of the equation between Indigenous and diasporic identities is shown by literary and cultural critics Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O. Longley in the introduction to their edited text Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations (1992). They contend that “the outsiders, the marginalised [are] Aborigines and those migrants who have come from places other than England or Ireland” (xv). Gunew and Longley use Aborigines and (European) migrants as interchangeable examples of ‘Otherness’ or exclusion. This over-emphasis on the experiences that Aboriginal and migrant communities share is made at the expense of recognising the many differences between them that stem from their divergent historical experiences and vastly dissimilar connections to land.

This attempt to incorporate the Indigenous within the multicultural, or to subsume race within ethnicity, is also evident in the governmental or political sphere. For example, the 1999 policy statement “A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia” argued for the inclusion of Aborigines as a part of multiculturalism. Through the fusing together of two formerly distinct government departments, DIMIA—the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs—was established in 2001. The establishment of this new hybrid department is a clear indication of the Howard Coalition government’s grouping of Indigenous and migrant communities together as non-Anglo-Celtic ‘Others’. The government’s redefining of the nation in terms of ‘cultural diversity’ has also tended to mask the
important distinctions between and within Indigenous and migrant communities. Government rhetoric stresses the rich and varied ethnic and cultural plurality of contemporary Australian society, thereby assuming a power-free coexistence between all Australians that fails to address the unique claims of Indigenous peoples.

What is needed then, is a new national narrative that neither separates nor artificially equates Indigenous and migrant communities and discourses. By looking at these debates in conjunction with one another, a clearer understanding emerges of the related histories of struggle of oppressed and excluded minorities against the homogenising tendencies of nationalist imaginaries. In registering the connections between a wide range of subaltern minorities, the fostering of common platforms for future struggles can be initiated and promoted. But these interconnections should not be made at the expense of recognising where, and why, Indigenous and diasporic forms of diversity differ from each other: “differ in their histories, differ in the challenges, to politics and policy, that they pose; and differ in the kinds of urgency that attach to them in particular historical circumstances” (Bennett and Carter 255).

The cross-cultural engagements between Indigenous and Asian-Australian communities not only highlight the need for a new national script. By showing that Australia is permeable at its external boundaries, the cultural, spiritual, linguistic and ceremonial links between Aborigines and Asians also challenge the very idea of a sovereign nation state. The historic and contemporary cross-cultural alliances between the peoples from north and north-western Australia and Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese and other Asian communities point beyond the Australian nation state to an archipelago of basins or trading areas that are linked, rather than divided. The supra-national links between Indigenous and various Asian diasporic collectivities were reinforced in 1999 after the Howard government committed ground troops to East Timor. The Sydney Morning Herald ran pictures of an Indonesian protest banner that compared the violence visited upon Asian nations with the violent dispossession of Australia’s Indigenous custodians and their continuing oppression and exclusion. The banner asked, “Mr. Howard What Happen [sic] With The “Aborigines”? (reproduced in Povinelli 23) (see figure 35).
The supra-national links between Asian and Aboriginal peoples were reinforced in December 2002 when the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad compared the violence visited upon Asian nationals to the treatment of Aboriginal Australians. Mahathir criticised John Howard’s preparedness to launch a pre-emptive military strike if terrorists in neighbouring Asian countries planned to attack Australia. Mahathir said that Malaysia had good relations with Australians as people, but that the country’s leader “is totally insensitive and thinks he is the white-man sheriff in some black country” (qtd in Age Online). Like Indonesia, Malaysia pointed to the disjunction between the ideal image of Australia as a post-imperial exemplar of Western democracy in the region “and the actual brutality of its laissez faire stance toward its own internal colonial subjects” (Povinelli 22). According to Mahathir, Australia “stands out like a sore thumb trying to impose its European values in Asia as if it is the good old days when people can shoot Aborigines without caring about human rights” (qtd in ABC Online).

Another extraordinary example of the close links between Aborigines and Asians—forged outside any state apparatus—was demonstrated in January 2003 when Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory offered sanctuary to a group of 80 East Timorese facing imminent deportation. Marie Munkara—a traditional owner of Cape Fourcroy on Bathurst Island (north of Darwin)—consulted Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land who support the East Timorese in their fight to stay. According to Munkara, Aborigines “believe we should help these people … We’ve got places for them to stay. We’ll look after them. We are offering our land” (qtd in Toohey, "Black" 5). The 80 Darwin East Timorese are part of a group of 1800 from around Australia who will almost certainly be deported to East Timor later in 2003. Most of this group escaped Indonesian occupation after the 1991 Santa Cruz cemetery killings, but now that East Timor is independent, Philip Ruddock—Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs—says they must return. For the Maningrida and Bulman people of Arnhem Land, their offer of sanctuary marks a continuation of the centuries-old relationship between Aboriginal and various Asian peoples. According to Colin McDonald QC—the barrister for the Darwin East Timorese—the Aboriginal people cannot prevent their deportation, but their offer was of great moral significance: “[u]nlike the federal Government, these Aboriginal people are looking at this issue as a moral one, based on a history (of dealing with islanders to
the north) which extends well beyond 200 years” (qtd in Toohey, "Black" 5). In Melbourne, Aboriginal writer and activist Tony Birch is also involved in political struggles to help the people from East Timor. At rallies and meetings held in support of the East Timorese, Birch has felt both humbled and empowered “as a member of the community, and as an Aboriginal person, supporting the rights of a people who were visitors to the country of my elders” ("Last" 22).

We live in an increasingly modernising and globalised world where national borders are becoming more permeable. But merchandise, capital and information are not the only commodities to cross national boundaries. Migrant and diasporic communities are also moving between nation states for a range of reasons that includes the prospect of greater study and employment opportunities, a better standard of living, family reunion and the chance to escape political and religious persecution. The need for a new national script that promotes greater understanding of the incorporation of migrants within, rather than after the history of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is thus of paramount importance. Regardless of the racism and other difficulties migrant communities have encountered in Australia, all immigrants remain the beneficiaries of the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. My insistence that more recent migrant communities recognise their complicity in the injustices committed against Indigenous peoples does not, of course, take the onus of Anglo-Celtic or settler Australians to understand and acknowledge our role in the colonisation of Aboriginal Australia. However, it does problematise the “polarising binary of indigenous and white race relations” (Perera and Pugliese, "Detoxifying" 14) that presently characterises debates on reconciliation and dominant notions of Australian historiography.

Aboriginal peoples’ efforts to reconnect with their Asian heritages not only highlight the need for a new imagining of the Australian nation, they question essentialist conceptions of identity and foreclose every attempt to define a unitary and singular subject position. People of Indigenous-Asian descent are living proof that identity is always echoed and contaminated by an absent (or lost, silenced) ‘Otherness’. Not only are there no ‘natural’ or ‘original’ identities—since every identity is the result of a constituting process—but the process itself must be seen as one of permanent hybridisation and fragmentation. If identity is understood to be composed of a
multiplicity of elements—that are both dependent and interdependent—then it does not rest on the exclusion and expulsion of difference. It is the tension between the logic of identity and the logic of difference that guarantees the best protection against every attempt to effect either a complete fusion or a total separation of one’s constituent parts (Mouffe 112).

This same tension between the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference enables discourses of Indigenenity and those on the Asian diaspora to be negotiated without completing equating or quarantining them. The concerns of Indigenous and (Asian) migrant communities have been dialectically constructed as completely distinct from each other on the one hand and as entirely alike in being different from white culture on the other. Recognition of the productivity of the creative tension between the discourses and politics of Aboriginality and Asianness enables us to see the differences as well as the commonalities between these communities. It is only in the precarious ‘in-between’ that the pluralism, diversity, intersections and ambiguities between Indigenous and Asian-Australian communities can be celebrated. In acknowledging the complex entanglements that exist in the interstices between Aborigines and Australians of Asian descent, we are reminded of the radical impossibility of completely subsuming or denying difference.

Australian national identity is constantly negotiating between its constituent racial, cultural, ethnic, religious and national elements—it is always necessarily in the process of ‘becoming’. By recognising that every single identity exists in relational terms to its ‘Others’, that is, that the constitutive outside is inside every subjectivity, we can resist the temptation to construct a national identity in terms of exclusion. Only if peoples’ allegiances are multiplied and their loyalties pluralised can we stop the violence that exists in the construction of an identity derived from the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Mouffe 111). In Australia, it is this difference that is the condition of both the possibility and impossibility of creating national unity and homogeneity. A new imagining of Australia’s national identity invites us to abandon the illusion of a unitary and harmonious whole, and to admit that the ‘Other’ and its otherness are irreducible (Mouffe 112). For Indigenous and Asian-Australians, unless Australian nationhood is based on such a framework, their identities, artistic exchanges and political needs will continue to remain outside any state apparatus.
My original intention in writing this thesis was to show that Indigenous/Asian commercial and social intercourse necessitated an alternative imagining of nation. I sought to prove that the accepted narrative of the Australian nation would necessarily remain irrelevant to Indigenous/Asian experience unless it was expanded and recast. Upon critical reflection, I now realise that the ultimate goal is not the integration of Indigenous/Asian histories and contemporary subjectivities into the Australian national narrative—not even into an expanded version of it. The forging of supra-national affiliations that exist both within and without Australia’s geographical boundaries mean that the pre- and post-invasion experiences of Indigenous/Asian communities cannot ever be incorporated into the singular and isolated Australian nation state. The experiences of these ‘imagined communities’ straddle the landmass of Australia and traverse the porous water masses of the Indian Ocean.

Indigenous and Asian-Australian peoples have maintained traditions of remembering, of community and of shared genealogies that ignore dates like 1788 and the coastal boundaries written on the map of Australia. It is less about finding the right national narrative to contain and explain these cross-cultural identities and experiences than about recognising that these supra-national networks of meeting contest the very viability of the nation state as an entity. Indigenous and Asian peoples established whole cross-cultural societies without any regard for the nation state, and their experiences and subjectivities refuse to be enclosed within the imagined narratives or territorial borders of the Australian nation. It is not just that Indigenous and Asian alliances have been excluded from Australian imaginings of nation, but that these communities have insisted upon meeting outside any state apparatus. By definition, such extra-governmental and supra-national partnerships and engagements rely on these communities’ exteriority to the nation. The very possibility of these cross-cultural and inter-racial relationships depends on the continuing agency that Indigenous and Asian-Australian communities have exercised in maintaining their ambiguous and complex unions beyond the social and political organisation of the Australian nation state.
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