

## Imagining Borders / Policing Borders: Australia, Asylum Seekers and the Oceans of the Asia Pacific

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In the federal election held in Australia in 2013 the victorious conservative party came to power with a number of promises, but one very popular slogan was “Stop the Boats”. This pithy phrase succinctly expressed the intention of the incoming government to strengthen their commitment to, and the amount of resources dedicated to, stopping asylum seekers (mostly from Afghanistan, Iran and Sri Lanka) from reaching the Australia mainland by boats leaving from Indonesia. In many ways there was nothing new about this negative campaign. In the run up to the 2001 Australian federal election an earlier conservative Prime Minister John Howard had launched his campaign with the pulpit thumping, vote winning cry of:

We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come (28 October 2001).

One hundred years before this, another set of Australian federal parliamentarians had debated the form of the *Immigration Restriction Act*. One aspect of their discussion went:

Mauger: ... [the Australian people] are determined that Australia shall be kept free from alien invasion and contamination.

Glynn: It is a question of colour. It is not a question of whether a man is an alien or not.

Mauger: It is a question of coloured labour.

Watson: ... the question is whether we would desire that our sisters or our brothers should be married into any of these races to which we object (Cth of Aust 1901a: 4631-3).<sup>1)</sup>

Ghassan Hage argued in his 2003 book that the three Howard governments, from 1996-2003, had seen the re-centring of an old form of paranoid nationalism (2003: 4). Paranoid nationalism is a form of nationalism that is marked by a lack of generosity, and is based on anxiety. This anxiety is about losing power, access to resources in particular land and also a fear about the erasure of the key historical signifier of Australian-ness – “whiteness” as

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<sup>1)</sup> As Alison Bashford (2013) has argued there were other dimensions to restriction, including objections on health and moral grounds. However, the racial dimension was an important and long lived part of the legislation and popular sentiment.

reflected in a pale skinned citizenry. Hage in this book follows scholars such as Suvendrini Perera, Ann Curthoys, Peta Stephenson and myself in foregrounding the triangulated nature of Australian race anxieties. White Australians are worried about both an internal Other, whose land they have taken and an external Other who they fear will “invade”. As Peta Stephenson, in her review of *Against Paranoid Nationalism* notes ‘the White Australian refusal to acknowledge and confront the colonial past (and present) ... “explain[s] why we have become so ungenerous to the migrant and the refugee”’ (152). She goes on:

While Hage earlier excluded Indigenous subjectivities from the Anglo-‘ethnic’ binary dynamic, *Paranoid Nationalism* suggests that a triangulated vision of Indigenous-Anglo-immigrant relations is central to understanding this current anxiety. After all, as Ann Curthoys suggests, ‘Immigration ... 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’ (172).

The discussants in the 1901 parliament are in the process of producing this form of nationalism. The members of parliament note that the issue is not about native or alien status. It is about “colour”. Belonging in Australia is not about how long a people have occupied a space, but about the maintenance of whiteness/Britishness and civilization – trio of ideas seen to be embodied in the new Anglo-Australian.

In 2001, Howard, and the conservative prime minister who followed him in 2013, as well as the more liberal governments in-between, argued that it was the “illegal” status of the people trying to cross Australian borders that forced them to refuse them entry. As I noted one hundred years earlier, the parliamentarians seemed to suggest that it is the aliens’ “colour” and fear (of interracial sexual desire) that underpinned their convictions on the need for exclusion. So these early-twentieth century white men worried about people they name “coloured” as not only entering the nation, but more specifically the family. It is the marriage of a non-white person to a “brother” or “sister” that brings out the paranoia.

This article explores the raced and gendered aspects of boundary crossing in the (post) colonial nation of Australia. In particular it focuses on the raced and gendered representations of unauthorised immigration. Though the examples explored are deeply political events, this paper takes a narrative approach. Teresa Goddu in her work on race and Gothic fiction in the southern parts of the United States developed a model of analysis that brought together the mythical with the real. As with Ghassan Hage’s work, Goddu’s framework is psychoanalytic in its approach. She suggested that what was happening in the United States, and I would argue something similar for Australia, was that the dream world of national myth (in both cases a dream about the power of whiteness) was continually being disrupted by the nightmares of history (1997: 10). In both the twentieth and twenty-first century Australian context the nightmare for the Parliamentarians was – border crossing. At the national and the individual level the separation of different groups, the policing of the border was never total and the

differences between the two groups, the purity of whiteness (or the distinction between citizen and newcomer) could not be maintained or claimed.

The article analyses the ways in which the sometimes violent, sometimes self-congratulatory, rhetoric that accompanies representations of unauthorised acts of boundary crossing exposes the sore that is colonisation – the original unauthorised boundary crossing of the British into Indigenous peoples' country. Drawing on a variety of representations of 'aliens' and (sexual) desire over the last 100 years this article traces both changes to and similarities between representations over this long period. It will analyse the different ways in which 'alien' men's and 'alien' women's bodies are represented in images of border crossing. It will explore the history of the ambivalence that is built into the drive to regulate the Australian border.

The article focuses on the way understandings of legal or illegal crossings have been and continue to be (re)produced in terms of gender and family as well as sexual pleasures and danger. It will explore the history of the ambivalence that is built into the drive to regulate the Australian border. The article focuses on the way understandings of legal or illegal crossings have been and continue to be (re) produced in terms of gender as well as sexual pleasures and dangers. In doing this it will challenge the idea that fear of invasion is premised on an unambiguous xenophobia, arguing instead that an ambivalence underpins relationships with outsiders; an ambivalence that encompasses both pleasure and loathing.

When I first started to undertake this work in the late 1990s I worked with a model that imagined the Australian border as pretty much being the coast of the island continent. Of course there have always been imagined borders that challenge the political and geographic extremities of a state. So for example there is a powerful myth that parts of Turkey are in some ways Australian. The battles fought at Gallipoli in 1915 and the large numbers of Australian soldiers buried in war cemeteries or in unmarked graves around this battle site has created a sense of ownership of this territory. In another case, and region, the island of Bali is sometimes referred to as the ninth territory of Australia. The large number of young tourists travelling to the island and their affection for the place translates, again, as a type of belonging. Further, the Australian state has made a claim for just over 40 percent of Antarctica. From a different perspective the island continent nature of the Australian state means that the maritime sea claims of Australia are huge. They come in as the third largest in the world, and as geographers point out, if the Antarctic water claims are included Australia's maritime domain is almost twice the size of its land mass (Cordner 2008).

Since the turn into the twenty-first century, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, successive governments have focused on refining and strengthening the security of Australia's borders. These borders are not understood to only be marked by customs checks at airports or the long and winding coast. The border is now located 200 nautical miles off land, where the Australian navy patrols a vast ocean. As the unsuccessful search for the missing Malaysian airlines flight in mid-2014 made clear, the oceans are a space that is still unknown and unmastered. To use an historical and a contemporary example to make my point, I would note that in the 1850s the implementing a colonial policy designed to exclude Chinese sojourners

from coming to Australia was through a head tax applied to every Chinese person on a ship that docked in an Australian colonial port. Whereas today, when the Australian navy implements exclusion policies it intercepts boats containing would be asylum seekers 100s of miles from any port and tows them into international waters. It has on occasion drifted in to Indonesian waters creating a diplomatic rift that is yet to be mended.<sup>2)</sup> So for a country to understand its borders as existing on the “high seas” creates new modes of understanding and room for a more fluid sense of border crossing.

The article draws on an eclectic range of stories of border crossing in an attempt to analyse the multiple ways in which exclusion and inclusion are imagined. The stories are obviously those that have somehow been recorded (in law, in fiction, in the media). They also reflect iconic mages of border crossing in a variety of anxious decades– 1880s, 1930s, 1950s, 1970s, and 2000s. These are anxious decades because they are moments when the ‘nightmare’ overwhelms the ‘dream’. They are moments where the level, type, or approach to immigration, and often also the state of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, are being negotiated, complicated or challenged. The examples analysed help demonstrate the relationship between Australian colonialism, gender and immigration.

The theory underpinning the argument draws on work by scholars such as Anthony Burke, Homi Bhabha, Ghassan Hage, Jennifer Rutherford and Joseph Pugliese who explore the ambivalence, anxiety and violence that often underpin representations of border control. Using their ideas this article will suggest that even at times of the most strident calls for the exclusion of aliens – especially “coloured” aliens, traces of other ideas of assimilation and desire for the excluded people – are discursively represented. These complex and changeable desires for the alien inform understandings of border crossing.

The fantasy of a clearly bounded and inviolable national space has underpinned many of the ideas that white Australians carry with them about what it means to be Australian. The continually reinforced (though perpetually challenged) belief is that the nation is a singular and coherent space out to the furthestmost boundaries of the sea (Barnard in Drake-Brockman nd). The fantasy of the coherence of the white Australian nation/state needs to be especially emphatic in the face of sovereign Indigenous peoples. As Patrick Wolfe (1994) explains, the British colonial project in Australia was imagined as settler colonialism. That is, it was organised in terms of British settlers (who later became Australian-British subjects and then Australian citizens) who colonised the Australian continent with the intention of owning, occupying and working the land (Wolfe 1994).<sup>3)</sup> In the Australian vision of ‘settler colonialism’ the Indigenous peoples’ prior occupation and ongoing presence directly challenges the settler fantasy. So Indigenous peoples need to be eliminated or domesticated both literally

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<sup>2)</sup> Latika Bourke, 2014, ‘Navy breached Indonesian waters six times under Operation Sovereign Borders, review finds’ ABC News 20 February.

<sup>3)</sup> This contrasts with other types of colonial projects where the colonisers imagine that the land will be owned by them but worked by Indigenous people for the coloniser’s profit (Veracini 2013).

and metaphorically from the space of the nation.

Yet ‘white Australia’ is produced in terms of a triangulated relationship between white Australians, an internal Indigenous Other and an external non-white Other (Perera 1995, Elder 1998). James Donald argues:

the ‘fictional unity’ of the nation is created by ‘differentiating it from other cultures, ... [and] by marking its boundaries’ (1993: 167). The unity is always a fiction ‘of course, because the “us” on the inside is itself always differentiated’ (167).

The fictional ‘us’ in white Australia was defined in terms of this internal and external Other and these Others were imagined in terms of race. As Patricia Grimshaw explains the push for federation emerged from a:

‘[c]oncern for preserving a white society, and for fostering white motherhood, [these] were key motives serving to integrate colonies within which otherwise so much contestation was evident between classes and people of differing religious persuasions and geographical areas’ (1994: 191).

So for example the Hon William McMillan said in the new Federal parliament in 1901: ‘Australia must be kept pure for the British race who have begun to inhabit it’ (Cth of Aust 1901a: 4626). Helen Irving extends this argument by noting that in the discussions around Federation:

Australia it was thought needed to be white – not merely as an outcome of coordinated immigration policy – but as a type of culture ... a “white” population was metaphorical as well as racial. It could only be achieved, its proponents believed through creating the pre-conditions for a common national identity and through fulfilling a common “destiny” (2002: 20).

From the 19th century onwards the idea of the Australian nation hinges on a disavowal of the non-white Indigenous peoples who not only occupy the continent but through their Indigeneity challenge white Australians’ claims for this ‘native’ status. In this relationship Australian Britons are both ‘aliens’ and ‘invaders’. This uncomfortable relationship between Indigenous peoples and Australian-Britons is also informed by the relationship between Australian-Britons and non-Indigenous, non-white immigrants. The discursive logic of ‘white Australia’ is, as the historical quotes above suggest, to disavow the illegality and alien status of Australian-Britons. In many ways this works through the displacement of this dis-ease onto an external Other. The discourse of white Australian national identity has long been underpinned by a belief that this continental space, which is set aside for the ‘British race’ (and later for immigrants who fulfill stringent citizenship requirements), is surrounded by, and so dogged by,

millions of people who want to come to or invade it. Images of an inviolable white Australia continually menaced by others, and fiercely defended have circulated over the last 100 years and more. Take for example the dozens and dozens of well-known cartoons published in magazines such as the *Boomerang* and *Bulletin* that depict ‘dangerous’ Chinese men who desire white Australia and white women, and who plan to takeover both. The mentality that underpinned the original cartoons can still be found in contemporary images. For example, in 1999 the Sunday Telegraph ran a headline ‘Invaded’ when a rusty old ship with approximately 80 Chinese unauthorised entrants ran aground at Scotts Head Beach on the north coast of New South Wales (Gora 1999: 1). As John Howard’s election slogan and the *Sunday Telegraph’s* language demonstrate the crudest beliefs about exclusion can still be found in contemporary discourse. Yet as I will demonstrate in more detail the feelings of fear, panic and violence that often accompany understandings of ‘aliens’ at the border in Australia are part of a more complex discourse that also includes a desire for ‘alien’ bodies. For at some place in white people’s psyches we know we are ‘aliens’ too.

In the fantasy of a ‘white Australia’ the physical borders of Australia are often imagined as the places in the nation where the policy of exclusion fails, where ‘leakages’ take place, where invasion is possible. In particular there are areas – named ‘zones of flux’ by Ross Gibson (1994: 668) – where the clarity of inside/out are harder to imagine. These zones can be the sea, long isolated parts of the coast, ports, airports, poor inner city suburbs or ‘ethnic’ neighbourhoods. Temporal boundaries also exist. The idea of going to ‘a place that time forgot’ or to a ‘timeless’ place is a powerful metaphor used to signify crossing a boundary between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australia. Still in post-1901 Australian history the most obvious sites that evoke and erase the fantasised idea of an impregnable national boundary is the coast. And even more specifically the fixation on securing boundaries and proving the integrity of a unified nation is most obvious in imaginings of the north and north-west of Australia. So for example, the changes in 2001 to the *Migration Act* and the increased naval surveillance of the northern waters of Australia demonstrate the fixation on northern coastal border crossings as the spaces where the Other is imagined as entering the nation, either literally or imaginatively.

So by this logic borders are often represented as places where the idea of an essential ‘white Australia’ was challenged and where ‘counternarratives’ of the nation might emerge (Bhabha 1990: 300). However, to argue that the liminal spaces of borders are unruly and unstable is not to say that they are anarchic and out of control. It is also not to say that there are not particular pleasures available in the imagining of unauthorised border crossings. Russ Castronovo argues the uncertain space of borders and their crossings can often operate ‘as the sutures of national cohesion, offer[ing] an imaginative topos for the articulation of “transcendent” ideals of racial supremacy and political unity’ (1997: 202). Castronovo’s contention is that hegemonic governments can use border spaces to ‘reframe and manage rebellion so that its power [is] not antagonistic’ (204). In this sense the leakiness of the nation is not contradictory but part of the imagining of the nation. As Homi Bhabha writes:

[the idea of the nation is] an idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force. This is not to deny the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress (1990a: 1).

So we can look at border spaces to see how ideas of unruliness can be re-imagined and managed in ways that seek to reinforce ideas of a 'white Australia'. What underpins the long history of imaginings of border crossing and boundary transgression of 'white Australia' is ambivalence. Homi Bhabha in analysing the ambivalence of the nation explores the contradiction between the 'nation's modernity' and its dependence on 'atavistic apologues' (1990b: 293). He quotes Partha Chatterjee:

Nationalism ... seeks to represent itself in the image of the Enlightenment and fails to do so. For Enlightenment itself, to assert its sovereignty as the universal ideal, needs its Other; if it could ever actualise itself in the real world as the truly universal it would in fact destroy itself (1990b: 293).

Homi Bhabha argues that uncertainties are what characterise the centre, the West, or in this case the nation (1990b: 303-4). He suggests this uncertainty results from the haunting of the colonial power by an excluded or marginal group(s). So though 'white Australia' is premised on a total exclusion of 'aliens' and 'undesirables', what happens is a continual (representational) re-enactment of the possible entry of the excluded followed by a violent disavowal of the entry. The excluded people are never completely expelled from the imaginary of the West or the coloniser because of the ambivalent feelings of simultaneous desire and repulsion for the marginal or excluded people (Bhabha 1994: 132).

As this article's earlier quote from the 1901 Federal Parliament suggests this ambivalent desire was often represented in and through images of inter racial sexual relations. The notion of a white body and a non-white body together is both erotically charged, and represents an assimilative imperative (see Anderson 1993/4) but also marks a boundary that is not to be crossed. However, though this coupling is emphatically stated to be what must be stopped, it is the repetition of its (im)possibility that occupies a central place in many stories of 'white Australia'. More than this 'alien' male and 'alien' female bodies are understood differently. To use The Honourable Mr Watson's heteronormative fantasy of border crossings as a model: male bodies that exist as potential threats to our 'sisters' are more dangerous than female bodies are for our 'brothers'.

Though fantasies and 'forbidden' wishes for a sexualised alien or other were organised by different protocols than the everyday knowledge of policy and law, they are still produced from the same repertoire of discourses. Desires – even illicit ones – are part of socially produced discourses, rather than individual or socially disconnected fantasies. Robert Young (1995), extending on Bhabha, makes the point that fantasy is not a maverick unregulated set

of unspeakable feelings and images. Rather it is ordered by the same discourses that order the law, government policy, the school curriculum, and published fiction.

This 'desire for the other' is always underpinned by fear. The fear of 'too many', 'too much', a 'flood' that will 'swamp' white people puts a brake on this desire. As Joseph Pugliese (1995) argues 'the other face' is often 'a site of desire', but this desire for 'the other face' is soon after counteracted by the 'designation of difference underwritten by the insuperable category of "race" (241). The wish to include the Other is often followed with a violent refusal or negation of the original desire. To return to Ghassan Hage's book *Against Paranoid Nationalism* (2003) he notes that this violent refusal can be a national project as much as an individual one:

At the border we do things that we might not like to see being done inside our society ... At the border, the protection of hope sometimes unleashes aggression, hatred and mistrust (31).

This ambivalence – the process of desiring the 'Other' and then violently disavowing this desire – occurs continually in narratives of 'white Australia'.

In her book *The Gauche Intruder* (2000), Jennifer Rutherford uses a psychoanalytic approach to explore this violent disavowal through what she calls the good neighbour fantasy in Australia. She argues that one of the persistent stories of Australian identity is one of Australia as the exemplary nation. Rutherford writes that this story and the fantasies of 'the good' (we do) that accompany it:

provide a camouflage for aggression at both a national and local level: an aggression directed both to an external and an internal Other... whether it be the accompaniment to a state orchestrated genocide or a privately enacted scenario, the good, as camouflage, as point of identification, as authorisation, provides a fantasmatic frame for the enactment and consolidation of white Australian culture at the singular and collective level (10).

Rutherford suggests that this desire to good often manifests itself as the fantasy of Australia as a 'good and neighbourly nation' (12). She then draws our attention to a paradox where 'the manifestation of aggression is visible at the very moment we set out to do good' (10). Though each of these writers takes a different approach to the exploration of national identity, they all engage with the disavowed or repressed violence that informs the nationalist story of the nation.

I begin by exploring ambivalence and the border as it manifests in discussions in the Federal parliament in 1901 when the soon to be enacted *Immigration Restriction Act* was on the table. The production of a 'white Australia' has been a subject of discussion for decades in Australia. It is, quite rightly, seen as a founding discourse for the nation and a point of



reference in many discussions that have taken place since about what Australia should be.

The evolution of the 1901 parliamentary discussion about a ‘white Australia’ began with colonial government policies and laws implemented from about the mid- to late-19th century and designed to keep Chinese migrants and non-white contract workers out of the country (Markus 1994: 112, 114; Seuffert 2011). The first federal parliament inherited this desire for exclusion. Prime Minister Barton noted the issue of a ‘white Australia’ as ‘one of the most important matters with regard to the future of Australia’ (Cth of Aust 1901a: 3497). The historical idea of a ‘white Australia’ has been repeated so often, so forcefully and so clearly that it is almost a truism:

... [the Australian people] are determined that Australia shall be kept free from alien invasion and contamination (Cth of Aust 1901c: 4631-3).

The main piece of legislation that underpinned the discourse of a ‘white Australia’ was the *Immigration Restriction Act*. By the time of Federation the colonial governments’ original focus on the restriction of Chinese immigrants had expanded to include labourers from the Pacific Islands and Japan. Though these particular groups were singled out for notice, time and time again in the debates that surrounded the passage of the Immigration Restriction Bill, the rhetoric of racism was broad. A not uncommon cry in the parliament of 1901 was: ‘We want to exclude absolutely every kind of coloured immigrant’ (Cook H, Cth of Aust 1901b: 4640).

In 1901 the main issue for debate in a parliament almost entirely in favour of a ‘white Australia’ was how to exclude the immigrants Australian-Britons did not want.’ The final choice of an indirect method of exclusion was a response to British government disquiet with a policy of direct exclusion. As the British parliament had to approve all pieces of Australian legislation before they were passed in the Australian parliament their comments were not without weight. On the issue of direct exclusion the British government protested firstly that it was un-British to have a race-based policy. Secondly the British government was unhappy with a direct exclusion of all ‘coloured immigrants’ because citizen subjects of the Empire, especially people from India, Ceylon and Bengal would be unable to enter Australia (Chesterman & Galligan 1997: 103-9). In the minds of the British government this made a mockery of the British ideal of the ‘family of the empire’. In more practical terms the reason for the threat of refusal from the British government to approve a piece of Australian legislation that explicitly excluded an entire nation on the grounds of race was because Britain’s close economic ties with Japan and China could be jeopardised. These were ties that all states, except Queensland, did not share.

Though the Australian government’s decision to exclude ‘coloured immigrants’ – directly or indirectly – was emphatic it was actually a moment of ambivalence. The British government argued that Australia, as a leading ‘civilised’ nation, had certain standards to uphold in terms of justice and equality. Some members of the Australian parliament were not insensible to the contradiction in their decision to exclude immigrants on the basis of ‘colour’. As one

parliamentarian put it:

... the question is whether we are to subordinate our undoubted desire to prevent coloured immigrants from coming to Australia to the exigencies of Empire (Glynn P, Cth of Aust 1901b: 4643).

Coupled together here is the desire to exclude 'coloured immigrants' and the desire to fulfill the moral requirements of being part of the Empire (to be the 'good neighbour'). The ideas held by most of the parliamentarians meant they believed that what separated them (Australian Britons) from the people they wanted to exclude ('coloured immigrants') was that they should know better than to do such a thing. As William McMillan said to the parliament:

Everyone of us ... must feel, especially belonging as we do to the race which has been more broad minded, more cosmopolitan and more adventurous than any other race the world has known, that in attempting to shut out any human beings from our shores and from the privileges of British freedom, we are doing a very extreme act. It was once our boast that if the negro [sic] set his foot on our shores from that moment he was free (Cth of Aust 1901b: 4626-7).

The excluded people were the group who Australian-Britons needed to include in the idea of their nation if they were to think of themselves as superior; if they were to think of themselves as good. They desired the excluded group. Even as the discussion moves inevitably towards exclusion, even as 'every coloured man' is being vilified the bodies of 'coloured' men—the ex 'negro' slave, the Indian prince or Indian cricket player – surface in the text as desirable others. For as Chatterjee has explained 'the universal ideal needs its Other', and so, the adoption of legislation that indirectly rather than directly restricted immigration meant that the policy of exclusion contained within it the possibility for entry of groups designated as Other or as 'undesirable'. Though the idea of a polarisation between 'us' and 'them' was powerful, even in this moment of strident racialised nationalism there are challenges, fissures and contradictions (Young 1995: 179). The need for Australian-Britons at Federation to so emphatically declare their democratic right to protect Australia 'providers] a camouflage for ... an aggression directed both to an external and internal Other' (Rutherford 2000: 10) – so the external Other who will replicate our invasion and the internal Other who challenges the legitimacy of our belonging.

So far this article has focused on a general anxiety about border crossing and the aggression and ambivalence that underpins ideas of maintaining a white Australia. As suggested earlier one of the ways in which the anxiety and pleasures of border crossings were enunciated and represented was through images of gendered and sexualised bodies. In discourses that depend on an (often) undeclared hetero- normativity these bodies are represented in terms of a heterosexual imperative and an understanding of men's bodies as

threatening women's bodies as vulnerable.

One of the key tropes deployed to represent the danger of border crossing is the image of the white woman. The white woman is represented both as that which must be most carefully protected but also as the weak point in the maintenance of white Australia. For example the 19th century cartoon that depicts the colony of Queensland as a young fair-haired woman being defended by a white man in a tam o'shanter, with a large and fierce dog on a leash, from a cowering Chinese man, draws on the idea of white women as vulnerable and needing to a strong male protector. In another cartoon also representing the danger of Chinese men to the nation, two white women are featured sitting at the door of an opium den, already rendered lost by their inability or refusal to decline the untoward advances of opium sellers. Here the white women are the weak point in the nation, they represent the point of 'entry' of undesirable men (and their 'alien' cultures) into the nation.

In both these cartoons the non-white male body is a site of a fantasised aggressive danger, even though it is this body that is usually violated rather than pursuing violence. A third and strikingly evocative example of this double positioning of white women as both in danger and the danger is provided in an (unpublished) story by writer Henrietta Drake-Brockman called 'The Tiger's Tooth'. This story written in the late 1920s is a fantasy about sexual transgression. As I suggested earlier, though the story is a fantasy it can still be understood as driven by the same everyday logic and rules that inform more mundane representations of 'white Australia', such as government policies and legal remedies (Young 1995: 168). This story illustrates well ideas of white women as the weak link in the discourse of 'white Australia' and the violence meted out to the non-white male bode if it dares to desire 'our sister'.

'The Tiger's Tooth' (Drake-Brockman, [n.d.]) is about a young woman, Sheila, who is on a cruise ship holiday up the North-West coast to Singapore.' Sheila is identified early in Drake-Brockman's story as 'very shy, bottled up' and untouched by the 'sensuous beauty of the Timor Sea' (2). However by the time she reaches Broome, Sheila has been touched by her changed environment. Broome gives Sheila and her fellow tourists a 'foretaste of exotic pleasures yet to come in Java and Singapore' (6).

However even with this promise of the exotic Sheila remains 'bottled up'. It is only on the return trip south, when Sheila buys a 200 year old tiger's tooth that has intrigued her since she first saw it on the northward leg of the journey, that things really change. From the moment Sheila clasps the tiger's tooth necklace around her neck she signifies sexuality –she becomes 'what the talkie blurbs call – alluring' (3-4). Sheila's sexual appeal is linked to the jungle: her walk is noted as no longer 'the loose swinging stride of an Australian girl ... a whiff of the jungle came stealing along the deck' (4). Here a parallel is drawn between this woman travelling in the north-west and a notion of the primitive (Torgovnick 1990: ch 3).

When Sheila starts to wear the tiger's tooth she purchased in Broome it sets off a complex, inter-racial sexual drama between these characters. The sexual and racial boundaries that had been carefully maintained on the northward leg of the journey are now crossed. A Bengali sailor on the ship becomes fascinated by Sheila. He starts to follow her around and finally

breaks into her cabin one night: [Sheila] awakened to see a yellow face close to her head. Two black eyes were devouring her ... eyes she had seen in her dreams ... The cabin receded ... in the dark recesses of the jungle she lay at his mercy ... (14). This passage of transgressive inter-racial sexual desire—figured here as a sexually aggressive Other devouring a (now) passive white woman — is quickly and violently contained. The momentarily pleasurable experience of representing the desire of and the desire for the Other — a border crossing — is followed by a playing out of a vision of that Other as evil. In the passages that follow Sheila's awakening the tiger's tooth is ripped off her neck as she sleepwalks on the ship's deck in the thrall of the Bengali sailor. Watching the Bengali sailor is the Malay crew member who stabs the Bengali man, cuts his hands off and throws his body overboard. The Malay crew member then commits suicide by cutting off his own head. Finally a white man, who has admired Sheila, quickly declares his intention to marry her (15-7).

The fantasy of the alien Other, the Orientalised Bengali crew member, and the sexualised, transgressive white woman, who threatens the white nation, can be indulged in this border space but it is then contained in a scene of gothic violence. The denial of Sheila's desire for the Bengali sailor (a 'white woman's' desire for a 'coloured' man) is staged through an extremely violent exclusion of the 'other face'. To use Pugliese's idea again: texts that locate the 'other face as a site of desire' immediately follow this by the designation of them as racially different: 'Race' will effectively objectify the other and reduce it to the unmotivated blankness of a racial difference emptied of desire and inhabited only by primitives, animals and deaf-mutes (1995: 241). In 'The Tiger's Tooth' the Bengali and the Malay sailors are both chopped up and consigned to the ocean, nothing more than signifiers of a sub-human 'raced' category. As the ship returns to the Fremantle port the Bengali sailor, about whom Sheila dreamed, is dead and the sexualised alluring woman who played with the possibility of desire for the Other is bound in marriage to an Australian-Briton.

The representatives of transgressive desires are excluded from the nation -left outside, beyond the boundaries of the nation. The 'alien' male crew members are literally thrown overboard. The 'good' Malay sailor masochistically sacrificed himself for the 'memsahib'. The dangerous white woman, whose sexual desires include 'coloured' men, is figuratively thrown overboard with the tiger's tooth, leaving a less threatening Sheila (the 'white Australian' everywoman) her desire appropriately directed at white man and procreation for a 'white Australia'. In imagining a 'white Australia' there is an ambivalent and aggressive pleasure in representing white women as both desirable to Other men and then representing the violent end of that desire. There is a pleasure in representing the leakiness of the border — for this is how Australian-Britons invade Australia, but this is accompanied by a violent repulsion at the knowledge of who else might cross 'our' borders. A repulsion that is to this day affected through aggression directed at the bodies (of men in particular) who approach the border from the north.

It should be noted that this expulsion takes place at sea. The ship is back in order by the time it reaches port. This narrative could be understood as a literary version of the

contemporary navy-immigration department operations. Since the late 1990s when Australian attitudes to unauthorized entrants to the country became more aggressive, more and more of the interventions and interactions with the “Other” occur in the liminal zone of the oceans. Today, when aliens are detected in Australian waters, the navy moves in, and assessments about who can and cannot come into the nation are made hundreds of miles off-shore. The gothically violent solution of Drake-Brockman’s story is replaced with legal responses the involve being towed out of Australian waters, transfer to an off-shore detention centre or resettlement outside of Australia. (Davies 2013) The grisly violence of this piece of fiction could however be seen as a ghostly presence in modern day attitudes to aliens. This will be discussed later in the article.

Non-white women – Other women – are also part of the set of representations that make up the discourse of ‘white Australia’. There are certain pleasures and anxieties in imagining these border crossings. I now want to look at a range of representations of ‘alien’ women who appear at Australia’s borders. I will analyse these representations in terms of the ambivalence and aggression they invoke as challenges to a ‘white Australia’. The next series of representations I analyse come from the 1950s. This decade was one where the ‘white Australia’ policy had to be represented to the world and to the nation. The horror of the Holocaust made blatant and crude racism more difficult to present as good government policy. Though there were few extravagant changes to the legislation that underpinned the ‘white Australia’ policy the large-scale immigration program that began in this decade made the policy of migrant inclusion and exclusion and the idea of well monitored and strong borders important.

I begin by considering a quite well-known photographic image of Soviet citizen Evdokia Petrov in April 1954. Photographed at Sydney’s Mascot airport the image shows Petrov being gripped by two Soviet ‘couriers’ – one on each side – as she is hustled on to a plane. The faces of the two male Soviets are implacable, the face of Mrs Petrov, whose husband had decided to defect to Australia, is anguished. Her head is tilted back and she appears to be slumped in the arms of the ‘couriers’. Her face has become a long-standing signifier of vulnerability at the border. Here the danger is communism and the pleasure is to be had in saving this woman from having to face its perils. The continual recycling of this image, along with the accompanying piece of trivia that Mrs Petrov lost her shoe in the scuffle, thus increasing her vulnerability, works to cement an image of the generosity and goodness of Australia.

Including the enemy ‘alien’ in the nation is an anxiety inducing project. The status of Mrs Petrov as Soviet citizen but also a potential (white/Australian) citizen and her rescue at the airport in Darwin (where she finally agreed to defect along with her husband) signifies the fantasy of a good ‘white Australia’. The violence needed to maintain the border is not ‘ours’ but ‘theirs’. Though both ‘Mr’ and ‘Mrs’ Petrov defected it is the image of the vulnerable woman who stands as the long-term signifier of border crossing in Australia. Here the foreign female body is dragged to the edge of the Australian border and then rescued and awarded citizenship by the good nation. This takes place in a decade when Indigenous peoples struggled to have their citizenship demands heard. Mrs Petrov was saved from crossing the border back

into the totalitarian USSR in an era when Indigenous peoples were deprived of civil rights in Australia. The point is not that Stalinist Russia or Australian Indigenous policies are (or are not) equivalent but that the aggressive defence of Mrs Petrov is one of many belligerent acts of 'good' that camouflage the violence required to maintain white Australians' belief in themselves as the rightful occupiers of Australia.

An even more complex discourse of border crossing and inclusion was the arrival of Japanese people in Australia after World War Two. In many ways in the 1950s the Soviet Union was a recent 'enemy', whereas Japanese people have long appeared in 'white Australian' narratives as undesirable 'aliens' as well as more recent military enemies. However, the Australian military occupation of Japan after the 1939-45 war led to a series of 'unauthorised' relationships between Australian military personnel and Japanese women. Though for many years the Australian military and the federal government discouraged any type of personal relationships in 1952 Immigration Minister Harold Holt finally granted entry applications to a number of Japanese women who had married Australian men (mostly servicemen) thus allowing them to come to Australia (Tamura 2002: 129). There was a high level of press coverage of the first brides coming to Australia. For example Julie Easton notes that the first Japanese war bride to arrive in Western Australia was 'tracked' by the media once the boat she was travelling on neared the Australian mainland. Reports were made on the couple's whereabouts as they approached Perth (Easton 1995: 24). The representations of the Japanese women on their arrival reinforced both their dependence on their husband (for example photographs show them with their husband, who is often in his military uniform) and their attractiveness (which reinforces ideas of the women as petite, dainty, shy, gentle (Easton 1995: 24).

Later media reports focus on the women in domestic and family situations where they are cemented in as part of the everyday female world of the private sphere. As Easton notes in her work on the Japanese brides assimilation is one of the key issues in the thinking about the arrival of the women. Assimilation was a broad and popular policy in the 1950s that applied to Indigenous peoples as well as immigrants. An ambivalence that underpinned assimilation – a desire to 'absorb' the Other and a fear that it might be 'whiteness' that disappeared – haunted the policy. Again the triangulated relationship between internal and external Other informs the idea of 'white Australia'. The same careful monitoring of the Japanese brides and their entry into 'white Australia' is played out in the monitoring, via protection legislation, of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples' potential sexual and marital relationships. The Australian (or its state legislatures) state decides who will remain alien and who will be naturalised.

Twenty years later as the Vietnam War drew to a close another set of media representations were produced as another group of Asian women crossed Australian borders. As thousands of South Vietnamese citizens had been displaced during the Vietnam War, the federal government began to offer places for these refugees in Australia. There was a marked rise in anti-Asian sentiment. The 1970s was also a period of intense activism for Indigenous peoples in Australia. The changes and challenges that were taking place around land rights and civil

rights disrupted the dominant idea of the unchallenged sovereignty of 'white Australia'. These internal and external threats had to be managed in a nation now committed, at least on paper, to multiculturalism and self-determination.

As with the earlier episode of Japanese brides coming to Australia the 'panic' about Vietnamese immigration was managed in the media through the domestication of Vietnamese immigrants. Adrian Carton (1994) has pointed out that the arrival times of Vietnamese migrants was gendered – in the initial years of immigration it was mostly Vietnamese men who came to Australia – and this caused a 'panic'. Though the arrival of almost all of the Vietnamese refugees, and soon to be citizens, was authorised by the government (and took place in an orderly way via air travel) the overwhelming image of Vietnamese arrivals was as unregulated loads of 'boat people'. The combination of Vietnamese men arriving and stories of boats arriving from the north drew on the ghost of the powerful historical myth of 'hordes' of Asian men desiring to invade Australia and fuelled the fear.

The representation of the eradication of this fearful presence could no longer be undertaken with a story of a beheading and violent expulsion. The domestication of this fear was undertaken in the media through the over-representation of Vietnamese women as the new arrivals (Carton 1994). As with the episode of Japanese women's border crossing the fear felt by many Australians about the arrival of the Vietnamese women in Australia was assuaged through representations of them as unthreatening – at home, at the hairdressers – and also in the care of (and in many ways monitored by) (white) Australian men and families. As Carton argues:

In orientalisng Vietnamese immigrant women into ideals of feminine "Asianness" not only were the boundaries of "Australianness" redrawn but the images of these immigrants provided the avenue to the type of society in which they held currency (80).

The media images work to reproduce the notion of Australia as the 'good neighbour' (Rutherford 2000) – a nation that welcomes those who need assistance and brings them in to the heart of the nation. The Vietnamese women are welcomed across the border, first, because represented as passive and docile 'Asian' women they are not seen to pose a danger and second because their presence in the nation assuages the racist fear of a troubling group of single Vietnamese men in Australia.

In January 1979 a very different type of 'boat person' arrived in Australia. An 18 year old Ukrainian woman by the name of Lillian Gasinskaya was working on a Soviet cruise ship berthed in Sydney, when she jumped into Sydney Harbour, swam to shore, wearing only her swimming costume, seeking political asylum. Gasinskaya was dubbed the 'red bikini girl' by the press and achieved some notoriety in her bid for freedom. The news images of Gasinskaya show her in a similar set of unthreatening poses as the Vietnamese women – getting a hair cut, buying clothes. But the ubiquitous image – relayed to newspapers all round the nation –

is of Gasinskaya in her bikini. In one bikini photo waist deep in water, hair wet, she looks at the camera, face composed, calm and photogenic. In another she sits on a swing, eating an ice cream, half-smiling and looking away from the camera. Though at the same time other immigrants were arriving in Australia illegally in boats and put into detention Gasinskaya was quickly granted residency by the federal government. The combination of cold war politics and beauty sealed Gasinskaya's fate. As with Mrs Petrov she is on the receiving end of Australia's 'good neighbour' actions. As with the Vietnamese women she is represented in terms of her domesticity but also as sexual and sexually available. Photographs of Gasinskaya in bikinis, shorts and clinging skirts present her as a slightly exotic Other available for white Australian men rather than as a sexual object for non-white men. In a world where the last vestiges of the race based immigration policy were being dismantled the welcome for Gasinskaya mutes the aggression directed at many unauthorised and authorized Asian arrivals and Indigenous peoples.

In December 2001 another woman, this time a Canadian model named Brendale Doel, made it to the news as an unauthorised entrant to Australia. Doel was working in Australia with the incorrect visa. She was questioned by immigration officials and then detained in Villawood Detention Centre before being deported from the country. Like the 'red bikini girl' what makes the story of Doel interesting and what makes it possible to represent her as a desirable 'A-list' party goer from the 'best country in the world' rather than an 'other wom [a]n who can hardly speak English' (Thome 2001: 3) is her gender and ethnicity. The whiteness of this 'illegal' immigrant makes it possible to represent her time as detainee and deportee as ludicrous. The media reporting implies there is a sense of injustice about her deportation, which is suggested, was the result of a 'technical hitch' (3).

The *Sun Herald* article that reports on the indignities suffered by Doel quotes her as outlining the conditions in which she was kept quarters that were overcrowded, dirty and filled with women who did not speak English. Though Doel does argue that no-one should have to live in such conditions she is truly amazed that a (white) Canadian should have to. Given that thousands of potential refugees live in these conditions for years in Australia it is interesting that it is a white woman suffering this indignity that is brought to our attention. To paraphrase the 1901 parliamentarian Watson – we do not want our sisters or those we would marry being kept in conditions that are 'dirty and overcrowded ... [and] stink' (3). The representation of Doel in the *Sun Herald's* media story juxtaposes a large photograph of her distressed and crying after she has been released from Villawood and a small inset photograph of her in one of her most successful advertisements. The image of a longhaired blonde woman, hands before her in a pose of supplication, crying and obviously distressed, so different from the sexual image of her in the advertisement, works to reinforce the notion that detention centres are no place for a white lady. As with the wayward Sheila, the red bikini girl and Mrs Petrov, here is someone to be rescued.

Since the late 1990s when Australian attitudes to unauthorized entrants to the country has become more aggressive, more and more of the interventions and interactions with the "Other"



occur at sea. So, in some ways the Drake-Brockman fantasy – of encounters in the liminal zone of the oceans are more common. One encounter that was extensively covered in the media and perhaps has a ghostly trace of the murderous and suicidal intentions in Drake-Brockman's tale is the maritime incident referred to as the Children Overboard Incident. In this case a group of asylum seekers were making their way to Australia in an unseaworthy boat when the Australian Navy intercepted them. The false story, that circulated for many months, and could not be shifted even in the face of evidence that contradicted the story, was that adults in an attempt to get the navy to pick them up and take them to Australia threw their children (Herd 2006). The story was taken up by the conservative government and by conservative elements in the media as proof of the unsuitability of these potential migrants or refugees.

This story of a tough government that protected Australia's borders, plus the image of bad migrants invading Australia appealed to a portion of the voting population (Slattery 2003). Indeed this was the moment in which the then Prime Minister John Howard declared his government would decide who entered Australia and how they did so. The Children Overboard story was taken up by the conservative government and by conservative elements in the media as proof of the unsuitability of particular types of potential migrants or refugees. Though it played out in a different way, I think there are some faint parallels with Drake-Brockman's story from the 1920s. There is the idea that the unruly and un-ruled space of the sea lends itself to barbaric actions that reveal the unsuitability of particular groups to enter Australia. The photographs that appeared in the media; images of both adults and children in the ocean did not lead to sympathy from many Australians. Rather it created a feeling that they deserved their punishment. Somehow this group of people were not vulnerable, but bad and "illegals". They should be consigned to the ocean. They should not be allowed into 'white' and 'civilised' Australia.

In early 2014 a young potential refugee to Australia was murdered while in detention (2014). Reza Berati had been picked up by the Australian Navy and sent, with dozens of others, to an island belonging to Papua New Guinea. The facts of what happened to Berati are sketchy as the government is now extremely secretive about the process of detention. It outsources much of the work to private companies. Off-shore detention means that these employees of the company and the refugees are bound by that country's laws and its enforcers. In this case there was a riot at the detention centre and local police and perhaps local residents had entered the camp. It was in this violent encounter that Reza was murdered. Unlike the glamorous photographs of earlier refugees or unauthorized arrivals, there are no media produced images of Reza. What circulated in the media was a single passport style picture of him (Laughland 2014) and a mystery about what happens to people seeking to come to Australia when they are intercepted at sea and then shipped to a non-Australian space, to held endlessly in this liminal space – a nowhere place – with the only certainty in their lives that they will never be allowed to step on Australian soil.

In recent years a debate has raged in Australia about border control, refugees, detention and race-based exclusion. These debates took place within the context of heated discussions

about the past treatment of Indigenous peoples and hopes for reconciliation. Though the two issues are seldom linked in popular debate, this article has made some effort to trace the historical links between the two. Using Bhabha's idea of nation and ambivalence (the inherent ambivalence contained within the idea of nation) as well as his more specific psychoanalytic exploration of ambivalence as part of the (post)colonial relationship this article has explored the ways in which the simultaneous anxieties and desires about border-crossing women represent the never-ending white anxiety about, and desire to belong to, this place. The 'founding' legislation of 'white Australia' – the *Immigration Restriction Act* – carries within it this ambivalence. The discussions around the passing of the legislation deploy both modern notions of democracy, citizenship and equality as well as pre-modern notions of clannishness, insularity and geography. This ambivalence manifests itself in the legislation in a paradoxical emphatic refusal to welcome the Other, alongside a mechanism that allows their entry. This anxiety about external aliens, invaders and illegals mimics and masks another anxiety that emerges through white Australians' refusal to acknowledge their alien and invader status. Shadowing the representation of the external Other are stories of white (governmental) techniques to control and displace Indigenous peoples and delegitimise their claims of sovereignty and belonging.

'White Australia' can be understood in terms of a triangulated relationship where 'white Australians' imagine ourselves sitting at the apex, monitoring a relationship between ourselves and an internal Other and also an external Other. The mastery of the position masquerades an anxiety and an ambivalence that often manifests in violence directed at those who are seen as the source of this dis-ease (Dyer 1997). So called 'illegal entry' by potential refugees is often violently curtailed by the state. Yet, any calls from Indigenous peoples for the recognition of the, earlier, illegal entry by the British are mocked as un-Australian, divisive and against the spirit of reconciliation. The longevity of exclusionary entry legislation, first framed as the *Immigration Restriction Act*, and the present debates over unauthorized immigration to Australia signal the ongoing 'double movement of containment and resistance' (Hall 1981: 228) that continues to take place on Australia's borders.

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