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**Intervening in the racial imaginary:  
'mixed race' and resistance in contemporary  
Australian Literature**

Lyn Dickens

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
University of Sydney  
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## Abstract

This thesis examines the extent to which three contemporary Australian novels can be regarded as interventions in “the modern racial imaginary” (Mignolo 2011a, p. 277). In order to analyse the novels as interventions, this thesis looks in particular at depictions and conceptualisations of mixed race subjectivity and experience in the texts. The novels, *The World Waiting to be Made* by Simone Lazaroo (1994), *Shanghai Dancing* by Brian Castro (2003) and *The Lost Dog* by Michelle de Kretser (2007) all explore mixed subjectivities and experiences in the Asia-Pacific region. Throughout this thesis I examine the complexity and disruptive potential of the concept of ‘mixed race’. I argue that through the depiction of people of mixed race and their traumatic experiences of racialisation, the novels critique, resist and disrupt concepts of race and colonial worldviews.

I further explore the ways in which the novels both promote and exemplify alternative ways of perceiving and interacting with other human beings that do not rely on racial categories or the humanitas/anthropos divide (Mignolo 2011b, p. 90). In order to do this I draw on Walter Mignolo’s concepts of border thinking/sensing and delinking, and Édouard Glissant’s work in *The Poetics of Relation*. I argue that critical examination of mixed race subjectivity and representation, in conjunction with transcultural concepts such as Relation and border thinking, provide a means of both challenging traditional concepts of race and essentialised cultures, and thinking beyond their boundaries. Furthermore, the novels themselves open up a transcultural space with transformative potential, which encourages the imagination of alternative, more equal worlds of Relation.

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# ONE

## Introduction: Intervening in the Racial Imaginary

*and when we speak  
we are afraid our words will not be heard  
nor welcomed  
but when we are silent  
we are still afraid*

*So it is better to speak*

‘A Litany for Survival’ Audre Lorde, 2000

### Background

This thesis examines the implications of mixed race themes in three contemporary Australian novels, *The World Waiting to be Made* (1994), *Shanghai Dancing* (2003) and *The Lost Dog* (2007). Drawing on work in postcolonial studies, feminist theory, race and ethnicity studies and the growing field of mixed race studies, this thesis looks specifically at how these novels can be considered interventions in “the modern racial and colonial imaginary” (Mignolo 2011a, p. 227). I further intend this thesis to contribute to intervening in this imaginary through its critique of racial categories, exploration of mixed race subjectivities and engagement with theoretical links across transnational colonial contexts.

I have chosen to focus on these three novels for several reasons. The novels examined in this thesis, written over a period of 13 years, are all significant, award-winning examples of Australian literature. They are also notable for their depiction of people of racially mixed heritage. Explorations of racial and cultural difference in Australian literature and cultural studies have an established history (Gunew 2004; Khoo 2003; Ommundsen 2007), however in-depth and nuanced explorations of what I term mixed race subjectivity is a somewhat less common phenomenon.

Significantly, the novels explore both the vertical relationship between whiteness and the racially marginalised, as well as the less examined relational movements between and across different marginalised groups and older colonial powers. While the novels

are anchored in the Australian context, they are arguably transnational, and they focus on processes of racialisation in multiple temporal and geographical contexts, including non-Western societies. These transnational, transcultural and multiracial aspects of the novels are informed by the authors' 'mixed race' and transnational backgrounds.

Although I do not generally contain the term mixed race in quotation marks, I have done so both in the title of this thesis and the preceding sentence as it is not my intention to create a new ethnic label for either the type of literature these novels are, or the identities of their authors. As numerous scholars in the field of mixed race studies have pointed out, people of racially mixed backgrounds should be allowed the freedom to define their own forms of identification (Root 1996; Zack 2010). Similarly, while 'mixed race' Australian literature is a shorthand I have used in my thesis title, I do not wish to imply that these novels can only be read in such a way, or that all novels written by racially mixed authors engage with the same themes or concerns that I examine in these particular works.

### **Research Questions**

The main questions I aim to address in this thesis are: to what extent can the novels *The World Waiting to be Made*, *Shanghai Dancing* and *The Lost Dog* be regarded as interventions in the modern racial and colonial imaginary, and how do they undertake these interventions? Within these broader questions, I am also interested in examining how an exploration of mixed race subjectivity and experience contributes to this intervention. I am further interested in making connections between a primarily Asia-Pacific space with its recent history of British colonialism, and alternative forms of postcolonial studies, specifically key works of Édouard Glissant and Walter D. Mignolo.

While Glissant and Mignolo write from the Francophone Caribbean and Latin America respectively, the work of both scholars lends itself to broader application and is of particular relevance to the often marginalised mixed and transcultural relationships throughout the Asia-Pacific. Inspired by Audre Lorde's influential argument that "the master's tools" will never bring about "genuine change" or create "a world in which we can all flourish" (2012, p. 112), I was encouraged to look towards theorists from seemingly unrelated colonial contexts in order to examine the

interventionist potential of these novels. I have not, however, been the first to approach these concepts in an Australian context. Writing of Australia's limited concept of multiculturalism, Jon Stratton advocates an engagement with the term 'creolisation' over either multiculturalism or the more standard term hybridity, arguing that creolisation offers a more productive and arguably accurate way of examining race and cultural relations in Australia (Stratton 1998, p. 16).

Furthermore, Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih argue, "[m]ore often than not, minority subjects often identify themselves in opposition to a dominant discourse rather than vis-à-vis each other and other minority groups. We study the centre and the margin but rarely examine relationships among different margins" (2005, p. 2). In their work, Lionnet and Shih aim to address these relationships. They state "[a]s scholars working both within and across area and ethnic studies, we not only want to bring intellectual questions raised in one field to bear upon the other, and vice versa, but we also want to raise new questions that address specific issues of transnationality in the twentieth century" (Lionnet and Shih 2005, p. 4).

Similarly, the novels I examine in this thesis are all examples of "the productive cultural work of minorities resulting from their transcolonial and transnational experiences" (Lionnet and Shih 2005, p. 11) that explore not only the binary between white Australia and its others, but also the rhizomatic relationships between multiple cultural groups and forms of colonisation. These aspects, along with their mixed race themes, render them complex and layered novels. Some forms of postcolonial studies however, have "been overly concerned with a vertical analysis...where the vertical power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is the main object of analysis" (Lionnet and Shih 2005, p. 11). By drawing on the scholarship of Glissant and Mignolo I am endeavouring to engage across marginalised and colonised contexts and bring alternative ways of envisioning cultural mixing to bear upon the novels, rather than examining them in terms of a white-Asian binary.

In order to address my research questions, I engage with Walter Mignolo's interpretation of "the modern racial imaginary of the modern colonial world" (2011a, p. 277). Mignolo draws on Édouard Glissant's use of the term "imaginary", which refers to "all the ways a culture has of perceiving and conceiving of the world" (Wing

1997, p. xxii), and engages with it to indicate “the symbolic world through which a community (racial, national, imperial, sexual etc) defines itself” (Mignolo 2001, p. 20). He further applies his own interpretation of the word by giving it a “geopolitical” meaning and applying it to the imaginary of the “modern colonial world system” (Mignolo 2001, p. 20), and he emphasises the links between modernity, colonialism and the construction of racial categories. Unlike much of Anglophone postcolonial studies, Mignolo views the modern world system and the beginnings of colonialism as coming into being at the end of the fifteenth century, with the advent of the Spanish and Portuguese Empires and the Renaissance, rather than the Enlightenment (2000, p. 19). He further argues that rather than referring to the progression of history, modernity is the “hegemonic narrative of Western civilisation” (Mignolo 2011a, p. 279), and the construction of racial categories is a key part of this narrative. Mignolo makes the link between dominant modern Western epistemologies and the construction of race, arguing that rational modes of classification were used to justify racial classification, which in turn justified colonial exploitation (2011b).

In using the term racial imaginary, however, I am not restricting my critique to solely Western situations or understandings of race. I also use the term racial thinking throughout this thesis, which I employ to refer to the use of racial categories, and worldviews which rely on race as a ‘given’ or accepted fact. A recurrent theme throughout the novels and this thesis is the prevalence of racial categories and forms of racism in non-Western contexts such as parts of Asia. Often, these are a combination of local Asian understandings of racial categories, which developed in conjunction with Western colonial expansion and European constructions of race (Hotta 2007, pp. 23-24; Chen 2010, p. 267). Forms of Asian racisms were part of anti-colonial and anti-Western movements during the twentieth century, and these are touched upon in the novels, particularly *Shanghai Dancing*. Significantly, both Mignolo and Glissant are critical of reactionary anti-colonial strategies as demonstrating a colonised mentality. Building upon this critique, this thesis includes such race-based anti-colonial strategies in the racial imaginary, and they are also a focus of intervention.

I argue that these novels are interventions in the modern racial and colonial imaginary, as defined by Mignolo and Glissant, in several key ways, as they critique,

challenge and disrupt concepts of race and racialised understandings of culture, as well as exploring alternative ways of ‘knowing’ and perceiving difference. Through their explorations of mixed race subjectivity and experiences in the Asia-Pacific region (specifically Australia, with strong references to Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Macau, China and India) the novels destabilise racial categories, as well as depicting their persistence in contemporary Australia and Asia, and critiquing them for their damaging effects on racialised people.

In order to analyse the novels as interventions, this thesis looks in particular at depictions and conceptualisations of mixed race subjectivity and experience in the texts. The novels are all written by authors of mixed ancestry and they all explore mixed subjectivities and experiences in the Asia-Pacific region. Throughout this thesis I examine the complexity and disruptive potential of the concept of ‘mixed race’. I argue that through the depiction of people of mixed race, and their traumatic experiences of racialisation the novels critique, resist and disrupt concepts of race and colonial worldviews.

I further explore the ways in which the novels both promote and are examples of alternative ways of perceiving and interacting with other human beings which do not rely on racial categories or the ‘humanitas/anthropos’ divide. In order to do this I draw on Mignolo’s concepts of border thinking/sensing and delinking (2000), and Glissant’s work in *The Poetics of Relation* (1997). I argue that critical examination of mixed race subjectivity and representation, in conjunction with transcultural concepts such as Relation and border thinking, provide a means of both challenging race and essentialised culture, and thinking beyond their boundaries. Throughout this thesis, I have also endeavoured to make a theoretical contribution to the processes of conceptualising mixed subjectivities and intervening in racial thinking. These areas, however, also extend beyond the scope of this thesis and would benefit from further research into their transformative potential.

## **Context and Definitions**

### *Race and mixed race*

There is a substantial history of literature and scholarship in the field of what has been called multicultural or migrant literature, and more recently Asian Australian Studies.

In an Australian context, however, less work has been conducted regarding people of mixed race, either with regard to representation or experience. Part of this reflects the general newness of the field, which is also under development in other academic environments such as those in the United Kingdom and the United States, where mixed race studies is a new and growing area of research. However, it also reflects a level of ambivalence and discomfort in Australia regarding its history of racial politics, and the term 'race' itself.

Throughout its history, Australia has relied on concepts of race in order to justify European colonisation and regulate the inclusion and exclusion of people from Australia's national borders and within Australian society. As I will explore in more depth in Chapter 3, the assimilation of mixed race Aboriginal people was seen as a way of both erasing the Indigenous population and justifying white belonging in the nation. The bodies of non-Indigenous mixed race people symbolise certain historic Australian anxieties regarding population, reproduction and race, and they allude to that which can be altered within whiteness, rather than that which can be altered by whiteness.

While I focus on the specifically mixed race angle of the novels, I do so in order to critique processes of racialisation, and power structures that result from these processes more broadly, and it is my contention that all processes of racialisation are inherently traumatic. My intent is, like Naomi Zack (2010), less to promote the concept of mixed race as an identity category, although I acknowledge its benefits in certain situations, but to critique racialisation, and the racialisation of national belonging and culture more broadly.

I engage with the terms 'multiracial' and 'mixed race' to describe people with ancestry stemming from two or more groups which are socially perceived in the modern imaginary as distinct 'races'. This is undoubtedly a problematic and flawed shorthand, since the concept of race itself, upon which the idea of 'mixed race' hinges, is biologically fallacious (Zack 2010, p. 875) and processes of racialisation are contextual (Fojas and Beltrán 2008, p. 3). Race has been particularly critiqued and questioned since the end of the Second World War, which was based on racism and genocide (Winant 2000, p. 170). There is no scientific or biological basis for race, and

racial categories are frequently imprecise if not “completely arbitrary” (Omi and Winant 1994; Winant 2000, p. 172). It is, nevertheless, a social construct that has currency in social interactions. The idea of race still permeates many societies (Zack 2010, p. 875) and “racial hierarchy remains global even in the postcolonial present; and popular concepts of race, however variegated, remain in general everyday use almost everywhere” (Winant 2000, p. 170).

Race, furthermore, is frequently correlated directly with ethnicity, culture, and national belonging. As Robert Young emphasises in *Colonial Desire*, the terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’, while seemingly less dangerous than ‘race’, have been heavily imbricated with racism and racial categories for most of their history (1995, pp. 26-28). As such, to invoke ethnic or cultural difference is to imply a level of essentialised, racial difference. Ann Stoler similarly argues that the traits of ‘new racism’ or ‘cultural racism’, whereby racialised physical identifiers are down-played in favour of cultural and nationalist sentiments and affiliations, are not new at all, but have their history in European colonial beliefs and policies (2002, p. 97).

As a result race is a marker of identity which has meaning far beyond skin colour or facial phenotype, being connoted with mental, emotional and moral character traits, as well as ideas of sexual reproduction and group loyalty that police the sexual choices of members of a racial group (Nagel 2003, p. 14). The persistence and broad applicability of racial categories means that the concept of mixed race has meaning and currency. Furthermore, it is a necessary site of research as long as concepts of racial groups continue to have social validity (Zack 2010, p. 876).

Having said this, it is not my intention within this thesis to engage with identity-debates regarding the commonalities and differences between mixed race people and people of colour more broadly. While research throughout the humanities and social sciences has shown that, although there are significant commonalities, people of mixed race do often experience racialisation and issues regarding racial and ethnic identity differently from other people of colour (Root 1996, 1997; Ali 2003; Perkins 2005; Ifekwunigwe 1999); concepts of race and identity are slippery, and do not lend themselves to being ‘grasped’. In other words, who is or is not ‘mixed race’, and what this means, are debatable points that depend on situation and context.

Blackness, in the United States, for example, is the product of slavery that involved forced racial mixing, and many African Americans who identify and are identified as black now have white ancestry (Baptist 2001, p. 1645). Regardless of her historic white ancestry, however, it still becomes a contentious point if a woman racialised as black and identifying as African American chooses to marry a white man, and this choice does have implications for her 'newly mixed' children and their identity and identifications. This particular point will be raised in my analysis of the novels, as all of them explore the creation of ethnic groups out of historical racial mixing, and the ways in which they allow or disallow 'newly mixed' identities. What becomes clear from these examples then, is that racial mixity in itself is inherently meaningless. As the Human Genome Project has demonstrated, there is no genetic basis for what we currently perceive as racial groups, and every individual is already a mixture of more than one population group (Mccan-Mortimer *et al* 2004). We are all mixed. Racial mixity is given meaning, however, by not only the embodied appearance of racial ambiguity in a 'newly mixed race' person, but also the meaning that is attached to interracial sex, marriage and parenthood, and the creation of visibly transracial family groups.

This mixity, furthermore, has always been and continues to be problematic for the racial and colonial imaginary, and as a result the focus on mixed experiences and subjectivities in the novels has disruptive potential in itself. Having said that, the tenacity of racial thinking is such that, while it is troubled by mixed race people, it has historically found ways to adapt itself around them. Examples of this adaptability include arguments of hypodescent and exclusion in the US context, forced partial assimilation or complete exclusion in the Australian context, or the attempt to create localised buffer communities between the European and the native in the Dutch colonial context.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this historical persistence of racial concepts, it is not my contention that mixed race people or mixed characters alone necessarily dismantle the racial imaginary. However, the novels' focus on both the interiority and lived experience of

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<sup>1</sup> These examples will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

the mixed race subject and the traumatic effects that the racial and colonial imaginary has upon their subjectivity is significant and interventionist. This is particularly the case as the novels all deal with societies in the Asia-Pacific where mixed race identities are marginalised or suppressed, either excluded from whiteness and othered as 'ethnic' in Australia, or perceived as 'foreign' and as unduly Western in parts of Asia. As a result, voicing the concerns of those who are not only significantly marginalised, but who also actively challenge racial thinking, is a notable intervention in the modern racial imaginary.

Significantly, however, the novels do not simply promote the marginal voices and experiences of a new identity category. Rather, they engage in processes of Relation and solidarity across a variety of groups who have suffered discrimination and endured violence. The novels, furthermore, not only explore the traumatic effects of racialisation on mixed race people, but also on interracial couples and any people, whether white or of colour, who challenge the distinctions of racial and ethnic boundaries. As a result, they are much more than identitarian critiques, as they rather highlight the structural and cultural nature of racial oppression and its traumatic effects across a range of experiences, engaging with mixed race characters to demonstrate its pervasive and adaptable qualities.

#### *The novels in context*

I have chosen fiction as my area of research into these issues as it is a key site of in-depth imaginative and potentially radical cultural production, which both explores the social realities which produce it as well as envisioning new possibilities. Sneja Gunew states "the imagination is a necessary and often overlooked component in knowledge construction particularly when this is modelled in predominately sociological ways" (2004, p. 2). She refers to Marcel Stoetzler and Nira Yuval-Davis who argue that "the faculty of the imagination constructs as well as transforms, challenges and supersedes both existing knowledge and social reality. However, like knowledge, it is crucial to theorize the imagination as situated, that is, as shaped and conditioned (although not determined) by social positioning" (2002, p. 315).

The novels that I am examining in this thesis are both a product of Australian culture, which is in turn produced by cultural forms, and creative explorations of alternatives

to the imagined boundaries of race and multiculturalism. Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler further state that “one of the advantages of the concept of the (creative) imagination [is]... that it allows for a varying degree of indeterminacy” (2002, p. 329), and to illustrate this factor they point out that while there is a gendered dimension to imaginings, “there is no such thing as a female imagination” (2002, p. 330). Similarly, I approach the novels in this thesis as texts which have a multiracial and Australian dimension, without necessarily confining them to these areas, as all three texts are arguably transnational, transcultural and transracial literary productions.

### *Australian Multiculturalism and Literary Studies*

In conjunction with their transnational qualities, all three novels are significant examples of Australian literary fiction and they have also been examined within the fields of Australian ‘multicultural’ literature and ‘Asian Australian’ literature. The field of Australian ‘multicultural’ literature has had a contentious history, which mirrors multicultural sentiment in Australia more broadly (Ommundsen 2007, p. 75).

Part of the problem of discussing literature as ‘multicultural writing’ is that it relies on the very frequently over-simplified categories that this thesis and the novels themselves critique. What “multicultural writing” is, “who produces it, and who decides” on its categorisation are contentious issues (Ommundsen 2007, p. 75). The term multicultural writing, furthermore, carries an “immigrant” connotation (Ommundsen 2007, p. 75) with the result that many Indigenous Australian writers have strategically distanced themselves from the term, arguing that it does not recognise their unique status as original inhabitants of the land (Ommundsen 2007, p. 75). The perpetual “immigrant” connotation attached to multicultural writing, and the term multiculturalism more broadly, also disadvantage and exclude other Australians of colour as they insist on the eternal foreignness of non-Indigenous, racialised people. As Peta Stephenson has demonstrated, people of Asian and Pacific descent have inhabited and had relations with Australia long before European settlement, and Asians were also amongst the first European colonisers (2007). This is rarely reflected, however, in the dominant stance towards the history of Australia, or non-white, non-Indigenous participation in it.

Previous analyses of the novels and the authors' other works have discussed the roles of whiteness, racial stereotyping, and Australia's problematic relationship with Asia. The novels' focus on mixed race experiences and subjectivities are less frequently examined. There are also, furthermore, substantial issues with the ways in which some scholars and reviewers have approached and analysed the novels, which I will briefly examine.

*The World Waiting to be Made*, and the works of Simone Lazaroo more broadly, are the most clearly focused on themes of race, gender and identity. In her analysis of *The World Waiting to be Made* and Lazaroo's second novel, *The Australian Fiancé*, Robyn Morris points out that her work "disrupts the hierarchical relationship that exists between the white gaze and its imperialistic marking of race" (2005, p. 280). She further argues that Lazaroo's novels more generally are "strategically interventionist" in the ways in which they explore race and whiteness in Australia (2005, p. 280).

Like Morris, I also examine *The World Waiting to be Made* as a creative and political intervention, however I focus on the ways in which it intervenes in racial and colonial thinking through an exploration of Lazaroo's depiction of mixed race subjectivity. Morris touches on the aspects of racial mixing in Lazaroo's work, noting the "double form of exile" that the narrator endures, being rejected in Singapore for her "bicultural heritage" while simultaneously being fixed as "strangely different" and "exotic" in Australia (2005, p. 288). Her analysis in this regard, however, is problematic, as the accuracy of the term bicultural to refer to either Lazaroo or her novel's narrator is debatable. One of the core themes of *The World Waiting to be Made* is the many cultural influences that compose the narrator's family and ancestry including Islam, Catholicism, indigenous Malay shamanism, as well as British, Portuguese, Malay and Australian cultures. To refer to the narrator as bicultural washes out the vibrancy of this tapestry, rendering her a product solely of a generic Asia and the West, the very divide which the novel and the narrator seek to overcome. The term, furthermore, unquestioningly conflates race and culture, which is a symptom of the persistence of racial discrimination in Australia and Europe today.

While Morris' analysis falters with regard to its exploration of mixed race themes in Lazaroo's work, this weakness is a reflection of the lack of work in mixed race studies in Australian academia more broadly (Fozdar and Perkins 2014, p. 139), and her analysis is otherwise insightful. The inclusion of her chapter, however, in a book on *Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English*, is highly problematic, and it is indicative of a wider problem when it comes to scholarly analysis of Lazaroo's work. Simone Lazaroo herself is of mixed Portuguese Eurasian and Anglo-Australian ancestry, and this is also reflected in her narrators' heritage in both *The World Waiting to be Made*, and *The Australian Fiancé*. *The World Waiting to be Made* makes it clear that the Asian aspects of the narrator's family are primarily Malay. While it is not impossible the narrator has some Chinese heritage, through her interactions with Chinese Australian employers and colleagues, and references to Chinese-Malaysians in the novel, it is evident that she is not of the Chinese diaspora. Furthermore, in Singapore and Malaysia, the countries in which the narrator's father grew up, the Chinese and Malay communities are for the most part quite distinct.<sup>2</sup> The inclusion then, of Morris' otherwise well-informed chapter on Lazaroo's novels in this book is puzzling, not least of all because this distinction is not mentioned or explained by the editor in the introduction, and Lazaroo's work is simplistically absorbed in Chinese diaspora studies (Khoo 2005, p. 12-13). This unsophisticated categorisation is rendered even more troubling by the book's claim that "[h]eeding the call for multi-facted, sociocultural perspectives in literary studies, this book provides wide-ranging, critically engaged discussion about specific texts and contexts" (Khoo 2005, p. 3).

Unfortunately, this mis-recognition is not the only example of problematic interpretations of Lazaroo's work. Writing on *The World Waiting to be Made* in a chapter in *Locating Asian Australian Cultures*, edited by Tseen Khoo, Deborah Madsen describes the narrator's Eurasian father as a "Chinese-Malaysian man", and calls her Eurasian family her "Asian relatives" (2008, p. 124). The marriage between the narrator's parents, furthermore, is problematically referred to as a "cross-cultural" relationship, while Madsen describes the novel as dealing with the "migrant

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<sup>2</sup> An exception is a creole community known as the Peranakans, who are an ethnic group with mixed Chinese and Malay cultural influences. However, during the colonial period Peranakan culture was regarded as distinct from the rest of the Malay and Chinese population. Peranakan culture is not mentioned in *The World Waiting to be Made*.

experience” (2008, p. 124). Both terms elide race and culture, while her descriptions of the narrator’s family are erroneous by any interpretation, and fall into the racist trap of assuming all Asian ethnicities and cultures are the same, which is the very stereotype a field such as Asian Australian studies ostensibly sets out to critique.

The flaws in Madsen’s analysis are highlighted by Jacqueline Lo’s argument that Asian Australian studies must acknowledge “the internal contradictions and differences within the category of Asian Australian so as to ensure such essentialisms are not reproduced by the very apparatuses that we are trying to dismantle” (2008, p. 16). From a brief examination of analyses of Lazaroo’s fiction, it is evident that her work is mis-read and mis-categorised, and that the multiracial and transcultural experience she explores is frequently marginalised in favour of a more generic “migrant” story. In the same chapter, Lo also points out that the “sublimation of race in multicultural discourse hindered the potential for Australians to critically engage with our colonial past and the continuing presence of racism in society”, and she critiques the “refiguring of racism in culturalist terms” (2008, p. 17). The slippages, however, between race and culture in analyses of Lazaroo’s fiction run against Lo’s argument by reinforcing this cultural racism.

Furthermore, Lazaroo herself also expresses unease at the ways in which her work is categorised as “Asian Australian” or “migrant writing”. Writing in the *Australian Humanities Review*, Lazaroo discusses her ambivalent identification with the marker of Asian Australian because of her transnational heritage and upbringing, and her concerns regarding its homogenising tendencies (2008). Similarly, she argues that as labels Asian Australian and migrant writing run the risk of subsuming complex thematic concerns and dismissing the work of non-white Australians as solely foreign or exotic, in spite of the fact that more universal issues regarding human experience can also be found within her novels (Lazaroo 2008). Significantly, Lazaroo also demonstrates similar concerns about more specific identity based terms such as Eurasian Australian, indicating her unwillingness to subscribe her work to any fixed racial category. Within the same article, however, Lazaroo’s ethical commitment to anti-racism, and to depicting forms of racialised suffering, is also clear (2008).

Like Lazaroo, Brian Castro has often been read as an example of a key ‘Asian Australian’ or ‘Chinese Australian’ writer. A major exception to this rule is Bernadette Brennan’s insightful monograph on Castro’s novels, which pays due attention to his complex theoretical and stylistic underpinnings, and creative innovations (2008). In other readings, however, Castro’s Chinese heritage is a central focus. Deborah Madsen discusses Castro in terms of migration and the Chinese diaspora, however the complexities of his multiracial, Chinese, Portuguese and French heritage are downplayed in favour of a straightforward reading of his “somatic” “Chinese face” (2009, p. 49, 51). In contrast to this reading, I suggest Castro’s bodily Chinese-ness is tenuous as a result of his mixed heritage, and the meanings accorded to it are liable to change based on whether he is racialised in a Western setting such as Australia, or an Asian setting, where race is liable to be seen on bodies quite differently.<sup>3</sup> A more detailed attention to the ambiguities in Castro’s work can be found in Katherine Hallemeier’s reading of Castro’s collection of essays *Looking for Estrellita* and *Shanghai Dancing* as a critique of fixed identity categories imposed by multiculturalism (2011). Hallemeier engages with theories of hybridity to read Castro’s work, and while I am not employing the term hybridity to examine the novels in this thesis,<sup>4</sup> I also read *Shanghai Dancing* as involving “liberating and creative potential” (Hallemeier 2011, p. 129).

The fiction of Michelle de Kretser has been less thoroughly examined with regard to ‘migrant’ or ‘multicultural’ writing compared to Lazaroo and Castro’s works. Scholarship on Michelle de Kretser will no doubt increase, particularly since she won the Miles Franklin award for her fourth novel *Questions of Travel* in 2013. *The Lost Dog* has, however, been referred to in several recent works, notably as a novel which draws attention to “a century of migration, mixed histories...[and] haunting” in modern Australia (Chakraborty 2012, p. 8), and promises transformation (Chakraborty 2012, p. 8) as well as exploring “grace” and “an ethos of compassion”

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<sup>3</sup> Uncritically accepting one (usually Western) cultural view of race is problematic in many ways, particularly with regard to people of mixed race who are frequently racially interpellated in a variety of ways in different settings. This renders a discussion of them in relation to diaspora and belonging more complex. See Kuan Hsing-Chen (2010, pp. 257-268) for a discussion on the prevalence of Han Chinese racism, and Emma Jinhua Teng (2013) for a discussion of Chinese attitudes towards race-mixing.

<sup>4</sup> I acknowledge that hybridity is a useful term within postcolonial studies, particularly as deployed by Homi Bhabha (1994). However, in light of this thesis’ very specific examination of multiracial subjectivity, hybridity’s racial and racist past, as discussed by Robert Young (1995), means that it may not be the most appropriate theoretical term for this thesis.

(Collett 2014, p. 141). As authors, both de Kretser and Castro have been singled out for incorporating “scepticism” in their writing with regard to overt multicultural political agendas (Ommundsen 2012, p. 6). In this thesis, I build upon these analyses of the novel, focusing in greater depth on both the mixed race themes within the text and their transformative potential.

While Lazaroo clearly grounds her fiction in racial and gender-based issues, Castro and de Kretser approach themes of race less overtly and in a manner which is more complex. Part of the complexity regarding the presence of race in *The Lost Dog* and *Shanghai Dancing* involves both novels’ exploration of both mixed race themes and cultural fluidity. While Lazaroo also engages with these themes, they have often been overlooked in favour of her broader critiques of whiteness and her exploration of migration. This thesis aims to examine in particular the depictions of racial mixity and cultural blending in the novels, and to explore their interventionist potential, making conceptual links with concepts of Relation and border thinking/sensing in order to enhance this analysis.

As such, this thesis is also situated in the field of postcolonial studies. Postcolonial studies is a somewhat nebulous field without a clear point of origin or defining methodology, however it has become “a major critical discourse in the humanities” (Gandhi 1998, p. viii). In spite of the prefix “post”, postcolonial studies is not concerned so much with the period in history following formal decolonisation as it is with critiquing and resisting the ongoing ramifications of colonial encounters (Boehmer 2005, p. 3). These include the ways in which colonial ramifications manifest in twenty-first century phenomena such as globalisation, migration, multiculturalism and transnationalism (Ashcroft *et al* 2013, pp. viii-ix). Earlier scholarship in postcolonial studies, such as the influential works of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, were heavily influenced by the South Asian experience under British colonialism, a factor which has been criticised as undue (Spivak 2005, p. xv). In more recent works, however, the field of postcolonial studies has expanded to encompass non-British colonialism, and contexts as diverse as the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Ireland, Israel and Australia. Significantly, postcolonial studies has often been defined by a dialectic – which at times manifests as a simplistic binary – between Marxism and poststructuralism (Gandhi 1998, p. viii). Benita Parry, most notably, has criticised

the overly cultural and textual focus of some strands of postcolonial studies which abandoned “historical and social explanation” in favour of viewing colonialism as solely a “cultural event” (2004, p. 4).

In spite of these criticisms, at its best postcolonial studies is a radical, transformative and ethically motivated field, which pays due attention to the impacts of colonialism while constantly striving for a more equitable future. That it is concerned to highlight the persisting effects and violence of colonialism also means that postcolonial studies is a particularly relevant counterbalance to the field of Australian multicultural literary studies, which has often overlooked the implicitly colonial and hierarchical relationship between approaches to non-Anglo-Australian writing.

This thesis aims to contribute to the growing field of mixed race studies, to postcolonial studies and to studies in Asia-Pacific and Australian ‘multicultural’ literature. Both mixed race and postcolonial are complex terms, however I have only encased ‘multicultural’ in quotation marks as it is a profoundly uncomfortable and in many ways misleading term in relation to the novels I am analysing and the concepts I am engaging with. This thesis then, is an attempt to contribute to and change the field of Australian ‘multicultural’ literary studies. It does so by situating *The World Waiting to be Made*, *Shanghai Dancing* and *The Lost Dog* in the global context of the postcolonial and engaging with scholars such as Glissant and Mignolo, who write from colonised locations that are relevant to racial and cultural interactions in Australia but who are only more recently being used in this context (Stratton 2004). Furthermore, by exploring the novels’ very overt depictions of race-mixing and mixed race subjectivity, and drawing on scholarship in mixed race studies, this thesis aims to highlight many of the problematic aspects of multicultural sentiments, which are, in fact produced by, and reproducers of, the racial and colonial imaginary.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The next two chapters of this thesis set out the theoretical framework that informs my analysis, and the social and contextual background of the novels respectively. Chapter 2 explores the primary theoretical concepts which I will use to read the novels. These centre around subjectivity, trauma theory and alternative imaginaries. The chapter lays out concepts of the body, subjectivity and lived experience as a means of

thinking through the relationship between racialised bodies based on phenotype and the interiority of the subject. It further explores specific concerns regarding a mixed subjectivity. In this chapter, I also engage with postcolonial trauma theory as a means of examining and critiquing the effects of the racial and colonial imaginary on the subjectivities and experiences of mixed race people as depicted in the three novels. I also explore the concept of Relation, which Édouard Glissant expounds in the *Poetics of Relation*, and border thinking and delinking, as ways of both reading the novels' creative interventions in the racial and colonial imaginary and exploring alternative frameworks for approaching differences more broadly.

In Chapter 3, I examine the history of colonialism in Asia and Australia, focusing in particular on attitudes towards interracial families and multiracial people in these contexts. I conduct an overview of Portuguese, Dutch and British attitudes towards race and processes of colonialism in India, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, with some references to the Indonesian experience of colonisation and the Eurasian population under the Dutch. I also present a brief overview of British settlement in Australia and the development of racism towards both Indigenous people and Asians in Australia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing on scholarship in Australian multicultural studies, I additionally discuss critiques of multicultural sentiment and more recent work on racially mixed people in Australia.

Chapters 4 to 6 involve my analysis of the three novels. In Chapter 4 I examine the earliest of the novels, *The World Waiting to be Made*, by Simone Lazaroo. Chapter 4 focuses primarily on the ways in which *The World Waiting to be Made* can be read as a critique of the racial and colonial imaginary. It argues that multicultural sentiments in Australia are part of and perpetuate the racial and colonial imaginary through a reading of Lazaroo's novel. This chapter further explores the ways in which multicultural inclusion relies on processes of racialisation, with traumatic effects, and it examines Lazaroo's depiction of the intersections of race and gender, which manifest in her novel as forms of gender-based violence and racialised commodification. While the novel primarily functions as a critique, this chapter also examines the ways in which *The World Waiting to be Made* disrupts the racial and colonial imaginary and explores alternative imaginaries and worldviews, focusing on the specificity and complexity of mixed race experience in the novel, processes of

racial ambiguity, such as passing. It further examines the presence and ambivalence of whiteness in the novel, and the ways in which racial fluidity and changeability, and transracial families, disrupts racial categories. In this chapter, I also look at the extent to which the novel raises the possibility of alternative imaginaries. I engage with concepts of Relation and border thinking in order to analyse the novel's use of magical realism and its depictions of transculturalism.

Chapter 5 focuses on *Shanghai Dancing* by Brian Castro, which is arguably the novel that most disrupts the racial and colonial imaginary. The novel, however, also engages in a substantial critique of this imaginary. In this chapter I argue that a particular critique in *Shanghai Dancing* involves the representation of racialisation as an inherently traumatic process. I also examine the novel's depiction of the inconsistency and irrationality of race, and the contextuality and unpredictability of racial categories. I further discuss the ways in which the categories intersect with attitudes towards the gender and reproduction, and the difficulty racially ambiguous people have in exerting agency and defining their own subjectivity in certain circumstances. Significantly, these traumatic experiences of racialisation and discrimination occur in both Western and non-Western contexts, the novel emphasises the presence of discrimination towards those on the thresholds of categories in multiple temporal and geographical locations. The novel, however, also emphasises the possibility of agency, disruption and resistance in the face of this discrimination, and this chapter focuses on the motif of dance as resistance, and reads aspects of the novel through Glissantian concepts of the rhizome and Relation. The chapter also focuses on Castro's depiction of racial ambiguity, resilience and passing in the novel, and the ways in which the process of perpetual disruption and resistance is portrayed as an alternative to the racial imaginary.

In Chapter 6 I examine the final novel, *The Lost Dog* by Michelle de Krester. While *The World Waiting to be Made* is primarily concerned with critiquing aspects of the modern racial and colonial imaginary, and *Shanghai Dancing* principally engages in disrupting and resisting racial categorisation, *The Lost Dog* is most interested in an exploration of alternative knowledges and worldviews. In this chapter, I examine the novel's exploration of mixed race subjectivities in an Australian and Asia-Pacific context. *The Lost Dog*, like *The World Waiting to be Made*, critiques racialised

Australian attitudes such as white cosmo-multiculturalism, and racialised perceptions and constructs more broadly by demonstrating both their flawed and anxious inconsistency and their traumatic effects. I further examine the novel's disruption of the modern racial and colonial imaginary through its exploration of racial likeness and difference, including the embodied likeness and difference of the mixed race person and its unsettling effects. This chapter also explores the novel's engagement with alternative imaginaries that do not involve racial classification, and which potentially delink from the modern racial imaginary. I examine these in light of the novel's depictions of knowledge and transformation, and its engagement with the spiritual and supernatural. I further examine the novel's depictions of multiracial people and families in terms of Glissant's concept of Relation and Mignolo's theory of border thinking/sensing. I argue that these concepts provide a way of both enhancing the interventionist potential of racial and cultural fluidity, as well as creating a space that accepts racially mixed bodies and subjectivities.

In Chapter 7, I discuss the ways in which this thesis contributes to current scholarship in critical mixed race studies and Australian literary and cultural studies. I focus primarily on its examination of mixed race subjectivity in the novels, which demonstrate the fictive qualities of race. I also discuss my exploration of multiracial trauma in the novels, which results when racial categories are imposed upon racially ambiguous bodies and subjectivities. The novels also, however, disrupt the racial imaginary and gesture to alternative modes of being in and thinking about the world, and I discuss these qualities and their transformative potential. This chapter also discusses the limitations of this thesis, and provides recommendations for future research.

## TWO

### **Subjectivity, Trauma and Alternative Imaginaries: Theoretical Framework**

#### **Introduction**

In order to examine the extent to which *The World Waiting to be Made*, *Shanghai Dancing* and *The Lost Dog* intervene in the modern racial and colonial imaginary as defined by Mignolo, I look in particular at the interactions between racially ambiguous people of multiracial heritage and this imaginary. My theoretical framework consists of three primary themes. The first theme involves theories regarding the racialised and gendered body and subjectivity. The second theme engages with trauma theory, as one means of analysing the effects of the interactions and encounters between the racialised people and the racial imaginary. The third theme explores concepts which critique this imaginary and explore alternative ways of perceiving the world and interacting with difference.

The following chapter is organised according to these three themes. Within the section on the body and subjectivity I examine subjectivity in relation to race, specifically mixed race, and gender, and I include a discussion of performative subjectivity. Feminist phenomenological theories of the lived body and lived experience are also introduced, and the chapter discusses how these relate to the racialisation and experiences of mixed race people. In the second section, on trauma theories, I engage with these concepts in order to analyse the effects of the racial and colonial imaginary upon the subjectivities of racialised people. In order to do this, I focus in particular on postcolonial developments in the field of trauma studies, and the ways in which trauma theory has been adapted in order to examine specifically racial forms of trauma.

The final section of this chapter discusses concepts that analyse the racial, colonial imaginary and which explore alternative imaginaries that do not involve divisive racial categorisation. Here I focus on developments in decoloniality, specifically Walter Mignolo's work on border thinking/sensing, and his critiques of what he terms the *humanitas/anthropos* divide, which he argues is part of the racial imaginary. I

further engage with the work of Édouard Glissant, in particular his concept of Relation, which explores processes of relating with perceived difference without engaging in racial categorisation or oppressive knowledge practices.

## **The Body and Subjectivity**

### *Subjectivity*

In this thesis I am engaging with the concept of subjectivity to discuss the ways in which the novels engage with racialisation, gender and identity. Subjectivity is a concept that allows identity to be investigated as constructed, unstable, changeable and negotiated between the subject and the social context (Hall 2004, pp. 3-4). It also takes into account self-hood and lived experience (Mansfield 2000, p. 2), which, as I will discuss later in this section, are useful to examine “the interior sense of selfhood” (Hall 2004, p. 35) of marginalised people of mixed race.

Subjectivity, as conceptualised within Cultural Studies, has antecedents in psychoanalysis, and one of its major contributions to studies of identity and the self is its disruption of concepts of a fixed, self-contained rational subject. Rather than being self-contained, Lacan and Althusser argue respectively that subjectivity is shaped by language (Lacan 2002) and social interaction (Althusser 1972) that influence processes of identification. As such, gender and race, which continue to govern social perceptions of individuals, play a key role in determining and moulding human subjectivity, either becoming internalised aspects of “lived subjectivity”, or, if the subject feels mis-recognised or mis-interpellated, focus points of “dis-identification” (Weedon 2004, p. 7). As I will discuss later in this section, lived experience and the body are also core aspects of subjectivity, and they are particularly relevant ways of examining the effects of race and gender upon racialised people.

### *Subjectivity and Race*

While, within academia, race has been discredited as a biological fact (Omi and Winant 1994; Zack 2010; Appiah 1986; Mansfield 2000, p. 119) it persists as a social construct which effects processes of identification and subjectivity. Sociologist Howard Winant defines race as “a concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies” (2000, p. 172). He argues:

Although the concept of race appeals to biologically based human characteristics (phenotypes), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. There is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along the lines of race (Winant 2000, p. 172).

In spite of the discrediting of scientific racism in the mid-twentieth century, race continues to function as a means of classifying people, primarily according to phenotype. Furthermore, different races continue to be accorded certain social, cultural and moral attributes which have developed as stereotypes over time as products of the modern racial imaginary. While 'race' as a term has been replaced in Western liberal theory by the less overt terms ethnicity and culture, Robert Young emphasises the historical imbrication of both words with racial and racist thought (1995, p. 28; 2008, p. 237). He furthermore points out that culture, race and ethnicity are now frequently used interchangeably (2008, p. 237). This is evident in the racialisation of culture in contexts such as the white-settler nation of Australia, as I will discuss in the following chapter.

This brief summary of race as a concept indicates it remains a powerful social force. It still frequently governs the ways in which individuals are interpellated, and therefore it effects the development of subjectivity. The link between racialised physical appearance and specific cultures, as created by the modern colonial imaginary, has led to the development of racial stereotypes which impose upon racialised individuals rigid and frequently degrading social expectations of behaviour and national belonging. These often lead to mis-interpellation, whereby the broader social expectations of a group contradict or degrade an individual's sense of subjectivity. I will discuss this in more detail in the section on trauma and race.

### *Subjectivity and mixed race*

Moving from the broader relationship between subjectivity and race, I will now examine the concept of mixed race as it relates to subjectivity and processes of identification, as mixed race representations and experiences are a key focus of this thesis. Writing on racial categorisation, Robert Young points out that to be mixed race

is to be excluded from whiteness, othered and rendered ethnic, at least within the Western world (1995). However, the arbitrary nature of racial classification, which is frequently determined by phenotype as well as perceived cultural and national affiliations, renders the classification of a person who is racially and culturally mixed complex and unpredictable. Sociologist Joane Nagel highlights this complexity when she draws on the example of a multiracial individual of Irish Catholic and Nigerian Muslim heritage to illustrate the negotiated nature of identity and ethnicity. Nagel states that:

[a]n individual's ethnicity is as much the property of others as it is the person's making the ethnic claim...[and is] the result of a dialectical process that emerges from the interaction between individuals and those whom they meet as they pass through life. An individual's ethnicity is a negotiated social fact" (2003, p. 42).

However she argues these negotiations between the individual, and how they might perceive their own subjectivity, and the broader community, and how they identify the subject, are not always equally weighted. With regard to people of mixed race, mixed subjectivities are often marginalised or denied, and it can become difficult to articulate an identity that does not match preconceived ideas of what certain racial or cultural identities should look or behave like.

In order to address this particular complexity regarding mixed race subjectivity, I am engaging with the broad field of mixed race studies, which is multifarious and interdisciplinary. It has strands in life writing and personal experience (Camper 1994; Williams-Léon and Nakashima 2001; O'Hearn 1998; Perkins 2005), sociological and anthropological research (Ali 2003; Ifekwunigwe 2004; Parker and Song 2001), history (Carton 2012; Ghosh 2005, 2006; Reynolds 2003), literary studies (Brennan 2002; Silva 2004; D'Cruz 2006; Elder 2009), film and cultural studies (Fojas and Beltrán 2008; Nishime 2014; Park 2010), philosophy (Zack 2010), psychology and policy (Root 1992, 1996). What unifies this interdisciplinary field is an acknowledgement of the complexity and fluidity of racial identity in spite of the entrenched power of racial categories (Zack 2010), and an awareness of the pain and

trauma that can be inflicted on those who embody this complexity and fluidity, and who inhabit the borders of these imagined categories (Root 1996; Anzaldúa 1987).

The links between race, culture, ethnicity and national belonging add layers of further complexity to the experiences and representations of mixed race people (Nagel 2003). They can be seen to embody both cultural mixing and visible phenotypical racial ambiguity. This can be troubling for both a person of mixed race and a person attempting to make sense of this mixity. A common theme in mixed race studies is an argument that an individual of mixed race does not need to choose or prioritise one strand of heritage over another – they can be white, black and mixed race simultaneously (Root 1996). Or, if they choose, they can be solely black, however, as has been pointed out, they can problematically only ‘pass’ for white, at least in Western societies. In many Asian societies, however, an individual with mixed Asian and white European ancestry is unlikely to be classified as ‘Asian’, as whiteness is racialised and rendered visible in this context. This further complicates the suppression of articulations of mixed race subjectivity in Western yet diverse environments such as Australia.

The multiplicity of mixed race experiences, both in terms of unsettling racial ambiguity, fluency across more than one culture, and an ambivalent recognition of both the pains and pleasures of being mixed race, is a significant aspect of mixed race subjectivity, which belies the notion of both stable identity categories and unimpeded, limitless, depoliticised racial and cultural choice. In a prescriptive article, Maria Root argues that a person of mixed race has the right to choose a stable, internal sense of identity that may never be reflected back to them by the outside world and that, in fact, this may be the best course of action for many mixed race people who feel consistently mis-interpellated (1996, pp. 3-15). As Nagel (2003) points out, however, identity is a negotiated exchange, and an individual’s choice of identity is only one factor in the process of identification.

Contemporary scholarship in the field of mixed race studies demonstrates that, while an examination of fluid, paradoxical multiracial subjectivity, and the unpredictable ways in which multiracial people are racialised in different contexts, highlights the irrational underpinnings of ‘race’ as a category, the presence of mixed race people

alone do not dismantle ideas of race (Zack 2010). While the biological concept of race now has less credence as a result of studies such as the Human Genome Project and it is acknowledged that all population groups have mixed ancestry, the power of race as an idea has not diminished (McCann-Mortimer *et al* 2004), and the historical existence of mixed race people has troubled but never dismantled this power. As I discuss in the following chapter, race is still a significant marker of identity and belonging in Australia, even as it masquerades beneath terms such as migrant, culture and ethnicity (Stratton 2003, p. 199).

While I have emphasised that the presence of multiracial people does not by itself break down concepts of racial categories, they do implicitly problematise them, and cause the social structures supporting these categories to work harder in maintaining them. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, the presence of mixed race children in colonial Asia historically resulted in attempts by both the colonisers and the local population to classify and deal with them as a specific ‘problem’. This was based on fears that Eurasians constituted a “political danger” which, while depicted as being “predicated on the psychological liminality, mental instability and economic vulnerability of culturally hybrid minorities” was actually based on “the fear of [mixed race] empowerment, not marginality at all” (Stoler 2002, p. 110). This fear of multiracial empowerment demonstrates the potential that articulations of multiracial subjectivity have to challenge the fixity and rationality of racial categories. While a lone mixed race person may not always have the power or agency to speak back to racialisation, the fact that a mixed race person must constantly be placed and categorised, and that their articulations of a mixed heritage are often disregarded, indicates the fragility of racial categories, and the difficulty with which they maintain a premise of power (Mahtani 2005, p. 78).

While I do use the terms ‘mixed race’ and ‘multiracial’ throughout this thesis, I also engage with the phrase ‘racially ambiguous people of multiracial heritage’, as it highlights several characteristics of a group more loosely known as ‘mixed race’ which are notable and often contentious. Firstly, their bodies are frequently racially ambiguous – that is, they do not reliably and consistently fall into one racial category on phenotype alone, and can often be racially interpellated quite differently in a variety of social and cultural locations (Nagel 2003, p. 42). The power of racial

appearance alone can be troubling to set racial categories, as it disturbs concepts of easily distinguishable races, however ‘mixed race’ ancestry adds another layer of disruption, as it implies a history of interracial contact, intimacy and sexual relationships. A person who is both racially ambiguous, and racially mixed, embodies transgressive racial contact and interrelationships, as well as physically disrupting racial categories through a racially blended appearance and mixed racial ancestry.

A new development in the field of US mixed race studies is “Critical Mixed Race Studies” (hereafter CMRS), which describes itself as:

the transracial, transdisciplinary, and transnational critical analysis of the institutionalization of social, cultural, and political orders based on dominant conceptions of race. CMRS emphasizes the mutability of race and the porosity of racial boundaries in order to critique processes of racialization and social stratification based on race. CMRS addresses local and global systemic injustices rooted in systems of racialization (CMRS, 2013).

Here, a link is made between the personal, lived subjectivity of a multiracial person and broader political and social concerns regarding racial thinking and classification, which informs my analysis of mixed race themes in the novels.

### *Subjectivity, race and feminist theory*

The argument that the personal is political was a key underpinning of the second-wave feminist movement (Scutt 1994, p. 268), and this thesis draws on aspects of poststructuralist and phenomenological feminist theory in order to examine the intersections of race and gender and their influences on subjectivity and processes of identification. A particular feminist concept that is especially useful for examining racialised and gendered subjectivities is that of performativity, which has primarily been developed by Judith Butler (1990).

As I have discussed, the unsettling and changeable nature of racialised sameness and difference demonstrates these categories are contextual and contingent. Yet they are ascribed fixed and enduring meanings which involve hierarchical rankings and power relations. Tensions can result when both subjectivities and visible markers of race are

mixed and multiple, to the extent that they both trouble fixed meanings and hierarchical relations yet are also marginalised and constrained by them. In order to analyse the novels' depictions of racialised and gendered subjectivity, I am engaging with Butler's concepts of performativity and parody, which she developed primarily in relation to gender (1990, 1993). Butler argues that femaleness is not something natural that pre-exists language and culture, rather she sees the interpellation of a baby as "a girl" as part of the process that turns the baby into a girl (1993, pp. 7-8, p. 232). In other words, language and culture create gender through a series of acts that "congeal" over time to create the sense that gender is "pre-discursive" and has existed forever (Butler 1990, p. 3). Butler explores this through her development of "performativity" stating that:

gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence... gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (1990, pp. 24-25).

Sarah Salih describes performativity as meaning "'woman' is something we 'do' rather than something we 'are'" (2002, p. 10). Butler's work on identity, subjectivity and performativity provide relevant tools for the analysis of the three novels this thesis examines, as just as "[g]ender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid, regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1990, p. 33) so race is also performatively produced and something people 'do' rather than 'are'. While efforts have been made to stress the biological non-existence of race, it retains "the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" and certain races are still frequently associated with certain personality traits and racialised actions.

The concept of performativity provides a mode of examining the social implications and effects of race, exploring how race is something people do, which is then interpreted as being pre-discursive. Butler's conceptualisation of parody and drag also provide a useful set of references when examining the themes of racial ambiguity that

run through the novels. While Butler argues that all gender involves parody and that “[p]arody by itself is not subversive” (1990, p. 139), she nevertheless states that “parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalised and essentialist gender identities” (Butler 1990, p. 138) and “there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony” (Butler 1990, p. 139).

While Butler writes of parody solely in terms of gender, the notion of performative parody also has relevance in terms of racial and cultural performativity and ‘passing’, particularly with regard to racially mixed people who, like those who do not conform to gendered, heterosexual norms, potentially disrupt the “inner and outer worlds” (Butler 1990, p. 134). It further has relevance to the intersection of racial and gendered stereotypes, which, as I will discuss in my analysis, frequently compound one another.

#### *The lived body and lived experience*

As I have discussed in the preceding sections, racialisation is a social process, which relates to both a subject’s interiority and their interactions with the community and social space. Subjectivity is, furthermore, influenced by social expectations of both race and gender, which involve interpretations of the physical body. In light of the socially and discursively constructed nature of race and gender, however, it can be problematic to discuss the subjectivity and experiences of those who are racialised and gendered without reifying and essentialising the very categories we aim to critique. To ignore subjectivity and lived experience, on the other hand, would also be to continue to perpetuate the silencing and marginalisation of racialised and gendered people.

One theory which provides a way out of this conundrum is a feminist interpretation of “the lived body”, specifically Iris Marion Young’s reading of the concept, as first employed by Toril Moi in her 2001 monograph *What is a Woman?* Moi’s concept of the lived body and lived experience develops out of phenomenology, in particular the works of Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. She argues that, according to Beauvoir, lived experience is “an open-ended, ongoing interaction between the

subject and the world, where each term continuously constructs the other” (2001, p. 56). Moi further states that:

’lived experience’ designates the whole of a person’s subjectivity. More particularly the term describes the way an individual makes sense of her situation and actions. Because the concept also comprises my freedom, my lived experience is not wholly determined by the various situations I may be a part of. Rather lived experience is, as it were, sedimented over time through my interactions with the world, and thus itself becomes part of my situatedness (2001, p. 63).

To Moi, the body is “a situation” that “founds my experience of myself and the world. This is a situation that always enters my lived experience. This is why the body can never be just brute matter” (2001, p. 63). Moi contrasts this conceptualisation of the body with Judith Butler’s reading of Beauvoir, arguing that Butler reads Beauvoir as conceptualising an erroneous sex/gender distinction, which allows for a biological, objective female body, which is then socially and culturally given a gendered meaning (2001, p. 73). However, Moi argues that according to Beauvoir, the sex/gender distinction is irrelevant with regard to lived experience. “For Beauvoir,” Moi states, “a woman defines herself through the way she lives her embodied situation in the world, or in other words, through the way in which she makes something of what the world makes of her” (2001, p. 72).

I now turn to Iris Marion Young’s interpretation of both the lived body and Butler’s concepts of sex, gender and performativity which Moi critiques, as Young provides an insightful way of approaching this tension. Young (2005) acknowledges the socially and discursively constructed nature of sex and gender, as described by Judith Butler, and, like Butler she asserts the necessity of engaging with the gender as a concept in order to critique the gendered structural and social restrictions and inequalities women encounter. In this respect, Young differs from Moi. Young agrees with Moi, however, that:

[d]econstructive challenge to the sex/gender distinction has increasingly abstracted from embodiment...at the same time that it has rendered a concept of gender virtually useless for theorizing subjectivity and identity (2005, p. 12).

Young also asserts, however, that “[t]he oppression of women and people who transgress heterosexual norms occurs through systemic processes and social structures which need description that uses different concepts from those appropriate for describing subjects and their experience” (2005, p. 13). Gender, she argues, remains necessary for examining these systemic processes and structures, while the lived body provides an insightful “means of theorizing sexual subjectivity without danger of either biological reductionism or gender essentialism” (Young, I.M, 2005, p. 12).

Young’s reading of the lived body, however, is pertinent not only in relation to sexual subjectivity, but also to a theorising of racial subjectivity. Like sex and gender, race has been critiqued and deconstructed as a social construct that lacks biological reality, however it endures in both social structures and social relations and forms of ‘culturalism’ involving a conflation of racialisation and essentialised culture, whereby phenotype is associated with key cultural characteristics. As a result, it remains necessary to interrogate and challenge the presence of race in social structures and public discourse. Race, however, may not be the most accurate or productive concept to use in order to explore racialised subjectivities and experiences without reifying it and reinforcing racial categorisation. At the same time, a person’s experience of racialisation impacts both upon their body and being in the world, and their subjectivity, often in traumatic ways, and to ignore this would be to accept racial inequalities and hierarchies. As with sexual subjectivities, the lived body provides a way of theorising racialised subjectivities and experiences without reifying and reinforcing racial categories, while acknowledge that these categories are a powerful and often damaging social force.

As Young defines it, the lived body is “a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is body-in-situation” (2005, p. 16). Young explains that situation refers to “the produce of facticity and freedom”, whereby facticity involves “the material facts” of a person’s body “in relation to her given environment.” Young goes on to describe a woman’s facticity:

Her bodily organs have certain feeling capacities and function in determinate ways; her size, age, health, and training make her capable of strength and movement in relation to her environment in specific ways. Her skin has a particular color, her face determinate features, her hair particular color and texture, all with their own aesthetic properties. Her specific body lives in a specific context (2005, p. 16).

This facticity, however, is combined with “an ontological freedom to construct herself” as the “human actor has specific projects, things she aims to accomplish, ways she aims to express herself, make her mark on the world, transform her surroundings and relationships. Often these are projects she engages in jointly with others. *Situation*, then, is the way that the facts of embodiment, social and physical environment, appear in light of the projects a person has” (Young, I.M., 2005, p. 16).

I suggest that Young’s understanding of the lived body is a particularly adept way of examining the complexities of racially ambiguous bodies and those with multiracial heritage, and theorising their subjectivities and experiences. Concepts of race, including the concept of ‘mixed race’ as a loosely defined category, are necessary in order to critique and analyse the imaginary that continues to reify and reinforce race, and to examine the frequently traumatic encounters between a race-based society and a racialised individual. However, Young’s concept of the lived body and subjectivity provides a way of examining racialised experiences without reinscribing fixed racial categories back onto racialised subjects.

### **Trauma Theory**

The second part of my theoretical framework formed around bodies and subjectivities, concerns the idea of trauma. This concept links the conceptual with the experiential and provides a means of analysing the impact of the racial and colonial imaginary upon the subjectivity of racially ambiguous people of mixed heritage.

One of the earlier works of trauma in literary studies is that developed by Elaine Scarry (1985), which aligns trauma with pain. Scarry developed her work in *The Body in Pain* in relation to physical suffering, torture and trauma, however aspects of her

argument are also relevant to racial, sexual and colonial forms of trauma. Scarry writes primarily of the inexpressibility of physical pain, stating that:

when one speaks about “one’s own physical pain” and about “another person’s physical pain” one might almost appear to be speaking about two wholly distinct orders of events...[s]o for the person in pain, so incontestably and unnegotiably present is it that “having pain” may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is to “have certainty”, while for the other person it is so elusive that “hearing about pain” may exist as the primary model of what it is to “have doubt”” (Scarry 1985, p. 4).

In spite of Scarry’s focus on physical pain and the body, these sentiments have relevance to racial and colonial forms of trauma, which involve elements of marginalisation within trauma theory itself, as I will discuss throughout this section.

Shoshana Felman (1992), Dominick LaCapra (2001) and Cathy Caruth (1995) are three major scholars in trauma studies whose work in literary studies sought to overcome the “political and ethical paralysis” (Caruth 2010, p. 10) induced by dominant forms of poststructuralism in preceding decades, and reaffirm a commitment to social and ethical issues through textual analysis. In spite of this desire, however, their works have been critiqued for their overwhelming focus on Euro-American histories and traumas (Craps and Buelens 2008; Forter 2007). Such traumas, Forter argues, are primarily ‘punctual’ or event-based – “events of such singularity, magnitude, and horror that they can be read as shocks that disable the psychic system” (Forter 2007, p. 259) and “shatter” a worldview (Root 1992, p. 236). A core example of such an event-based traumatic event is the Holocaust, which has been central to the works of early trauma theory.

However, there are also many other definitions and occurrences of trauma which I will draw upon rather than stringently aligning myself to a single classification, as in its earlier forms trauma theory has been critiqued for applying a universal, Euro-centric concept of trauma and marginalising racialised, colonised and non-hetero-normative contexts and experiences (Craps 2013, p. 2). One of the more open definitions of trauma specifies that “an event is traumatic if it is extremely upsetting

and at least temporarily overwhelms the individual's internal resources" (Briere and Scott 2006, p. 4). Foundational mixed race studies scholar and clinical psychologist Maria Root has developed the concept of "insidious trauma", which she uses to describe a form of trauma which "shapes a worldview rather than shatter[ing] assumptions about the world" by occurring throughout a lifetime rather than condensing in a single traumatic event (Root 1992, p. 240). The results of insidious trauma, however, are similar to other forms of trauma, such as the experience of being physically attacked, for example, which Root classifies as direct trauma. Both types of trauma can result in symptoms such as depression and anxiety (Root 1992, p. 240). While insidious trauma does not result in physical injury, it does "violence to the soul and spirit" (Brown 1995, p. 107). In this thesis, I am approaching trauma as event-based and everyday, insidious and direct, and as both "shaping a worldview" (Root 1992, p. 240) as well as "making and unmaking the world" (Scarry 1985).

In relation to this thesis, and to criticisms of the Euro-centric bias of trauma theory, Root's concept of insidious trauma is particularly useful for examining the traumatic experiences of racialisation. Root's concept of insidious trauma is particularly relevant to racialised people as she suggests that it involves "the social status of an individual being devalued because a characteristic intrinsic to their identity is different from what is valued by those in power" (Root 1992, p. 240). Race, gender, sexuality, age and physical ability are examples of some of these characteristics. Root further explains that the "frequency of insidious traumas results in a construction of reality in which certain dimensions of security are not very secure: as such, the individual is often alert to potential threat of destruction or death" (1992, p. 241). This mode of alertness and the experience of a form of trauma that is not recognised by dominant understandings of trauma can result in symptoms that are frequently dismissed as character flaws or negative stereotypes of minority groups (Root 1992, p. 242).

While Maria Root developed her concept of insidious trauma in the field of psychology, the theory has been used in literary analysis, specifically in what could broadly be called postcolonial trauma studies as well as feminist readings of trauma in literature. It has been argued that many postcolonial trauma novels "often denounce the pathologization and depoliticization of victims of violence, critique Western

complacency in dealing with non-Western testimony, and call for the development of alternative modes of address” (Craps and Buelens 2008, p. 5). Root’s conceptualisation of insidious trauma has been described as helping trauma studies realise its “self-declared ethical potential” by rectifying the Eurocentric bias and event-based focus of traditional trauma studies and providing a way of exploring representations of racial and colonial trauma (Craps and Buelens 2008, p. 3).

Racial trauma differs in that, unlike physical pain, it is not necessarily without “referential content” (Scarry 1985, p. 3), however like physical pain it, at least partially, “shatters language” (Scarry 1985, p. 200). Part of the reason why racial trauma, as opposed to other forms of psychic injury, has this incoherent effect is because of the marginalisation of traumatic racialised experiences within the field of trauma theory itself and the broader social and cultural context of the colonial imaginary. As Stef Craps emphasises, the history of trauma theory has been, while ostensibly pursuing ethical and normative universal goals, skewed towards a white Euro-American experience, and it has substantially overlooked, down-played and marginalised both racialised, colonialised and non-Western experiences of trauma (2013). Craps describes the scarcity of attention within trauma theory given to diasporic or racialised experiences within Western regions, as well as the discrepancy and discrimination impinging upon mental health services offered to those experiencing trauma in Eastern Europe compared to those in sub-Saharan Africa, who, unlike their in European equivalents, were, even in the latter-twentieth century, denied access to humanitarian psychiatry (2013, p. 12). Similarly Toni Morrison writes that “the trauma of racism is, for the racist and the victim, a severe fragmentation of the self” (1990, p. 214) and Rosanne Kennedy and Jill Bennett suggest that processes of racialisation are traumatic in themselves, regardless of whether this racialisation is cast in a positive or negative light, and it has been argued that the process of attempting to reconcile multiple cultural heritages can be “constitutive of trauma itself” (Bennett and Kennedy 2003, p. 7) as a result of power structures involving race and ethnicity.

Kennedy further argues that incidences of racial trauma are frequently denied “by the Western orientation of trauma studies” (2008, p. 87), and, in the cases where they are acknowledged, racial trauma can be misrecognised and downplayed, mimicking a

repetition of the original trauma. To demonstrate this, Kennedy refers to the case of *Cubillo v Commonwealth*,<sup>5</sup> where Lorna Cubillo, an Aboriginal woman of mixed heritage who was removed from her Aboriginal mother and the Philip Creek Native Settlement in 1947, later sued the Commonwealth for “wrongful imprisonment and for breaches of statutory duty, fiduciary duty, and a duty of care” (2011, p. 338). In 1998, Cubillo’s case was heard before Justice O’Laughlin, who Kennedy argues acknowledges and legitimates Cubillo’s experiences of pain and trauma, and yet simultaneously denies its effects by doubting Cubillo’s memory of events. In particular, he doubts her ability as a four year old child to remember being called “a half-caste”, and views her fragmentary narrative as evidence of unreliability rather than a symptom of traumatisation (2011, pp. 342-343).

This had the effect, Kennedy states, of putting the veracity and authenticity of Cubillo’s experiences of racial trauma on trial, of devaluing her pain and of causing a repetition of the effects of the original trauma, as Cubillo is quoted as responding defensively “I know what happened to me...[P]eople like you removed me” (in Kennedy 2011, p. 343). Kennedy argues that the colonialist regime of the Australian courtroom once again has the effect of traumatising as well as silencing Cubillo, in much the same way as she was flogged and punished for speaking her own language rather than English when she was in the Retta Dixon home as a child (2011, p. 343). This effect of the courtroom goes against William Deane’s statement that “the legacy of child removal “cannot be addressed unless the whole community listens with an open heart and mind to the stories of what happened in the past and, having listened and understood, commits itself to reconciliation” (in Kennedy 2011, p. 338), which in itself echoes work in trauma studies emphasising empathetic listening as an aid to the healing process (Kennedy 2011, p. 3, 42; Felman and Laub 1992, p. 71-72).

Kennedy’s exploration of *Cubillo v Commonwealth* demonstrates a “missed encounter” not only between the law and trauma, but also conceptualisations of trauma and racialisation (2008, p. 335). As Kennedy argues:

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<sup>5</sup> Case citation (2000) 103 FCR 1

Incorporating histories of race and colonialism into trauma studies is challenging because acts of racist and colonial violence do not necessarily conform to the notion of the “traumatic historical event” . . . intimate sexual and domestic violence against women and girls, which typically occurs in private, and racialized abuse and violence, often go unacknowledged as trauma. Cvetkovich’s insight that “everyday forms of racism . . . which are institutional or casual . . . don’t always appear visible except to those who are attuned to them” is particularly relevant to the Stolen Generations, who were routinely institutionalized (Kennedy 2008, p. 335).

While I do not examine specifically Indigenous themes in this thesis, Kennedy’s insights have relevance to the treatment of racially ambiguous bodies and people of mixed descent as they develop a conceptual framework that enables one to deal with not only everyday forms of racism, but also the traumatic effects of racialisation and racialised cultural essentialism. Furthermore these ideas are attuned to the issues that arise when analysing the subjectivities and experiences of people of mixed descent, whose abilities to articulate either a mixed subjectivity, or experiences of racialisation, are often stifled or marginalised (Root 1992, 1997; Zack 2010).

Part of the complexity of mixed heritage involves a racially ambiguous person laying affective and ancestral claim to cultural attributes that are dominantly viewed as exclusive to ‘pure’, non-mixed communities. This occurs in both Western and Asian contexts, however it is also applicable to non-mixed, non-white individuals in countries such as Australia, and also involves experiences of trauma. Extending on the concepts of trauma that will inform my analysis I now discuss Ghassan Hage’s theory of the “shattered racialised person” (2010, p. 245). This is a theory of trauma informed by Althusserian notions of interpellation, which Hage uses to describe the effects of persistent, racialised mis-interpellation. Hage argues that while multicultural policy in Australia was ostensibly designed to protect – as well as regulate – certain forms of cultural difference, the protective benefits of this policy decrease for multi-generation non-white, non-Indigenous Australians, as opposed to recent migrants.

According to Hage, these Australians believe a discourse which positions them as refusing to integrate or assimilate in Australian society and they, in fact, creolise (although Hage does not use this specific term) and do assimilate, although they crucially assimilate on their own terms, not on the terms of white Australia (2010, p. 245). This creolised form of assimilation, however, is rejected by white Australia in favour of eternal foreignness. Drawing on Althusser's concept of subject formation and interpellation, Hage argues that "racism is a failure in the interpellation system whereby society falls short of allocating the racialised person a space that makes their life meaningful" (2010, p. 244), but also states that this form of interpellation varies. According to Hage, first-generation immigrants experience either non-interpellation or negative interpellation, the former involving a sense of invisibility and unimportance, and the latter involving "visibility produced by classical modes of racist inferiorization" (2010, p. 244).

Second-generation immigrants, however, Hage argues, can experience these forms of negative interpellation as well as mis-interpellation, which he describes as occurring when a person "recognizes themselves as being interpellated, only to find out that they are not" (2010, pp. 244-245). Hage elaborates, stating:

When the nation hails you as 'hey you citizen' everything in you leads you to recognize that it is you who are being hailed: but you reply 'yes it is me' you experience the shock of rejection where the very ideological grid that is inviting you in the nation expels you through the petty and not so petty acts of exclusion that racists engage in in their everyday life. You say 'it is me' and the ideological structure of society replies with cruelty: 'No. Piss off. It is not you I am calling' (2010, p. 245).

Hage argues that "[m]is-interpellation is a far more traumatizing experience of racism than negative or non-interpellation" (2010, p. 245).

Subjection to racism always involves an experience of fragmentation. When this subjection is intense as in the case of mis-interpellation it can become an experience of shattering, and while a fragmented subject can always manage to pull themselves together to be operational in the world, the shattered racialised person needs a space

immune from the effects of racism in order to “pick up the pieces” (2010, p. 245). Multiculturalism, Hage argues, does not and cannot provide this space, as it was designed to recognise and valorise the “culture of the other” (2010, p. 245), arguably to counter-act the negative or non-interpellation that Hage specifies as being a trait of first-generation immigrants, and it “has not been conceived to handle the drama of mis-interpellation. As such, it often leaves the second-generation outside its operative sphere” (2010, p. 245). According to Hage, this is a flaw in multiculturalism in Australia, as:

the mis-interpellated is not someone yearning to have their culture recognized, paradoxically, they are someone who was yearning to assimilate, who has offered the nation their assimilation and found it was rejected by the nation through the medium of a variety of racist subjects (2010, p. 245).

While Hage’s framework is overly reliant on a clear division between the experiences of what he calls first-generation and second-generation immigrants and places different forms of racial trauma in a hierarchy, he nevertheless provides an insightful way of conceptualising the effects of racialisation on non-white Australians. Furthermore, he highlights a key flaw in multiculturalism, namely, that, in the long-term, it excludes on the basis of racial difference, rather than being inclusive. Hage himself limits his analysis of shattering racialisation to the experiences of young Arab-Australian Muslim men, however I employ his framework more widely in this thesis, examining the ways in which the racialised acceptance of mixed race women is also a form of rejection from the nation and shattering racialisation.

### **Alternative Imaginaries**

In the previous section I discuss the concepts that I employ to examine the novels as interventions in the racial and colonial imaginary. These include a focus on the gender/race intersection, the ways in which bodies are racialised and how people frequently experience this racialisation as a form of trauma. I have also linked these concepts to the specific theme of mixed race experiences and subjectivities that permeate all three novels.

While the novels engage in a substantial critique of processes of racialisation, they also explore alternatives to racialisation, and engage in a process of decolonising knowledge forms and worldviews. In order to examine this process, and the alternatives imagined in the worlds of the novels, I draw on concepts of border thinking and decoloniality, as defined by Walter D. Mignolo, as well as Édouard Glissant's theory of Relation and creolisation.

While Glissant's concepts developed in the context of the Caribbean and Mignolo's in Latin America, neither envisioned their theories as being geographically restricted. I have chosen to engage with their ideas for several reasons. Firstly, the novels themselves evoke these concepts through their exploration of 'creolising' cultures and multiply mixed family groups and subjectivities, and their emphasis on alternative ontologies and epistemologies. As Mignolo emphasises literary practice is not only "an object of study", but also "a production of theoretical knowledge...[and] a reflection its own way about issues of human and historical concern" (2000, p. 223). Secondly, an application of these theoretical frameworks allows these themes of creolisation, mixed subjectivity and alternative epistemologies space to "breathe", and extends them. As I have discussed in the Introduction, while the works of Simone Lazaroo and Brian Castro have been substantially examined and critiqued within Australian literary and cultural studies, their novels' nuances with regard to mixed subjectivities, transculturalism and critiques of racialisation have often been overlooked, or lost in focuses on broader dichotomies of "Asia" versus the "West". Through a theoretical approach that is itself based on concepts such as border thinking/sensing and Relation, this thesis will explore the novels' theoretical and thematic complexities and interventions with regard to colonial knowledge forms and concepts of race.

### *Border thinking/sensing and decoloniality*

In their discussion of creolisation, Shih and Lionnet argue that "decolonising epistemology is crucial" (2011, p. 27), Walter D. Mignolo further asks, "[r]acial classification meant rational classification, and rational classifications derive not from natural reason but from human concepts of natural reason. But who establishes criteria of classification, and who classifies?" (2011a, p. 163). Mignolo's answer to his question is that humanitas are those "who inhabited the epistemic zero point" and

therefore established the criteria for classification, while those who are classified without participating are the anthropos, those who are not in control of knowledge, which is the “zero point” (2011a, p. 163). Mignolo’s ideas are useful for exploring the disempowerment and objectification that results from being racialised, and therefore relegated to the anthropos. However it is also important to remember that even in this moment acts of struggle and resistance can be undertaken against this form of knowledge. In some cases, actionary rather than reactionary re-interpretations, remodelling and fusions of different types of knowledge can be used to support creolising subjectivities in the face of this restrictive classification. Mignolo continues to state that there is a need for the anthropos to “claim epistemic rights” and “engage in barbarian theorising and knowledge construction” and demonstrate the common humanity of both the *humanitas* and *anthropos* (2011c, p. 168). This, Mignolo argues, is decolonial thinking.

Another useful concept that I engage with is what Mignolo describes as border-thinking and sensing. This involves erasing “the distinction between the knower and the known, between a “hybrid” object (the borderland as the known) and a “pure” disciplinary or interdisciplinary subject (the knower), uncontaminated by the border matters he or she describes” (2000, p. 18). Border thinking, furthermore, refers to subaltern knowledges which are “critical of both imperial designs (global coloniality) and anti-colonialist nationalist strategies (internal coloniality)” (Grosfoguel 2006, p. 499). For my thesis this concept is useful for the way it assists in analysing, in particular, the roles race and ethnicity play in being the knower or the known, but also to demonstrate the possibilities of disrupting this distinction. Significantly, neither Mignolo’s concepts of decoloniality or border-thinking advocate the stripping away or discounting of all Western knowledges, but rather the de-centring of them, and an ability to allow other knowledge forms to coexist without being discounted as belonging to the anthropos and therefore not true humanity.

Mignolo argues that border thinking “structures itself on a double consciousness, a double critique operating on the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system, of modernity/coloniality” and as such critiques modernity from within itself, as well as from the position of colonial difference (2000, p. 87). This is a substantial theme in all of the novels, running parallel with the desire in the texts to allow space for multiple

ethnicities and blended, creolising subjectivities. Characters in *The Lost Dog*, in particular, articulate a sense of doubleness which is at once troubling and productive, as they negotiate and adapt Western modernity and knowledge from both the position of an Western, modern subject and a mixed race person with a non-Western history and cultural influence.

Similarly, Mignolo also states that a key aspect of border thinking is the disruption of “dichotomies through being themselves a dichotomy” (2000, p. 85). “This”, he argues, “is the key configuration of border thinking: *thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in dichotomies*. Border thinking ... is logically, a dichotomous locus of enunciation and, historically, is located at the borders (interiors or exteriors) of the modern/colonial world system” (2000, p. 85). His concept of border thinking is particularly relevant in terms of transcultural production. It enables fruitful readings in situations where characters are categorised and positioned in terms of essentialised, dichotomous blocks of ‘Asia’ and, or versus, ‘Australia’. The authors, novels, and central characters, however, are all comprised of double/multiple races, cultures, identities that place them in an ambivalent but potentially creative space between, across and throughout ‘Asia’ and ‘Australia’, which, the novels demonstrate, do not necessarily need to be dichotomously categorised.

Through his concept of decoloniality, furthermore, Mignolo also emphasises the necessity of “changing the terms of the conversation and not only its content” (2011a, p. 275) by doing what he calls “delinking” from both “[r]ewesternization and the unfinished project of Western modernity” and “[d]ewesternization and the limits of Western modernity” (2011a, p. 280). By delinking from this struggle, it is possible to view Western modernity not as a universal concept which must either be imitated or strongly rejected, but as a regional development which, like other regional concepts and forms of knowledge has its own value in certain settings. The main difference, Mignolo notes, is that while European concepts of modernity have local histories, they “became global designs”, positioning themselves as “an ontological unfolding of history” rather than “the hegemonic narrative of Western civilisation” (2011a, p. 279). Once one realises the regionality of modernity, Mignolo argues that “there is no need to be modern. Even better, it is urgent to delink from the dream that if you are not

modern you are out of history” (2011a, p. 279). He further argues that “alternative or subaltern modernities” which feel the need to “claim the right to exist reaffirm the imperialism of Western modernity disguised as universal modernity” (2011a, p. 279), when in fact Western modernity is just an option rather than “an ontological moment of universal history” (2011a, p. 279). Instead, Mignolo argues in favour of being “non-modern”, delinking from the authority modern colonial imaginary and striving for a “just and equitable future beyond the logic of coloniality” (2011a, p. 279).

### *The Poetics of Relation*

Creolisation, border thinking and decoloniality are intertwined strands of an emerging form of postcolonial studies that is no longer anchored in the British Empire or the Anglophone world. Their interrelation is evident in the works of Martinican writer and thinker Édouard Glissant, particularly his text *The Poetics of Relation*. Glissant argues in favour of the broader, planetary applicability of creolisation, rather than the fixing of it in the Caribbean (Mignolo 2000, p. 40). He defines it as a continual process that “diffracts”, extending outwards and ever-changing unlike other terms such as hybridity or métissage which “can concentrate one more time” and solidify into dogma (Glissant 1997, p. 34). In tandem with creolisation, Glissant also describes a process of Relation. For Glissant, Relation is a process in which “each and every identity is extended by a relationship with the Other” (1997, p. 11), thereby emphasising the interconnected, affective and equal aspects of human contact in a creolising context. Glissant rejects fixed “notions of ancestral purity and racial authenticity” (McCusker 2003, p. 115), however he does not suggest disregarding ideas of “difference and specificity” in favour of “uniform sameness” (Dash 2003, p. 234). Rather, Glissant advocates “a system of relations fraught with tensions, disruptions and anxieties...numerous, widespread, eccentric [and]...never exhausted by any one voice” (Dash 2003, p. 234). He describes Relation using the image of a mangrove swamp’s rhizomatic, enmeshed root system, as opposed to a singular root, which is frequently used to describe exclusive, hierarchical ethno-national identity.

Glissant argues that “[r]hizomatic thought is the principle behind...Relation” (1997, p. 11), which is itself based on “a fundamental relationship with the other” (1997, p. 14), a factor which has been disregarded by many nations that have gained freedom from colonisation (1997, p. 14). I would argue that this notion is frequently ignored

and overlooked in Australian conceptions of multiculturalism and race and cultural relations. Unlike the compartmentalised nature of Australian concepts of multiculturalism, Relation opens up “positively defined, discrete identities...to what lies outside them or beside them or to what they might encounter by chance...Relation is about fertile contacts and fruitful synergies the outcomes of which cannot be predicted and which escape determination within a proliferating mode of being that resists hierarchy” (Crowley 2006, p. 106). French Studies scholar Patrick Crowley further argues that Glissant’s concept of Relation “refutes notions of identity imposed by a system that would transcend a relational subject position. A system of colonial power, for example, that introduces an educational system freighted with the cultural values of its own tradition” (2006, p. 106).

Like Mignolo, Glissant is concerned with full decolonisation, and he critiques the reactionary nature of de-colonised nations and, by implication, other race-based or ethnic movements and theories that define themselves in opposition to the West, or the West’s historic conceptions of the anthropos. He sees such enterprises to be self-limiting and still exhibiting symptoms of colonisation. He argues that only once this limitation has been overcome will “decolonisation ... have done its real work” (Glissant 1997, p. 17). This argument links back to Mignolo’s work on decoloniality and border thinking, both of which displace the centrality and power of the West while not rejecting its contributions in entirety.

Glissant further speaks of the struggle with and against Western knowledge forms, including concepts of race, racialised culture and rational worldviews, which emerge in the novels I analyse, through his concepts of transparency and opacity, and the other of Thought. He argues, much as Mignolo does regarding the classifications of the *humanitas* and the anthropos, and the power over knowledge systems this involves, that understanding difference often involves rendering it transparent and reducing its humanity, in order to rank it in a pre-existing hierarchy (Glissant 1997, p. 111).

Writing in French, Glissant uses the term *comprendre* to describe the process of knowing, understanding and also grasping, enclosing and controlling difference by rendering it transparent. Instead of this process, he advocates accepting the opacity of

difference without attempting to appropriate it, and he employs the term *donner-avec* to describe this way of relating to the other as opposed to *comprendre*. Opacity, he argues, is but that “which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence” (Glissant 1997, p. 191).

Opacity is not, however, to be obscure or separate, “it simply refuses to yield itself; it resists a certain mode of thought that seeks to know or rather to categorise the world and thus reduces its diversity” (Crowley 2006, p. 107). Opacity is a mode of engagement that resists “the light of (Western) understanding in order to preserve diversity and advance exchanges based not upon hierarchy but upon networks that abolish the primacy of any one centre of understanding” (Crowley 2006, p. 107). While understanding/grasping involves a close handed “gesture of enclosure if not appropriation”, the gesture that accepts opacity opens outwards (Glissant 1997, p. 192). Thinking about Glissant’s ideas in relation to Australian multicultural sentiment, this would involve an acceptance of a non-racialised cultural complexity, permeability and creolisation, and an ability on the part of both white and non-white Australians to create links and relationships with difference without needing to contain, categorise or control it.

In resistance to *comprendre*, Glissant employs the term *donner-avec*, which is translated by Betsy Wing as “gives-on-and-with”. While *comprendre* means to understand, have power over, reduce and grasp difference, *donner-avec*, which is a neologism coined by Glissant, is defined as “understanding in Relation” (Wing 1997, p. 212) and implies both generosity and a notion of looking outwards, as well as a sense of yielding (Wing 1997, p. 212). Glissant demonstrates the effects of *donner-avec* in dealing with difference when he writes about “thought of the Other” and “the other of Thought” (1997, pp. 154-155). “Thought of the Other,” according to Glissant, is:

the moral generosity disposing me to accept the principle of alterity, to conceive of the world as not simple and straightforward, with only one truth – mine. But thought of the Other can dwell within me without making me alter course, without ‘prizing me open’, without changing me within myself... The other of Thought is precisely this altering. Then I have to act. That is the

moment I change my thought, without renouncing its contribution. I change, and I exchange (1997, pp. 154-155).

While the multicultural tolerance that Ghassan Hage critiques, which I will explore in the next chapter, can be seen as examples of “thought of the Other”, the “other of Thought” presents the possibilities of a deeper, more genuine form of interaction with perceived difference, which would involve the active and reciprocal process of interrelation and exchange between individuals and cultural groups.

As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, concepts of race and essentialised culture, which inform Australian concepts of multiculturalism, are often at odds with the lived experiences and identifications of people of mixed race and ethnicity. This disjuncture can often result in both individual and familial forms of trauma. While creolisation, border thinking and Relation do not directly address this trauma, they challenge the entrenched forms of racialised thinking that informs multiculturalism, and carve out space where the authority of Western knowledge is de-centred and dynamic, blended forms of culture and identity are accepted.

Relation, furthermore, attends to the important and often overlooked sites of family, intimate relationships and affective interaction that have always and continue to permeate racial, national and cultural boundaries. All of these themes and concepts occur throughout the novels examined in this thesis, which both desire and, at various stages, attempt to imagine, a dismantling of racialisation and its effects through a process of creolisation, Relation and a decolonisation of identity and imagination. Furthermore, all of the novels ask, even if they are times are uncertain of the answer, whether a dynamic, critical pursuit of Relation, involving opacity, *donner-avec* and the other of Thought, could arguably result not solely in the “deeper commitment to a more far-reaching multiculturalism” Ghassan Hage seeks (2000, p. 26), but also “the disappearance of racism through a generalization that would prevent segmentation within the human family” (Loichot 2009, p. 50).

## THREE

### Social and Historical Context

#### Introduction

In order to examine *The World Waiting to be Made*, *Shanghai Dancing* and *The Lost Dog* as interventions in the racial imaginary, I will first set out the social and historical context of race mixing in the colonial Asia-Pacific. As I have discussed in the Introduction, the novels are transnational texts which are situated in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, India, China and Hong Kong. As a result, the themes they explore are affected by a variety of colonial contexts and colonising powers. These primarily include the Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial endeavours. Each colonising power had complex attitudes to racial mixing. There were commonalities across all contexts, yet also distinct differences.

In the first section of this chapter, I have endeavoured to map this complex and often contradictory context in order to demonstrate the contingent, tenuous and unpredictable social positions mixed race people occupied. This situation of unpredictable discrimination and privilege is a core theme in all of the novels, which also explore its perpetuation in present day Australia. In the second section of this chapter, I examine Australia's history of British settler-colonialism and race relations, and more contemporary attitudes towards multiculturalism and racial difference. I close this chapter with an overview of contemporary, popular attitudes towards people of mixed race within Australia as a means of situating the focus of this thesis.

#### Situating the mixed race person in the Asia-Pacific

My examination of these novels as interventions in the racial imaginary is informed by the intersections between gender, race and nation as defined by various scholars such as Anne McClintock, Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias and Ann Stoler. Yuval-Davis and Anthias have been particularly influential in mapping the relationship between gender, race and national belonging, identifying several key ways in which women are entangled in nation building (1989, 1997). They argue that women are construed as biological reproducers of the nation, as reproducers of national boundaries through "restrictions on sexual or marital relations", as producers of

national culture (in McClintock 1996, p. 90), as symbols of the nation and as “participants in national struggles” (in McClintock 1996, p. 90).

In conjunction with the construction of women as symbols and reproducers of the nation, Joane Nagel argues that “the idea of the nation and the history of nationalism [is] entwined with the idea of manhood and the history of manliness” and states “that nationalist scripts are written primarily by men, for men” (2003, p. 159). Nagel also emphasises that in these nationalist narratives women tend to hold “supporting roles” wherein they maintain their nation’s culture by mothering national heroes or maintaining their sexual virtue against foreign invaders (2003, p. 159). Similarly, Yuval-Davis argues that women “are constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity’s identity and honour” (1997, p. 145).

As Nagel also points out, race and ethnicity are often integral aspects of national identity (2003, p. 1). In the contexts of the novels’ locations – Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and India – they are implicit signifiers of national belonging. The construction of women as reproducers of the nation, and guardians of national purity through specific sexual and marital practices, is indicative of the tensions between race, gender, ethnicity and the construction of national borders. Nagel describes the regions at the “intersections of racial, ethnic, or national boundaries” as “ethnosexual frontiers – erotic locations and exotic destinations that are surveilled and supervised, patrolled and policed, regulated and restricted” but also frequently crossed by people “forging sexual links” with those across the borders (2003, p. 14).

In light of Nagel, Yuval-Davis and Anthias’ articulations of women and the nation, it is clear that women are thought to occupy a particular role in upholding racial, ethnic and national boundaries by withholding their sexuality at these ethno-sexual frontiers. This racial and gender dynamic is particularly interesting in relation to the figure of the racially mixed woman, and is explored in-depth in all three of the novels I examine. While, as Nagel points out, the image of a young mixed race woman is used to allay fears of racial difference, by demonstrating assimilable, almost-white and non-threatening femininity (2003, p. 23), mixed race female sexuality has often been constructed as something troubling, which is desirable and yet also potentially uncontrollable.

In her examination of French Indochina Ann Stoler points out that young Eurasian women were encouraged to marry working and lower-middle class white men, rather than men from the local Vietnamese population (2002, p. 208). Their Asian mothers, furthermore, were frequently seen by the colonial authorities as unfit parents, who would attempt to encourage their daughters to become sex-workers, or otherwise try to profit from their European heritage (Stoler 2002, p. 207). There was a particular fear that Eurasian girls would be “forced into prostitution” by Asian men, thereby raising concerns about whether girls who could be considered French were catering to Chinese and Vietnamese, rather than European, men (Stoler 2002, p. 208).

These problematic attempts to control mixed race female sexuality, however, are complemented by a fetishisation of mixed race women based on a fascination with the concept of transgressing ethno-sexual frontiers. All women of colour have been sexually stereotyped by the West, and historically viewed as sexually available. Edward Baptist explains that mixed race women in the American slave-owning states were fetishised precisely because they physically embodied, through their mixed heritage, a history of white male sexual domination over women of colour (2001). As a result, the ownership of and sexual relationship with a woman of mixed race symbolised a white man’s link with the white men who possessed women of colour before him, thereby solidifying his sense of status and authority.

While not involving slavery as such, a similar relationship can be seen in the positioning of Eurasian women in the Asia-Pacific, both in relation to whiteness and people – specifically men – of colour. While such women throughout European colonies in Asia were never whole-heartedly and unconditionally accepted into European communities, neither was it seen as acceptable for them to belong unproblematically to local Asian communities. As Stoler argues, this was particularly fraught with regard to their sexuality, as mixed race women were portrayed at once distinct from white women in depictions of their promiscuity, but also as carrying vestiges of whiteness (2002, pp. 207-208). Arguably, like attitudes towards multiracial female slaves in the United States, mixed race women in the colonies represented the history of European colonisation and its domination over people of colour, through the gendering and sexualisation of the processes of conquest and colonisation.

The fetishisation of their bodies, therefore, represents a white desire to lay claim to a colonial history signified by the offspring of previous sexual relationships between white men and women of colour. In some cases a similar fetishisation of mixed race female bodies also represents a hyper-masculine, anti-colonial desire to break this white colonial claim and symbolically break the history of colonisation. The latter is evident, for example, in the significant Indonesian novel *This Earth of Mankind* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1982), which explores the beginnings of the Indonesian nationalist movement at the start of the twentieth century through the eyes of a young Javanese journalist, Minke and casts a young mixed race woman Annelies as his love-interest. Much of the novel centres on Minke's struggle to be with her in spite of her legal classification as European, and this tension is mirrored by the quest for Indonesian independence, to the extent that Minke's marriage to Annelies can be regarded as a metaphor for an attempt to reclaim Indonesian territory from the Dutch. Both European colonial and indigenous Asian attitudes depict women as both producers and guardians of the nation, with the ambiguous body of the mixed race woman signifying both the history of colonial domination and an object of anti-colonial struggle.

The sexualisation of the mixed race body, however, is not unique to women. Stoler emphasises the sexualised nature of the Eurasian individual who, whether male or female, had their national and racial identities defined by "varied sexual contracts [as]...cohabitation, prostitution, and legally recognised mixed marriages slotted women, men and their progeny differently on the social and moral landscape of colonial society" (2002, p. 110). Furthermore, according to Stoler, Eurasians constituted a "political danger" which, while depicted as being "predicated on the psychological liminality, mental instability and economic vulnerability of culturally hybrid minorities" was actually based on "the fear of empowerment, not marginality at all" (2002, p. 110).

Similarly, as Maureen Perkins points out in relation to Aboriginal children of mixed heritage, while they were removed from their communities in the name of assimilating them in to white, and therefore 'normal' society, their upbringing, abuse and curtailment of their freedoms tells a different story (2004, pp. 173-174). Perkins

argues that it indicates that they were actually taken in order to be controlled and restricted to a specifically working class social strata, and that this was motivated by fear that their 'colour' would eventually break out in the form of moral flaws (2004, p. 174). What these diverse examples involving slavery in America, the colonisation of Southeast Asia, and the forced removal of Aboriginal children in Australia all demonstrate is the attitude of ownership and regulation towards women of mixed race. At times, as I will argue in this thesis, this ownership and regulation might take on the guise of inclusion, but this inclusion is only ever partial and conditional.

While I have discussed the particular combination of fascination and attempted regulation with which mixed race women have historically been regarded by Western societies, mixed race men have often elicited a very different response. Like women of colour, men of colour have been stereotyped in specific ways in order to justify colonial expansion and domination. Yuval-Davis draws attention to the stereotype of the colonised male as effeminate, particularly in comparison to white men, and the occurrence of hyper-masculinisation and the "extremely 'macho' style of many anti-colonialist" men in reaction to this stereotype (1997, p. 60). Like mixed race women, mixed race men share many of the same stereotypes as men of colour more broadly, however their mixed heritage has also historically been regarded as problematic.

While the sexuality and reproductive potential of mixed race women was the primary focus and troubling aspect to colonial powers, mixed race men were seen as potential political problems. Both symbolised potential threats to race and nation – mixed race women because of their 'half-white' bodies, and the acceptability or non-acceptability of their reproducing with either middle-class white men or men of colour – and mixed race men because of their perceived access to allegedly white aspirations of education, independence and freedom, and combined with their perceived loyalty to people of colour.

The early twentieth century Sociologist E.V. Stonequist articulates a common historical stereotype of the mixed race man, which is that he is more likely to become a political leader of a non-mixed, non-white population (1937). These historic stereotypes provide a significant context for my analysis of these novels, which explore the racialised gender distinctions between men and women of mixed race. As

interventions in racial discourse, the novels avoid solely presenting critiques of stereotypes of mixed race people. Rather they explore the complexities of figures who are racialised as inhabiting the borders between racial and national groups.

### **Colonial History in the Asia-Pacific**

While the novels are all examples of Australian literature, they are also transnational productions which are framed by the colonial history of the Asia-Pacific region and the creolising communities that developed as a result of colonial interactions, as well as attitudes toward race mixing in these contexts. As postcolonial and historical scholarship regarding colonialism in Asia has demonstrated, attitudes towards interracial relationships and people of mixed race were shaped by a variety of factors. These include the processes of economic exploitation, competition and communication between different European colonial powers, indigenous Asian attitudes towards race, caste and privilege and the construction of a European subject through the colonial interaction with difference. In this section I focus on the ways in which these processes shaped attitudes towards race in the context of Portuguese, Dutch and British forms of colonialism, which are the primary forms of colonialism that the novels engage with.

#### *Portuguese*

I start with an examination of Portuguese colonialism, which is both the oldest form of European colonialism in Asia and one which has left an enduring cultural legacy. Characters in each novel have ancestral links to Portuguese communities. Instances of European colonialism varied considerably, and the substantial timeframe of approximately five hundred years over which they occurred means that forms of colonialism were shaped by, and shaped in return, factors of religion, economics, European politics and worldview. The early Portuguese incursions into India at the end of the fifteenth century were influenced by the belief that Asia was separated solely into Christian and Muslim populations, and that therefore the Christian Indians would be natural allies to the Portuguese (Subrahmanyam 2007, p. 262). Race, in the modern sense of the word, was less of a factor in determining alliances and enemies than religion.

In the case of Portugal, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw an increase in religious intolerance involving the forced conversion of the local Jewish population to Christianity and the expulsion of Muslims. In this particular instance, the Muslim population was not forced to convert because of fears of reprisals from Muslim nations (Soyer 2007, p. 1). These actions terminated a period of relatively harmonious religious plurality in Portugal and what is now known as modern day Spain (Soyer 2007, p. 1). They also had far-reaching consequences in what would become the colonised worlds, with divisions between Christians and Muslims influencing Portuguese political and military action in India, and the colonisation of Malacca, which was seen as disrupting a key Muslim trading centre (Dhoraisingam 2006, p. 8). Furthermore, the mass forced conversion of Jews within Portugal did little to alleviate discrimination against them. Throughout the sixteenth century anti-Jewish feeling transitioned to hostility towards the New Christians, also known as *conversos* – those of Jewish ancestry who had, individually or along the family line, become Christian (Saraiva 2001, p. 20). The dilemmas involved in categorising *conversos*, and the general distrust towards those of Jewish heritage, is an example of identity-based discrimination which relates to more modern forms of racism. This particular historical example of discrimination against the *conversos* is a focus of Castro's novel *Shanghai Dancing*.

This discrimination manifested in the form of the Portuguese Inquisition, which concerned itself primarily with targeting those who had either converted from other faiths (predominately Judaism) or had remote non-Christian ancestry. The Inquisition, however, also spread to locations colonised by the Portuguese, such as Brazil and Goa (Wadsworth 2004, pp. 19-23), where new converts from Hinduism and Islam were also targeted, as were the Nasrani Christian community, who did not belong to the Roman Catholic Church like the majority of Western Europe (Fuller 1976, p. 59). Castro substantially references the Portuguese Inquisition in *Shanghai Dancing* (2003, pp. 83-90), employing it to demonstrate the links between religious and racial discrimination, and undercutting any arguments that the Portuguese were 'better' colonists because they did not have the same categorical and pseudo-scientific understandings of race as later colonial powers.

As Mignolo argues, the concept of a Christian self (primarily Roman Catholic and Protestant) developed into early forms of whiteness, which in turn influenced the social construction of race in later centuries (2011b, p. 111). This early sense of white Christian identity however, was somewhat flexible, and the rigorous attempts to police who was 'truly' Christian during the Inquisition can be seen as demonstrating an anxiety over the group's porous and fluid boundaries. In the Portuguese communities of India, furthermore, Portuguese identity was not strictly regulated. Adrian Carton reflects that diverse groups were referred to as Portuguese, some of whom were mixed race, others Indian-born Portuguese, and some Catholic Indians who may or may not have had Portuguese heritage (2012, p. 17).

A reason for this ambiguity is that race, as we understand it, was not as strictly defined in the early modern context. The Portuguese colonisers, furthermore, while engaging in violent discrimination in the form of religious and ethnic persecution, saw no impediments to interracial marriages between Portuguese men and local Asian women, and in fact encouraged them as a colonising strategy and a way of propagating Catholicism (Carton 2012, p. 14). Mixed race offspring of these unions, furthermore, were not rigorously classified in a uniform way, and they were recognised as being both "less-revered than country-born Europeans" yet "integral members of the European community" (Carton 2012, p. 14). However, while they were frequently termed *mestiços*, they could also be called European, Catholic, Portuguese and black Portuguese (2012, p. 18). There was therefore no categorical way of referring to a Eurasian, probably because, as Carton notes, this type of identity category as we understand it today did not fully exist at the time, and religion, rather than race, was still the primary marker of political identity (2012, p. 18). This emphasises the contextual nature of concepts of race and mixed race, as well as the more fluid and intersectional racial histories which inform the multiracial and transcultural family groups in the novels.

Carton does note, however, that several key stereotypes surrounding mixed race people that are more established in the contemporary context were already circulating in the early modern period. He refers to the depiction of a mixed race child in *The Lusiad*, a significant piece of Portuguese literature published in 1572, which portrays the child of an Indian woman and a Portuguese man as "a threatening semi-demonic

monster” (Carton 2012, p. 11). This is an early form of some of the negative stereotypes of mixed race people which were further developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by figures such as Arthur de Gobineau, who penned one of the earlier attempts at ‘scientific’ racial categorisation, *An Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1915). Throughout the nineteenth century, people of mixed race were frequently depicted as physically and morally weak, as well as degenerate (Knox 1850, p. 26), echoing *The Lusiad*’s bestial child. During the Portuguese period of colonisation, however, other early forms of stereotypes of mixed race people were also in circulation – namely that they were stronger and better suited to living in harsh or tropical climates, and that mixed race women were considered particularly attractive (Carton 2012, p. 16). In later centuries throughout the Western and colonised world, these concepts of ‘hybrid vigour’ and mixed race beauty would permeate attitudes towards multiracial people, often concurrently with the more negative stereotypes espoused by Gobineau (1915), and further entrenched by works such as Stonequist’s Marginal Man theory in the twentieth century (1937).

I mention the early presence of these forms of racialised thinking in order to both demonstrate the trajectory and development of racial categories as well as emphasise that, while Portuguese colonisation may not have been as ‘racist’ in the modern sense of the word as later European colonial powers, it should not be romanticised as benign. Castro and Lazaroo themselves emphasise this in their novels, and Castro specifically depicts the religious intolerance that pervaded the Portuguese Empire, and its ethnic and racial undertones. Writing on the development of imperial colonialism and knowledge formation, Mignolo argues that a combination of aspects of Christian theology and a capitalist world economy was a foundation for the production of racial categories (2009, pp. 69-70). Castro also makes this point through his intertwining of the Portuguese, Christian persecution of Jews and *conversos*, and the oppressions of slavery upon those of African descent.

In spite of this, race in Portuguese Asia was a fluid concept, and more complex factors such as language, religion, education and ancestry were used as identifiers, more so than race as we now understand it. While the Portuguese were only a major power in Malacca and Southern India for less than two centuries, they nevertheless left an enduring cultural legacy. The Eurasian communities in Malacca and Singapore

are still referred to as Portuguese or Portuguese Eurasian, and speak a form of Creole Portuguese called Kristang (Baxter 2012, p. 115) and Catholicism has a strong presence in all of Portugal's former colonies.

### *Dutch*

Dutch colonialism has less cultural impact upon the novels when compared to the Portuguese, however it was a significant colonial power in the Southeast Asian region and its war with Portugal in the seventeenth century informs a key scene in the novel *Shanghai Dancing*. Unlike the Portuguese, the Dutch did not focus on Malacca as a major trading centre, and they also developed different attitudes towards interracial relationships and mixed race children. Whereas the Portuguese Empire was characterised by loose, and on the whole cultural or religious rather than racial categorisation, the Dutch colonial system developed a more categorical approach towards racial difference. In keeping with the formulations of racial concepts in other Western European environments such as Britain and France, the Dutch colonisers attempted to make clear-cut and unambiguous distinctions between European, native, and Eurasian. These attempts at categorical distinction however, frequently proved problematic.

Looking at the Dutch presence in what is now known as Indonesia, Ann Stoler maps the anxieties that surrounded who could legitimately claim European privileges, and the layered and complex attitudes towards individuals who were Eurasian, otherwise known as 'Indo'. Settled by the Dutch in the early seventeenth century, Stoler points out that a mixed population of Dutch and Indonesian heritage numbered nearly three-quarters of those "legally designated as European" by 1900 (Stoler 2002, p. 199). In spite of the fluidity and seeming inclusiveness of the designation 'European', mixed race children were primarily seen as a "dangerous source of subversion" and a "threat to white prestige", both throughout the Netherlands Indies, as well as French Indochina, as their existence questioned "the very criteria by which Europeanness could be identified, citizenship should be accorded, and nationality assigned" (Stoler 2002, p. 199).

The tensions regarding the classification of Eurasians in the Dutch East Indies and elsewhere in Asia were not restricted solely to European attitudes towards racial

mixture, although the colonial power relations and categories certainly impacted upon pre-existing attitudes towards ethnicity and ethnic relations. The Eurasian population of the Dutch East Indies attempted to form a social movement in the early twentieth-century which was anti-government in its protests against Dutch classification and discrimination against people of mixed race, while simultaneously asserting their cultural and racial superiority over non-mixed Asians (2002, p. 223). In spite of their anti-government stance, the movement remained loyal to the Dutch, and was excluded from other Indonesian nationalist movements.

The perceptions of Eurasian privilege, their loyalty to colonial forces and their discreteness from non-mixed Asian populations resulted in a particular backlash against them during the post-war period in the Dutch Indies and Malaya. In August 1945 Indonesia declared itself independent, and during 1945 and 1946, during the immediate aftermath of the Japanese Occupation when Dutch colonial power was struggling to regain control, a genocide was perpetrated against Eurasians by parts of the non-mixed Indonesian population. This little known instance in Southeast Asian history is somewhat problematically described by historian Robert Cribb as “directed against a settler community...[and] part of a process by which indigenous peoples recovered control of their own countries” (2008, p. 424). While Cribb’s introductory summary does not fully unpick the complexity of mixed categorisations or the difficulty in clearly delineating ‘settler’ and ‘indigenous’ with regard to people of mixed ancestry, his is nevertheless one of the few studies of genocide against Eurasians. He notes that it was an unexpected occurrence, as while Eurasians frequently had more privileged positions under Dutch rule compared to the non-mixed indigenous population, this was, as Stoler has pointed out, never clearly entrenched in law, and there was never a legal mixed race category differentiating the mixed and non-mixed population (Cribb 2008). This highlights the fluidity but also the changeability of mixed racial categories, which is a recurrent theme in the three novels

Furthermore, while resentment towards other racialised groups, such as the Chinese in Indonesia, had a long history, the genocide directed against Eurasians lacked a similar precedent (Cribb 2008, p. 433). Cribb describes it as a haphazard rather than regulated form of genocide, whereby tens of thousands of Eurasians disappeared (2008, p. 436).

Many of them were murdered by members of the Indonesian nationalist movement while conducting their daily business in the aftermath of the Occupation (Cribb 2008, p. 436). Cribb emphasises the fraught relationship between the Eurasians and the educated indigenous elite, and the two groups' concepts of Indonesian independence, as key triggers of the violence (2008, p. 433). While many Eurasians at the start of the twentieth century did support a form of independence, they were seen as maintaining a sense of loyalty to the Dutch, and as such, after Indonesian independence was declared, they were seen as potential traitors to the new state (Cribb 2008, p. 437). This illustrates the ambivalent position that people of mixed race occupy in both Asian and European contexts, and the prevalence of racial tension in both environments.

### *British*

Unlike the Portuguese and Dutch, the British were less tolerant of racial mixing. Ironically, mixed communities which did not have British ancestry, such as the Portuguese Eurasians of Singapore and Malaysia, and the Peranakans of mixed Chinese and Malay ethnicity, were favoured by the British colonial powers, primarily because they were seen to be racially neutral with regard to the conflicts that occurred between the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians (Ansald *et al* 2007, p. 211; Tope 2011, p. 148).

While, in this case, mixed ancestry was seen as a positive sign of neutrality in pre-established mixed communities, first-generation mixed race individuals with British parentage were not viewed in the same light. Instead, their presence was seen as a reflection of British moral weakness, and a challenge to the virtue and authority of British colonisation (Tope 2011, p. 148). Although the Portuguese Eurasian communities also reflected the results of weak European character in the eyes of the British, they were tolerated as it did not impinge on the British themselves, but rather, rival European powers, or sections of Europe which already had a tenuous connection to whiteness.

This stigma towards first generation Eurasians, however, did not only stem from the British or white Europeans, but also existed among Asian communities, as Asian women who engaged in relationships with white men were seen as disreputable. This

stereotype has persisted to the present day as, for example, the term Sarong Party Girl is a derogative phrase used to refer to non-mixed Asian women who, it is implied, embark on relationships with white men for social and financial gain (Bulbeck 1998, p. 184). Similarly, while British colonial discourse often perceived people of mixed race as biologically degenerate and morally lax, within “traditional Chinese race-thinking” Eurasians were not perceived in such moral and biological terms” (Lee 2004, p. 4). Rather they were “often seen as a living betrayal of one’s racial loyalty – a loyalty that in effect is a crucial extension of one’s lineage loyalty as well as national loyalty” (Lee 2004, p. 4).

Writing on the French and British presence in India, Adrian Carton argues that changing forms of political modernity both challenged “the authority of religion” which had previously governed attitudes towards identity and affiliation. British approaches to racial categorisation and mixed race people changed substantially when the British Parliament restricted the British India Company’s freedom and authority in India and took responsibility for its territories in 1784 (Carton 2012, p. 31). The British presence in India ceased to be solely concerned with individual profit, and developed an imperial, moral and ‘civilising’ mission as a “‘modern’ technique of governance” (Carton 2012, p. 31). Under this paradigm, the role of Eurasians became troubling, and at a time (the late eighteenth century) when Dutch and French attitudes towards people of mixed descent were more flexible, the British began to devise more rigid and exclusionary categories of biological race.

In her exploration of the experiences of Eurasians in Hong Kong during the Second World War, Vicky Lee draws on the memoirs of Eurasians to discuss the ways in which race, rather than citizenship, dictated their fates. She refers to the 1940 Evacuation Order from Whitehall that “British women and children of European descent” be ready to “embark for Manila en route to Australia” (Lee 2004, p. 132). While the Eurasian women Lee discusses were primarily British subjects, “their eligibility was marginal” (2004, p. 132), and when they questioned the government on just who the Evacuation Order was directed towards they were told it only included “[p]ure British” (Lee 2004, p. 133). Those who held British passports but were of Eurasian or Portuguese descent were not “considered worth saving from danger” (Hahn 1944, in Lee 2004, p. 133). The British justification for this decision was based

on ideas that those who were native, or partially native, had a better chance of survival than 'pure' British women and would be able to escape the oncoming Japanese invasion through Free China. Hahn summarises the response of the British authorities as, "[w]e can't help it... We are giving free transportation to these women and children, all the way to Australia. We can't send every woman and child in town. And we would have to take millions of Chinese too, if we start accepting Eurasians" (Hahn 1944, in Lee 2004, p. 133).

The memoirs and statements of British Hong Kong Eurasians at this time also reveal that British Eurasian women who did board the evacuation ship bound for Australia were "weeded out" in Manila (Lee 2004, p. 133). Lee argues that this constituted a form of "ad hoc ethnic cleansing" (2004, p. 133). British Government officials engaged "two ladies from Hong Kong" to identify which of the women were not 'pure' British. According to the memory of Hong Kong Eurasians, these women went through the group, pointing out, "'She's Eurasian and she's Eurasian and her mother's Eurasian' and so on. [These Eurasian women] were then all separated and sent back to Hong Kong" (Wordie 1997, in Lee 2004, p. 134).

Lee points out that these identifications were made without documentary proof – the women in question all had British passports, which do not map a genealogy of racial ancestry. The identifications, therefore, were made on the basis of perceived racialised phenotype or known ancestry alone. This phenotype, however, was evidently ambiguous enough that the government officials could not distinguish the women themselves, but rather required a colonial – whether white or Asian – 'insider' to distinguish those who were 'passing'. This pinpointing of 'coloured' ancestry, Lee points out, was "an assiduously popular subject for...malicious calumny" (2004, p. 134) amongst the small European community.

This event, furthermore, reveals the ultimate demarcation between those who were considered purely British on the basis of 'race', and those who held a 'false promise' of Britishness and equality in the form of a British passport. The racialised body, therefore, takes precedence over citizenship or cultural belonging, and underscores the untruthfulness within the British Empire's claim that all its colonial subjects were equal. It also, furthermore, undercuts British moral authority in the European arena of

the Second World War, as the scene mirrors the demarcation between the Aryan Europeans and those of Jewish ancestry under Nazi Germany. Regardless of nationality, personal loyalty or cultural practices, ancestry and invisible 'race' define whether or not one is sent to danger and possible death or safety.

Lee also recounts the concerns of one Eurasian woman, Jean Gittins, regarding the evacuees' destination, Australia, as she worried that she was not "'white enough' for the White Australia Policy" (2004, p. 133). While Jean was more European in appearance, her Chinese maiden name on her passport revealed her mixed ancestry, and as a result she decided to her Eurasian children's best chance of escape and survival was to board the evacuation ship without her. Looking primarily European, and with a British name, they were able to pass for 'pure' white and leave Hong Kong under the care of a European female friend and migrate to Australia, while their Eurasian parents remained behind.

This scene demonstrates the limited nature of racial fluidity, and the ways in which benefits have historically been assigned to and taken away from people of mixed race based on political expediency. It also, furthermore, draws attention to the intersecting modes of racial discrimination and colonialism operating upon the lives of mixed race people. The women in Lee's monograph face the tenuous privileges of a British colonial system in Hong Kong, which is taken away from them in the event of war. Through this war, they face an alternate, Asian colonialism in the form of Japanese imperial expansion. In their attempts to escape from the oncoming Occupation however, they are met with the Australia's racially motivated immigration restrictions, which impede their escape. The complex, and multiply colonised, nature of these experiences is highlighted in the three novels I examine, as they demonstrate the interaction of colonialism in Asia, the effects of the Second World War and the reiteration of colonial structures within Australian borders.

This very brief overview of colonial attitudes towards race mixing in Asia demonstrates several important points. One is the great deal of racial fluidity that existed in colonial contexts, particularly with regard to Portuguese colonialism. This fluidity, however, was limited, and other forms of identity-based violence such as religious discrimination, which affected both mixed race and non-mixed populations,

also existed. Another point this sections demonstrates is the historic and fairly universal links between concepts of mixed race people and sexual morality. This is evident in throughout all the colonial contexts, and it is especially apparent in the Dutch and French concerns regarding the behaviour of mixed race women and the stereotype of immorality associated with mixed race people in British colonial Asia.

In spite of these stereotypes, it is also apparent that Eurasian populations enjoyed certain material privileges and benefits under European colonialism. What is also clear however, is the tenuous nature of these privileges. The lack of security mixed race people faced is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the “ethnic cleansing” described by Lee in the Second World War. A final, important point demonstrated in this historical overview is the equally tenuous and uncertain place of mixed race people in Asian societies. The little known instance of the Eurasian genocide in Indonesia is a prime example of the distrust Eurasians encountered in both Asian and European settings.

Having undertaken a brief regional examination of race mixing, I now turn to a specifically Australian context. While Australia was also a British colony, its history differs significantly from colonised Asia in that it was settled as a permanent penal colony. European colonisation, furthermore, has never really ended, even though Australia became its own nation in 1901. As I will discuss in the following section, issues of race relations were the foundations of both the initial British colonisation of Australia and Australia’s federation as a white nation in 1901. This has a significant effect on the mixed race themes of the novels.

#### *British colonialism in Australia*

As I have mentioned, the British colonisation of Australia differs to its colonisation of the Asian region, in that it resulted in permanent colonial settlement. Furthermore, while enhancing the economic and imperial security of the growing British Empire was a motivation in colonising the southern continent in 1788, the initial colonising endeavour involved the mass-transportation of British convicts, to lessen the social and financial burdens on the British government. New South Wales, the first state to be colonised, “was to become a gaol...within the strategic context of a larger imperial enterprise” (Burke 2008, p. 18). The loss of America during the War of Independence

was also a factor in Britain's settlement of Australia, as gaols in the American colonies were no longer an option (Vaver 2011, p. 239), yet the British government remained eager to expel its growing "criminal class" and sought a new geographical location (Burke 2008, p. 18). Writing on the history of convict transportation to Australia, Burke states that:

[i]n short, Australia's origins lie in the attempts by the British ruling classes to achieve some sense of economic and *existential* security against enemies 'without and within': against both imperial competitors and an internal threat that was primarily a function of their own position and paranoia (2008, p. 19).

The foundation of Australia, then, can be read as a process of abjection, whereby the British upper and middle classes 'spat themselves out', to paraphrase Julia Kristeva (1982, p. 3), in an attempt to secure themselves against the unwanted criminal and lower class other. This casting out of a social group, to what was, at the time, the ends of the earth and an initially alien and hostile landscape (Anderson 2006, p. 14), has had significant ramifications for the development of Australian identity. It has contributed significantly to the highly racialised nature of Australian identity and belonging, and the treatment of racialised Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, which I will explore later in this chapter.

While the Australian landscape and climate was perceived by the initial settlers as strange, hot and possibly deadly to European bodies (Anderson 2006, pp. 14-15), the region was soon seen as a particularly healthy climate (Anderson 2006, p. 15), and the convergence of the Anglo-Celtic body with the Australian landscape can be seen as a primary way in which an 'Australian' is made. Writing on the cultivation of whiteness in Australia, medical historian Warwick Anderson charts the scientific focus on Australian born children of British ancestry in the early twentieth century, arguing that while there were concerns about 'degeneracy' regarding children in urban environments, white Australian children in pastoral and tropical regions were seen as especially robust and healthy (2006, p. 165, 171).

The resilience of white bodies and white sovereignty in Australia, however, has always been challenged by the enduring presence of Aboriginal people and the

continent's geographical proximity and historical ties with Southeast Asia. Initial encounters between Aboriginal people and the early European explorers and settlers were relatively nonviolent and involved forms of exchange and trade (Broome 2010, pp. 16-17). There was, furthermore, a relatively humanitarian approach to Aboriginal people on the part of the first British explorers and settlers such as Captain Arthur Phillip (Moses 2004, p. 7). Significantly, during the initial process of exploring Australia in the eighteenth century, the British government instructed Captain James Cook to "cultivate a friendship and alliance" with the people he found in Australia and "with the consent of the natives to take possession of convenient situations in the country in the name of the king of Great Britain" (Banner 2009, p. 14). It was, at the time of Cook's voyage, standard British practice to purchase land from the Native Americans in North America, so his instructions were not unusual (Banner 2009, p. 14-15). Upon surveying the coast of eastern Australia, however, without venturing inland, Cook and the naturalist Joseph Banks regarded the continent as thinly populated, and inhabited by people whose 'low' technological status and lack of agriculture meant they did not warrant the same treatment as the Native Americans (Banner 2009, p. 17-19). As a result, Cook persuaded the British Government that it was not necessary to negotiate with the Indigenous population or buy the land, which set in place a justification for the argument *terra nullius* – that Australia was owned by no one prior to British settlement (Banner 2009, p. 20).

#### *Australian Race Politics: Indigenous people*

The perception of Australia as *terra nullius*, however, did not mean that Aboriginal people 'disappeared'. On the contrary, they persisted in spite of the increasing violence and racism of the more developed colony in the nineteenth century, and in spite of eugenicist beliefs that they were a 'dying race' who would eventually become extinct as a result of contact with the modern world (Jacobs 2009, p. 68). Anderson recounts the perplexity and anxiety this created amongst parts of the scientific and medical community in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as numerous studies were conducted upon Aboriginal subjects (2006). Of particular interest were the bodies of Aboriginal and European racially mixed people, who were, until recently, derogatorily referred to as 'half-castes.' Multiracial Aboriginal children represented at once the possibility of racial contamination, but also, and with

increasing enthusiasm, an answer to Australia's 'racial problem' of the persistence of Aboriginality.

Anderson charts the ways in which scientists argued that Aboriginal people were "archaic", "'dark'" Caucasians" (2006, p. 193), who could, in theory be assimilated into whiteness (2006, p. 194). This focus on assimilation was, in later to decades, to become State policy and to concentrate in particular on multiracial Aboriginal children. Many of these children were forcibly removed from their Aboriginal communities and placed in state custody from the beginning of the twentieth century until as late as the 1970s in an attempt to assimilate them into white society and effect the dying out of Aboriginal culture. Such children are now known as the Stolen Generations, and their removal and attempted assimilation is regarded by the *Bringing them home* report as a form of genocide (Manne 2001, p. 35).

The extermination of Aboriginal culture and society, and its assimilation into white Australia, has several effects. It makes the imagined argument of *terra nullius* a reality, and it legitimates white sovereignty over the Australian landscape by rendering whiteness indigenous. This is, however challenged by several factors. One is that, in spite of arguments that multiracial Aboriginal children could be absorbed into white society, there remained an enduring fear that 'colour' would resurface, and otherness would break out (Perkins 2004, p. 173). As a result, the removal of multiracial children was not so much about unconditionally welcoming them into white society, as it was about controlling them, and preventing them from freely passing as white (Perkins 2004, p. 174), as well as removing their Aboriginal cultural heritage.

#### *Australian Race Politics: Asians and Pacific Islanders*

In conjunction with Indigenous Australians, people racialised as Asian have also troubled the security of white sovereignty from both within and without the continent's shores (Burke 2008, p.68). As Peta Stephenson (2007), Penny Edwards and Shen Yuanfang argue (2003), there has been an Asian presence in Australia since the time of British settlement. Furthermore, Makassan fisherman from Indonesian islands have had contact, trade and familial relationships with Aboriginal people on the north coast of Australia since at least the seventeenth century (Stephenson 2007,

p. 40). Interracial relationships between Asians and Aboriginal Australians, furthermore, continued after British settlement, drawing the disapproval of the white Australian authorities. While these unions were actively discouraged by the authorities, they did not induce the same level of moral concern that the presence of fair-skinned, Aboriginal children with European ancestry provoked, and were, for the most part, ignored and written out of history (Stephenson 2007). The presence of Asians within Australia before the 1970s has also, for the most part, been marginalised, to the extent that a contemporary Australian would be forgiven for believing that there were no permanent Asian settlers in Australia prior to the abolition of the White Australia Policy. In fact an Asian presence in Australia predates 1788 (Stephenson 2007).

These points are significant for several reasons, as they demonstrate the two distinct ways that white Australia, both as a British colony and as a federated nation, has 'managed' racial difference. In the context of Aboriginal people, it has been exterminate or assimilate, in the context of Asians, it has been expel, erase and exclude. A fear of an Asian-Aboriginal alliance against white Australians, furthermore, has contributed to the division of contemporary approaches to race in Australian academia (Curthoys 2000, pp. 21-30), which focus on Aboriginal concerns, and so-called migrant or ethnic concerns, as unrelated issues. The legacy of this perception of discrete and clear-cut groups of whiteness, Indigenous peoples and threatening racialised others can be seen in the contemporary approach to ethnicity in Australia, which involves a triangulated model whereby white Australia controls and separates Indigenous Australia and 'ethnic' Australia, which is racialised as foreign. What is significant, however, is the extent to which these groups are constructed as separate and unambiguous. This currently occurs in academia and historically occurred through active practices of social engineering by Australian state and federal governments, which is demonstrated by the ways in which interracial relationships and multiracial children were treated in historical policy and practice.

It also, furthermore, has implications with the ways in which various types of racial mixing are approached. While multiracial Aboriginal people have been forcibly assimilated and 'owned' by white Australia, multiracial people of Asian and European descent have primarily been excluded from national belonging and claiming

European ancestry (Dutton 2002, p. 30). While the two approaches may seem opposite, they are in fact complementary. Both involve the categorisation and control of mixed race bodies by whiteness for its own political advantage, and both disregard the personal subjectivities, familial relationships and emotional ties of the mixed race person.

The strength of the fear of an Asian incursion into Australia can be seen in the foundation of Australia as a nation. While British settlement was predicated on dispossessing Indigenous peoples without attempting to negotiate with them, Australian federation in 1901 was predicated on the racially based exclusion of people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent from migrating to Australia. The 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, also known as the White Australia Policy, was put in place, and Pacific Islanders living in Northern Queensland were expelled (Hahamovitch 2011, p. 16).

The 1901 Immigration Restriction Act did not explicitly refer to race, although its inception and development were motivated by a strong desire to ensure Australia remained a white nation (Lake 2005, 226). Rather it involved a dictation test that required applicants to write out 50 words in any European language the Customs Officers chose (Lake 2005, p. 226). This gave the immigration official the flexibility to exclude all people of colour. Applicants could not prepare for this test, and the fluency in English on the part of Indian British subjects, for example, could be overcome by testing them in a different European language (Lake 2005, p. 226).

Significantly, Britain objected to the new nation's deployment of racial language, or explicit exclusion of Chinese and Indian British subjects, or its Japanese allies (Lake 2005, p. 219), as the Empire prided itself on nominal equality for all its subjects even though, as I have demonstrated, this did not occur in practice. As a result, the Australian government avoided racial terms and coded the policy in very specific ways to achieve the same effect. In this way, a precedent was set in Australia's foundation as a nation for practising racism and discussing race while avoiding overt charges of racism or racial language (Jupp 2002, p. 8).

From 1901 until 1966, the White Australia Policy remained relatively unchanged (Dutton 2002, p. 39). For much of its history, it was also popularly supported (Dutton 2002, p. 39). It was not until 1973 that the White Australia Policy officially came to an end, and around the same time the first discussions of an ‘Australian multiculturalism’ took place at a government level. In spite of these official changes, however, the former Australian ambassador in the Philippines, Cavan Hogue, relates that even up until the beginning of the 1980s many immigration decisions were guided by the percentage of European blood an applicant possessed (Moreton-Robinson 2003, p. 25).

### **Australian multiculturalism**

Since the gradual dismantling of the White Australia Policy by the Whitlam and Fraser governments of the 1970s (Petrilli and Ponzio 2009, p. 320), Australia has enacted a number of multicultural policies and it also, by and large, self-identifies as a multicultural country (Galligan and Roberts 2013, p. 209). In light of Australia’s very recent, racially exclusive history, multicultural policy can be read as “a practical, humane and sensitive way of accommodating immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds” (Galligan and Roberts 2013, p. 211). However, multiculturalism is also used as a “prescription for changing Australian identity” (Galligan and Roberts 2013, p. 211).

As Galligan and Roberts (2013) and Southphommosane (2013) argue, multicultural policy has, in many ways, been a success, and it is not my intention to criticise then Minister for Immigration Al Grassby for introducing the term “multicultural” in 1973 (Leuner 2008, p. 89). However, as a way of framing Australian culture and identity, multiculturalism is more problematic. While Australian multiculturalism manifests itself in various ways, within the worlds of the texts that this thesis examines it appears more fluidly, as a social sentiment or sensibility, that permeates Australian society. As a result, the term multiculturalism is used in this paper to refer not only to “state multiculturalism” which deals with the “management of diversity” (Gunew 2004, p. 16) and the cohesion of the nation but also pervading popular perceptions of multiculturalism and its meaning in Australia.

This latter aspect of multiculturalism has, to a degree, become more significant in Australia over the last decade and a half, as state-sponsored multicultural initiatives were gradually dismantled under the Howard government. In spite of multiculturalism's lack of official support, it has become entrenched in Australia's perception of itself and an aspect of Australia's national identity, as can be seen in the 2011 Department of Immigration and Citizenship document, *The People of Australia*, which states that "[m]ulticultural Australia is this Australia, this country we know...it describes us as we are and as we are destined to be" (p. 9). This thesis is primarily concerned with this particular way of using and understanding multiculturalism.

Anthropologist Ghassan Hage has been one of the most influential scholars to critique the cultural aspects of Australian multicultural sentiment. Using the theories of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Hage examines the seemingly contradictory figures of the "'evil' White nationalist/racist" and the "'good' White multiculturalist" (1998), and argues that they are, in fact, complementary rather than opposite. According to Hage, "both White racists and White multiculturalists share in a conception of themselves as nationalists and of the nation as a space structured around a White culture, where Aboriginal people and non-White 'ethnics' are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will" (1998, p. 18). Hage goes on to critique what he calls "White cosmo-multiculturalism" and the figure of the "cosmopolite" (1998, p. 201). He defines the former as regulating and containing the presence and actions of non-White Australians in order to ensure that the White dominance of the nation remains intact.

Furthermore, the seemingly celebratory attitude towards cultural diversity – which, Hage emphasises, involves only 'safe' forms of culture – is in fact another form of cultural dominance and control. Hage specifically focuses on the pro-Asian multicultural discourse of the 1990s, likening it to colonial fairs which displayed exotic and subjugated peoples from parts of the Empire and exhibited them in the metropole. Furthermore, the inclusion of 'exotic ethnics' in the nation is conditional – they are "imagined as dead cultures that cannot have a life of their own except through the 'peaceful coexistence' that regulates the collection" (1998, p. 163). As a result, the cultures are 'dis-armed' and their undesirable aspects, which are capable of harming white Australian society, are removed. The 'ethnics' then, become "living

fetishes, deriving their significance from the White organising principle that controls and positions them within the Australian social space” (1998, p. 161). This analysis of multiculturalism relates to the conditional inclusion mixed race characters face in the worlds of the novels. It also, however, relates to the ways in which these characters are positioned as different and excluded from the nation, and the violent effects of exoticisation, which are key themes in *The World Waiting to be Made* and *The Lost Dog*.

Hage’s analysis of Australian multiculturalism also explores the construction of whiteness, which is an underlying theme in all three of the novels, and he examines the role of Anglo-Saxonness in Australia and what he terms the “discourse of Anglo decline” and “White cosmo-multiculturalism”. While “White multiculturalism thrives on portraying itself as the anathema of what it pictures as a living example of ‘evil racist nationalism’” (1998, p. 182), a core argument of Hage’s text asserts that white multiculturalism and white racism are complementary, as “[b]oth the ‘racists’ and the ‘multiculturalists’ shared in the conviction that they were, one way or another, masters of national space” (1998, p. 17) “where Aboriginal people and non-White ‘ethnics’ are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will” (1998, p. 18). Sociologist Jennifer Rutherford makes a similar point, arguing that a fantasy of white Australian goodness upholds the dominance of the white Australian centre, even as it critiques white Australian xenophobia (2000, pp. 7-9).

Hage furthermore, defines the “discourse of Anglo decline” as a product of shifting power relations in Australia, as Anglo-Saxonness is displaced from its former position as the “national aristocracy” (1998, p. 192) not by ‘ethnics’ but by another form of whiteness. While, from the time of the Second World War up until the mid-1960s, having an Anglo-Celtic background alone enabled one to inhabit the national aristocracy, the supremacy of Anglo-Celticness has gradually, Hage argues, been replaced by the White cosmopolite, a “mega-urban figure...[whose] domain [is] of refined consumption” (1998, p. 201). This concept of white cosmo-multiculturalism will be explored throughout this thesis, particularly in relation to *The World Waiting to be Made*, which explores the violent intersections of race, gender and cosmo-multiculturalist desire.

Writing at a similar time to Hage, Cultural Studies scholar Ien Ang's refers to a narrative of progressive transformation circulating in Australia, in which the nation is claimed to be "on the road from a racist, exclusionary past to a multicultural, inclusionary present" (1996, p. 37). Ang critiques this narrative, drawing attention to its role in suppressing an open discussion of the continuation of racism in Australia. Much of this critique is still relevant to Australia today. As Sneja Gunew has highlighted, concepts of race and racism are not publicly discussed in Australia in relation to so-called 'migrant' Australians, as their identities and concerns are couched in terms of ethnicity and cultural difference (2004).

The narrative of multiculturalism, however, has altered slightly. Where Ang speaks of early and mid-1990s Australia as perceiving itself to be "on the road" to a multicultural society, Australia in the twenty-first century presents itself as an already multicultural, equal and tolerant society, where race no longer matters. By discarding the notion of being on a journey in favour of proclaiming that the nation has reached its multicultural destination, a discussion of the endurance of racism in Australia, or even that of racialised identities, is discouraged, as it disrupts the notion that Australia has achieved a post-race society (Gershevitch *et al* 2010).

Terms such as 'post-race' have been employed and the value and necessity of multiculturalism and anti-racism have been questioned in both Western academia and public discourse (Lentin and Titley 2011, p. 49), however Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley point out that this has led to an inability to critique race and the effects of racism (2011, p. 68). In a specifically Australian context, former Race Discrimination Commissioner Conrad Gershevitch refutes the popular narrative that Australia is an unambiguously tolerant and colour-blind society. He maintains that "Australia continues to have a complex relationship with racism" and points out that a deliberate avoidance of "a public discourse about race" is "virtually a cultural trait: Australians just do not like talking about or acknowledging racism" (Gershevitch *et al* 2010, pp. 229-230).

Sneja Gunew has also drawn attention to Australia's reluctance to engage with concepts of race and racism in Australian society, particularly when compared with

Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom (2004), which relates to James Jupp's summary of Australia's foundational racism which was coded so as to avoid accusations of racism. In spite of this history, Gershevitch highlights the fact that Australia has never been a monocultural society, as from the moment of its colonisation its settlers came from diverse racial and cultural groups, not to mention the cultural diversity that existed amongst Aboriginal people in pre-colonial Australia. The idea of an Anglo-Saxon, monocultural society "was a myth that was promulgated later" (Gershevitch *et al* 2010, p. 231).

Furthermore, Australia still maintains that it is "a progressive, multicultural democracy", in spite of the fact that multicultural policy and anti-racist action has been in "stasis" since 1996 (Gershevitch *et al* 2010, pp. 241-242). Gershevitch's article is significant as it illustrates that the meaning of the word 'multiculturalism' has changed over the last fifteen years. It is no longer something which is implemented at a state level or written into policy, however it remains a strong sentiment in public discourse with which Australian national identity is associated. This less tangible multicultural sentiment is the primary focus of this thesis, and the novels it examines.

While Gershevitch focuses less on the idea of multiculturalism in public discourse in Australia, he does draw attention to Australia's mainstream media, which he describes as "sensationalis[ing] and simplify[ing] narratives around culture and race" (Gershevitch *et al* 2010, p. 244) and "border[ing] on racist" but which also "reflect Australia's love of cultural diversity (such as travel, food, the arts and décor)" (Gershevitch *et al* 2010, p. 246). Gershevitch then adds the dubious point that this "acts as somewhat of a corrective to the negative message" (Gershevitch *et al* 2010, p. 246). While Australia's love of superficial cultural diversity, such as the examples Gershevitch lists, is evident in its mainstream media, the work of scholars such as Hage (1998) and Graham Huggan (2002) contradicts this assertion that it acts as a counter to racist messages. As Hage points out, the exotic appeal of cultures which are 'othered' and added to the multicultural "zoo" only further objectifies these cultures, and people who are associated with these cultures, and replicates a colonial relationship of the white Australian centre with difference.

As my discussion of race and multiculturalism in Australia has demonstrated, race remains a contentious and unsettling issue. While it has influenced the settlement and federation of the Australian nation, it is nevertheless not as explicitly discussed as it is in the United States and the United Kingdom. In spite of this denial, racism remains an ongoing problem, and it is not addressed by tokenistic and exoticising practices of cosmo-multiculturalism. Contemporary Australian engagements with mixed race identity significantly highlight the intersections of constructions of race, racism and cosmo-multiculturalist processes of othering and exoticisation. I now wish to turn to a brief examination of contemporary depictions of people of mixed race in Australian media as a means of situating this overview of Australian race relations and foreshadowing some of the key issues which I explore in relation to *The World Waiting to be Made* in the next chapter.

#### *Contemporary representations of racially mixed people*

In an Australian context, racially mixed people have been abject figures who have been subjected to rigorous policing, control, exclusion and assimilation. The recent phenomenon in Australian public discourse involving the glamorous sexualisation of mixed race people, in particular young mixed race women, is rendered problematic when it is cast in the context of the widespread sexual exploitation of colonised women throughout Australia, the forced removal of mixed race Aboriginal children, the racially-based prevention of Eurasian refugees fleeing to Australia in the Second World War and the exclusion of Japanese ‘war-brides’ from joining their Australian husbands in the post-War period.

In light of this history, the glamorisation of mixed race women that began to occur in Australian media at the start of the twenty-first century appears to be a positive shift in race relations. It is, however, nevertheless a reductive and superficial engagement with the complex experiences of racially mixed people that does little more than perpetuate old stereotypes of mixed race women and pander to white cosmo-multiculturalist fantasies.

This is evident in portrayals of multiracial women in Australian media. Matthews examines the disparate usage of Asian and Eurasian models in advertising throughout Australia and Asia. Significantly, she analyses the ways in which Eurasian images are

used differs to Asian images, arguing that while images of Asian women are used to signify academic and professional success, female Eurasian images are primarily used in the beauty and fashion industries (2002). This is significant in relation to the historic sexualisation of mixed race women, and the ways in which this functions as an aspect of conditional inclusion and disempowerment in the novels, particularly *The World Waiting to be Made*.

Matthews expands on her work on Eurasian images in the 2007 special issue of the *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, where she examines the commodification of the Eurasian female. Matthews critiques the idea that a mixed race face symbolises the end of racism (2007). Rather, Matthews links the budding popularity of predominantly female Eurasian models in advertisements to globalisation, consumerism and the rendering of visible difference ‘safe’ (2007). As Matthews emphasises, the women who are valorised as modern icons of beauty are chosen because they are “desirably female and identifiably different” (2002, p. 22), and their inclusion does not indicate either racial or gender equality (2002).

Furthermore, the popularity of mixed race models has not resulted in any meaningful engagement with mixed race experiences or wider issues of race relations in Australia, and racially mixed women are frequently cast as glamorous figures whose contribution to meaningful discussions on race and ethnicity are minimal. As Maureen Perkins points out, furthermore, Australian public discourse tends to avoid discussions of ‘people of colour’, which is a more unifying term of solidarity which originates in North American anti-racist struggles (2005, p. 104). In an Australian context, people of colour’s experiences of race may have commonalities and therefore cut across seemingly “more established ‘ethnic’ identities” (2005, p. 104). She also points out the unreliability of the tendency to equate racial appearance, culture and identity in Australia, as well as its negative impact upon its racialised subjects, an insight which is particularly relevant to my analysis of *The World Waiting to be Made* in the following chapter.

However, in spite of this lack of engagement with the effects or implications of racial mixing, Australian public discourse nevertheless engages with global stereotypes of mixed race women (Perkins 2005, p. 106). These stereotypes, involving beauty,

emotional and sexual warmth, mental instability and a sense of racially-based, pre-destined tragedy, endure, Perkins, argues, “as traces of racism in the Western world”, and effect women of mixed race in Australia today (2005, p. 109). While Perkins, and the women she interviews, acknowledge the well-meaning intent behind some comments associating racially mixed heritage with beauty, Perkins warns of the difficulty of dismantling historical racially based stereotypes, arguing that “[t]he psychic importance of a stereotype is in its power to impose fixity, to draw a line between the self and other that confers security by appearing to be dependable and clear” (2005, p. 109). In a similar vein, Perkins acknowledges that reclaiming and changing racist language can be possible, she points out the dangers of attempting to reclaim racist terminology, such as the terms hybrid, hybridity, *métissage*, and *mestizaje*, quoting Robert Young’s assertion that while a word can accrue new meanings, its previous meanings never completely disappear, “[t]hey rather accumulate in clusters of ever-increasing power, resonance and persuasion” (Young, R., 2005, p. 79).

Similarly, while international and Australian media only invokes a partial stereotype of mixed race women when it depicts them as symbols of racial beauty, the other, related historical stereotypes of uninhibited sexuality, mental instability, often as a result of internal cultural clashes, and tragedy, also resonate and cling-on. In an Australian context, however, stereotypes of mixed race people have also altered over time to reflect multicultural sentiment and a tendency to avoid discussions of race and racism, as multiracial people are often depicted as possessing the best of both worlds. These stereotypes, however, remain race-based and arguably re-inscribe racial divisions and categories by highlighting the seemingly unusual physicality of a multiracial person. This racial re-inscription, however, does not lead to a discussion of racism, or multiracial experiences. Instead, the presence of mixed race people in Australian public life are used to support the argument that we live in a post-race society, where full equality has been achieved (*The Age* 2004). As Conrad Gershevitch points out, this is an erroneous, if not dangerous, notion, as race and racism remain significant and contentious issues in Australia today.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I have presented an overview of the unpredictable ways mixed race people have been categorised and perceived in both Western and Asian contexts in the Asia-Pacific region. In light of the examples I have discussed, mixed race people can be seen as embodying anxieties regarding the surety of racial categorisation more broadly. While they trouble its boundaries, they do not dismantle processes of racial categorisation. Racially mixed people instead cause the political structures reliant on race to find ways of continuing to reinforce racial categories as a reality, in the face of bodily multiraciality which effectively questions race. This can be seen the Eurasian genocide in Indonesia, the British evacuation policies in Hong Kong and the treatment of multiracial Aboriginal children. Attitudes towards mixed race people, however, were also universally informed by concepts of acceptable and transgressive sexuality, as well as desire for the exotic. This perception of mixed race people as a combination of the politically troubling and the sexually desirable persists in new forms in images of mixed race beauty which can be found in contemporary culture. This combination, and the tension it produces, is a theme in the first novel I examine, *The World Waiting to be Made*, which I discuss in the following chapter.

## FOUR

### “To struggle and embrace”: critiquing the racial imaginary in Simone Lazaroo’s *The World Waiting to be Made*

*For those of us  
who were imprinted with fear  
like a faint line in the center of our foreheads  
learning to be afraid with our mother's milk*

‘A Litany for Survival,’ Audre Lorde, 2000

#### Introduction<sup>6</sup>

The earliest of the three novels this thesis examines, *The World Waiting to be Made* (1994), depicts multiculturalism in Australia as a replication of the racial and colonial imaginary, and through a reading of the novel this chapter presents a specifically gendered critique of this imaginary. As part of this critique, this chapter looks at the novel’s portrayal of the difficulties that racially ambiguous women of mixed heritage face with regard to intersecting processes of racial and sexual objectification and violence. Specifically, I focus on the depiction of the mixed race narrator and her twin sister, the traumatic and shattering effects of Australian cosmo-multiculturalism and the pressures this places on mixed race subjectivity.

While *The World Waiting to be Made* is primarily a critique, I also examine the ways in which the novel both disrupts the racial imaginary, and gestures towards alternative modes of engaging with perceived difference. In order to do this I focus specifically on spaces of Relation in the novel with regard to both Indigenous and Eurasian interactions, the fluidity of whiteness in interracial relationships as embodied by the narrator’s Anglo-Australian mother, and the narrator’s own white/Asian body. I also examine the limited role of diaspora in the novel, and how the novel alludes to diaspora’s extension into creolisation and transculturalism through the narrator’s encounter with her Eurasian Uncle Linus. To do so, this chapter will further analyse

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<sup>6</sup> Aspects of this chapter were published in the journal *Australian Studies*. See Dickens, L 2011 ‘Transcultural Horizons and the Limitations of Multiculturalism in *The World Waiting to be Made*’, *Australian Studies*, 3.

the novel's engagement with magical realism and religious syncretism. It also draws on concepts of syncretism, Relation, and border thinking/sensing to discuss possible alternative modes of framing racial and cultural difference in light of the issues raised in *The World Waiting to be Made*.

### **The Novel**

*The World Waiting to be Made*, first published in 1994,<sup>7</sup> is a significant work as it draws attention to the limitations of multiculturalism and assimilation at a time when Australia was both vigorously enthusiastic about a multicultural society and yet also fraught with anti-Asian sentiment (Ang and Stratton 2001, pp. 95-96). The novel is essentially a coming of age tale, which covers the narrator's life from the age of three or four until her mid-twenties, and explores her experiences as a child and teenager in suburban Perth, as well as her friendships, relationships and the breakdown of her parents' marriage. It centres primarily on the narrator, her parents and her two sisters, one of whom is a twin. All the members of her immediate family are unnamed, although they are revealed to have a Portuguese surname, Dias.

The novel charts their migration from the narrator's father's home, Singapore, to her mother's place of origin, Australia. It is significant for focusing on an interracial relationship between a white Australian woman and a Singaporean Eurasian man. As a result the novel attends to both themes of migration, from the narrator's birthplace and paternal home, and themes of explicitly racialised belonging in Australia, which hinge on racially identified bodies rather than histories of migration.

*The World Waiting to be Made* is broken into short, titled chapters, which are in turn composed of short paragraphs, also individually titled, with the effect that the narrative does not flow seamlessly. Rather, there is an episodic quality to the text, as each paragraph is a self-contained event, and is often acutely themed. The novel can be classified as a work of fiction, infused with what Lazaroo describes as "fictional interpretations" (10). She states that, "while my own experience and that of many others inspired this work, I have used fiction and dream to give it its own life" (10).

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<sup>7</sup> All page numbers in this chapter refer to the 2000 edition of *The World Waiting to be Made* unless otherwise specified.

### **A gendered critique the racial and colonial imaginary**

Perhaps the most significant critique of the racial imaginary offered by Lazaroo within *The World Waiting to be Made* pertains to what Hage calls, “white cosmo-multiculturalism” (1998, p. 205) and its effects upon both the narrator and her family. White cosmo-multiculturalism, as defined in Chapter 3, will be explored here in relation to its gendered dimensions, where ‘the sexualised nature of Orientalism’ becomes apparent in an Australian context (Yeğenoğlu 1998, p. 2).

Some of the most useful analyses of the intersection of race and gender emerge in feminist theories of colonialism. In her monograph *Colonial Fantasies: towards a feminist reading of Orientalism* Meyda Yeğenoğlu describes Orientalism and colonialism as “structured by unconscious processes” such as “fantasy and desire” which “play a fundamental role in the colonial relation that is established with the colonised” (1998, p. 2). While the term ‘Orientalism’ was initially employed by Edward Said to refer to Europe’s relationship with the Middle East, it is nevertheless relevant to the relationship between Southeast Asia and white Australia. As Olivia Khoo expounds in *The Chinese Exotic: modern diasporic femininity*, the term ‘the Orient’ has come to refer to the region stretching from the Middle East to the Pacific Rim, including Southeast Asia (2007, p. 8). Similarly, she defines Southeast Asia as the point of Australia’s primary relationship with the Asian region, and the centre of Australia’s Orientalist fantasies (Khoo 2007, p. 135). Furthermore, while Australia, as a nation, never formally colonised the Asian region, a colonial relationship nevertheless exists between white Australia and what it perceives as ‘Asian’ as a result of white Australia’s foundation by Britain and involvement in upholding the British colonial empire. Furthermore, the British colonisation of Australia has been obscured by the fact that the figure of the coloniser has become the authentic citizen – that is, Australian – recreating a colonial relationship with the non-white citizen.

A colonial relationship that is built on ‘fantasy and desire’ is evident in *The World Waiting to be Made*, despite the contextual differences between *Colonial Fantasies* and the novel. The narrator of *The World Waiting to be Made* is both racialised and sexualised in various encounters she has with white Australian men, who draw attention to her racially ambiguous appearance as a token of desirability and welcome her presence on the basis of her femininity and the assumptions they make about her

ethnic identity. Her position as both a woman of Asian heritage and, specifically, a mixed race woman, is foregrounded throughout the novel, highlighting the intersections of Orientalist fantasies and the fetishised mixed race body.

The novel is peppered with numerous examples of these encounters. As a young woman, the narrator becomes a high school teacher and moves to the northern region of Western Australia to teach in an Aboriginal community. In her free time she visits the coastal town of Broome, where she encounters a local who claims to know what he calls “what Asians like,” and asks her about her origins before remarking that she is “still pretty” and has “the best of both worlds” in her (191). He then tells her, “you’ll like this town. We like Asians here” (191). The narrator, however, finds such encounters ambiguous at best, if not upsetting, and after numerous school teachers ask if she is Mauritian (81), or single her out as a visual example of Southeast Asia or the Middle-East (79-81), she reflects that she was “any wog people wanted [her] to be” with no regard for her own interpretation of her origins or identity (81). Her anger reflects her frustration at her dependence on white Australian authority, which has the power to racially categorise her. As a result she has a constant fear of being seen and categorised against her will, as she refers to herself and her twin sister as “merely screens for some men to project their fanciful notions of the Orient” (171). Similarly, while the narrator is not physically veiled in the manner of many of the women of whom Yeğenoğlu writes, her “fluidity of features” (81), her racial ambiguity and the lack of “an appropriate category in this country” for her and her family (94), coupled with stereotypes of ‘Oriental inscrutability’, construct a type of veil which white Australian fantasy seeks to remove or penetrate in order to have full ownership and control of her difference.

This desire for those who are seen as racially different is coloured by “discourses of Romanticism” (Elder 2009, p. 22) and “primitivism,” which involve “a form of identification with or a desire to be primitive that is actually a way for white people to better know themselves”. This “love of the primitive” is a form of “colonialism and racism [as one] can desire something and still systematically destroy it” (Elder 2009, p. 32). This concept mirrors a recurring motif which occurs throughout the novel, involving white Australians’ desire to find themselves within the otherness of an ‘Oriental’ culture and, including the possession of an ‘Oriental’ lover. To those who

are exoticised and desired in such a way, however, it can be a damaging force which, in the guise of multiculturalism and the seemingly benign desire to learn about difference, refuses women like the narrator their humanity by turning them into “flavours or colours in a blur of incense, mantras and sheer veils” (171), which can be simultaneously desired and destroyed.

This racial desire is demonstrated in the novel when the narrator is told that she is “a really beautiful chick” by a man who muses that she “must be a mix,” as “the best-looking people are a mix of all nations” (160). While her encounter in Broome stresses the desirability of her Asian heritage, the acknowledgement that she “has the best of both worlds” in her evokes a familiar stereotype of mixed race people. This stereotype is reinforced by the man who calls her “a mix,” as her beauty is specifically and deliberately linked to her racially mixed background. These encounters illustrate the strength and pervasiveness of racially based stereotypes, particularly those regarding mixed race women, for which cosmo-multiculturalism provides fertile ground (Perkins 2005, p. 109). These stereotypes, which label women of all mixed white/Other heritages as unusually beautiful and sexual, are often perceived as being positive labels, and therefore not racist. This simplistic view, however, belies the stereotypes’ inherent violence, both with regard to their foundations in colonial history and the racial and sexual fragmentation they cause (Root 1997, pp. 157-159), which are demonstrated in Lazaroo’s novel through the Dias sisters. Furthermore, mixed race identities, such as Eurasianness and in particular Eurasian femininity, are frequently positioned as unstable entities lacking in familial, racial or national belonging, marked by a nebulous ethnicity characterised by disempowerment and violence.

### **Racialised sexual violence**

In conjunction with the oppressive aspects of gendered racialisation I have discussed above, the novel also depicts forms of racially motivated sexual violence, which highlight the damaging results of the racial imaginary. In her analysis of *The World Waiting to be Made*, Robyn Morris describes the novel as emphasising the power of the white gaze to divide and “psychologically dispossess” the narrator, whose body is “racialised, coloured and exoticised under sustained white scrutiny” (2005, p. 271). Furthermore, the narrator’s engagement with this “white scrutiny” is not

unambiguous. Although she does attempt to rebel against white Australian expectations of her, particularly as she gets older, her perception of herself, her twin sister and 'Eurasian culture' are arguably viewed through 'white Australianised' eyes. These perceptions are particularly evident in the narrator's response to her sister's rape. While the narrator experiences subtler forms of racial and sexual stereotyping, her twin sister receives attention of a much more violent nature, as she is raped at a festival "somewhere between the Indian astrology and the Reiki massage workshops" (170). The narrator believes that her twin did nothing that could be construed as "asking for it" (171). At most, the narrator thinks, she "might have laughed nervously behind her dark veil of silky hair. He must have been a very wilful interpreter with a foreigner's understanding of Asian languages" (171). In contrast to herself, whom she views as Westernised, the narrator describes her sister as a "good Eurasian girl whose inhibited and quiet protestations had been dismissed by a greedy man gorging on Eastern mysticisms as if they were supposed to gratify his appetite" (170).

While the narrator is at once critical of the "greedy man's" physical violence and cosmo-multiculturalist desire, she nevertheless perceives her sister as an example of Eastern passivity and submissiveness, unquestioningly accepting the validity of such a connotation. As the 'Australianised' sister, the narrator believes she would have been vocal and violent in her resistance, whereas the 'Asian-ness' of her sister renders her docile, a widespread stereotype of Asian women. The fact that the narrator employs these tropes about Asian women to understand her sister and, at other points in the text which will be explored later, herself, indicates she has internalised white Australian conceptions of raced gender and the 'Orient' so completely that she cannot always identify and critique them. Rather, they have become entrenched in her mind-set and refract her ability to relate to her family members.

In conjunction with revealing the racially compromised aspects of the narrator's subjectivity, the sister's rape is implied but not told to the reader. The narrator skirts around the actual naming of the event by obliquely describing it. She also demonstrates a problematic attitude towards consent and culpability. The understatement and relative silence with which she deals with her sister's rape is significant. Victoria Burrows states that silence "is an inherently ambivalent word. It can protect, dignify and honour, or it can erase, subjugate and oppress, and the spaces

between the two are often blurred” (2004, p. 161). While there is an element of protection in the way in which the narrative glides over naming the narrator’s sister’s rape, there is also erasure, as the severity of the event, and the trauma it must produce, are down played. Burrows also argues that “the historical structuring of silence for women-of-color living in societies in which whiteness is the dominant discursive and material force has many layers, most of which are painfully hard to break” (2004, p. 161), and she states that ambivalence and trauma frequently compound silence.

The narrator’s interpretation of her sister’s rape can be read as a form of repression under the weight of a patriarchal and white-dominant society, as she refers to her sister’s rapist as a “suitor” and likens this act of violence to her own consensual but negative sexual experience, ostensibly but problematically to draw broader connections with regard to their racialised and exoticised sexualities. The similarity is enhanced by the fact that the events are depicted as occurring simultaneously, and the narrator depicts her own encounter as an obligation of a transactional nature. The narrator further makes a direct connection between the attention she and her sister receive and their ambiguous racial status. “It was always difficult for my siblings and I to find ourselves as we entered adulthood,” she reflects:

because we couldn’t see ourselves in anyone around us. Because we felt so different...It seemed to us our suitors thought of us as bargains. Most of them gave all that away quite soon, found investments that yielded better returns, and we were grateful for that (171).

While the narrator evidently seeks to find and provide solidarity with her sister, and demonstrate the violent and detrimental effects of race and gender oppression, her depiction of her sister’s rapist as a suitor illustrates not only an internalisation of racial categories and hierarchies but also an internalisation of the acceptability of male-perpetrated sexual violence. This is further born out by her comment that “eventually I came to see that it was not entirely our suitors’ fault that my sister and I...found it very difficult to find ourselves when we were with them” (171), which excuses her sister’s attacker from blame. In this paragraph, the narrator effectively attempts to subsume and grasp her sister’s suffering, appropriating it in order to make sense of her own experiences.

### **The commodification of racialised sexuality**

In conjunction with the depiction of racialised sexual violence, the novel also portrays the ways in which racialisation and exoticisation work to commodify and objectify racialised women in specific ways. The narrator's comment that her suitors thought of her as a 'bargain' is not the first time that the narrator speaks of sexual interactions in economic terms, and as a young teenager she satirically observes the practice of flirtation and sexual expression by her female white Australian peers as "free enterprise" and an ability to "operate... confidently in the marketplace" (84). The narrator, furthermore, depicts her body as a type of property or commodity, something that should have a "price" (170). After she begins an unsuccessful affair with an older man, which is described primarily in terms of economic exchange, the narrator grieves for "a lack of chaperone to set the price for [her]" (170), directly referring to the absent nature of her parents, particularly her father and his inability or unwillingness to exercise his role as a protective Eurasian parent.

The narrator's sentiments reflect a search for alleviation from the stress of shattering racialisation and exoticisation, and, at varying points in the novel, she examines whether patriarchy, or class-based sophistication, can offer her protection from their effects. In this section of the novel, the narrator recounts an episode in her father's family history, when her youngest aunt became a stage performer and film actress. "[H]ighly mindful of the risks involved", her parents and in particular her father, rigidly chaperoned her filmed schedule, the measurements of her costumes, and her courtship with a European stockbroker over three years (166-169). The narrator observes that this "chaperoning had its pay-off". Her aunt married the stockbroker and went to live in Europe, in presumed happiness and luxury (168), in contrast to both her sisters' and her own lives. The narrator recounts her aunt's story with irony and amusement, however she nevertheless demonstrates a romanticisation of familial protection and control of a woman's sexuality, particularly in the face of what she perceives as her own bereft status, as a mixed race woman and member of no cohesive social group. This simplistic romanticisation, however, is troubled by her own acknowledgement of her mother's suffering in her marriage, and the narrator's observation that she "could see no bright future in being a wife", so "[w]hat was there to save yourself for?" (169).

A key episode in the novel where the narrator's experience of the intersections of race and sexuality is explored involves her affair with a much older man, Max. She meets Max, who is described only as working in advertising, through her school-friend Eddie, who, like her, was born in Singapore but is of Chinese heritage and is not racially mixed. Apart from working in advertising, Max is a white Australian and also a veteran of the Vietnam War.<sup>8</sup> He hastens to add that he was "an officer, of course", a statement which emphasises the attachment he feels for his middle-class status, which he also attempts to link with cosmopolitan sophistication (162). He describes his time in Vietnam as providing him with an appreciation of Asian culture and "a natural affinity with Asian women" (162). This so-called affinity leads him to assume that the Eurasian Australian narrator, who has primarily Malay ancestry, uses chopsticks and reads the Karma Sutra (162-163). On their first date, Max surmises that she is "not pure Asian...But part. Asian enough" which causes the narrator to think, "[w]hat the hell does he mean by Asian? Which Asian?" (163).

Max's generalisations regarding Asian culture and women reflect not only a superficial and compartmentalised understanding of race and culture which Hage emphasises as a key flaw in Australian multiculturalism, but they are also examples of practices Glissant describes as "understanding" and "grasping" (*comprendre* in the original French). Glissant argues that there is a link between attempts to understand difference and rendering difference "transparent" and open to categorisation, judgement, appropriation and reduction (1997, p. 190). In the novel, Max claims to know and understand 'Asian' culture and, while this is evidently not the case, as is demonstrated by his homogenisation of various different traditions and practices, the narrator feels too disempowered to contradict him, or question him on his judgement that she is "Asian enough". Max, on the other hand, as one who is not only white Australian but also 'cultured' and cosmopolitan, thereby occupying what Hage terms the "national aristocracy" (Hage 1998, p. 192), feels able to not only understand 'Asian women', but also to grasp them, categorise them in an order to his liking and, to use Glissant's word, 'reduce' them to something less than his own humanity. Glissant describes such a process as "transparency" and argues:

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<sup>8</sup> For more details on Australian men and the Vietnam War see Robin Gerster (2012).

if we examine the process of “understanding” people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought, we discover that its basis is this requirement for transparency. In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and, perhaps, judgements. I have to reduce (1997, p. 190).

Against transparency, Glissant proposes the concept of opacity, which he argues is not necessarily that which is obscure, but that “which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence” (Glissant 1997, p. 191). Opacities, according to Glissant, “can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components” (Glissant 1997, p. 190). While understanding/grasping involves a close handed “gesture of enclosure if not appropriation”, the gesture that accepts opacity opens outwards (Glissant 1997, p. 192). In the context of the novel, and the narrator’s experience of multicultural sentiment and racialisation, this would involve an acceptance of a non-racialised cultural complexity, permeability and transculturalism, and an ability on the part of both white and non-white Australians to create links and relationships with difference without needing to contain, categorise or control it.

The narrator’s experiences reflect the insidiously traumatic aspects of multiculturalism, whereby the narrator is seen as a desirable element within Australia as long as she conforms to particular modes of behaviour, both what is expected from her as an ‘Asian’ woman, more specifically how white Australians perceive Asian womanhood, while also not challenging existing social structures. As a pale-skinned yet ethnic looking woman, the narrator satisfies a modern middle-class Australia’s desire to appear racially and culturally diverse, while also holding the promise of assimilation. Sociologist Julie Matthews writes about the similar treatment of female Eurasian models in the mass media, whom she refers to as being used to sell cosmopolitanism as “a desirable commodity” and as allaying fears of miscegenation by being “youthful, benign, virtually white” representatives of “cosmo-chic” (2007, p. 49). In keeping with this idea, Max suggests that the narrator become a model, citing

her “international appeal” as a selling point (164), reflecting the commoditised nature of multiculturalism and the mixed race body.

The novel primarily explores the experiences of the racially mixed female narrator, however it also depicts, to a lesser extent, the racialisation of her childhood friend Eddie, who is an Australian of Chinese Singaporean heritage. The narrator’s and Eddie’s experience suggest, not only that difference is commodified under cosmo-multiculturalism, but that it is both gendered and re-constructed to reflect white fantasy and desire. While the narrator receives frequent racialised sexual attention, Eddie, as an Australian Chinese man, finds his efforts to fit in and literally and metaphorically levitate obstructed. When the narrator first meets Max via Eddie, both men are “advanced seekers” who are doing a course in levitation that costs a thousand dollars (161). Eddie complains to the narrator that he “was the only one who didn’t make it off the ground. A skinny Chinese bloke like [him], out-levitated by all these beefy Anglo-Saxon businessmen” (161). He then reflects, “maybe I’m not lifting off because I’m more worried about the cost than they are” (161). When the narrator expresses disbelief at both the price and reality of levitation, Eddie tells her, “[p]eople are paying big money to learn the Secrets of the East. We could go far on this, if we can only work out how” (161). His bemusement is poignant as while his Asian-ness may be associated with ‘the Secrets of the East,’ his maleness reduces his multicultural value and constructs him as a less desirable commodity.

As an Asian man, Eddie is at once more threatening and less interesting to white Australian masculinity and it is only by manipulating the white cosmo-multicultural desire for “the Secrets of the East,” like the narrator’s father and the levitation guru (162), that Eddie can find success in a white Australia. Precisely what these “Secrets” are, however, is something that Eddie cannot fathom, and his wistful statement “[w]e could go far on this, if we can only work out how” echoes the narrator’s more forceful question, “[w]hat the hell does he mean by Asian?” (163). Their bemusement reflects the disjuncture between a white cosmo-multiculturalist’s Orientalist fantasies of Eastern secrets, and the experiences of Australians of Asian heritage. The experiences of Eddie and the narrator reveal the reductive tendencies of a commodified and essentialised multiculturalism that seeks to categorise difference. These tendencies,

read in light of Glissant's work, result in reduction, comparisons and judgements on the value and humanity of the racialised other.

### **Trauma and subjectivity**

The racial categorisations explored above have a variety of effects on those subject to them. This section explores more fully some of the effects of racism, misidentification and exclusion. It focuses on three aspects of these effects, namely shattering racialisation, insidious trauma and the internalisation of racial categories. Ghassan Hage's concept of the shattered racialised person is a useful way of analysing these effects. He discusses the damaging effects of disjuncture when he writes of the "shattered racialised person" that second-generation immigrant Australians often become (2010, p. 245). Hage significantly points out the inefficacy of multiculturalism in dealing with the experiences of Australian-born and/or raised non-whites (2010, p. 245). Multiculturalism, which was designed to "recognise and valorise the culture of the other," may be effective at combating racism against first-generation non-whites, who are aware and to an extent identify themselves as being different (2010, p. 245). However, it becomes ineffectual and even detrimental when applied to multi-generation non-whites, who, Hage observes, see themselves as already belonging and assimilated, albeit on their own terms (2010, p. 245).

While the narrator and Eddie were both born in Singapore, they also both migrated to Australia at a very young age – in the narrator's case she was three or four years old – and as a result, they have more in common with those whom Hage terms second-generation immigrants than they do with first-generation immigrants. According to Hage, second-generation immigrants experience "mis-interpellation," which involves being mis-recognised, rather than necessarily being ignored or abused (2010, p. 244). Glissant similarly argues that a condition he defines as "root identity" is responsible for "the hazards of emigration", which involve the emigrant "being split and flattened ... [and] forced into impossible attempts to reconcile his former and his present belonging" (1997, p. 143).

With regard to the novel, the narrator's mixed race background differentiates her from Eddie as she is at once both more accepted and more objectified by white Australia. Significantly, she also witnesses racist attitudes occurring within her family and

directed at various family members by other relations. While she at times almost passes into white society, she is at other times marked out as not purely white, which automatically excises her from the white Australian group and places her in the migrant category. While the narrator suffers from less abuse than her siblings, the positioning of her as an exotic, Eastern, sexualised creature is a form of rejection from the nation as well as a misrecognition. It at once marks her as specifically alien and foreign, as well as ignoring her own self-identification and stipulating that a condition of her being marginally accepted into the nation is that she enacts and internalises a sexualised, Oriental, multicultural fantasy.

Although Hage does not write specifically about the gendered aspects of multiculturalism, or how mis-interpellation affects non-white women, his theories complement Yeğenoğlu's work on the sexualised nature of Orientalism. Yeğenoğlu states that there is an "inextricable link between the process of understanding, of knowing the other culture, and the unconscious and sexual dimensions involved in this process" (1998, p. 25). Her argument also evokes Glissant's concept of *comprendre* (understanding), in which knowing and understanding the racialised other involves judging their difference and placing them in a pre-defined hierarchy. Knowing and understanding racialised culture, therefore, through attending workshops on Eastern mysticism, subscribing to gurus and buying Buddha statues, all of which are depicted as aspects of cosmo-multiculturalism in the novel, becomes tied to the desire to sexually possess an 'Eastern' woman.

Significantly, however, the narrator is not unconditionally accepted as Asian either, and her subjectivity, and experiences of exclusion and racialisation, is also explored through Asian cultural and national spaces. She notes that in Malaysia a Malay term for a Eurasian is "cempur, the name of a salad made of sundry leftovers" (40). Furthermore, her Chinese employers in Perth, who first assume she is American, laugh when she tells them she is Eurasian from Singapore and call her "chap cheng", a derogatory term for a mixed race person (100), which means "mixed up" and has "connotations of craziness" (40). "[R]olling their eyes", they later remark to her that "[y]ou Eurasians so chap cheng, get lost so quickly" (101), implying that the character's mixed heritage results in cultural and mental confusion. These experiences, while not inducing physical damage, nevertheless constitute a form of

what Maria Root describes as “insidious trauma” (1992). Root’s concept of insidious trauma, discussed in Chapter 2, is particularly relevant to the narrator’s experiences as it becomes evident throughout the novel that her worldview, self-perceptions and self-confidence are shaped and in many ways stunted by non-physical yet nevertheless traumatic racialised experiences.

### **Internalising the racial imaginary**

One of the ways these traumatic experiences of racialisation manifest themselves in the novel is through a depiction of the narrator’s internalisation of the racial imaginary, and her reproduction of racial worldviews in her attitudes towards her twin sister. In her analysis of the work of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Kiran Grewal adapts Vivek Dhareshwar’s term “colonial habitus” (1989) in order to apply it to postcolonial contexts, arguing that a “postcolonial habitus” – whereby “colonial regimes of control” are internalised – still has power in spite of decolonisation (2012, p. 584). Given that, as has been discussed, multiculturalism in Australia mimics colonial relationships with regard to racialised Australians, the narrator’s perception of her sister is indicative of the perpetuation of a postcolonial habitus in multicultural/settler colonial Australia.

On another level, however, the way in which the narrator and her sister are at times racialised as white and Asian respectively, in spite of both their mixed ancestries, serves metaphorically to reflect the constructed, rather than biologically real, nature of race. The narrator is described as tall, pale-skinned and with green-eyes that are implied to be European in shape, while her sister is not only darker, but racialised by the narrator as having “*Asian* feet” and dark eyes “shaped like bay leaves”, while the “other curves of her face, too, seemed as constrained and idealised as Sanskrit script, making the typical expression on her face difficult to read” (107). The narrator reflects:

I thought this had something to do with her looking more Asian than I. I’d seen feature articles in the newspapers and on the television, full of observations on *the inscrutability of our Asian neighbours* (107).

The narrator makes this observation as a teenager, just before she attempts to start an argument with her sister, whose appearances she feels causes her “tension” and whom the narrator attempts to leave behind by attending a different school, away from her darker-skinned sisters and father. Her racialisation of her twin takes on a vicious turn, as just after pronouncing that her twin has “*Asian* feet” the narrator “jam[s] [her] chair leg down unto her toes” (109). She immediately regrets this action, and the novel links her act of violence with a persistent abdominal pain the narrator experiences, which is in turn metaphorically linked to her self-disgust at “the Asian in [her]” (105).

The narrator’s description of and violence towards her sister can be seen as a result of her attitudes towards her own racial mixity, which, as I have discussed, represents the narrator’s internalisation of racial categories and her desire, in the early stages of the novel, to be unconditionally accepted by white Australian society. However, it also further emphasises the interconnectedness of perceived difference, and the fiction of race. As the ‘white’ sister and the ‘brown’ sister, the narrator and her sister are not only siblings but twins, and the nature of their familial relationship which stresses the rhizomatic and connected nature of human relations across the visible differences of race, evoking Glissant’s argument that Relation is a process through which one’s identity is extended through a relationship with the other. In spite of this Relation, however, and the ways in which the interracial family in the novel disrupts the coherence of racial discourse, structures of race, racialised culture and stereotype nevertheless impress themselves upon the narrator and her family, either through insidious or more overt experiences of racial trauma.

### **Mixed race subjectivity and experience**

While, as I have discussed, Lazaroo’s novel presents a strident, satirical critique of white cosmo-multiculturalism and racialisation more broadly, she also examines sites of tension, ambivalence and trauma surrounding concepts and experiences of being mixed race, some of which I have touched on in earlier in this chapter. Ann Stoler points out that mixed race individuals are, by virtue of their birth, sexualised, as their existence hinges upon what has historically been and to an extent continues to be regarded as illicit sexual relationships (2002, p. 110). In the words of sociologist Joane Nagel, “[a]ll sexual ethnic boundary crossing has the capacity to generate controversy since ethnic groups almost always encourage members to ‘stick to their

own kind” (2003, p. 15). Their ambiguous racial and ethnic identities also have implications regarding their authenticity in the nation as, in spite of changes to national demographics, national identity frequently involves concepts of shared ethnicity and racial purity.

As symbols of the nation’s identity and honour, women must maintain their sexual purity and by association the purity of the nation. As a result their sexuality is subject to policing as they are expected to reproduce with the right type of man, that is, one who is part of the nation. In the case of *The World Waiting to be Made*, the narrator’s mother, a white woman who marries a dark-skinned foreigner, is seen to fail in her duties as a white Australian woman. Furthermore, her mixed race daughters, who are neither fully white Australian nor fully Malaysian, are excluded from a place or role within either nation or culture and are isolated from both sides of their extended family.

As well as coping with an ineffectual and demeaning multiculturalism, as previously discussed, the narrator is also afflicted with experiences that Maria Root and Maureen Perkins identifies as being common amongst racially mixed women – she is frequently identified by others in a way that does not necessarily reflect her own identity (Perkins 2007, p. 9) and she is also afflicted with a sense of guilt regarding the paleness of her skin (Root 1997, p. 163). Her awareness of this factor begins at a very early age. There is an episode when she and her sister are in primary school, another student punches her twin, who later tells the narrator that she is “lucky, [she is] paler than [her]” (31). Her twin and younger sister, who are both significantly darker than she is, are called “sluts,” “chocolate girl” and spat at (31), while only the narrator, so pale that she “could almost have passed as one of *them*, one of the Australians, had copped no vicious insults” (125). Furthermore, her childhood friend Sue even reassures her that she need not worry about racism as she “[doesn’t] look like a slope or a boong” (27). Sue uses two highly derogatory colloquial terms to refer to people of Asian and Aboriginal descent respectively, bringing to mind the triangulated relationship between white Australia and its racialised others.

On more than one occasion, the narrator is explicitly welcomed to Australia on account of her racial appearance, or singled out and complimented for her exotic

beauty, and at unpredictable times she does appear to pass into white society. The narrator's sense of guilt, uncertainty and experience of insidious trauma are emphasised as she writes that she feels "[g]uilty and bewildered about this, I checked my skin for secret scars cast by a bad-luck magician. Surely I hadn't escaped completely" (125). She then reflects:

Perhaps my fate would be worse than being punched in the teeth, spat or sworn at. Perhaps the knot had been tightening all my Australian life, waiting for the right time to snap my caramel-coloured skin into two colours, white and black, and my speech into two languages, Asian and Australian; so that there would always be two parts to me that didn't understand each other (125).

The narrator's concerns are significant on several levels, not least of all because of the segmented perception she maintains regarding herself. The narrator's confusion and guilt, as well as her fixation on the perceived incompatibility of aspects of her heritage, reflect her traumatic experiences of constant racialisation and non-physical violence, which is juxtaposed with her conditional acceptance into white Australia based on her combination of whiteness and the exotic.

Similarly, her fear of splitting and disintegration under a constantly present and building tension further evokes Root's argument that the "frequency of insidious traumas results in a construction of reality in which certain dimensions of security are not very secure: as such, the individual is often alert to potential threats of destruction or death" (1992, p. 241). While the narrator does not fear death she fears a more symbolic annihilation. Her fear of fragmenting into two parts that will never understand each other is arguably a result of the resistance she encounters both in Australia, and Singapore and Malaysia, to a non-commodified mixed race subjectivity. Not only does the narrator seldom encounter others whom she can see herself in, her self-identification as Eurasian is frequently met with either hostility and derision, or sexual objectification.

At this point in the novel, it appears that the narrator has internalised and accepted popular racial, ethnic and national categories. She uncritically accepts the notion that 'Asian-ness' and 'Australian-ness' exist as two distinct, irreconcilable entities, and

that her caramel-coloured skin is freakish and abnormal, waiting to disintegrate. While the narrator's musings reflect the effects of racism and essentialised concepts of ethnicity and culture, they also illustrate her inability to conceive of a transcultural identity which validates and accepts the diversity of her background without needing reassurance and permission from the white Australian norm.

Significantly, the narrator is unable to displace whiteness from its position as the central norm of her own world as well as the world around her, and the guilt and fear she experiences reflects the tenuous position she and her sisters hold as women of mixed Asian and European descent. While racially mixed people are often popularly associated with concepts of hybridity, border-crossing, and racial tolerance (Dickens 2009, p. 11), the experiences of the narrator and her sisters indicate that although their racial ambiguity disrupts the security of fixed racial categories, this tension does not break them down. In *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post-Nationalism and Cultural Hybridity*, Shalini Puri critiques the idea that border-crossings are automatically subversive, as "slave-ships, U.S. warships, luxury cruise ships and Haitian rafts" are all involved in the process of crossing boundaries, with very different histories, motivations and results (2004, p. 25). In a similar vein, the multiracial/Eurasian status of the sisters does not automatically overthrow racial categories, or essentialised forms of Australian multiculturalism. Rather, one sister – the narrator – is conditionally accepted by white Australia, ostensibly as an example of white Australian tolerance, while the others, being seen as too dark and inassimilable, are reviled.

As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter in relation to forced racialising surgery in *Shanghai Dancing*, while race and ethnicity are fluid, shifting and liable to change, people of mixed race are not always the bringers and determiners of this change. Rather, whether violently and directly, as in *Shanghai Dancing*, or insidiously, as in the narrator's case, they are often subject to identifications and racial control and exclusion based on the perceptions of race by those in power. Essentially, the narrator fears the disintegration of her existence as a multiracial person, and the annihilation of her ability to speak and articulate her experiences, even if her speech is at times, halting, uncertain and full of self-blame. In spite of the differences in her life as a middle-class, late-twentieth century Australian woman who does not experience

occupation, internment or direct violence, the narrator fears the silence and fragmentation that is a theme in *Shanghai Dancing*, which will be explored in the next chapter.

The narrator's fear of the obliteration of her multiracial self reflects the inequalities permeating the identification process, which is socially negotiated but also often skewed in favour of dominant social groups. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Joane Nagel draws on the example of a multiracial individual of Irish Catholic and Nigerian Muslim heritage to illustrate the negotiated nature of identity and ethnicity. Nagel further draws attention to the relationship between ethnicity and "structure and power [including] which ethnic categories are available in a society to be sorted into, and who gets to do the sorting" (2003, p. 42).

Maria Root, however, stresses that one of the particular challenges multiracial people face is to, if necessary, be able to conceive of their own sense of identity that may not always be reflected back to them by the world around them (1996, pp. 3-15). The trajectory of *The World Waiting to be Made* impels the novel towards the narrator's contemplations of this at the close of the novel. While she does not adopt an untroubled transcultural or multiracial identity, she demonstrates a critical attitude towards racialisation and determines to build a life that involves maintaining an internal sense of gladness and belonging "no matter what inheritance had been taken from you, what disguises you wore, or where in the world you happened to be" (263).

### **Disruptions: mixed race and transgression**

As the preceding section demonstrates, the narrator struggles to feel that her mixed heritage is adequately recognised in Australia, however it is significant that she is similarly mis-recognised in the Singaporean and Malaysian Eurasian communities, which are cultural spaces that she expects to find acceptance and belonging. In this section the key issue explored is mis-recognition outside Australia or outside the 'white' Australian community. This exclusion occurs both within Australia and in Southeast Asia (244), as the narrator is not considered to be a proper Eurasian on account of her mother's whiteness, which is described by her oldest aunt as "bad blood" (225). Similarly, her relatives at times judge her as a 'Western' woman, whom they assume is frivolous, spendthrift and immoral (221). Other relatives within the

same family, however, display disappointment that she is not ‘Western’, fashionable and confident enough (243). In both cases, essentialised tropes of white and Western femininity are drawn upon to construct the narrator’s identity, and given racial meaning in the form of her mother’s “blood”.

It is notable that *The World Waiting to be Made* emphasises that racialised thinking permeates non-Western societies as well as Western ones, and it portrays non-white communities as also having a racialising “gaze” (hooks 1997, pp. 166-168). While the established Eurasian community that her father comes from is already mixed race, in respectable Eurasian families the mixing occurred generations in the past, with each successive generation inter-marrying with other established Eurasian families. As a result, the narrator’s parents’ marriage is considered transgressive and alienates them from her father’s family and community. An example of what Glissant terms *métissage*, the narrator’s Eurasian family is not only ‘racially’ mixed, but also culturally and religiously blended. Glissant describes *métissage* as “the meeting and synthesis of two differences” (1997, p. 34), and the translator, Betsy Wing, states that for Glissant, “*métissage* moves from a narrow range of racial intermixing to become a relational practice affirming the multiplicity and diversity of its components” (1997, p. 214).

To an extent, aspects of the narrator’s life and family exemplify this concept of *métissage*, as will be discussed later in this chapter. However, Glissant also notes that while *métissage* is all of these qualities, “creolization seems to be a limitless *métissage*, its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable” (1997, p. 34). Glissant argues that “[c]reolization diffracts, whereas certain forms of *métissage* can concentrate one more time” (1997, p. 34), a statement that has particular relevance for the narrator’s family in *The World Waiting to be Made*. While her family is racially and culturally mixed, their mixity does not necessarily equal Glissant’s concept of Relation, whereby “each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other” (1997, p. 11). On the contrary, particularly in her eldest aunt’s case, a Eurasian *métissage* demonstrates itself as capable of condensing and congealing into a new form of a fixed and exclusionary category, which, far from diffracting outward in rhizomatic relation and *donner-avec*, which Wing translates as “gives-on-and-with”

(1997, p. 212), instead attempts to define and locate itself in the pre-existing and oppressive hierarchy of racial categories.

Being mixed race or culturally blended does not automatically signal an end to racialisation, cultural essentialism or exclusion. It is worth pointing out that all population groups are hybrid and mixed in some form, as Homi Bhabha frequently emphasises (1990, p. 292; 1998, pp. 29-30), however they often construct themselves as pure, or as ethnically and unproblematically cohesive. This can be seen in the narrator's aunt's understanding of Malaysian Eurasianness as being its own, discrete ethnic category in spite of historical intermarriages that took place. Glissant's concepts of Relation and *donner-avec*, on the other hand, emphasise a process of openness and connection that is not fixed to any one racial or cultural group, but can be employed transracially and transculturally.

The example of the narrator's aunt demonstrates the ineffectiveness of racial mixing by itself at breaking down racial and cultural barriers and segmentation. Instead it is in constant danger of solidifying into the very categories it aims to challenge. Creolisation, however, which diffracts endlessly and with unpredictable results, as well as *donner-avec*, both of which are part of the process of Relation, are active processes and therefore potentially more destabilising to racial and cultural stereotypes and categories. Glissant demonstrates the effects of *donner-avec* in dealing with difference when he writes about "thought of the Other" and "the other of Thought" (1997, pp. 154-155). "Thought of the Other," according to Glissant, is:

the moral generosity disposing me to accept the principle of alterity, to conceive of the world as not simple and straightforward, with only one truth – mine. But thought of the Other can dwell within me without making me alter course, without 'prizing me open', without changing me within myself... The other of Thought is precisely this altering. Then I have to act. That is the moment I change my thought, without renouncing its contribution. I change, and I exchange (1997, pp. 154-155).

While the multicultural tolerance that Hage critiques, and that the narrator experiences as so problematic, can be seen as examples of "thought of the Other", the

“other of Thought” presents the possibilities of a deeper, more genuine transculturalism, which would involve the active, reciprocal and equal process of interrelation and exchange between individuals and cultural groups. Such an image of cultural relations is not realised in the novel itself, however its possibility is hinted at towards the novel’s close, which will be explored later in this chapter.

### **Multiculturalism, race and Indigenous Australia: solidarity and Relation**

While *The World Waiting to be Made* focuses primarily on the interactions, tensions and blurred boundaries between whiteness and otherness, it also demonstrates the triangulation of Australian race relations into white, Indigenous and ‘ethnic’ through its critique of Australian multicultural sensibilities. Much of the novel occurs in the city of Perth, where the narrator’s experiences of racialisation are shaped by a dyad of white Australia and its racial others, who are frequently perceived as foreign. As a young teacher, however, she moves to rural Australia to work with an Aboriginal community, and spends time in the coastal town of Broome. Here, race relations are more overtly shaped by a racial triangle, whereby white Australia dominates the national space and splits and segregates its racialised others into the Indigenous and ‘foreign’ categories (Perera 1993, pp. 16-17; Curthoys 2000; Stephenson 2007).

Both the relationship and divide between the two racialised groups is demonstrated in the novel. As Robyn Morris points out, the narrator’s involvement in a multicultural parade in Broome is characterised not only by the feminisation and exoticisation of racial difference, as the narrator and several other women of various racial heritages are recruited to model as mermaids on a multicultural float, but it also depicts the disjuncture between white Australian constructions of multicultural Australia and Indigenous Australians. While the narrator and the other ‘mermaids’ of Asian ancestry remain part of the parade, with increasing unease and misgivings, Maddy, the only Indigenous participant, grows increasingly angry at the organisation of the event and abandons her role in disgust.

Olivia Khoo points out that this symbolises the exclusion of and rejection by Indigenous Australians of multicultural policy and sensibility, while the ‘ethnic’ women who remain part of the parade do so as conditionally included women who buttress and support the white Australian centre (2007, p. 134). However, this event

also displays the complex relationship between Indigenous and 'ethnic' Australians, particularly in the case of individuals who, like the narrator, have a complex and fractured sense of identity and belonging. Furthermore, the stereotypical roles of the 'ethnic' and the Indigenous person are illuminated clearly in this section of the novel. Neither the narrator nor Sharon, a woman the narrator believes has Japanese ancestry, want to wear the revealing mermaid costumes that have been designed for the pageant, however only Maddy vocalises her refusal, effectively paving the way for the other women to also alter their costumes. As the narrator puts it, "[t]he Japanese Sharon and I were silent in our refusal, but felt grateful to Maddy for being so forward in expressing our feelings" (197).

While the narrator ironically describes the three women as creating a "scene of racial disharmony" (197), the scene in fact establishes a sense of solidarity between the characters as women of colour resisting exoticised sexualisation. That the two 'ethnic' women, who are specifically of Asian heritage, enact a silent and less certain resistance is telling. The reader is given no insight into Sharon's character or state of mind, however the narrator has been effectively trained throughout her childhood and adolescence to play the good ethnic, and be allowed conditional inclusion into the white Australian nation as a result. Her tentative excitement at being part of the multicultural parade is indicative of her postcolonial habitus, and the strength this dictum maintains in her mind. Maddy, on the other hand, while in all likelihood experiencing racism, dislocation and a sense of fragmentation, is marked by dispossession rather than migration, and she rejects the attempts to constrain her within the conditional acceptance of white cosmo-multiculturalism. "I'm leaving this stupid show," she announces, before departing. The narrator, a white/Asian multiracial woman, calls to Maddy to return, but her "voice lacks conviction" (199).

The reasons for the narrator to call after Maddy are ambiguous. She is possibly attempting to include Maddy in the multicultural parade, seeing it, as she does, as the only space within the Australian nation where she can exist. It is also possible, however, that she seeks to rekindle the brief moment of solidarity they shared earlier in the day, where Maddy took on the role of the defender of women of colour. This scene evokes tropes of the submissive Asian woman and the militant black woman, which, in an Australian context are frequently contradicted and subverted by a belief

in Indigenous weakness, decline and assimilation, versus a fear of an Asian invasion, which involves the white nation being colonised and overrun by Asia (Ravenscroft 2004, p. 9-10). This illustrates the incoherence and instability of assumptions based on a seemingly fixed concept of race, and the narrator's brief but powerful interactions with Maddy illustrate the ambivalence of race relations in Australia, and the disrupting potentials of solidarity.

The setting of the multicultural parade also demonstrates the mediation of the multiracial Asian with the Aboriginal Australian by white Australia, a trend that is expressed in more detail while the narrator is working as a teacher in an Aboriginal community near Broome. The narrator, who has frequently been afflicted with a sense of non-belonging and rejection throughout her youth in suburban Perth, discovers a new lack of belonging in this context. While throughout much of her childhood and young adulthood the narrator was made to feel racially different, the white Australian teachers in the small community are initially inclined to include her as one of them, as opposed to a member of the Aboriginal community. There is an indication that, at face value, she passes for white, as her first sense of hostility is when a fellow teacher "narrow[s] her eyes at the sound of [the narrator's] foreign-sounding name" (177). The narrator's first name is never mentioned in the novel, however her surname is Dias, a Portuguese and, by the standards of the context, 'ethnic' name. In spite of this, she is, at first, accepted by the other teachers. The narrator, however, resists this simplistic inclusion, which predicated itself on the creation and denigration of a different kind of 'Other', and attempts to stifle the narrator's non-white cultural traits. The narrator reflects that "[w]e'd all been churned out of Perth's suburban sprawl and two or three teacher training institutions, but in most other ways they were not from the same place as me" (178-9). Later, as she is on her way to her first class, a fellow teacher refers to a young Aboriginal student as "the missing evolutionary link", a joke which immediately alienates the narrator, who reflects that she too had "felt marooned by that kind of joke somewhere before" (180).

While the narrator's discomfort at this joke demonstrates a shared experience of racialisation between her and the student, her tentative feelings of empathy for the local community are undercut by the headmaster's injunction to maintain "standards" by not "mixing with the Aboriginal community...[as in his] experience it causes more

trouble than it's worth" (178). The narrator's move from an urban to rural setting, furthermore, changes the implications of her racialisation. In Perth, her foreignness and mixity are experienced as a sense of exclusion, or sexualised, conditional inclusion. In the rural location near an Aboriginal community, however, the narrator finds herself included with the white Australian teachers on the basis of class, education and profession and a shared suburban upbringing. There is still, however, a conditional element to this inclusion.

In spite of the order to avoid "mixing with" the Aboriginal community, the narrator nevertheless experiences a growing sense of respect for the Aboriginal people, against whose lives the teachers' rituals of air-conditioning, lawn mowing and attempts to regulate the seasons and climate appear increasingly futile and small-minded. Similarly, she develops something of a friendship with the mother of one of her students, Patsy, who comforts her when she discovers her school friend Eddie is dying, and provides her with "the first really human contact" the narrator had experienced since her parents' marriage began to fall apart when she was a teenager (189). The narrator sees in Patsy a kind of certainty about identity and culture that she perceives herself as lacking, and wishes that she had the older woman's clarity. She draws a connection between her multiracial heritage and this lack of clarity, reflecting that "for people like [her], born into communities whose moorings had been shifted and controlled by sailors from afar, there was no real certainty" (189). She acknowledges, however, that in spite of Patsy's apparent surety, they were both aware that it was diminishing for her too, under the imposition of governmental control and rapid social change.

The narrator's interactions with Patsy are significant on several levels regarding the triangulation of Australia race relations into Indigenous, white and 'ethnic' Australians, and the criticisms I explored in Chapter 3 regarding the deliberate separation of the 'ethnic' and Indigenous by white Australia. Not only does the narrator straddle the ethnosexual frontier of the white and the ethnic, she also occupies an uncertain position between the white Australian teachers and the Aboriginal community. While the narrator understands that there are communal and cultural differences that separate her from the Aboriginal community, and she is "intimidated" by the headmaster's injunction not to socialise with them, she

nevertheless finds more companionship and understanding from Patsy and her daughter than her colleagues. The novel's depiction of this friendship can be read in terms of Australia's long history of Asian and Indigenous interrelationships and mixed race families, which have often been marginalised from dominant narratives of Australia's history (Stephenson 2007). The narrator herself feels discomfort at finding herself placed in the position of imposing certain white Australian norms on the students, as part of her role as a government teacher. She reflects on the irony of teaching her female students how to make scones, when she herself is only familiar with Malaysian and Singaporean cooking.

In a sense, the narrator engages with and upholds white Australia authority in the area, however she also undermines it through her self-reflexivity and her ability to engage with members of the community personally. She demonstrates a willingness to build a relationship with Patsy that, in Glissantian terms, extends her own identity, without demonstrating tendencies of *comprendre* or attempting to render Patsy and her cultural practices transparent. While the narrator does become, in a sense, a non-white woman who upholds white authority in an Aboriginal community, her discomfort with her own position reveals her inner conflict and heightened self-consciousness about her role. Furthermore, she herself points out the historicity of this conflict, as the majority of her father's ancestors in the Eurasian communities of Malaysia and Singapore were also ethnosexual transgressors who were subject to colonial regulation and control. In migrating from Singapore to Australia, the narrator and her family forego one type of colonial regulation for another, which creates a space of Relation between the narrator and Patsy.

### **Whiteness**

While throughout my analysis of *The World Waiting to be Made* I have focused primarily on the ways in which the narrator is 'othered' as non-white, or fragmented as someone who is mixed race, her whiteness is also an important part of her experiences of subjectivity, and it is arguably a disruptive aspect of the novel. In this section, I analyse the troubling effects of whiteness and explore the character of the narrator's mother in terms of her Anglo-Australian identity. By the term whiteness, I refer to the "location of structural advantage" and racial privilege, a "standpoint" from which white people view the world and cultural practices which are "unmarked and

unnamed” (Frankenberg 1993, p. 1). Whiteness also refers to visual bodily markers such as skin tone, eye and hair colour, which are then given racial meaning, and in an Australian context, whiteness also acts as a marker of belonging in the national space.

While whiteness theory has emphasised the invisible and de-racialised qualities of whiteness within Western societies (Frankenberg 1993; Edmonds 2009, p. 100; Dyer 2013), it has also acknowledged the ways in which people of colour have visually racialised and named whiteness (Frankenberg 1997, p.4; hooks 1997, pp. 165-166). As I have discussed, the presence of racialisation in non-Western societies is a theme in *The World Waiting to be Made*, and when in Singapore and Malaysia the narrator is expected to display certain cultural attributes because of her whiteness, both as the daughter of a white woman and as someone who grew up in Australia.

Significantly, even within Australia, the narrator displays a consciousness of her own sense of embodied and cultural whiteness. I have alluded to these aspects throughout my analysis of the novel, as the narrator’s physical appearance is, at times, perceived as European, and she sees herself as the outgoing, confident and Western sister compared to her siblings. In this sense, she possesses some of the visual markers of whiteness, as well as certain cultural attributes, and they serve to protect her from more virulent and physically violent strains of racism. She notices this in particular compared to her sisters, who, as I have discussed, are darker and endure racial physical and verbal abuse. She has access then, to a certain type of racial privilege as a mixed race woman who is almost white in appearance and behaviour. However, she reacts with guilt to this privilege, which is also notable for its unreliability, as the narrator’s Asianness is also at times perceived through visual cues. Similarly, her name is European, but of Portuguese origins, marking her out as ‘foreign’ within Australia and less white than her Anglo-Saxon Australian peers.

The novel is notable, however, for its depiction of the instability of racial categories in general, particularly when interracial families and relationships take place. Anglo-Saxonness, often held up as the purest form of whiteness, is no exception to this, as the ambivalence the narrator feels for her own whiteness is mirrored by the gradual decline of her white mother, who becomes increasingly broken and faded as the text progresses. In spite of being an Anglo-Saxon Australian, the narrator’s mother is not

immune to racial and social prejudice against her for disrupting multicultural Australia's neat cultural compartments. The narrator's mother suffers socially both for marrying a non-white man and for the eventual break down of her marriage. Under the weight of this prejudice and her failed marriage, her character is depicted as fading and diminishing, to the extent that she is described as becoming "her own ghost" (134).

It is particularly interesting that as a white mother of mixed race children her character is seen to fade away, as the purity of whiteness, and of white women in particular, has historically been a key ingredient necessary to preserve white Australia in the face of a perceived Asian threat (Macintyre 2009, p. 149). Furthermore, in an Australian context, most depictions of interracial relationships portray a white man and a non-white woman, and non-white masculinity has historically been imagined as a threat to white Australian women, and the whiteness of the nation itself (Castles and Vasta 2004, p. 142). Mixed race non-white women, on the other hand, have been portrayed as easy to assimilate into the white nation, particularly through their marriages with working-class white men (Elder 2009, p. 236).

The fact that the narrator's mother is Anglo-Saxon, however, while her father is of mixed heritage and looks visibly non-white rather than European, contravenes the stereotype of interracial relationships. Similarly, it transgresses the limits of acceptability, for while, as I discussed in Chapter 3, the bodies of mixed race women are sexualised because they embody the colonial and slave-owning sexual history of white men's relationships with women of colour, the narrator's mother subverts this narrative. Rather than producing white children, the narrator's mother gives birth to mixed race children and as a consequence both she, and her ethnicity, seem to be excised from their lives. Her deterioration into a metaphorical *persona non grata* is compounded by the fact that, in an Australian context, Anglo-Saxon whiteness is not often thought of as an ethnic identity with cultural traditions, and therefore it has no real place within multiculturalism (Hage 1998, p. 205). Instead it is thought of as the central, normal arbiter and consumer of other cultures, unless, like the narrator's mother, it crosses a certain boundary and is forced to disappear. That the narrator's mother is rendered other within her own society is demonstrated by the ostracisation she faces from her local church and suburban white Australian community,

particularly once her marriage breaks down, as she is deemed a failure for engaging in a “mixed marriage”, which according to popular wisdom would “never work” (143).

Furthermore, it is implied in the novel that the narrator’s maternal grandparents once attempted to have their daughter committed to a mental hospital to “protect” her from her relationship with and marriage to the narrator’s father (152). Once her marriage ends, the evidence of her “exotic-looking children” is perceived by her community as a marker of her sexually dubious moral character, indicating that she had “already made her bed a long time ago in a dangerous place, beyond the pale” (144).

While the description of the narrator’s mother as “becoming her own ghost” does indicate her diminishment, the term ghost connotes not only that which is insubstantial and spectral, but also that which, often undesirably, stubbornly persists. The narrator’s mother, and, more specifically, her whiteness, haunts the novel and the narrator herself. The narrator and those around her, however, repress what this haunting symbolises. Her mother’s ghostliness, which, I will argue later, has several key similarities with Tom’s vision of his white father’s spectre in *The Lost Dog*, symbolises the ability of whiteness to change, to be supposedly ‘contaminated’ and yet persist in a new form. It also represents the potential for interrelation between and throughout that which is racialised as white and that which is racialised as of colour, undercutting the discreteness and viability of race and racialised culture.

This can be seen in the novel itself through the narrator’s mother’s participation in the transmission of Malaysian Eurasian culture to her multiracial children in Australia. While the narrator’s Eurasian father attempts sporadically to convey aspects of his cultural background to his children, it is the narrator’s mother who reminds her and her sisters that they are “Eurasian. Eurasian women know how to wear sarongs as well as dresses” (31). It is also her mother, furthermore, who comforts the narrator and her siblings after they experience racism as children by telling them stories of their Malaysian Eurasian heritage, to help them “believe in bright futures” (40). The narrator reflects that “[l]ike a medicine man, a magician, a *bomoh*,<sup>9</sup> she brought us

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<sup>9</sup> A traditional Malay shaman

back to ourselves after we'd suffered frights that might otherwise have given opportunistic *hantus*<sup>10</sup> the chance to call us away from who we were" (40).

Her mother, furthermore, does not exhibit the aspects of white cosmopolitanism that can be seen in certain characters' approaches to Indianness in *The Lost Dog*, which will be examined in Chapter 6. She experiences racism and discrimination amongst her in-laws in Singapore and Malaysia, as well as being aware of her own parents' prejudice against her husband. Yet she manages to respect and value their cultural contribution and encourage it in her daughters, whom she does not view as diminished by their racial background. To an extent, the narrator's mother represents the qualities of *donner-avec* and the other of Thought, as she demonstrates an ability to 'prise herself open', to use Glissant's expression, and change from within, as a result extending her identity through a relationship with the perceived Other, rather than attempting to tolerate or possess difference while remaining unchanged. This is contrasted by the narrator's father, who is depicted as resisting Relation, as the narrator observes that when he met her mother she "was a foreigner to him", and he "kept her a foreigner" rather than engaging with her through a process of Relation (265).

### **Passing**

As the changing and persisting nature of whiteness haunts the novel, the narrator oscillates between perceiving herself as Western and liberated, particularly in relation to her sister, who she sees as "dutiful" and more "Asian", to regarding the whiteness of her skin and appearance with fear and disgust. Her reflection that she was so pale she "could have passed for one of *them*, the white Australians" indicates that she views her mixed, racially ambiguous appearance not as a marker of her familial connection to her Anglo-Australian mother but as a source of simultaneous privilege and shame. The novel is interesting for its demonstration of the narrator's changing attitudes towards whiteness throughout her childhood and adulthood, as she moves from valorising and desiring it to viewing it as something abhorrent. As a child, the narrator, who is "pale and tall" (51), deliberately passes, pretending she is adopted in

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<sup>10</sup> Malevolent spirits in Malay folklore

order to dissociate herself from her dark father, and as a teenager she desires to emulate the white femininity of her peers.

While she aspires to whiteness, however, the satirical and humorous tone of the novel undercuts the value of this aspiration. The narrator admires, in particular, the white femininity of her childhood friend, Sue, who grows up to be a popular teenager at their high school. The narrator describes her as sitting at the:

centre of the iridescent girls...[s]he had her hair done out in blonde streaks and an aggressive fringe that stuck out over her forehead like a visor. Around her eyes she'd smeared some pearlised blue eyeshadow quite similar to the colour of the baboon's backside I'd seen at the zoo years before. Her black mascara had bled and pulled her eyes down at the outer lower lids. Little flakes of it lay like shrapnel across her cheeks (76-77).

While the teenager narrator is ostensibly in awe of Sue, and later events of the novel indicate the extent to which she tries to emulate her, the description of teenage white Australian markers of beauty borders on the grotesque, and satirises the power and centrality it holds in the narrator's mind.

The narrator notes that her bodily whiteness protects her from the more physically violent and insulting aspects of racism, yet perceives that this protection must coexist with a worse fate that will result in the annihilation of her subjectivity. Furthermore, she views her whiteness as something foreign, to which she has no familial or ancestral claim, and which makes her complicit with the oppressors of herself and her sisters. As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, this signifies her internalisation of broader white Australian concepts of who she should be as a woman with Asian ancestry, which disallows the articulation of a multiracial subjectivity. It also represents the potential malleability of whiteness, which, through its inscription on the narrator's body, persists in an altered form, rather than vanishing upon contact with 'colour'. As I have pointed out, this does not mean the narrator is unconditionally accepted as an Australian, nor does it indicate that she is perceived as a 'white' or even 'Western' woman, although this does occur within Singapore and Malaysia in the novel. The narrator's occasional ability to be perceived as almost white, however,

is indicated in the novel as she feels she encounters more suspicion from some of her white Australian teaching colleagues for her “foreign-sounding name” than for her appearance (177).

Her relationship with passing is ambivalent, as while the narrator initially strives constantly to be racially acceptable to her white Australian peers, as she grows older she attempts to become authentically Eurasian, and whiteness and Anglo-Saxonness do not form core components of her identity as cultures or ethnicities in themselves. The narrator desires whiteness to the extent that it signifies normality, but she does not desire to connect with her British heritage the way she does with her Singaporean and Malaysian roots. This is significant, as it indicates that the narrator has, to a degree, internalised white Australian ideas of what constitutes culture and ethnicity and what she, as a mixed race woman, should be like. The narrator, being visibly racially mixed, cannot be admitted into the realm of white Australia, and she assumes, must instead be classified as exotically ethnic and a vessel of strange and mysterious cultural charms. While the narrator does question the validity of this assumption, she does not go so far as to interrogate the centrality or normality of whiteness, nor does she thoroughly examine what her British heritage might imply.

Her racial ambiguity, however, and her occasional forays into passing, do contain elements of disruption, although they do not break down racial categories in and of themselves. Unlike the United States, where passing has a strong narrative history and concepts of hypodescent were once entrenched by law, Australia does not have as strong a relationship with the concept of passing, and racial assimilation regarding Indigenous peoples was once government policy (Haebich 2008, p. 8). Having said that, however, the process of assimilating mixed race Indigenous children involved careful observation, categorisation and control, and such children were neither educated nor encouraged to pass seamlessly into middle-class white society. Rather, they were always treated as less than white, and encouraged to hope for a lower-class Australian existence at best (Perkins 2004, p. 173). Similarly, with regard to non-Indigenous, non-white Australians, essentialised racial and ethnic categories have historically been and remain a key part of Australian multiculturalism and perceptions of cultural difference. The narrator’s occasional ability to pass, then, is at times troubling, both to racial categories, those around her, and the narrator herself. It is

significant that the narrator regards her whiteness as a source of anxiety and ambivalence, and she swings between uncertain pleasure at being interpellated as “American” by a Chinese couple and embarrassed attempts to perform an overtly “Asian” identity in front of some white Australian acquaintances.

Anna Camaiti Hostert argues that passing is “a metaphor for identity formation, as well as a metaphor of transgression – for the practice of violating boundaries that masquerade as absolute and universal when they are in fact, contingent, historical and local” (2007, p. 15), and the narrator’s experiences and performative ‘race’ to an extent reflect this. On one level, her ability to perform whiteness at one point and Asianness at another reveals the fluid, fictional nature of biological race. However, as my discussion of her experiences of racialisation earlier in this chapter demonstrates, the ways in which she is interpellated are frequently beyond her control. At times her visibly mixed and racially ambiguous appearance becomes a way in which she is further racially objectified rather than racially liberated. While passing is a transgressive performance, the narrator, particularly as the narrative progresses, approaches it with caution as she realises it is not fulfilling to her to perform either whiteness or a generic, orientalist Asian identity, and she remains ambivalent about what she perceives as her fraudulent access to white privilege.

The narrator maintains this ambivalent attitude towards whiteness until the close of the novel, when, after her visit to Singapore and Malaysia, she begins to interrogate her interpellation as a Westerner and Australian with white ancestry. She is further concerned with how much she might be complicit in perpetuating the white Australian notion of a homogenised and mystical Asia when she travels to Singapore and Malaysia in order to discover her heritage. On the return flight home from her first trip to Singapore and Malaysia as an adult, she startles herself with the violence of her blame and contempt towards Australian tourists, who she perceives as travelling to Singapore in search of “unexamined, superficial souvenirs” and exoticism in order to add excitement to their lives (262). After her initial reaction wears off, however, she wonders if she too has her “own need for souvenirs...[and] perhaps something like the needs felt by these Australian tourists had driven” her to seek out her Malaccan and Singaporean relatives (262). The tourists remain, though, “people...who [she] couldn’t see [her]self in” (262), just as the narrator remains

afflicted by a feeling of “belonging elsewhere,” although this ‘elsewhere’ is undefined (275).

The narrator’s occasional ability to pass and her racial ambiguity informs her sense of belonging “elsewhere”, even after her attempt to “find out what [she] is really made of” by travelling to Singapore and Malaysia. This illustrates both the impediments and disjunctions she faces as a person who is both racially and culturally ambiguous, as well as the disruptive and potentially productive aspects of this ambiguity. While, as Hage and others have pointed out, mis-interpellation and non-belonging are common aspects of migration and diaspora, what *The World Waiting to be Made* portrays is the isolation of the mixed race person from even within this experience of diaspora. The narrator not only experiences racialised prejudice in Australia, she also encounters it from her own relatives in Singapore and Malaysia. Her father’s sister disapproves of the narrator’s white mother’s “bad blood”, and her cousins deplore what they see as her extravagance and immorality as a Western woman. Furthermore, while a substantial diasporic Malaysian Eurasian community is mentioned as existing in Perth, the narrator and her immediate family are excluded from it, to the extent that she is unaware of it until almost the end of the novel. Her lack of belonging in that diaspora, she assumes, is a result of her mother’s whiteness (244). The narrator, then, experiences the rejection and misinterpellation of the migrant of colour in a multi-layered and condensed manner that stems from both communities of her origin.

Furthermore, there is no refuge for her in diaspora, as she bears the embodied visual markers of ‘racial’ mixity. She is fair-skinned and green-eyed, and at times is counted amongst the almost-white, while in other situations she is racially marked out as Asian, and therefore an eternal foreigner. This fluidity, however, is portrayed in the novel as predominately beyond her control. While the narrator is something of a passive character and there is certainly room for her to exert more agency with regard to her subjectivity, the novel demonstrates that the cumulative experiences of community-rejection and conditional exclusion over the course of her life have left her with a highly fragmentary and problematic sense of self, which is intensified by her inability to access a diasporic community.

### **Alternatives: diaspora and creolisation**

I now move from a discussion of the disruptive aspects of the novel to its more transformative qualities, and alternative modes of conceptualising difference imagined in *The World Waiting to be Made*. One of these alternatives can be read in light of creolisation, and its relationship with diaspora. The novel references a Malaysian Eurasian diasporic community in Perth, however it is not portrayed as providing an antidote to the narrator's sense of fragmentation and the narrator's relationship with diaspora is problematised. This leads me to consider the narrator's multiracial and transcultural aspects by engaging with creolisation as an alternative mode of approaching her subjectivity and experiences. Diaspora has been defined as being "held up by trauma" (Prabhu 2007, p. 10), as "the memory of shared trauma assures its cohesion in the present" (Prabhu 2007, p. 10), and literary scholar Anjali Prabhu makes a distinction between diaspora and creolisation, as she argues that the latter dispenses with trauma as a position from which to speak (2007, p. 10). "[D]iasporic discourses," Prabhu argues, rely "on a past trauma that justifies a present affiliation and solidarity, whereas creolizing discourses, even if not concerned with an actual erasure of the past trauma, direct their energies toward interaction and new connections in the present" (2007, p. 5). While Prabhu explores the significant degree of overlap between diaspora and creolisation theories, she also notes that many articulations of hybridity theory are situated in times involving colonial contact, or slavery and forced migration under colonialism, or the period involving migration from the colonies to the metropolis (2007, p. 10). Discourses of postdiaspora creolisation, on the other hand, have their origins in the 'New World', and the experiences of slavery and settler migration that occurred in those locations.

As the title of the novel demonstrates, *The World Waiting to be Made* places itself clearly in the context of a 'new world', even if Australia is not geographically located in the historical New World of the Americas. Furthermore, Prabhu's articulation of diaspora and creolisation indicates that the narrator's experiences, isolated as they are from diaspora, may yet find belonging in certain concepts of creolisation. While the narrator certainly suffers from racially based trauma, it is a double trauma of racism and rejection that originates from both sides of the ethnosexual frontier she lives within as a multiracial and transcultural individual. This particular type of trauma then, indicates that as someone who embodies racial and cultural mixing she may be

better placed to “direct [her] energies toward interaction and new connections in the present” (Prabhu 2007, p. 5). These possibilities are explored by the narrator herself towards the conclusion of the novel, where she considers “embrac[ing]” a future with an awareness and acceptance of her transcultural heritage (273), and will be examined in more detail in the following section.

### **Alternative ways of conceptualising difference**

In conjunction with the novel’s creolising aspects, *The World Waiting to be Made* also engages with alternative ways of knowing and sensing the world. In this section, I will explore the novel’s engagement with magical realism and syncretic spirituality, and how these aspects of the novel can be read in terms of Glissant’s concepts of Relation and creolisation, and Mignolo’s work on the colonial imaginary and border sensing and thinking.

One of the alternatives *The World Waiting to be Made* explores is the role of syncretic religion and spirituality in both articulating a multiracial and transcultural subjectivity and resisting multiculturalism’s more oppressive tendencies. In *The World Waiting to be Made*, the narrator and her family negotiate religion and spirituality both as a source of empowerment and a source of objectification and violence.

As has been discussed, white Australian and European perceptions of ‘Eastern mysticism’ inform several of their experiences as what is seen as ‘Asianness’ is constructed as containing deep spiritual mysteries. The white cosmo-multiculturalist idea of ‘Eastern mysticism’ is juxtaposed with the narrator and her family’s perceptions of Malaysian spiritual beliefs and Portuguese Eurasian Roman Catholicism. The narrator herself sees becoming a “good *bomoh*” as a form of defence against racism and non-belonging (123). Good *bomohs*, she muses, “have the power to protect people by means of charms” (123). A section of the text, which occurs in the middle of the novel, borders on magical realism, as the narrator seamlessly leaves her suburban, late-twentieth century life in Australia to travel in time and space throughout historical Malacca (126-131). Here, the narrator becomes a *bomoh* who magically reprimands the racism of both British colonisers towards Eurasians and her Eurasian Oldest Aunty towards her white mother (129). She cannot,

however, maintain the realism of this magic, as she jolts both herself and the reader back to her “Australian incarnation” (132).

Chris Warnes defines postcolonial forms of magical realism as:

a response to the “othering” that accompanies Western colonialism, supported as it is in the modern period by the universalist claims of reason. It is an attempt to escape from the violence, epistemic or actual, of rational truth’s “grasp on things” by calling into question post-Enlightenment certainties about what is real and what is not (2009, p. 152).

Viewed from this perspective, the narrator’s inability to fully embrace magical realism takes on an added significance. She seeks out, toys with, and aspires to being a *bomoh*, gifted with spiritual powers and transcending reason. However she cannot resist attempting to explain the supernatural away. Her inability to allow her narrative to become magical realist mirrors her inability to shed herself of internalised orientalism and go beyond her fear of being split in two, and to “delink” from the modern racial and colonial imaginary (Mignolo 2011a, p. 276).

Towards the culmination of the novel, when she finally meets her aging Uncle Linus, who is held in awe by her Eurasian family for his magical powers, the narrator still wavers on her acceptance of magic and the marvellous. Uncle Linus occupies a mythical position in her family, but what the narrator remembers most about him is “how full of pride and purpose [her] father had become at the mere mention of Uncle Linus’ name, even after a day of prejudice and powerlessness” in Australia (249). The narrator’s meeting with Uncle Linus symbolises the possibility of reconciliation between what she had previously perceived as her two halves, but which are, in fact, already racially and culturally mixed. It is Uncle Linus who reveals to her that the ‘Arab’ she thought was her father’s ancestor was in fact an Englishman who converted to Islam in order to have multiple wives (253), and that, while he may be a *bomoh* and “a bad Catholic” in some people’s reckoning (256), he nevertheless believes in God and makes the sign of the cross, often surreptitiously, in order to “find [his] way” (256).

Uncle Linus' casually mentions astral projection amidst his discussions of duty, God, and his reminisces about creating incense for the diverse religious groups in Malacca. The inclusion of traditional magic has the effect of questioning the dominance of Western forms of knowledge and rationality. Mignolo describes this form of knowledge as a "zero point epistemology" for its ability to portray itself as universal, rather than a local form of knowledge that is "universally projected" (2011, p. 161), over alternative worldviews and spiritualities, which are instead relegated to "myth, legend, folklore, local knowledge and the like" (Mignolo 2011, p. 161). In Uncle Linus' case, this worldview allows for Relation and *donner-avec* with difference, and with what appear to be conflicting religious traditions. The narrator reflects:

I found God difficult to think about... I found souls difficult to think about. God, Souls and Faith. Antique locked-up words that wouldn't let me in (260).

Her reference to God, souls and faith as antique indicates their status as concepts that have been relegated to the past, beyond the boundaries of modernity, however her description of them as "locked-up" also refers to her own situation of being locked in to the racial and colonial imaginary, and unable to delink. In spite of her appreciation of her uncle's message, his magical presence does not miraculously cure the narrator's ambivalence regarding her heritage, subjectivity and life in Australia, and provides no easy, celebratory way of being in-between. The novel concludes with a certain degree of tension, as the narrator realises that she must "struggle and embrace" (273), reflecting the ongoing process of Relation, which never solidifies into a fixed state or achievement.

The syncretism of Uncle Linus' life does evoke the possibility of transculturalism and rhizomatic cultural relations, which differ significantly from the humanitas/anthropos binary that Mignolo argues is a core aspect of the racial and colonial imaginary. While the word syncretism has historically been primarily used to refer to religion, often with a pejorative meaning (Stewart 1999, p. 46), the term has, to an extent, been adapted to refer to cultural mixing and has recently taken on a more positive connotation (Stewart 1999, p. 47-48). Syncretism refers to the union of

perceived opposites and, unlike terms such as hybridity, it implies reconciliation and the possibility of a new harmony emerging from this unification. As such, it relates directly to the word transculturalism, which Sneja Gunew identifies as “the latest term in a continuum to which multiculturalism belongs; a continuing quest to capture the hybrid realities of diaspora and globalisation” (2004, p. 127).

In order to read the novel’s exploration of alternative worldviews through the narrator’s interactions with her Uncle Linus, this section engages with the concept of transculturalism in order to explore how the dominant culture and marginalised cultures both consciously and unconsciously engage with and change each other, the process of which creates new, ever-changing cultural phenomena. This process is similar to Glissant’s articulation of *chaos-monde*, which he argues, when informed by Relation creates a way of interacting with the perceived Other that results in mutual respect and mutual change (1997, pp. 94-95). These qualities are reflected in Linus’ interactions with the Christian, Hindu and Muslim communities in the Malaysian town of Malacca, as well as his practice of traditional shamanism. Glissant’s concept of Relation further acknowledges the rhizomatic interconnection of what Valerie Loichot terms “the human family”, which ‘race’ otherwise attempts to split and fragment (2009, p 50). This interconnection is present in the novel through the narrator’s multiracial and transcultural family, and the friendships she begins to build in the Aboriginal community. However, both sets of relationships, as well as the narrator’s multiracial subjectivity, are put under pressure and fractured by racialised thinking. Relation then, can be read as both a descriptive term conveying a lived reality in the novel, and a prescriptive concept which provides an alternative to racial and colonial thought.

Transculturalism and Relation differ vastly to the Australian idea of multiculturalism, with its colonial antecedents. While multiculturalism allows for cultural and ethnic diversity, it does so in a way that not only privileges the white centre of Australia (Dhamoon 2010, p. 265), but also assumes that there are clear boundaries between each culture and its relationship with whiteness (Noble 2009, p. 47). Transculturalism, however, necessitates the dissolution of these boundaries, and the delinking from the racial and colonial imaginary, such as in Uncle Linus’ layered spirituality, and the

belonging that the narrator senses is possible, even if she does not quite achieve it within the borders of the novel.

Relation, furthermore, based on creolisation and transculturalism, which were explored earlier, can be used to read the novel's concluding scene. The concepts create the possibility of going beyond trauma without insisting it is forgotten or repressed. *The World Waiting to be Made* is focused on both the trauma and the possibilities of building productively on past trauma through articulating a worldview which allows for transcultural and multiracial subjectivities. At the novel's conclusion, the narrator writes of her family and friends in Australia:

There all of us were, our relationship to one another overwhelmed by our longing to imitate this vision of Australian life, to belong. There was a great struggle and shedding of ways within our houses and outside them...and so much of our past was not shared with anyone, and never handed down to our children, who play and skip in the surf with the neighbours' children, and are not torn so much by a feeling of belonging elsewhere (275).

This scene can be read as raising the possibility of transculturalism and Relation, however it is clear that neither have fully developed within the space of the text. The conclusion is, rather, infused with an acute sense of loss, a loss that is part of the process of acculturation rather than transculturalism. There is, however, also a sense of possibility, that those children, "who are not torn so much by a feeling of belonging elsewhere," as well as having lost much through their parents' "great struggle," also contribute something new that challenges the centrality of white Australia, which can be seen as what Glissant identifies as "the totalitarian root" which "kill[s] all around it" (1997, p. 11).

Rather, the children who play with the neighbours' children evoke the possibility of the rhizome: "an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently" (Glissant 1997, p. 11). The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a "totalitarian root" (Glissant 1997, p. 11). According to Glissant, "[r]hizomatic thought is the principle behind what [he] calls the Poetics of Relation,

in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other” (1997, p. 11). Glissant also refers to this ‘relationship with the Other’ as “*créolisation*...the meeting and synthesis of...differences” (1997, p. 34). The term creolisation refers, on one level, to racial mixing, however Glissant employs the term in such a way that it move away from “a narrow range of intermixing to become a relational practice affirming the multiplicity and diversity of [its] components” (Wing 1997, p 214). I suggest *The World Waiting to be Made* raises the possibility that the narrator’s life and that of her children will not only be concerned with mixed race or immigrant themes, but by reading the novel through Glissant’s concepts of opaque relationality I argue the novel’s ending implies an affirmation of a non-heirarchical ‘multiplicity and diversity.’

### **Conclusion**

As a novel *The World Waiting to be Made* substantially critiques the effects of the racial and colonial imaginary and does, in parts, disrupt its authority and explores alternative ways of perceiving the world. Through an exploration of the narrator’s varied experiences of racialisation, and a depiction of her internalisation of racial categories and the damaging and reductive effects they have on her and her family, the novel portrays race as a symptom of societal dysfunction that needlessly splits and fragments human relationships. It, furthermore, examines the segregation of those who are classed as white and those who are considered ‘ethnic’. Through its depiction of interracial relationships and the enduring effects of whiteness on the mixed race body, the novel challenges the assumption of inevitability and reality that surrounds race and racial identity.

Moreover, through an exploration of the narrator’s internalisation of racial and gender norms, the novel satirises and contests their power, while also depicting the trauma they inflict. Although the novel predominately focuses on the limited nature of white cosmo-multiculturalism as a mode of “managing” difference, and the traumatic effects of racialisation, it also explores potential alternative approaches to conceptualising perceived difference and relating to the other. While, as the example of the narrator’s aunt indicates, racial and cultural mixing and *métissage* does not equal an end of racism or racial categorisation, aspects of the narrator’s family and experiences do indicate the presence of transculturalism and Relation in the narrator’s

life, in spite of the overbearing and reductive effects of racialisation. Through the characters of the narrator's mother and uncle, the novel explores the potential of the concepts of Relation, border thinking and delinking, and presents them as alternatives to the more dominant approach of cosmo-multiculturalism and racialised culture.

In the days before her migration to Australia, the narrator stumbles over the pronunciation of the name of her new home. "Australia," her father tells her. "The world waiting to be made," and he "smiled... as if he could barely contain his sense of anticipation and optimism" (12). While their family's optimism is shaken and fragmented, the image of their new home as 'the world waiting to be made' is a constant refrain throughout the novel, reinforcing the text's sense of promise and possibility. Although the experiences of the narrator and her family present a scathing critique of tokenistic, commodified multiculturalism and the racist fantasies and desires of white Australia, the title of the novel, which is threaded throughout the narrative, evokes the prospect of moving beyond multiculturalism in the pursuit of an anti-racist and equal society. Through the narrator's meeting with the character of Uncle Linus, the novel raises the possibility of a syncretic transculturalism, whose fluidity and opacity would disrupt internalised orientalism and essentialised multiculturalism, leading to what Glissant terms a new form of "Relation, in freedoms" (1997, p. 190).

## FIVE

### “A form of insurrection”: disrupting the racial imaginary in Brian Castro’s *Shanghai Dancing*

*for those of us who cannot indulge  
the passing dreams of choice  
who love in doorways coming and going  
in the hours between dawns  
looking inward and outward  
at once before and after*

‘A Litany for Survival’ Audre Lorde, 2000

#### Introduction

As the previous chapter demonstrates, *The World Waiting to be Made* primarily intervenes in the modern racial and colonial imaginary through its critique of forms of cosmo-multiculturalism, reductive understandings, and racialisation. By way of contrast *Shanghai Dancing* (2003)<sup>11</sup> is a more destabilising and disruptive intervention. Furthermore, while *The World Waiting to be Made* follows a primarily progressive, *bildungsroman* format, *Shanghai Dancing* is a non-linear, multivalent narrative. Like *The World Waiting to be Made*, however, *Shanghai Dancing* also engages in a critique of Australian multicultural sentiment. Similarly, it examines the trauma of racialisation in both Western and non-Western contexts. The novel is particularly adept at demonstrating the traumatic effects of racial categorisation on the racially ambiguous body. Such a process of cataloguing can involve for the persons so categorised a fragmentation of the subject and a shattering of language, as well as the specific racialised prejudice that mixed race people encounter.

In this chapter, I focus on *Shanghai Dancing*’s portrayal of mixed race masculinity, which differentiates it from the female orientation of *The World Waiting to be Made*. I also examine the ways in which processes of racialisation are critiqued in both an Australian and Asian context, and racism is not portrayed as solely the domain of

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<sup>11</sup> All page numbers refer to *Shanghai Dancing* (2003) unless otherwise specified

Western societies. Instead, Castro uses mixed race experiences to reveal and critique racism and racial-thinking within Asian societies. He further portrays the ways in which these can crystallise into violence in his depiction of the Japanese Occupation of China and Hong Kong. I argue that a particular critique in *Shanghai Dancing* involves the representation of racialisation as an inherently traumatic process, and the novel depicts this through a focus on mixed race bodies and voices.

Mixed bodies also contribute to the novel's depiction of the inconsistency and irrationality of racial categories, and, significantly, the novel's destabilisation of these categories. Through a focus on multiracial, transnational bodies within the same family tree, *Shanghai Dancing* employs the motif of movement – particularly dance – to depict resistance and rhizomatic Relation in the face of racial thinking. This is also demonstrated through racial parody and passing, and multiracial resilience in the face of racial violence and trauma.

### **The Novel**

Published in 2003, Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing* is a multi-layered narrative that takes place at multiple temporal and geographical locations. It moves from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century and across Europe, Asia, Australia and South America. Through its movement across these locations, the novel explores characters who are part of the same family, which culminates with the present-day first-person narrator, António Castro. On his mother's side, António has white English and Chinese heritage. On his father's side, he has Jewish, Portuguese, Filipino, Japanese, Latin American and, it is implied, African ancestry. António, then, is multiply mixed, and his family history is the springboard by which *Shanghai Dancing* explores a global history of identity-based discrimination and colonial violence. What sets *Shanghai Dancing* apart from the other two novels is that the characters, narrator and novel itself are deliberately unreliable. The narrator, António, alternates between referring to himself in first and third person and the novel deliberately undercuts all notions of truth, authenticity, and concepts of a fixed and stable subject.

Significantly, António, the product of centuries of interracial and interethnic relationships, grows up in Australia. As a nation, Australia has historically been defined by its policies of racialised border control and the exclusion of non-white

potential migrants (Jupp 2002, p. 9), as well as racial violence and assimilation with regard to its Indigenous populations (Lake and Reynolds 2008). It is also characterised by racism and colonial racial hierarchies within its national borders with regard to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous racialised subjects (Perera 2009). It is notable, therefore, that the culmination of a global history of colonial violence in the novel is depicted as being the modern Australian nation.

The novel's Australia is a postcolonising space, where race is an implicit but powerful presence with tangible implications. In using the term 'postcolonising' I am taking up Aileen Moreton-Robinson's sense of this concept (2003). She argues that Australia is not a postcolonial nation, as it remains a settler colonial space with a troubled and unresolved relationship with its Indigenous people (Moreton-Robinson 2003, pp. 31-38). Other scholars have taken a similar position and argued that while Australia, as a nation state, is no longer part of the British Empire, it nevertheless replicates racial imperial structures within its borders (Hage 1998, Gunew 2004). These structures affect racialised groups within Australia, including the Indigenous population and the 'ethnic' population. While these two racialised aspects of Australian society are often examined as being distinct, there are connections across their differing experiences of racialisation and racism, and I will refer to both situations throughout this chapter.

### **Critique of the racial imaginary**

While *The World Waiting to be Made* critiques the racial and colonial imaginary through the narrator's voice and overt didacticism, *Shanghai Dancing* undertakes a more complex and nuanced critique of the of the alleged reality and rationality of racial categories, and a more thorough depiction of the trauma of racialisation. In particular, I argue that *Shanghai Dancing* looks specifically at the traumatic effects of racialisation on those who occupy racially ambiguous bodies and have multiracial ancestry.

The novel has a series of characters who are members of groups that occupy the thresholds of categories. By this term, I refer to those who, for reasons of race or religion, cannot be securely placed within pre-established categories, but who occupy a borderline space. In particular, the novel focuses on individuals who change faith, and those of Jewish or racially mixed heritage. This focus on people of blended or

indeterminable categorisation demonstrates the pervasive and fracturing nature of both racism and racial categories themselves, as racial categorisation is depicted as a painful and counter-intuitive process of being captured, constrained and split. Throughout this chapter, I will focus on the novel's depictions of several primary characters who are part of António Castro's family group in order to examine these effects. In particular I look at the experiences of his Eurasian mother Jasmine, her brother Willy, Jasmine and Willy's Chinese father Virgil, António's great-grandfather Manny, as well as Antonio himself. Through these characters I will examine the process of racialisation as a form of trauma, while I will explore António's ancestors Isaac, Isabella, Israel and his father Arnaldo in relation to the novel's qualities of disruption and resistance.

While *Shanghai Dancing* spends considerably less time focusing on Australian forms of racism and multiculturalism, it does critique the white cosmo-multiculturalism that is the primary focus of Lazaroo's novel, and this section examines the relationship between fixed racial and racialised cultural identity categories and trauma in the Australian context. Like the narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made*, Antonio experiences a "shattered racialised" identity (Hage 2010) in Australia, whereby he is never accepted into the nation because of his racial difference. In one of the sections of the novel called "Pillow Book" an unnamed narrator, who is identified towards the end of the novel as António's maternal grandfather, Virgil Wing, writes in the third person from his daughter Jasmine's point of view regarding their life in Australia. Jasmine reflects:

her son knows so much about this land. He can speak about eucalyptus and silver-eyes and can hear the sneeze of a fox at a hundred metres on a frosty morning. But when he mentions these things to others they are surprised and do not want to know. It is their country and he knows he is disappointing them by knowing and seeing and being like them. Sameness is a threat. Difference is a threat. Outsiders can only know themselves and shouldn't comment on others (357).

Like characters in *The Lost Dog*, who I will explore later in this thesis, António does not conform to expectations of racialised difference in Australia, where he is troubling

by virtue of his sameness overlaid with difference. The youthful femininity and personal vulnerability of the narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made* rendered her less of a threat and more of an exotic commodity to the predominately white, male Australian nation. However, António's surety of traditionally male Australian topics of expertise, and his ability to navigate the code of the bush while being racially ambiguous, threatens the self-described owners of Australia.

Ghassan Hage's discussion of assimilation and belonging in relation to young Muslim Australian men can be used to read António's situation. Hage describes them as troubling white Australia because of their ability to be both Muslim and Australian, over-spilling the boundaries of multicultural categories (2010, pp. 248-249). Similarly, António unsettles the white Australian centre not because of his refusal to integrate or assimilate, but because of his ability to assimilate on his own terms, and the threat he poses by being racially different and yet also being Australian. Both António and the young men Hage interviews see themselves as Australian in a way that threatens to displace the authority of whiteness in Australia to regulate which people of colour or ambiguous ethnicity are included, and to monitor, police and if necessary reverse this inclusion. António's access to Australianness, then, is challenged and resisted, primarily through a process of racialisation and rejection.

### **Race and reproduction in Australia and Asia**

As I have discussed in Chapter 3, colonialism is a deeply gendered process, and Antonio as a heterosexual man occupies a particular position in postcolonising Australia. In this context, António's combination of racial ambiguity and traits of traditional heterosexual Australian masculinity renders him a specifically gendered threat to the body of the nation. Part of this potential threat to white Australia can be seen in Antonio's relationships with white Australian women, however it is also mirrored in Asia in his relationships with the Chinese photographer Carmen and his Eurasian cousin Cindy in Hong Kong.

For a time, António finds partial acceptance by white Australia in his marriage to a white Australian woman;<sup>12</sup> however, this acceptance is again, conditional with regard

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<sup>12</sup> It is implied that Ruthie is Jewish (77), however this is not clearly articulated in the novel.

to his racial interpellation. Although she is willing to marry him, his wife Ruthie informs him adamantly that she does not want to “have Chinese babies” (196). Ruthie’s perception of António is contrasted and yet complemented by his first sexual experience, which is shown to the reader through António’s memories towards the end of the novel.

After spending time in Europe and Asia, a middle-aged António briefly travels back to Australia and visits his rural property, where he recalls working as a roustabout on a farm in his youth. In this early period his employer’s wife, Mrs Beauchamp, makes sexual overtures towards him one evening, and when he responds they become lovers for a while. She calls him “boy” numerous times, affectionately referencing his lack of sexual experience but also highlighting his racialised position as a young non-white farmhand (365). She also offers to buy him books when she learns that he would like to be a writer (365). This indicates there is a transactional nature and inequality within their relationship, which evokes themes also present in *The World Waiting to be Made*. That she is keenly aware of his racial difference is portrayed in a paragraph, where António recalls her shouting “[o]n the hybrid” (original italics) during sex, “her erotic spurs [digging] deep into racial curiosity” (365). Here the word “spurs”, when combined with the term “hybrid”, alludes to the animal the mule, a cross-between a horse and a donkey, which was often used as a metaphor and biological comparison for people of mixed race in the nineteenth century (Young 1995, p. 8). Significantly, the mule is sterile and unable to reproduce, therefore its “hybrid” qualities exist for only one generation and the populations of horses and donkeys are not threatened by unregulated interbreeding.<sup>13</sup> While Ruthie essentialises António’s multiracial identity as Chinese, and rejects it, Mrs Beauchamp sexualises the same multiracial aspects of his identity that Ruthie’s represses. In doing so, she uses the term “hybrid”, which, in spite of its more recent incorporation into postcolonial scholarship to refer to cultural blending, still carries a history of nineteenth century racist science, which was troubled by the apparently unnatural crossings between ‘races’ (Young 1995, pp. 26-28).

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<sup>13</sup> This was an early stereotype about mixed race people (Young 1995, p. 8), which is evoked by António’s childlessness. However, other mixed race characters in the novel reproduce many times, notably António’s father Arnaldo, and this enhances their disruptive effect.

Both women's attitudes accept and reinforce the concept of biological 'race', and the links between race, gender and reproduction. Their relationships with António are more transitory, accentuating racial exoticism, while avoiding the danger of reproducing racial difference. While António's elements of sameness and difference might render him an exotic sexual partner, or possibly a candidate for a specific type of marriage, his status as a potential father is more dubious. As I discussed in my analysis of *The World Waiting to be Made*, Australia's racial purity has often been depicted as resting in the body of a white woman. Ruthie's refusal to have children with António reflects the nation's anxiety regarding uncontrolled and unidentifiable racial difference. Similarly, António's relationship with Mrs Beauchamp ends when her husband discovers them, and warns him away from his wife and land with a pistol (365), making clear the links between the control of white women's sexuality and sovereignty over the Australian landscape. António's white female partners' desire for him, however, indicates a broader white Australian desire for safe and controllable, fetishised difference that does not overspill clearly defined boundaries.

As an extra-marital affair, Mrs Beauchamp's relationship with Antonio is illicit, which conforms to stereotypes regarding interracial relationships (Stoler 2002, p. 51). Ruthie's marriage to António, however, is a state-sanctioned relationship. As a result, it represents a quest for multicultural, liberal tolerance, which is physically represented by his mixed race body.<sup>14</sup> Ruthie's rejection of potentially mixed race children, however, is particularly telling in relation to the politics and discomfort that surrounds both interracial sex and multiracial people. While she is willing to marry António, a racially ambiguous foreign body, the concept of having children with him proves too mentally and emotionally troubling for her. Ruthie's children with António would be Australian and yet not purely white; Jewish and yet Catholic and Protestant; a product of her own body and yet something alien to her. They would be like her and yet different, at the same time. Ruthie's reaction to the prospect of multiracial 'Chinese' babies evokes Freud's concept of the uncanny, whereby that which is familiar and alike is repressed, and rendered terrifying as the similarity nevertheless seeps through the repression to create sense of discomfort and strangeness (2003, p.

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<sup>14</sup> As I will discuss in my analysis of *The Lost Dog*, Tom, a similar figure to António, also believes his first wife married him for this reason.

154). As a result it becomes easier for Ruthie to reject and render abject her potential mixed race children (Kristeva 1982, p. 3). She erases all thought of their sameness, and, in spite of the fact that they are of her body, casts them out as “Chinese babies”, thereby attempting to erase their markers of sameness and render them eternally different.

In the early parts of the novel in Shanghai, Antonio’s Chinese girlfriend Carmen discovers she is pregnant and has a termination, echoing Ruthie’s disavowal of the possibility of having a child with Antonio. The placement of Antonio as a figure of sexual desire but also paternal repulsion evokes concepts of ambivalence, which numerous scholars have linked to processes of racialisation. As Robert Young points out, racism and concepts of race themselves, hinge on a “dialectic of attraction and repulsion” (2005, p. 166) which seem “to lie at the heart of racism” (2005, p. 108). He argues:

racism and their intermixture circulate around an ambivalent axis of desire and aversion: a structure of attraction, where people and cultures intermix and merge, transforming themselves as a result, and a structure of repulsion, where the different elements remain distinct and are set against each other dialogically. The idea of race here shows itself to be profoundly dialectical: it only works when defined against potential intermixture, which also threatens to undo its calculations altogether (2005, p. 18).

The scene that Castro produces of a white woman’s maternal repulsion of potential mixed race children symbolises the historical and still lingering wider Australian national concerns regarding race, interracial sexuality, and multiracial people. It calls to mind Australia’s history of attempting processes of assimilation with regard to Aboriginal children of mixed ancestry. Across the twentieth century various governments and institutions argued that Aboriginal children with European ancestry could be socialised to become white (Moran 2005), however this pursuit of assimilation was never predicated on equality and full inclusion (Perkins 2004).

Maureen Perkins (2004) argues that, given the strength of racial fears in the Western world that traits of ‘colour’ would break out and reveal themselves in even the whitest

of people with mixed heritage, Australia never really expected multiracial Aboriginal children to become full members of white Australian society. Rather, those children were offered a “false whiteness” that they could never “truly achieve” in an attempt to create an “underclass of servants and labourers” (Perkins 2004, pp. 173-174). Assimilation is offered, like whiteness, as a false promise (Hage 2010). In relation to António’s situation in *Shanghai Dancing* Perkins’ point demonstrates the persistent attempts in Australia to police and control racial difference, particularly in its more ambiguous, multiracial forms. A racialised other can only assimilate on white terms, not on terms of their own.

Furthermore, with regard to the partly white multiracial subject such as António and the children of the Stolen Generations, assimilation into whiteness must be even more carefully policed and guarded. The fact that multiracial Aboriginal children were institutionalised and controlled indicates a level of anxiety at the possibility that, rather than ‘assimilate’ into a coloured underclass under white authority, or even live traditional Aboriginal lives as people of colour with white heritage, they might in fact freely pass and move into white society of their own will and accord (Perkins 2004). Ruthie’s fearful and disgusted refusal to have of “Chinese babies” mirrors this fear of the racially other taking root and growing within the white body of the nation, emerging as a sameness that is different while simultaneously marking out changes on that body.

António’s childlessness in both white Australia and China reflects his otherness in both contexts, as the very difference that renders him desirable is also a source of potential racial transformation and contamination. Significantly, the only woman António imagines having children with is his Eurasian cousin Cindy Ling, a woman whose mixed background mirrors his own (196). This desire also troubles António, however, because of their close familial relationship, and it reflects the long and complex history between social and cultural representations and discussion of miscegenation and incest as two primary sexual taboos. As Werner Sollors points out, the taboo against incest was often used to justify rules against miscegenation, and they were often positioned as representing the two deviant extremes of sexual reproduction (1999, p. 314). Whereas incest is “too much sameness...the same mating

with the same...[t]oo much difference is miscegenation, the same mating with the wholly different” (Hillis Miller 2010, p. 160-161).

This duality, however, collapses in cases such as António and Cindy, where two members of the same family both embody different races and invoke the incest trope.<sup>15</sup> A similar collapse is read by Sollors in many works of American Southern fiction, whereby incest and miscegenation simultaneously occur as a result of plantation slavery and the relationships between multiracial slave women and their white brothers, cousins and other male relatives (1999, p. 341). In the context of *Shanghai Dancing*, the false incest/miscegenation binary is used to highlight the anxieties surrounding mixed race bodies, which involve their concurrent racial sameness and difference, while also depicting the fictive qualities of race, given its varying existence within one family unit.

### **Racialisation in Asia**

What is clear in *Shanghai Dancing* is that whiteness and Western society do not have the monopoly on racism or racialisation. This is implicitly highlighted through Ruthie’s position as a representative of white Australia who may also be Jewish. While, in late-twentieth century Sydney, Ruthie’s potential Jewishness does not render her racially other, Castro does explore the persecution of Jewish people in other social and historical contexts (83-90), demonstrating the fluid nature of racism and emphasising the potential for racially oppressed groups to also exhibit racist tendencies.

Racialisation and discrimination within Asian societies is a key theme in *Shanghai Dancing*. While *The Lost Dog* and *The World Waiting to be Made* touch on this, *Shanghai Dancing* challenges and displaces the concept that whiteness has control of the racialisation of ‘others’. White, Western societies such as Australia are sensitised to certain types of difference, perceiving whiteness as the norm and therefore invisible (Kelen 2012, p. 203). Non-white societies, such as those in Asia, are also arguably sensitised to difference, however in this case that difference may take the form of whiteness, or traces of whiteness, on a multiracial body (as well as recognising other

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<sup>15</sup> Cindy is of Chinese and English ancestry, whereas António’s heritage is much more diverse.

non-white bodies). This whiteness is both affected by local understandings of racial difference and, in turn, politicised by colonial incursions into the Asian region, and a local awareness of Western racism (Hotta 2007, pp. 23-24; Chen 2010, p. 267). This meeting of Western concepts of race with local understandings of ethnic identities and hierarchies creates a tenuous position for multiracial families such as Antonio's, whereby in some cases they partially benefit from the colonising powers while never gaining the trust and acceptance of either the local or colonising communities.

When António travels back to Shanghai from Australia as a middle-aged man at the beginning of the novel, he is immediately identified to locals as a foreigner based on his appearance and phenotype alone. He is greeted by calls of "Hello English", or spoken to in Russian or Mongolian, observing to himself that he "passed for both" (12). He further thinks of himself as,

the eternal foreigner they look twice at, want to know if you speak the language or celebrate Christmas or whether you would like directions to the train station ... these divagations led only to one thing, to bed or not to bed (344).

António's musings in this scene oscillate between Asia, the West and the in-between-ness of voyaging and travel, to the extent that the effects of racialisation are not confined to any one cultural or geographical location, but rather inscribe themselves on Antonio's racially ambiguous body regardless of where in the world he is.

His reflection that the confusion he elicits as a multiracial person leads "only to one thing, to bed or not to bed", suggest that António's sense of how he is perceived is in terms of desirability. His mixed-ness or ambiguity can be read as alien and repulsive or 'exotic' and desirable. These readings function both in terms of racialised sexual relationships and reproduction, and also in a broader sense of desirability within a national space. This latter aspect can be seen in the benign curiosity his appearance elicits – does he have the same customs; does he need help with directions? Such benevolence, however, is limited, and does not extend to acceptance in the national space. It similarly relates to the unnamed narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made*, and the novel's depictions of white Australia's objectifying, welcoming attitude

towards her, which is only ever predicated on conditional, exoticised forms of inclusion. However it also relates to her experiences in Singapore, as her relatives also have racialised assumptions about her as a Western woman that render her foreign because of her white ancestry.

### **Racism in Asia during the Second World War**

As the above section suggests, processes of racialisation, and the othering of racially mixed people, occurs throughout Asian as well as Western societies. In this section I would like to examine the ways in which racial categories function during a time of internal Asian conflict and imperialism, specifically the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation of China and Hong Kong. In order to do this I will focus on the sections of the novel that depict the experiences of António's parents, uncles and grandparents during the war.

Like António, his parents Jasmine and Arnaldo are also of mixed heritage. While both Jasmine and Arnaldo were born and raised in China, the Japanese identify them as foreigners rather than locals because of their racially mixed ancestry. Although Arnaldo and Jasmine live relatively privileged lives in multiracial enclaves in Hong Kong as young people in the lead-up to the Second World War, in the aftermath of the Japanese invasion their status as non-Chinese residents takes on an added meaning.

An important theme of the novel is the way in which racial categories are employed at both a state and personal level to split families and individuals who do not conform to normative categories. While this is depicted in Western societies in all the novels, *Shanghai Dancing* focuses closely on the ways in which a broad range of cultures and contexts inflict racial violence through categorisation. In relation to the Japanese Occupation, the novel highlights the racist thinking involved in this process of 'Pan-Asian' imperialism, whereby Japanese forces attempted to harness decolonial, anti-European sentiment in order to justify their own colonial expansion (Hotta 2007, pp. 23-24). The novel charts the ways in which peoples' fates are determined by race during this time of war. For example, Dora Siddle, António's English grandmother and Jasmine's mother, is placed in an internment camp for white British subjects, and treated with a degree of interest and tolerance by the Japanese as a result of her marriage to an Asian man. Virgil Wing, Dora's Chinese husband and Jasmine's

father, is initially ignored as a local Chinese, until his skills as a surgeon are discovered and he is recruited to work for the Japanese military. Jasmine and Arnaldo, who are both mixed race, are interpellated as racial foreigners and interned as a result. Significantly, neither are placed in camps with white British nationals. Rather, they occupy camps designated for assorted ‘others’ who do not conform to either East Asian or Western European categories. A fellow internee of Arnaldo’s, Mickey Guterres, reflects that in their camp most of them:

were Filipinos or Portuguese or Spanish. [He] didn’t know until later that there was a whole British contingent on the other side of the yards ... three years and [they] never set eyes on each other. Was it some racial theory? (306).

Mickey’s question highlights the wider history and context of the Second World War on both the European and Pacific fronts, referencing the culmination of a century of scientific racism and eugenicist concepts in the forms of both the Holocaust and Japanese internment camps in Asia.

It becomes clear that, even in the Asian arena of the war, race plays a substantial role in the experiences of António’s family, reflecting Japan’s own imperial ambitions and concepts of racial identity at the time. While Dora and the British women she is interned with endure hunger and mistreatment, members of Jasmine’s camp, who are “all foreigners...though none were English” (301) are routinely raped and sexually abused. Jasmine’s trauma, which manifests more significantly in the latter parts of the novel, is evidently linked to her experiences of sexual violence during the Second World War, however it is difficult to disentangle this experience of violence and her racialised identity as a non-European, non-Chinese ‘other’. While both her mother and father are given a degree of deference and freedom respectively, based on their English and Chinese identities, Jasmine’s ethnicity as a racially mixed woman does not afford her similar protection.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to imply that non-mixed Asian and European women did not suffer either internment or sexual violence during the Japanese Occupation of the Asia-Pacific. For more detail on these occurrences see Yoshiaki Yoshimi (2000), Sarah Soh (2009), Maria Henson (1999) and Dai Sil Kim-Gibson (2001).

This relationship between racial violence and racially ambiguous bodies is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in relation to Jasmine's eldest brother, Willy. Throughout *Shanghai Dancing*, António's maternal uncle Willy is described as looking the most Chinese of his siblings, unlike his brother George who "had blue eyes and looked like a Hollywood star" (37) and his sister, whose racial ambiguity is described as both striking and the cause of her mental and emotional difficulties in later life. "It was because she was *Eurasian*" (original italics), Willy tells António. "Nobody made her feel at home. There was nowhere she belonged" (388). He then remarks, "I'm glad... that I look so Chinese" (388). Willy's comments are given an added layer of meaning when it is revealed at the denouement of the novel that he, like his brother George, was once fair-haired and blue-eyed.

The child of an upper-class Chinese plastic surgeon and an English missionary, Willy was taken prisoner by the Japanese during the Second World War and placed on a Japanese prison ship, which was torpedoed by Allied planes. As a result, his blond hair was burnt off during the attack and his blue irises were blackened by injury. António's maternal grandfather Virgil comments in his journal that Willy should have died from his injuries, but he was saved in order to serve as a racial experiment, as the Japanese authorities grew "interested in seeing him transformed" (431). This attempt to constrain and control unregulated, multiracial bodies through forced assimilation or exclusion and extermination relates to the Holocaust in Europe, which is the most well-known instance of racial violence, but also to Australian state practices involving the forced removal of multiracial Aboriginal children and the attempt to, within carefully controlled limits, assimilate them into white society.

On the orders of General Toshishige, Virgil is given the option of allowing his son to die, or making him "Asian this Chinese European Eurasian son of [his] whose blind blue eyes and singed flaxen hair" are described as "an insult to his race" (431). Virgil chooses to undertake the surgery, effectively saving Willy's life, however his intentions towards his son are ambivalent. Earlier sections of the novel demonstrate that Virgil clearly resents his first-born child, at one point imagining strangling him when he is a baby (130), hearkening back to Ruthie's repulsion at the idea of giving birth to mixed race children. The pressure Virgil faces to inflict racially based violence on his son in the name of rectifying the "insult" to the "race" of 'Asians'

causes him to question his own paternal role and reject his son. In order to do this, Virgil draws on concepts that are heavily loaded with racial and sexual stereotypes, which victimise both his wife and his son in order to mitigate his own culpability. Virgil's resentment is explained by his fear that Willy is "the offspring of a bestial love" (432). He theorises that the rumours of his wife, Dora Siddle's, rape by Virgil's warlord father are true and that Willy is his half-brother, not his son (432). Virgil blames his wife's "promiscuity" for this event, believing that as "a white woman...her promiscuity was to be expected" (432), and he uses this thought to excuse himself from the guilt he feels at the "ferocious obliteration" of his son's face (432).

Virgil's thoughts weave together perceptions of violence, illicit sex, lax morality and racial contamination to justify the deformation of his son in attempt to make him racially singular rather than plural and, by association, racially 'clean'. His actions, however, inflict a particular trauma on Willy, physically and metaphorically splitting his racially mixed body and subjectivity, forcing him to suppress one aspect of his heritage in favour of another in an act that renders him physically and psychically wounded. This act is further compounded by Willy's paternal rejection for being both multiracial and the alleged child of "promiscuity", which his ascetic father deprecates and which has been an historic stereotype regarding the origins and futures of multiracial people.

Virgil's emotions, however, remain ambivalent during the operation, as he vacillates between guilt and horror and a form of fascination at "the miracle at work beneath [his] hands" (431). Not even the intrusion of António's father, Arnaldo, into the operating room can shake him from his absorption in his work (432). Virgil perceives Arnaldo, however, as "the devil himself" and "a hallucination of terrible dimension" who points an accusing finger at him as he operates on Willy's face (432). Arnaldo is married to Virgil's Eurasian daughter, and is multiracial himself, having Portuguese, Chinese, Brazilian, Japanese, Jewish and possibly African ancestry. Virgil describes him as "a jostler through the city gates" and deprecates his "promiscuity" stating "Oh how I hated his promiscuity! How I still hate promiscuity!" (432). Arnaldo's intrusion into the operating room, therefore, brings to the fore Virgil's guilt and his fear regarding his own involvement in both racial and sexual transgressions and mixing. Virgil perceives Arnaldo's entrance and hasty exit as signs of both accusation and "a

pact [being] concluded and a testament witnessed and galvanised” (432). Even though the novel reveals in an earlier section that Arnaldo does not recognise the event for what it is, after the war Virgil becomes embroiled in a feud with his son-in-law for the remainder of his life.

This scene demonstrates several problematic strands regarding both the perceptions and experiences of multiracial people in the worlds of *Shanghai Dancing*. As a Eurasian, Willy occupies a tenuous position in both the family and the broader racial group, as demonstrated here in General Toshishige’s concept of what it means to be ‘Asian’. Illustrated here are the cross-racial and cross-cultural qualities of prejudice towards racially ambiguous bodies of multiracial ancestry.<sup>17</sup> The novel, furthermore, locates this core scene, and the trauma undergone by Jasmine and Willy, during the time of the Second World War. This conflict was effectively the peak of overt colonial efforts to assert a racialised colonial modernity and the period during which the effects of racialised colonial expansion turned inwards upon Europe in the form of the Holocaust.

Simultaneously, decolonising endeavours both gained further momentum and often involved a racialised backlash against colonial powers, and groups seen to support these powers. In the case of the Japanese Occupation of Asia, concepts of Pan-Asianism and anti-Western sentiment were employed to justify Japanese invasion and colonisation of the Asian region, positioning the Japanese forces as ‘liberating’ fellow Asians from white oppression (Saaler 2007; Saaler and Szpliman 2011, p. 25). This anti-Western, Pan-Asianist backlash against colonial oppression (Kramer 2012, p. 206), manifests itself in violence towards racially ambiguous bodies – particularly those known to embody a history of interracial relationships and symbolising the intermeshing of the colonial and the local. Here, Willy’s English heritage becomes a marker of both colonising forces, and the changes made by colonisation on Asian nations and societies. The Japanese order to surgically alter his features, furthermore, reflects an attempt to undo Western influence through violent Asian colonialism and the assertion of a militant and exclusive Asian identity.

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<sup>17</sup> For more detail on nineteenth and twentieth century Chinese and Japanese attitudes towards race and racial hierarchies, see Frank Dikötter (1997), Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010), Leo Ching (2005).

Furthermore, the phrase “make him Asian” literally takes race at face value. The obliteration of visible traces of Willy’s English heritage is portrayed as the key to solving the dilemma of a racially mixed person, and confers a less problematic Asian identity solely through phenotype and colouring. Similarly, Virgil is positioned as transgressing and betraying his ‘race’ by fathering multiracial children with Dora Siddle, and his opportunity to make his son “Asian” is presented as his act of atonement in the eyes of the Japanese General.

This scene serves as a metaphor for the wider experience of multiraciality as portrayed in the three novels. It is a depiction of the inconsistent and uneven nature of racial categories, which belie the rationality on which they are allegedly based. The meanings of racial purity as well as sexual morality are portrayed as not only fluid and shifting, but as subject to manipulation and control by those in power. This illustrates the complex nature of multiracial agency and subjectivity. While, as this thesis demonstrates, the novels do explore spaces of creative resistance and concepts of cultural relations that allow space for ambivalent and multifarious heritages and identities, they do not assert that simply by ‘being multiracial’ one has access to these spaces. Rather, these spaces need to be actively carved out, often in opposition to powerful ideas regarding race, racial purity and inter/multi-racial gender and relationships, which, while fluid, are often directed by dominant rather than marginal voices and forces.

### **Racialisation and trauma**

While Willy’s experience is extreme and occurs in a situation of warfare, occupation and physical violence, it serves as a metaphor for the “psychic trauma” of many multiracial experiences that can be caused by non-physical factors (Brown 1995). Trauma is a key concept used in contemporary scholarship to make sense of the experiences of the mid-twentieth century European and Asia-Pacific wars (LaCapra 1996, 2013). As the vignette above suggests the experiences of traumas are multiple, however, trauma has been predominately conceived within a Western, male-dominated framework that relies on concepts of event-based trauma which sees trauma as being “an event that is outside the range of human experience” (Brown 1995, p. 100). Maria Root’s concept of insidious trauma is a newer contribution to the

field which addresses the non-physical effects of trauma encountered by minority populations and encompasses racialisation and gender-based discrimination (1992). Along with Root's concept of insidious trauma, postcolonial models of trauma are most useful for this analysis and I engage with these ideas to undertake the following considerations of the Wing-Castro family's experiences

Within *Shanghai Dancing* itself, Willy wears his racial trauma physically on his scarred face, however his siblings, George and Jasmine, carry less visible wounds. George is a secondary character in the novel whose experiences are underexplored, however he is portrayed as a long-term opium addict who is emotionally troubled. Jasmine, furthermore, is shown to suffer from race-related anxiety as a result of exposure to a lifetime of insidious trauma, as well as post-traumatic stress after her experience during the Japanese Occupation.

It is impossible to untangle the strands of Jasmine's suffering and classify them neatly into racially-based trauma, the trauma of internment and war and gender-based trauma, as Jasmine experiences the intersections of all three forms over the course of her life. In the eyes of her brother Willy and her son António, however, her race is the dominating factor in her life, interwoven with the other traumas, and it contributes to her mental deterioration. This deterioration is most powerfully represented in terms of language and voice (388). Jasmine's English mother, Dora, describes her as "a strong-willed girl who let everything happen to her and could never make herself understood. English being her worst subject" (218). In the spaces of Shanghai and Hong Kong, English is not the most common language but it occupied a dominant position in the mid-twentieth century world of the novel as the language of the British Empire and trade.

In Australia, where English is both the dominant and most widespread language, Jasmine's inarticulateness reaches new heights, as she finds herself unable to "buy her lunch at the factory canteen in case she jumbled up her words" (388). While the "other women" – implied to also be migrants of non-Anglo ethnicities – "went hell for leather in Italian, Greek, whatever came to hand...Jasmine...went without lunch for days" (388). Her lack of speech extends to an inability to buy bus tickets, so Jasmine takes to walking. Her son, the novel's narrator, reflects:

When she spoke of her days all her associations were with walking. If she kept on the move she wouldn't be targeted... After she died, it all became clear: her complex was bound with race. She couldn't use the word with this other meaning. She walked fast. Ran when no one was looking, to get there first before the final clause was added (388).

Jasmine's silence, and her fear of speech, testifies to the paradoxical, ambivalent and seemingly inexpressible nature of her experience of racial and gender-based trauma as a mixed race woman.

As her brother Willy notes, Jasmine's experience of indirect racial violence is not limited to her time in Australia, but also occurs in China and Hong Kong. Willy refers to a standard trope relating to people of mixed race to describe Jasmine's experience to her son António: "[S]he was *Eurasian*. Nobody made her feel at home. There was nowhere she belonged" (388). What is clear in Willy's interpretation of the trope, however, is that the blame for Jasmine's unhappiness should not be attributed to a flaw in her character. Willy specifically emphasises that it was not because "she was overly sensitive", rather, she was discriminated against (388). "Nobody made her feel at home" because she was racially mixed, and the responsibility and blame for this fact, in Willy's interpretation, lies with wider society and not with Jasmine.

Jasmine's trauma is depicted as being one example in the modern era's long history of racial discrimination, which is portrayed in the novel as transgenerational traumas spanning a rhizome of familial relations. Jasmine's trauma-induced inability to speak mirrors an experience of her husband's multiracial forbear, Manny, who grows up in the Filipino village of Balangiga in the nineteenth century with a natural gift for music and an ability to hear "divine songs" (117). Of Jewish, Portuguese, Japanese, Filipino and African heritage, Manny is known to be multiracial and is frequently described as a *mulatto*, or mule, by the Spanish colonisers. The Spanish, in Manny's opinion, are the only people who can't hear "the divine songs which undertook the preservations of worlds, by which he means the collection of particles of pure enchantment given to people entirely consumed by the spirit of freedom" (117), which makes it seem strange to Manny, that the Spanish view his people as "less than

human” (117). The Spanish, however are “said to have an aggressive turn of mind which [makes] them speak only of government and reason” (117) and through attempting to educate Manny in European rules of music they begin to stifle his ability.

By drawing inspiration from nature and the environment of his village, Manny intuitively composes music on his uncle’s guitar, however he soon finds that he can no longer repeat the same melody twice, “because someone or other always disagreed and either inserted extra notes or remembered more clearly than he did” (118). Manny tries to “mark down notes the way a visiting friar once taught him to do” and to “remember keys” (118). The same friar affectionately calls Manny “*a mulatto, a freak of nature [and a] mule*” (118) and Manny reflects:

[L]ike the notes, he had been marked out by others. It was such things from the larger world which brought a key to his confusion. He could only see himself as a kind of improvisation, a *cadenza*. In order to have his place in history he would have to understand the nature of sacrifice and resistance (118).

Unable to play music because of this uncertainty, Manny decides that he must need Spanish “government and reason” in order to be a successful musician. Hearing that the Spanish government is sponsoring Filipinos to travel to Spain to receive an education, he travels to Manila to apply. When he arrives, a local Spanish soldier interrogates him, demanding to know his name and warning him “[d]on’t come the smart one with me, Mr Mulatto” (119). Later in the same scene, when he tells the soldier that his community calls him Manny, the soldier responds, “I don’t give a stuff what they call you. I call you a *mule*” (119). Here, the soldier, with more brutal and derogatory intent, echoes the friar’s racist terms to categorise Manny. The two figures – the benign friar and the aggressive soldier – reflect two sides of the colonial endeavour. In relation to a more contemporary setting, they also highlight the ways in which Western liberal tolerance and hostile racism often maintain the same racial categories and deploy the same language to racialise difference. Manny then, is an endearing “freak” to the friar, while his mixity and ‘smartness’ make him an object of suspicion and attack from the soldier. Both colonial figures, however, mark him out racially as unusual and mixed. After the soldier is satisfied with Manny’s identity, he

demands that he play something on his uncle's guitar. His ability already stifled by the intrusion of a perceived need for order and "reason", Manny is unable to, and as a punishment the official takes his guitar and breaks it into pieces.

For Manny, whose speech is like singing, music is a form of talking and, as it does with Jasmine a century later, the weight of racial trauma suppresses his voice. Jasmine fears being inarticulate and jumbling up her words when speaking English, just as she fears the concept of race catching up with her and categorising her. Jasmine measures her racial ambiguity by a standard that she can never achieve, as the Spanish do to Manny a century earlier. Manny internalises Spanish perceptions of him as "a freak of nature", although he subverts the negativity of this assumption, considering himself an "improvisation" and a "*cadenza*". He does, however, believe that he can only be a true musician with a European education. Initially, he turns his back on his intuitive relationship with music that relies on his connection to his environment and hometown of Balangiga, which:

sounded like wind-chimes, had only a musical language...[and] no tenses, so that time had no past, present, or future, but was a continuous combination of dream and history, which is now and ever shall be...Balangiga (117-118).

Manny, however does not completely give up on music. He continues to improvise, and takes to busking in the hope of being sponsored to travel to Spain for an education. His application however, is rejected, as the office of the Governor-General informs him that they only send "indigenous peasants" to Spain, not "mulattoes" (120). As a result, Manny joins the resistance against the Spanish colonisation of the Philippines, and is eventually exiled with his family to Shanghai, where they live "relatively harmoniously" (121). As an old man, however, Manny is physically and mentally finally defeated by one last colonial intrusion. His son brings him the news in 1902 that American soldiers have massacred the inhabitants of Balangiga, wiping out the town and stealing the church bells as "war booty" (122). On hearing the news, Manny's "heart [breaks]" both metaphorically and physically, and he dies from a "coronary occlusion" (122).

The lives of both Jasmine and Manny are marked by thwarted expressive potential and stifling sensations of fear, self-doubt and the belief that they are inherently inadequate by external – in their cases, colonial – standards. While Jasmine’s ability to communicate is permanently fractured by social pressures upon mixed race people, Manny recoups some of his musical ability and finally resists the full intrusion of colonial racist values into his mind. Ironically, it is the act of the Spanish colonial official breaking his uncle’s guitar that liberates Manny from his inability to express himself musically. This is demonstrated by his response to the official, who has not only stolen and broken his property, but who has also racially abused him. After his guitar is smashed, Manny merely says, “[T]hank you” (118). While this depicts Manny’s disempowered position, as a colonised ‘mulatto’, it also marks the moment that Manny begins to play music again, freed, at least temporarily, from his fixation on learning Western music. Without a guitar, Manny realises once more that the “music wouldn’t stop. It was all he had” (118), and he begins to play again, using his voice and “two boards of wood from his broken guitar as rhythmic accompaniment” to busk until he can afford a new guitar (118). In this way, Manny survives his trauma.

As he does when he subverts being “a freak of nature” into being “a *cadenza*”, with all its connotations of beauty, skill and freedom, Manny takes the ruins of his guitar, left to him by colonial violence, and adapts them into instruments of self-expression. Manny demonstrates his resilience and resistance to such violence throughout the numerous setbacks of his life, surviving racism, physical and psychic violence, a leg amputation and political exile. He grows to accept that he cannot write music and “sadly [comes] to admit that the great world [is] closed to him forever” (122). The source of his strength, however, is rooted in his childhood community and environment, which is the town of Balangiga, and its destruction, and the massacre of its populace, is an act of colonial violence that Manny cannot survive.

### **Race, gender and trauma**

While both Jasmine and Manny suffer from trauma-induced silence, Jasmine’s experience of racial violence as a woman of mixed race in twentieth century China, Hong Kong and Australia differs to Manny’s in several key respects. Although Jasmine’s brother Willy asserts that her mental and emotional difficulties later in life

occur because she is “Eurasian” not “because she [is] a woman” (388), her English mother Dora links them to the fact that Jasmine was a “strong-willed girl who let everything happen to her” (218). What is clear is that both explanations are relevant to Jasmine’s life, and her experiences of racial trauma are clearly gendered. As a mixed race woman, Jasmine’s experience of race is woven together with her experiences as a woman, and neither one can be separated from the other. As a woman in a patriarchal society Jasmine, compared to Manny, faces more impediments when trying to subvert her experience of violence or expel the intrusion of racist perceptions from her mind. Like Manny, however, she learns to survive and live with trauma for a time, although she never recovers her voice.

There are many ways to understand Jasmine’s silence. In *Whiteness and Trauma*, Victoria Burrows notes that silence “is an inherently ambivalent word. It can protect, dignify and honour, or it can erase, subjugate and oppress, and the spaces between the two are often blurred” (2004, p. 161). Silence can perform acts of resistance, as has been explored in relation to the trauma of racially-motivated rape in Achmat Dangor’s 2003 novel *Bitter Fruit* (Miller 2008, p. 153). As suggested by Burrow’s concept of the blurring of the different forms of silence, in Jasmine’s case her silence is at once a protective gesture designed to shield her from further racialised notice, and a symptom of her chronic oppression as a perpetual racial outsider in both Asia and Australia. In effect, her silence does begin to erase her, as her inability to communicate starts to fuel her mental disintegration and memory loss. Like her brother Willy, who wears the loss of his visible multiracial identity and the violence of the Japanese Occupation on his face, and her husband’s ancestor Manny who loses a leg during his resistance against Spanish colonialism, Jasmine also bears a bodily loss in the form of her weakened memory and mental abilities, a symptom of which is her silence.

Jasmine’s inability to vocally articulate her suffering demonstrates the unspeakable nature of her experience of what I term multiracial trauma. Part of this unspeakability is because, as Maria Root (1992), Laura Brown (1995), Stef Craps and Gert Buelens (2008) point out, trauma is predominately conceived within a Western, male-dominated framework that relies on concepts of event-based trauma. Jasmine’s experience is one of both insidious trauma, with regard to the marginalisation she

experiences in Australia and Hong Kong as a Eurasian woman, and gender-based trauma in relation to her abuse during the war. The novel implies that as a Eurasian woman, Jasmine suffers from exclusion and discrimination in both her 'parent' worlds of 'Asia' and the 'West', and that because of this her mind is doubly oppressed, leaving little space for her to conceive of, or articulate, a self-determined, confident multiracial subjectivity. As a result, Jasmine lacks a space where she can safely share her experiences of racial and gendered trauma. Furthermore, her experience of sexual assault is indirectly portrayed in the novel, emphasising its location in a private sphere that is rendered shameful. Dori Laub argues that the "absence of an empathic listener or, more radically, the absence of an *addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognise their realness, annihilates the story" (1992, p. 68). In the absence of such empathy, Jasmine's story, in the form of her voice and mind, is slowly eroded and annihilated over the course of her life.<sup>18</sup>

### **Trauma and Resistance**

While, for the purposes of structuring this chapter, I have made a clear distinction between the representation of racialisation as trauma and the novel's disruption of and resistance towards the racial and colonial imaginary, I would like to point out that in *Shanghai Dancing* the experiences of trauma and resistance are closely intertwined. An early scene demonstrates this, as the novel opens with a middle-aged António leaving behind his Australian life to return to his birthplace Shanghai. On return there, António describes himself as beginning to walk, and then run, in the city, "tasting the rust of being so brutally fixed, so alone in my path that the world cracked open in my throat" (6).

António describes being "brutally fixed", a comment which refers to the process of attempting to categorise the multiple, varied ethnicities in any one individual in racial terms. In António's case, this is enhanced by his multiracial background, and the diverse heritage of both his parents. António's reflection, "so alone in my path that the world cracked open in my throat" also emphasises his experience of marginality

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<sup>18</sup> This point relates to the experiences of Lorna Cubillo, whose traumatic memory of being called a 'half-caste' as a child is denied in court (Kennedy 2011, p. 343).

and isolation, as well as racial splitting, as the forces of racialisation split him, and the wider world, open. The location of this splitting in his throat has repercussions for António's ability to articulate his experiences or sense of family history and identity, and throughout the novel his prose is at times fragmented and vacillates between first and third person, illustrating the pressures of racialisation on his subjectivity and voice.

While this section of the novel reflects the pain and confusion that results for those on the borders and intersections of racial and ethnic identities when those identity categories are enforced, it also highlights the potentially productive possibilities that come from occupying the space of the border. Although António is alone in his path, and feels his world splitting apart, he also has access to "the world" in his throat in his ability to think from the intersections of multiple identities and worldviews. In its most productive sense, this is an example of border-thinking (Mignolo 2000), and the novel explores the articulation of a multiracial subjectivity as a form of dissent. However Castro is careful to never allow his narrative to swing into the domain of what Jacqueline Lo terms "happy hybridity" (2000). Rather, the novel points to the creative possibilities of creolising, ethnically intersectional identities and worldviews, while also emphasising the impediments they face in the hegemony of racialised thinking.

### **Disruption and Resistance**

In *Shanghai Dancing*, I argue that the process of racially ambiguous bodies enacting and declaiming multiracial subjectivities and transcultural knowledges becomes a form of dissent that resists and disrupts the racial and colonial imaginary. Mixed race bodies in themselves disrupt the racial imaginary to an extent because of their racial ambiguity, which makes classification more difficult. However, as I explored in my analysis of *The World Waiting to be Made*, this ambiguity and disruption can be subject to categorisation and objectification by more powerful social groups. Resistance, however, also involves a mixed race person's agency and intent to challenge the racial imaginary. Through its exploration of mixed race subjectivity and experience in *Shanghai Dancing*, the novel engages in both resistance and disruption.

In order to examine the ways in which the novel resists and disrupts the racial imaginary, I will focus on particular scenes and characters in *Shanghai Dancing*, specifically António's paternal ancestors Isaac, Isabella and Israel de Castro, as well as aspects of his father, Arnaldo. As I have explored earlier in this chapter, *Shanghai Dancing* demonstrates the global occurrence of racial trauma through a depiction of António's ancestors, which span temporal and geographical locations. For example, through the experiences of Manny, Castro depicts not only the impacts of both colonial violence and insidious trauma on a mixed race individual, but also the hegemony of European colonial knowledge and racialised thinking. These knowledges affect Manny's thinking, musical abilities and self-awareness. This section suggests that the novel also challenges the authority of certain types of modern knowledges that rely on entrenched racial categories through this same family history, which spans the breadth of the globe. By creating a family with such a melange of cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds, Castro achieves two distinct ends. First he questions the reality of race, and secondly he demonstrates its reductive and violent potential. In the case of Isaac, Isabella and Israel, these characters endure racial trauma, but also highlight and engage in resistance, disruption and forms "of insurrection" (88).

### **Isaac and Isabella: Dance as resistance**

The novel's depiction of Isaac de Castro and Isabella Boa Vista takes place in the mid-seventeenth century in Portugal and Brazil, and it is the earliest exploration of António's ancestry. The geographical setting in Latin America, and the temporal setting before the dominance of the British Empire, is significant. While much of the novel is centred on conflicts resulting from a European colonisation of Asia and internal Asian concepts of race and anti-colonial violence, it is a deliberately expansive novel which engages with multiple and varied forms of discrimination, undercutting assumptions of straightforward racial relationships. Similarly, while I am engaging with concepts that draw on Latin America and the Caribbean as sites of Relation and creolisation, neither Mignolo, Glissant nor Castro assert that multiracial individuals or societies necessarily result in an end to discrimination. By jumping between temporal and geographical locations, Castro demonstrates the prevalence and mutability of racism and discrimination even in mixed societies, such as seventeenth century Brazil.

However, by creating a non-linear, multivalent narrative, *Shanghai Dancing* also resists the rigidity of the modern racial imaginary, which is characterised within the novel as linear and fixed. Furthermore a motif of movement, particularly creative movement such as dance, and other forms of creative improvisation, recurs within the novel, and is especially significant in relation to Isaac de Castro and Isabelle Boa Vista. In resistance to linearity, *Shanghai Dancing* and the motif of dancing as resistance reflects Glissant's concept of rhizomatic identity and Relation, as it rejects the linear movements of walking and running in favour of movement which is 'irrational', creative, frequently circular, diagonal and relational. This contrasts Jasmine's attempts to walk away from and outrun racialisation. Her fixed, linear movement mirrors rational, modern concepts of linear time and progression and therefore attempts to resist the racial imaginary on its own terms. Unlike running in a race, dance involves circular, interconnected, non-linear movements, much like the rhizomatic structure Glissant explores in his work on Relation. Like Relation, dance is often extended through "a relationship with the Other" (1997, p. 11). It also engages with strategic creativity and improvisation, and relates to forms of knowledge such as bodily knowledge, which have been excluded from accepted knowledge forms in the modern imaginary.

Dance, movement and music occur as notable motifs of resistance in the lives of Isaac de Castro and Isabella Boa Vista, and their experiences of slavery and the Portuguese Inquisition. The chapter which explores their lives is titled "*Peripeteia*", an Ancient Greek term meaning "*turning around*, a sudden change in fortune, for better or worse" (83), and it refers to both Isaac de Castro and the Castro family more generally, who were:

always walking and talking and things were always turning around; sometimes for the better, most times for the worst. They never stayed still. This condition went right back to Isaac de Castro. He too, was a walker, a talker, a fitter and turner (83).

This summary references the necessity of creative movement in order to survive racialisation and trauma and links this movement with speech, the loss of which is a symptom of the effects of shattering racialisation.

Isaac de Castro is a *converso*, a Portuguese Brazilian Jew who has converted to Christianity, yet who, in spite of his conversion, is still subjected to suspicion and persecution by the Portuguese Inquisition. As a *converso*, Isaac occupies a fluid, intersectional space between European Christianity and the non-Christian, non-white Other (Graizbord 2011, p. 2). Mignolo argues that the modern concept of race developed, in part, from theories of Western Christian subjectivity in opposition to Judaism and Islam. As such, the domain of a *converso* is similar to the intersectional space within which most of Isaac's descendants will also reside, in varying contexts and locations, over the next 450 years.

As readers, we first meet Isaac when he is resisting the colonial imaginary through improvised dancing. The scene occurs during the Dutch-Portuguese War, when the Dutch have occupied Recife and are fighting continuous "guerrilla warfare" with resistance fighters (84). In spite of his Portuguese name, however, Isaac does not take part in this form of resistance, but instead, during the battle he is "dancing with the beautiful fair Isabella Boa Vista" (84). Isaac:

has invented a new dance from an old slave ritual and it is most exacting, a dance in the path of a hunched and snorting bull, a smouldering volcano, a pogrom. It is a passing, a passing-over of a cape, a disciplined taming of a monster within himself (84).

Isabella dances with him, however she "is not dancing for him, or for the men who are watching, but for the black women who have gathered and who know about another kind of dancing: the slippery step, the resistant fury" (85). Isaac's dance references both the racial oppression of slavery and the position of the Jews in the Portuguese colonies, and he envisions his dance as "a form of insurrection" (88) in the face of this violence and discrimination.

Isabella's difference varies from Isaacs'. She, it is implied, has African and slave ancestry. One way this is represented is through the body of her son with Isaac, Israel, who it is stated has noticeably darker skin, in spite of descriptions of Isaac's pallor. More particularly this is suggested through her relationship with the black women watching her dance. It is implied that she, like they, knows of the sexual oppression of slavery, and the "resistant fury" it generates, and her dance is part of this resistance rather than a feminine performance for the men who are watching her, or for the lover she dances with.

Eventually, Isaac is arrested and shipped to Portugal to face the Inquisition. As a *converso* he is already considered with suspicion, and this is exacerbated by his refusal to rebel against the Dutch, for "at least there was no Inquisition in Holland" (85). Ironically, Isaac's imprisonment triggers his to return to Judaism, and he marries Isabella Boa Vista in a Jewish ceremony before he is eventually burnt at the stake in Portugal.

The story of Isaac and Isabella is significant for several reasons. The description of the dance references both dancers' heritages and methods of survival. The phrase "a passing, a passing-over", alludes to the tradition of multiracial people adapting to racialised societies by assuming a variety of racial identities. They may or may not have an ancestral connection to these identities, and, in relation to whiteness, if they do so they may be considered impure or inauthentic members of this group. A "passing-over" references the Jewish tradition of Passover, whereby the Jewish people were liberated from slavery in Egypt. Here, Castro draws a direct link between modern slavery of people of African descent, the history of enslavement and discrimination experienced by the Jewish people and, indirectly, its culmination in the form of the Holocaust. This solidarity is embodied in the form of Israel de Castro, who is racialised as a multiracial African Jew, and who, as I will discuss later in this chapter, experiences racial violence and trauma as a result of all three categorisations.

The emphasis on the relationality of blackness, Jewishness and mixedness, three ambiguous forms of racial categorisation that have been particularly troubling to the modern racial and colonial imaginary, contests the divisive attitude of suffering between different groups as a zero-sum game, where only certain types of racial

violence may be remembered. Instead, I argue that Castro's novel can be read in terms of Glissantian Relation and solidarity across marginalised and racially ambiguous groups. This in turn relates to Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory in response to group trauma. Rothberg argues that the commemoration of suffering should not be seen as a competition between different identity groups for space in collective memory, but should rather be seen as "*multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" and as having a "productive, intercultural dynamic" (Rothberg 2009, p. 3).

Castro's narrative charts the link between religious discrimination and violence in the form of the Portuguese Inquisition and anti-Semitism and its eventual solidification into rational racialisation and racism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Isaac de Castro's story is as far back in time as the Castro family history goes. While it predates the Enlightenment and the entrenchment of rationality and scientific racism that characterised the nineteenth century and British colonialism, it can still be read in terms of Walter Dignolo's assessment of the commencement of modernity and colonialism in the sixteenth century. Here Dignolo argues that "[r]acial classification meant rational classification, and rational classifications derive not from natural reason but from human concepts of natural reason" (2011c, p. 163). As Dignolo further elucidates, those "in control of knowledge" determine which specific human concepts of natural reason are implemented and included and which are excluded (2011, p. 163). This makes sense of the shifting temporal and geographical locations of *Shanghai Dancing*. Those who inhabit racial, religious and ethnic borders and intersections and who, either deliberately or otherwise, trouble rational, racial categorisations are therefore open to marginalisation or violent persecution.

Certain 'border' characters in *Shanghai Dancing*, however, resist both this marginalisation and persecution and attempt to contain them in a system of rational classification that Dignolo describes as a part of "global linear thinking" (2011b, p. 2). The concept of the rhizome is a useful one to explore what is happening instead. As a motif, the rhizome is also evident in the tangled web of António's family relations and ancestry, which spans multiple geographical locations, time periods and ethnicities. The novel itself is arguably a rhizomatic construction as it lacks linearity,

or even a clear sense of beginning, middle and end, and there is no resolution at the novel's conclusion.

### **Israel de Castro: rhizomatic Relation**

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's work in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Glissant argues that the rhizome provides an alternative method to the root for conceptualising identity (1997, p. 11). While root identity is singular, linear and fixed, "killing all around it" through its assertion of its unique dominance, the rhizome is an "enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory root stock taking over permanently" and it "maintains...the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root" (Glissant 1997, p. 11). Likewise, *Shanghai Dancing* does follow António's genealogy, maintaining an idea of rootedness, as can be seen in his creation of a family tree at the commencement of the novel, and the reference to António's family "line" (451). However through its exploration of multiple subjectivities, interracial relationships and the contextuality of discrimination, it also engages in "the rhizome of a multiple relationship with the Other" and a "Poetics of Relation" as a result (Glissant 1997, p. 16).

Glissant's concept of Relation, in which "each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (1997, p. 11), is also a concept which provides an insightful way of engaging with and analysing *Shanghai Dancing* in conjunction with the rhizome, which is part of Glissant's theory of Relation. Both Relation, and its sub-concept the rhizome, can be used to read the depiction of Isaac and Isabella's son, Israel de Castro. In many ways, Israel symbolises the novel's key themes of resisting racial and religious discrimination through movement, border epistemologies and forms of Relational cross-border intimacy, affection and empathy.

Israel grows up on an island off the coast of Espirito Santo in Brazil, and loses his mother to smallpox when he is a child. He is marked out from the beginning as different, both on account of his African appearance and his Jewish faith, and as he grows older and finds work as a sailor this discrimination continues as he undergoes abuse both as a Jew and a black man. Like many of the Castro family, Israel is propelled by a sense of movement that, in his case, seems to originate from an ambiguous source. The novel states that:

[t]here were fierce dialogues in his head which argued and proclaimed the inviolateness of things. And there was God ... God exacerbated doubt and then after days of silence would speak to him in the most mellifluous voice and with the most careful logic. It is possible this divine hallucination was the mark of a form of schizophrenia (97).

After raising the possibility of mental illness, the novel continues “[b]ut what Israel de Castro heard in his head in 1651 was really the voice of a persistent and resolute narrator concerned only with forward motion. This was no pathology. Little Israel ... gazed out to the clear horizon and felt a burning necessity to leave” (97).

Here, Castro troubles the neatness of rational categorisation – in this case the pathologisation of mental illness – by alluding to the possibilities of the marvellous, which in itself is a literary technique of postcolonial resistance in the form of magical realism. Furthermore, movement as a means of disruption and resistance in Israel’s case takes the form of wandering and rootlessness. He feels a desire to leave the place of his childhood but not necessarily to migrate and settle elsewhere, as he does not conceive of a fixed location from which he originated or to which he would belong. In his work on Relation, Glissant writes of “*errance*”, which has been translated as “errantry” or “wandering” (Wing 1997, p. 211), and which provides a lens with which to read Israel’s movement. Unlike “arrowlike” travel motivated by conquest, or the circular nomadism guided by seasonal use of the land (Glissant 1997, p. 12), Glissant conceives of errantry as containing a sense of “sacred motivation” (Wing 1997, p. 211) and as involving rhizomatic Relation, whereby “identity is no longer completely in the root, but also in Relation” (Glissant 1997, p. 18) – that is, extended through relationships with those perceived as ‘Other’.

As I will discuss in this section, this definition of Relation is one of Israel’s defining traits and it is developed in conjunction with his movement across the globe. Israel becomes a sailor and, significantly, joins colonial trade routes, in spite of the fact that his fellow sailors warn him he will “never rise above being a swabbie” (98) because of the colour of his skin. Through his journey he carries the narrative, and the Castro family history, from the Americas and Europe to the Asia-Pacific.

When Israel becomes a sailor, he realises that his “ancestors came from Africa in these holds” (98) and “[g]ratitude” and “negritude” fight within him during his journey as he passes Africa, the continent he “would touch and not touch, up and down, submission and resistance, in and out of roles he would play” (98). Like Isaac and Isabella, and Israel’s descendant Arnaldo, Israel learns the value of a performative identity. His experience of performativity, however, is a painful one, as it allows him to be disruptive and subversive without achieving liberation from racialisation, and it illustrates the limitations of choice that Israel faces.

While Israel’s fellow sailors tolerate his ‘blackness’, hence his “gratitude”, his Jewishness is more problematic to one of his older crewmates, a carpenter, who “kicked young Israel all over the shop until his body swelled and no one thought a thing about it because black skin doesn’t bruise, or so they said” (98). Here, Israel’s blackness and Jewishness converge in a double-oppression, symbolising the convergent histories of discrimination and the development of racism in conjunction with religious prejudice. In spite of Israel’s racial trauma, however, he nevertheless demonstrates not only resistance but also Relation. When the carpenter tells him the story of the twenty-six Christians who were crucified by Japanese officials in Nagasaki in 1597, Israel is moved by their story, in spite of his father’s execution in the name of Christianity. Instead of identifying the Christians as the oppressors of his faith and the murderers of his father, Israel instead conceives of them as victims of the same violence as his father, namely ethnic discrimination in its most extreme form.

Israel’s relationship with the carpenter is also notable, as in spite of the carpenter’s initial violence he plays a significant role in Israel’s life, telling him several stories which inform Israel’s engagement with rhizomatic Relation. The carpenter’s name is, furthermore, António, like the novel’s unreliable, twentieth century narrator and Israel’s descendant. One of the stories he tells Israel involves the tale of a gentle missionary named Dom Francesco, who once refused the gift of some goatskin boots from the carpenter António’s grandfather, instructing him to give them to a renowned Chinese smuggler instead. António’s grandfather disobeyed these instructions, and the carpenter inherited the boots, reflecting “[t]here would be evil consequences from all this handing down of things...” (99).

Israel gains the respect of the carpenter after successfully steering the ship during a storm, during which time he injures his leg and walks with a permanent limp, a trait which is mirrored by his descendants, Manny and Arnaldo. On his deathbed, the carpenter gives Israel the goatskin boots, which Israel finds are “worn to a thinness which made them useless for almost anything; except perhaps, for dancing. In and out. His limping seemed to help” (104). Dance does not play as large a role in Israel’s life as it does in his parents’, but here it is alluded to as a form of weaving and negotiation implied in the non-linear movement “in and out”. The fact that his limp, which can be read, like Manny’s, as a bodily reflection of racial trauma, “seems to help”, reflects the resisting and disruptive intent that develops out of the experience of racialisation. Israel, furthermore, breaks with the linear pattern of “handing down” the boots, and uses them as a tool for negotiation with Chinese pirates when he finds himself in conflict with them, gaining entry into Japan as a smuggler as a result (108).

Israel becomes a highly successful smuggler and falls in love with the city of Macau with its “varied population, a multi-culture of Portuguese, Filipinos, Creoles from Malacca, Chinese and Japanese ... even English and Germans and, surprisingly, Africans ... It was a population that had withstood cannonballs” (102). Israel’s love for Macau is significant, as it is depicted as both a creolising society and a resisting one, as well as a survivor. Like Israel, it is multiracial, and has been attacked and yet, as a mixed population, “had withstood cannonballs”. While in Macau, Israel falls in love with a *mestizhina* called Consuela Okada Pereira, and they have a complex relationship that Israel associates with his racialisation. Consuela refuses to marry him unless he has “abundant money, or failing that, influence” (102-103), and this reminds him “again of his skin” and recalls him to “a corner of his heart he thought was without despair” (103).

Israel’s sense of despair impels him to become a smuggler. He becomes legendary for single-handedly fighting a junk of Chinese pirates, and lives for a time in Nagasaki, Japan, where the Christians were martyred almost a hundred years previously, and where Christianity is still an outlawed religion. He sends lavish gifts back to Consuela until she consents to marry him, and within his gifts he conceals the remains of the Christian martyrs, instructing Consuela to inter them in the walls of the earthen house,

or *chunambo*, he had built in Macao. It is later revealed that his marriage to Consuela is not a success and Israel becomes increasingly insecure and dogged by his symptom of childhood trauma, where he begins to lose the ability to speak, and connect words to their given meanings. The novel states:

[w]ithout such assurances, horrific worlds flooded into his mind. He saw menageries of the grotesque, terrible wars, secretive follies, incest, deformities, decay and cruelty, and smelled the sweet pungency of genocide. And because these visions inhabited him, Israel de Castro no longer spoke. Language turned opaque, and instead of hiding objects he couldn't name, began to hide himself. He was to blame for such worlds (110).

Israel's experience of life-long racialisation manifests itself in his visions of these worlds, which centre around genocide and incest, referencing both racially-based violence and social laws governing reproduction, both of which relate to Israel's own experience. That Israel believes "he was to blame for such worlds" of racial violence and "deformity" reflects his internalisation of social attitudes towards him as a racially mixed, Jewish black man.

Israel, however, resists these effects of trauma and he turns the opacity of language to his advantage. As Glissant elaborates, opacity can result in freedom from reductive understanding (1997, p. 191). Israel's engagement with the transformation of his worldview through the opacity of language results in him excising "all memory and all sadness" (110) and retrieving the skeletons of the Christians from the walls of his house. He then engages in an act of Relation, whereby he presents them to the Bishop of Macau as holy relics, in spite of the discrimination he has experienced as a Jew, and the fate of his father under the Portuguese Inquisition. This act, and his decision to accept language as opaque and refuse to speak, liberates him from his "childhood repression" (110). It results in his being hailed as a "hero, even as a living saint" in spite of the fact that he is regarded as a "dumb Jew" (110). Israel's sense of affinity with the Christian martyrs is hinted at briefly, when it is revealed that during his time in Japan he has a relationship with Chiyoko, a Japanese woman who is Christian in secret. He tells her "he was not of this faith but was moved by the sacrifice and understood ... its drama and seduction" (113).

Chiyoko eventually gives birth to a son with Israel, Benjamin, the next Castro in *Shanghai Dancing's* rhizomatic family tree, who she prays will not be “persecuted for his faith, his darkness” as she flees Japan to live in the Philippines, settling in Balangiga (114). Israel’s reflection that he “was moved by the sacrifice” of the Christians, who refused to apostatise, and “understood” their motivations demonstrates his ability to unmoor feelings of faith and experiences of discrimination and violence from essentialised identity categories and view them as human emotions and experiences that can occur across racial, ethnic and religious groups in different contexts. Israel’s awareness of this contingency prompts him to view his own and his father’s suffering and the suffering of the Christians as complementary experiences. Israel sees the commonalities across the religions in spite of the enmity certain Christian groups exhibited towards Jews in his lifetime and throughout history.

Israel’s work as a cultural and religious archivist in Macau is destroyed by a typhoon in the nineteenth century, leaving no trace of his work. “In the years hence,” Castro writes:

Macau became a backwater, a receptacle of forgotten time; but in certain lights, in that chiaroscuro of drab dusk and polluted moon, there remains open a strange passageway between the seventeenth and twenty-first century. Israel had glimpsed it and recorded it faithfully; this mixture of the weight of words and the end of real events; this amalgam of *chunambo* and forgetting (111).

The emphasis on the amalgam of memorialisation and forgetting undercuts concepts of pure binaries. By engaging with the term amalgam, which was used in nineteenth century racial discourse to describe racial mixing, Castro links this process of undercutting to that of undoing concepts of race. Furthermore, his depiction of the “strange passageway” connecting the past and the present alludes to magical realism and further disrupts the modern colonial imaginary, whereby time is ordered and linear. Instead, marvellous connections are drawn between eras, allowing movement and Relation across seemingly segmented parts, and challenging concepts of a rigidly defined past, present and future. The amalgamation of memory and forgetting also evokes the possibility of building upon traumatic experiences, and

“thinking...through, and therefore out, of the historical imbalances and cultural inequalities produced by the colonial encounter” (Gandhi 1998, p. 176). By engaging with the magical/marvellous the novel delinks from the modern colonial imaginary as well as disrupting it, emphasising the validity of Relation and border thinking as alternative ways of seeing and being in the world.

### **Racial ambiguity, resilience and passing**

When Israel is injured in the storm early in his career, he has a delirious vision of a man who multiplies endlessly, as “out of his head emerges another like himself and then another until the light diminishes” (101). This man, seen through the eyes of the seventeenth century sailor, wears “strange evening dress of black and white” with a “top hat” and a “white silk scarf” (101), and he travels through the streets of “an immense city stretching along a river, grey and smoky” in a sedan-chair “transporting dancers to and fro” (101). Israel notices other details – the man tips some coolies by the waterfront, “[n]ods to a guard wearing a turban” – before entering a run-down building, sniffing cocaine and lighting a cigarette, perceived by Israel to be “an ivory tube” (101).

The man in this vision is unnamed, however the early sections of *Shanghai Dancing* present a similar description of the narrator’s father, and Israel’s descendant, Arnaldo when he is in his financial prime. Arnaldo looks out across the rivers of Shanghai, employs coolies and knows a Sikh guard at the vice-president’s house and spends his days dancing, smoking and sniffing cocaine (6-8). It is implied in the novel that Israel’s vision depicts Arnaldo, a racially ambiguous, multi-faceted figure who weaves his way through categories and avoids being assigned a fixed meaning. The disturbing potential of Arnaldo is emphasised by Israel’s vision of his descendant, who multiplies himself into many likenesses, remaking himself into “*other otherness*” (Cheng 2001, p. 51).

Through this shadowy and ambiguous figure, *Shanghai Dancing* explores the disruptive potentials of racial ambiguity and engages with concepts of parody and passing, as well as exploring resilience in the face of racialisation. The descendant of Israel de Castro, Arnaldo is of Portuguese, Jewish, African, Japanese and Filipino ancestry, that the reader is aware of, and he similarly moves between Jewish and

Catholic faiths. Castro deliberately constructs Arnaldo as an enigma, and his interiority is not fully explored. Rather, the reader is shown fragments of Arnaldo at non-linear moments throughout his life. While parts of the novel appear to be written from Arnaldo's perspective by a third-person, omniscient narrator, his internal thoughts and emotions remain opaque. Furthermore, the unreliable, fractured nature of the novel, and Antonio's and Virgil's narration styles, renders the 'truth' of descriptions of Arnaldo and his motivations constantly questionable.

A prime example of the deliberately misleading certainty of parts of the novel that explore Arnaldo is António's description of his father as:

European, a modernist, a progressivist. He was practical. He was the Empire and the Emporium. He got on with business. He was the West itself, while my mother was the East (32).

António's adamant categorisation of his father is disrupted and rendered layered, complex and ambiguous as different facets of Arnaldo's personality are revealed. None of António's descriptions are untrue – Arnaldo is a businessman, who engages in Western modernity, with European ancestry and a pragmatic personality. However, he is also extravagant, prone to socialising and dancing rather than working, with Asian, black and Jewish ancestry, and an open attitude towards the irrational and the miraculous. Arnaldo's layered combination of attributes that are positioned as binaries belies the simplicity of António's initial description of him.

António further reflects of his father:

I think he was a liar. Most of his side of the family were liars. But then you could never say *that* categorically because every now and again you would come up against the truth... The truth-appeasers were on my mother's side. They never said anything about themselves. Dull-disposed, they made their money and kept it. But on my father's side...full-scale fabrication (33).

Here, António himself allows for the combination of two seeming opposites within Arnaldo – he is a liar, but he also tells the truth. However, he still positions his

parents' families as opposites, evoking images of the Westernised, flamboyant, lying Castros as opposed to the Eastern, restrained, truthful Wings. The rest of the novel, however, proceeds to mix up these neat distinctions, revealing the Eastern Virgil Wing to be at once Westernised, Catholic and capable of deceit, and the Western Arnaldo to be transcultural, superstitious and, at times, truthful.

### **Resilience**

Arnaldo's complex multiracial, transcultural and multi-religious attributes are especially significant in the novel as they are employed to represent resilience in the face of racialisation and trauma, and the survival of the racially ambiguous person of multiracial heritage. This is particularly evident in the scene where Virgil performs racialising facial surgery on his son Willy. While I have discussed the traumatic implications of this scene in-depth earlier in this chapter, I wish to return to it here to look more closely at the implications of Arnaldo's unwitting intrusion into the scene and Virgil's reaction to this interruption.

It is established in *Shanghai Dancing* that Virgil dislikes his daughter's husband Arnaldo "intensely" (416) and initially the two are positioned as opposites, representing Antonio's false distinction between the Castros and the Wings. António's emphasis on the dullness and unremarkable qualities of his mother's side is undercut dramatically later in the novel, when it is revealed that the restrained, 'truthful' Virgil was complicit in his son's racial mutilation as well as Arnaldo's impoverishment. Arnaldo's witnessing of Virgil's operation on Willy is significant, as it represents the irrepressibility of racially ambiguous bodies and creolising subjectivities in the face of racial trauma and fixed racial categorisation. It furthermore, alludes to the process of bearing witness to violence as a form of resisting it (Laub 1992, p. 62), and taking "responsibility for the truth" (Felman 1992, p. 204). While he does not recognise exactly what he sees, Arnaldo's presence testifies to Virgil's sense of wrongdoing and guilt.

Virgil describes Arnaldo's intrusion to Antonio as:

in the darkest hour a hallucination of terrible dimension forced me to glance behind and the devil himself was there an index finger pointed at this

execrable festival ... Yes, your father was there – a jostler through the city gate – a Johnny-come-lately between my daughter’s legs and now this final entry made me want to excise his prying eyes. Oh how I hated his promiscuity! How I still hate promiscuity! (432).

Here Arnaldo’s embodied racial mixedness and ability to move across and between borders and “city gates” is seen by Virgil to represent promiscuity and “the devil himself”. Virgil’s desire to “excise his prying eyes” further indicates his urge to erase Arnaldo as a witness to racial violence. However it also relates to his operation on Willy, for at the moment of Arnaldo’s intrusion Virgil is “too absorbed in the work itself – the finesse of the eyelid’s single fold” to engage with him or conceive of “the future impact of this surgery” (432). The “eyelid’s single fold” references a stereotypical phenotype of an East Asian appearance, the epicanthal fold, and it is notable that Arnaldo intrudes upon Virgil just as he is in the process of removing traces of European features from Willy’s eyes. In order to do so, Virgil slits Willy’s eyelids and pops his eyeballs from his sockets before replacing them (325). His urge to “excise” Arnaldo’s eyes then, in the context of this scene, also alludes to a desire to ‘change’ Arnaldo’s ‘race’, to obliterate his multiracial and disturbingly fluid features and remake him in a fixed category.

Arnaldo himself appears to sense this, as the reader also views this scene briefly from his perspective at a much earlier point in the novel, where both Willy and Virgil’s identities are obscured and Arnaldo himself is unsure of what he is witnessing. When read in conjunction with Virgil’s confession to António, it becomes apparent that Arnaldo seeks out Virgil out of concern for Jasmine and their children, having recently been released from an internment camp and gaining a job as a musician at the Japanese Officers’ Club. He seems to feel guilt at “his change of skin”, knowing that “the only ones protected from shame were those who acted in opposition...because *to be silent was also to lie*” (324). When he stumbles upon Virgil and an unnamed nurse operating on Willy, he sees “two figures bent in carnal industry...A disfigured face...[a] monster” (325). Castro writes, “Arnaldo looked... He was forced to turn away as they cut and probed, then he looked again” (325). While Arnaldo does not fully comprehend the event, “he could not forget the scene...the bareness of the room, the feet stuck out, the grisly waste upon the floor, the careless improvisation...the

monster's bleeding, tender visage" (325). He returns "home to an empty house...and put his face in his hands. He thought his flesh might also have come away" (325).

Here, as a witness who is unable to fully bear testimony, Arnaldo feels ashamed of his inaction and silence in the face of injustice. However, he resists the urge to turn away from the sight he is witnessing. While horrified, he looks back, bearing witness to a scene which evokes an image of genocide, in spite of his fear of his own racially fluid body shattering and disintegrating as a result of this trauma, symbolised by his thought that "his flesh might also have come away".

Arnaldo's presence and witness of this event, and Virgil's impression of his son-in-law's judgement of him, disrupt the clearly demarcated notion of dominance and marginality. While Willy, as a multiracial man, is clearly disempowered within this context, and his forced deformation is symbolic of both the trauma of racial fixation and its irrationally rational origins, the incursion of the complex, elusive and multiply mixed Arnaldo into this scene of racial reconstruction also depicts the irrepressibility of racial fluidity in the face of attempted fixation and categorisation. As a symbol of a world that effectively disregards the boundaries of race, religion and culture, as well as one which draws on both Western rational modernity and lives on the borders of world views, Arnaldo represents the possibility of a multiracial subjectivity as a form of dissent.

Virgil's impression of him as "the devil himself", intruding upon "the ancient rite of the deformation of sons" also evokes the Judeo-Christian story of Abraham's binding of Isaac. Virgil interprets his actions as saving Willy rather than sacrificing him, but while his surgery saves his life he sacrifices his son's subjectivity in order to make him 'purely' Asian. Arnaldo's appearance, furthermore, and his accusatory finger, symbolise an intervention that personifies Virgil's own guilt at his actions. Virgil nevertheless chooses to interpret Arnaldo as a demonic, rather than angelic, figure, and continues with the surgery in spite of his misgivings, projecting his own discomfort with his actions onto the body of his son-in-law.

Virgil deplores Arnaldo and sees him as promiscuous, associating this promiscuity with Arnaldo's multiraciality and creolising subjectivity. I would argue that in so

doing he is, in effect, deploring his own transcultural life and personality. Although Virgil is not physically either racially ambiguous, or of mixed heritage, he is nevertheless a creolised figure, having had a traditional Chinese upbringing, an English education, a Protestant Christian religion and a conversion to Catholicism later in life. He also, furthermore, engages in his own non-traditional romantic and sexual practices, marrying a white English wife and fathering mixed race children. Virgil's revulsion for Arnaldo, therefore, reflects a sense of self-abhorrence and abjection, as Virgil attempts to expel his own transculturalism through a rejection of Arnaldo.

### **Parody and passing**

I now move on to consider the ways in which *Shanghai Dancing* challenges the racial imaginary by using the techniques of parody and passing. In contrast to Antonio and Jasmine, Arnaldo engages with identity and racialisation in a much more playful way, and he appears conscious of the contextuality and contingency of racial, cultural, religious and class identity. While António labels his father as an example of the rational and modern "West" and a "European" at the beginning of the novel, Arnaldo himself has a much more layered, fluid and performative attitude to subjectivity. As an older man, Antonio's "European" father enjoys "playing the wide-eyed refugee" in Australia. In spite of once being wealthy, "broke and tumorous, he said he liked the roughneck culture in Australia [and] left off wearing ties" (355).

As suggested above, when considering the character of Arnaldo the concept of passing is a useful one. Passing, as described by Werner Sollors (1999), is originally an American term, which may refer to "the crossing of any line that divides social groups" (247). While passing is broadly thought of in terms of a person of colour "passing for white" (Sollors 1999, p. 247) Sollors acknowledges that passing has a varied history, and that it encompasses cases of "Polish immigrants preferring to be German, Italians pretending to be Jewish...Chinese Americans passing as Japanese Americans and vice versa" (1999, p. 247). In the scene above, *Shanghai Dancing* demonstrates an example of this lesser known aspect of passing, whereby Arnaldo passes for an implicitly Asian refugee. This form of passing, however, is also parodic, as Arnaldo deliberately performs being a generically Asian refugee to the expectations of white Australia, rather than members of Asian refugee communities,

and he does so in a way that gives him pleasure. He ‘plays’ at being a “wide-eyed”, and thereby innocent and naïve, refugee and enjoys fooling those around him as a result. The knowingness of Arnaldo’s parody, furthermore, subverts the standard power dynamic between white Australia and the ‘Asian’ other. While, as I have explored in the context of *The World Waiting to be Made*, racial otherness is frequently identified and classified by the dominant social group, in a way that does not necessarily take into account an individual’s family, ancestry or identification, Arnaldo subverts this. By taking on a racial identity category provided to him by white Australia, and parodying it, he highlights the insularity and foolishness of Australian racism in contrast to his own cosmopolitan and multiracial experience.

Arnaldo however, also subverts any classism or elitism that might accompany this intervention. As the narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made* realises, being more knowing and sophisticated than the general white Australian is an imperfect and unfulfilling escape from racism, and one which allies itself with the very white cosmo-multiculturalists that the novel critiques. Similarly, Arnaldo, once in Australia, takes pleasure in the “roughneck culture”, spends his days at the wharves and pubs, and stops wearing ties. In contrast to the rigid British colonial and local Chinese class structures he grew up with, Arnaldo enjoys the (class-based) egalitarian nature of late-twentieth century Australia.

Arnaldo’s defiance of racial categorisation through his ability to both perform a “wide-eyed” refugee, a blue-collar man and a sophisticated, wealthy European play-boy on his own terms, is what makes him such an elusive and perplexing character to those around him. This defiance also enhances his ability to resist racial shattering and fragmentation during times of attempted racial fixation and trauma. Jasmine feels subjected by white Australian authority in Australia, to the extent that she fears her presence as a racial outsider being observed, commented upon and judged. By way of contrast Arnaldo engages with Australia flamboyantly, and instead passes judgement on Australia. Where Jasmine is fearful of catching the bus, Arnaldo enjoys public transport, observing that “the women in Shanghai have better legs”, although Australian women have faces like “models”. He is similarly critical of the treatment he receives in an Australian hospital towards the end of his life, noting that “[t]hey divide you from here on in: men/women/religion/worms/dust/memory. Divide you

with a knife before the camp doors open” (360) making a direct link between Australian systems of classification and his experiences of imprisonment during the Second World War. This also implicitly references Australian multicultural modes of separating and delineating difference and locates Australian attitudes towards racial difference in a long history of racial and colonial violence.

What is notable about Arnaldo’s transformations are the ways in which they are guided by his own intention – his agency – and how uncontrollable they are. As in his ancestor Manny’s visions, Arnaldo multiplies into likeness and difference endlessly. Within the racial and colonial parameters that constrain him, Arnaldo appropriates white Australia’s potential mis-interpellation of him and turns it on its head in a way that extends beyond the power and control of white Australian racialisation. By playing on the stereotype that all Asians, or people of colour more broadly, ‘look the same’, Arnaldo creates a performance that cannot be undone or controlled by the same categorical way of racial thinking. Ironically, Arnaldo could only be ‘revealed’ to be passing by a person or society that could conceive of multiracial, creolising subjectivities. In this way, Arnaldo demonstrates an unending ability to transform himself into “*other* otherness” (Cheng 2001, p. 51), so that while he remains the Other, rather than a secure member of the *humanitas*, he is the Other that cannot be categorised, rendered transparent, and controlled. Although he remains restricted by the oppressive structures of racism, he delinks from seeing himself as either the *humanitas* or *anthropos*, and maintains agency and initiative in his disruption and resistance of the racial imaginary.

## **Conclusion**

Of all the novels this thesis examines, *Shanghai Dancing* is the most transnational. Through its exploration of multiple national, social and historical contexts the novel highlights the “global designs” (Mignolo 2000) of the racial imaginary, and the occurrences of racialisation in both Western and non-Western contexts. Like *The World Waiting to be Made*, it offers a sharp critique of racialised exclusion in a seemingly inclusive Australia. Its primary focus, however, involves its depictions of the racial violence directed towards those who I describe as occupying the threshold of categorisation throughout the Asia-Pacific. This sense of the contingency of subjectivity, and of discrimination, is a major theme throughout *Shanghai Dancing*.

Castro's exploration of the effects of existing on the border or threshold of other's classification system undercuts the reader's sense of the surety and 'rationality' of racialisation and fixed identity categories.

Through an examination of characters who are understood as inhabiting racially ambiguous bodies of multiracial heritage, the novel demonstrates the political and cultural work that has to be directed towards maintaining systems of racial categorisation. This takes place at the state and personal level and is most powerfully illustrated in the scene of Willy's facial reconstruction surgery. Willy's forced racial surgery is a central example of both the irrationality of race, the violent effects of racialisation and the ways in which they are deliberately imposed upon more fluid bodies for political purposes.

The effects of trauma and racialisation, however, are not depicted as necessarily final, and a significant aspect of the novel is concerned with resilience and resistance in the face of the racial and colonial imaginary. These elements of resistance, which disrupt the racial imaginary, are arguably the novel's most interventionist aspects. Unlike *The World Waiting to be Made*, *Shanghai Dancing* does not present a straight-forward alternative to the racial and colonial imaginary. However, it engages more thoroughly in processes of resistance and survival, represented through creativity and movement. Dance, in particular, is employed in the novel as a metaphor for resistance and transcultural and transracial relationships, solidarity and intimacy.

The novel's focus on this solidarity and intimacy can be read in terms of Glissant's concept of Relation, and in this sense the novel's disruptive, resisting and resilient potential is the alternative to the colonial imaginary. The alternative imaginary *Shanghai Dancing* engages with then, is one of a perpetual process of Relation and resistance, which never settles or congeals into a fixed state. This can be seen in the ways in which the racialised bodies and subjectivities of mixed race characters parody race and 'pass' through several categories, exerting agency in the face of violence and trauma, continually remaking their subjectivities and engaging in processes of Relation. In this way, dance becomes a metaphor of Castro's depiction of survival and resistance, as the dance floor constrains the actions of the dancer in the same way the racial imaginary constrains racialised people. However the dance movements

themselves, which are fluid, creative, and weave “in and out” (104) of different categories, are the domain and decision of the dancer.

## SIX

### “A disturbing magic”: transformation and alternatives in Michelle de Kretser’s *The Lost Dog*

*For those of us who live at the shoreline  
standing upon the constant edges of decision  
crucial and alone*

‘A Litany for Survival’, Audre Lorde, 2000

#### Introduction

*The Lost Dog* (2007)<sup>19</sup> is the final novel I examine in this thesis. I have chosen it for several reasons. Firstly, like this thesis itself, it unites the particular and the personal qualities of *The World Waiting to be Made* with the broader global and political brushstrokes of *Shanghai Dancing*. As a result, it contextualises racial thinking in the history of European colonialism and modernity, the Asia-Pacific region and the very particular settler colonial location that is contemporary Australia. Secondly, like all of the novels this thesis examines it is also an intervention in the racial and colonial imaginary that has developed over the past five hundred years. While *The World Waiting to be Made* is primarily concerned with critiquing aspects of the modern racial and colonial imaginary, and *Shanghai Dancing* principally engages in disrupting and resisting racial categorisation, I argue that *The Lost Dog*, out of the three novels, is most interested in an exploration of alternative knowledges and worldviews.

I further use de Kretser’s novel as a springboard to further develop my exploration into theorising mixed race subjectivity and experience, and how it relates to and resists the racial and colonial imaginary. Engaging with the works of Glissant and Mignolo, I examine the ways a particular type of mixed race experience and subjectivity lends itself to theoretically intervening in the racial and colonial imaginary, and to fashioning alternative ways of engaging with “unknowable other” (Boehmer 2010, p. 180) human beings. Similarly, I engage with the concepts of

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<sup>19</sup> All page numbers in this chapter refer to the 2009 edition of *The Lost Dog* unless otherwise specified

delinking and Relation in order to examine the ways in which *The Lost Dog* explores alternative forms of knowing and sensing with the world.

In order to examine these themes, I focus on the novels' portrayal of first and multi-generation mixed race Australians and mixed race masculinity and femininity in the characters of Tom Loxley and Nelly Zhang, and their relationship. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which Tom experiences exclusion from the nation as a racialised man, and how his character is deployed to critique forms of Australian cosmo-multiculturalism. I also explore the character of Nelly Zhang, whose body is depicted as embodying racial mixedness through visual interpretations of her phenotype. In this sense, I examine her physical body, which is given racial meaning, and the ways in which her visual likeness to white Australia, melded with her visual difference in the form of her Asian ancestry, combines to unsettle and threaten dominant ideas of race and control within Australia. In conjunction with this analysis, I also read Nelly's performative modes of dressing and combining ethnic signifiers, and examine these in connection to her relationship with her white Australian ex-husband, Felix Atwood, and Tom Loxley.

Nelly and Tom's relationship, while personal, is also influenced by their respective professions and outlooks as an artist and an academic respectively, and these aspects of the novel will also be examined as sites of both disruption and potential alternative imaginaries. Through Nelly, who can be seen to practise Relation and allude to the transformative potentials of border sensing and delinking, I will examine Tom's changing attitudes towards Western knowledge, rationality and 'being modern'. I further examine the role of Tom's pet, the titular lost dog, which alludes to the miraculous and supernatural. These qualities, reminiscent of magical realism, align with the novel's multiracial and transcultural qualities to create a space within the novel that encourages alternative imaginaries and modes of relating to difference.

*The Lost Dog*, which, published in 2007, is the most recent of the three novels, begins to pull together the various threads of critique and disruption seen in *The World Waiting to be Made* and *Shanghai Dancing*, and like these novels it deals with racialisation in Australia and parts of Asia, presenting a critique of what Ghassan Hage terms "white cosmo-multiculturalism" (1998, p. 205). However more explicitly

than the preceding novels, it highlights the links between modernity, rationality and dominant forms of knowledge, and racialisation and its traumatic and discriminatory effects.

At first glance, *The Lost Dog* is an urban, intellectual, contemporary Australian novel, concerned with, as one reviewer describes it, “shin[ing] a satirical light on Melbourne’s inner-city artistic types,” to the extent that while it still explores “cross-cultural identities” it “casts its thematic net far wider” with the result that it is argued to be “a novel about the hydra of modernity itself” (Ley 2007). While the observation that the novel is about the “hydra of modernity” is accurate, I argue that this is inseparable from the novel’s themes of mixed subjectivities, histories of colonialism, and racialisation in modern nation states. As I have discussed throughout this thesis, Mignolo charts the links between modernity and racial categories, arguing that “rational classification [means] racial classification” (Mignolo 2011b, p. 325). De Kretser’s novel depicts this uneasy intermeshed relationship clearly, in particular through the characters of Tom Loxley and Nelly Zhang, and the extent to which they set up to represent the modern and, although this is deliberately less clear, the “non-modern” (Mignolo 2011b, p. 325) respectively.

### **The Novel**

*The Lost Dog* is written solely in the third person, and, compared to *The World Waiting to be Made* and *Shanghai Dancing*, it has a more traditional structure. To an extent, it takes place over 10 days, and the novel is broken into sections labelled Tuesday to Thursday week. This period of time corresponds with the central character, Tom Loxley’s, search for his dog, which goes missing in the Australian bush while he is staying in the countryside near the city of Melbourne. This ostensibly straightforward structure, however, is layered with forays into Tom’s childhood, his parents’ lives in England and India in the mid-twentieth century, and the more immediate past, so that while the 10 day structure guides the narrative it does not constrain it, and the novel is not strictly chronological.

The dog is never named within the text, and he is not found until the novel’s conclusion, however he plays a significant and symbolic role in the narrative, which I will expand upon later in this chapter. However, it is important to note here that the

absence and presence of the dog effectively impels and frames the narrative, as Tom continually searches for and worries about him. Tom's search for the dog is quest-like, and it triggers, within the novel, a rethinking and reimagining of his relationships and worldview, including his attitudes towards knowledge and modernity.

Tom's relationship with forms of knowledge and the modern is significant, as he is a Literature scholar in his forties researching high culture in the form of Henry James. He is also of mixed ancestry and has transnational origins, being the son of a deceased Englishman, Arthur Loxley, and a Eurasian Indian Catholic woman, Iris De Souza. Born in southern India, Tom migrates to Melbourne as a child, and, like António Castro in *Shanghai Dancing* and the narrator of *The World Waiting to be Made*, throughout his life he endures first-hand a combination of overt racism, exclusion and conditional inclusion, all of which are a result of his racialised body.

The novel unfolds primarily from Tom's perspective, with occasional episodes seen through his parents' eyes. The novel also focuses substantially on Nelly Zhang, an artist who is also of racially mixed Asian and European ancestry. Nelly ostensibly occupies the position of being Tom's romantic interest, however she is also rendered as a layered, creative and disruptive figure. Significantly, her interiority is not accessible to either Tom or the reader. I will explore Nelly's role and characterisation in-depth, as it is through both Nelly and Tom's subjectivities and encounters with the modern racial imaginary that much of the novel's interventions take shape.

### **First-generation mixed race Australian masculinity**

As I have discussed throughout this thesis, race and gender affect both lived experience and subjectivity, and race and ethnicity are frequently constructed in gendered terms (McClintock 1996). Later in this chapter, I will examine in more depth the ways in which racialisation and concepts of femininity intersect, however here I would like to look at how concepts of traditional white Australian masculinity are employed in order to exclude racialised men from belonging in the nation. When reflecting on his experiences of open racism, Tom attributes it to the combination of factors that he was "slight, dark-skinned, bad at sport" (40), all of which contradict traditional concepts of white Australian masculinity, and he recalls being told to "fuck off back to the other black bastards" (25). Here, the negativity assigned to his bodily

racial marker of being “dark-skinned” is compounded by his lack of traditional Australian masculine attributes such as sporting ability (Coad 2002, p. 37).

Tom also feels a sense of alienation amidst the Australian rural landscape, reflecting, once more, a lack of familiarity with the bush, a quality that is at once an historical Australian male ideal and yet elusive and fragile. In the opening scenes of the novel in rural Victoria, Tom is describe as disliking the cold, and holding himself “tight against the morning” (4), accustomed to but not loving “the bleached pigments of the continent where he had made his life” (5). Similarly, as a child he is described as empathising with a painting featuring a young white girl lost in hostile bush land. The painting at once evokes what Tom thinks of as “the fragility of European confidence in this place” and a feeling of mutual understanding as Tom, the “Indian boy” feels similarly “lost in Australia” (225). All of these traits contrast António’s characterisation in *Shanghai Dancing*. While, like Tom, António is of racially mixed, Asian heritage, he is depicted as having an advanced familiarity with the Australian bush, and engaging in other traditionally white Australian male practices (Bollen, Parr and Kiernander 2008, pp. 164-165). He rides a motorbike, works on a farm, courts white women on the beach and, in one of the novel’s lighter scenes, takes a nap beneath the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge. These aspects place him bodily in the centre of the quintessential, white male nation, and demonstrate a physical ease with which he occupies this space. All of these qualities are contrasted with his racially ambiguous appearance and cosmopolitan background, the combination of which render him a figure of unease and disquiet in white Australia. Tom, on the other hand, is both racialised and more easily excluded from valued Australian masculinity through his lack of physical prowess and his bodily discomfort with the land.

While Tom experiences “humiliations... in an Australian schoolyard” (40), his maleness does offer him a degree of privilege not experienced by racially mixed women. He does not undergo the same level of violence as the narrator’s sisters in *The World Waiting to be Made*, who experience sexualised racial slurs and racially motivated rape. Tom’s racialised maleness makes him a target for racially based rejection from the nation and hostile racist taunts, however it seemingly protects him from the sexualised racism that the narrator’s sisters are subject to. Like António, however, Tom nevertheless also experiences sexual and marital categorisation and

desirability based on race, which in its more extreme form results in the racialised commodification experienced by the narrator of *The World Waiting to be Made*. Social attitudes towards gender and race, however, mean that Tom's ability to attract women based on his racialisation enhances his masculinity, while a similar situation for mixed race women is, as I will explore, more complex (Root 1997, pp. 157-159). Tom resists being disempowered by this power imbalance as, unlike the narrator and her sisters in *The World Waiting to be Made*, he does not face both gender-based and racial and sexual discrimination. Tom's masculinity gives him greater access to the privileged category Mignolo terms the *humanitas*, with its associated attributes of modernity and knowledge and he draws on his intellectual capital, and his fluency in modernity, to strengthen his position in spite of being a racialised outsider. I will return to Tom's affiliation with rational modernity later in this chapter, as it is a significant strand in the novel's challenge of colonial and racial forms of knowledge.

Tom's marriage to a white Australian woman, and her awareness of his racialisation, relates to one of the key points that de Krester makes in this novel, which is a critique of white cosmo-multiculturalism (Hage 1998, p. 205). She does this through the character of Tom's ex-wife Karen and her friends. Although he is divorced by the time the central events of the novel take place, the attitudes of this group of people towards Tom's racially and culturally mixed heritage illustrates the limited range of Australian multiculturalism. To begin with, Tom is aware that Karen married him partly to "satisf[y] her need to rebel and her social conscience" (91). Her marriage was designed to shock her "liberal, middle-class" parents who "tolerated Asian immigration while not expecting to encounter it at the altar" (91). Karen and her family's attitudes towards Tom demonstrate a mode of white cosmo-multiculturalism, which involves the acquisition, conditional inclusion and containment of racial difference – interactions that are all based on a firm discrepancy in power relations.

Tom's awareness of Karen's objectification of and desire for the exotic both irritates and amuses him, and several scenes in the novel highlight the colonial and racial underpinnings of white Australian delight in clearly delineated and controlled difference. Tom is suspicious of Karen's determination to "be charmed by everything she saw" in India, which she decides is a "spiritual" place (143). A similar moment occurs in *The World Waiting to be Made*, where the narrator satirises white Australian

businessmen endeavouring to discover the “Secrets of the East”. In *The Lost Dog*, de Kretser likewise highlights processes of exoticisation through Karen’s experiences in India. Tom reflects on the irony of Karen’s love for India’s spirituality and the “extraordinary atmosphere of India’s sacred precincts” compared to her experience in Lourdes, where “the identical spectacle of ardent belief and flagrant commercialism had worked on [Karen’s] Protestant sensibilities as fingernails on a blackboard” (143). “The glaze of exoticism,” Tom reflects, “transformed *superstitious nonsense* into *luminous grace*” (original italics) (143).

Karen’s love for India’s exotic spirituality, however, does not extend to the creolised aspects of Tom’s family. After a solo trip to India, Tom shows photographs of his Eurasian Indian cousins to Karen and her friend. The novel describes Tom’s memory of visiting their house, where “children’s faces bloomed at different heights” and the “walls of the room were washed blue, of the shade the Virgin wore in heaven” (142). Tom also recalls the “plastic Madonna containing holy water from Lourdes”, and the “unsmiling” photos of his maternal ancestors in his cousin Eileen’s album, “each new generation less plausibly European” (142). He struggles to explain his feelings or impressions of his time with his cousins to Karen, thinking of “Cedric’s eyes travelling in opposite directions behind heavy rimmed spectacles; of the way Eileen’s hand flew to cover the deficiencies in her smile. In India,” thinks Tom, “bodies [are] historic, tissue and bone still testifying to chance and time” (143). Karen and her friend, however, view Tom’s photos of India with delight, “they loved India, they agreed” (144), until Karen’s friend sees a photo of Cedric and Eileen and singles out an image of the Sacred Heart on the wall behind their heads, pronouncing that “the whole Christian thing” “doesn’t seem right” in India as “it’s not like it belongs there” (145). Tom immediately thinks of the woman’s own home, where “a long-robed Buddha reclined on a mantel-piece and frankincense smouldered beneath a portrait of the Dalai Lama” (145). He nevertheless does not attempt to draw the woman’s attention to the irony of her remarks, thinking “[e]vidence of the subcontinent’s age old traffic with the West rarely found favour with Westerners [as] [t]o be eclectic was as Western privilege, as was the authentication of cultural artefacts...Difference, readily identifiable, was easily corralled. Likeness was more subtly unnerving” (145).

Tom's reflection on the "unnerving" quality of these similarities can be read as a form of the uncanny, which describes the "species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud 2003, p. 124). Sigmund Freud posits that the meanings of *das Heimliche* and *das Unheimliche* slide into one another, for as well as meaning what is familiar, *das Heimliche* also means "what is concealed and kept hidden", a meaning it shares with *das Unheimliche* (2003, p. 132). Thus, Freud argues, *das Unheimliche* both represents that which creates dread and feelings of horror and also indicates that which is, in part, familiar but repressed (2003, p. 145). Freud writes:

The frightening is something that has been repressed and now returns. This species of the frightening would then constitute the uncanny, and it would be immaterial whether it was itself originally frightening or arose from another affect. (2003, pp. 147-148).

The reaction of Tom's ex-wife Karen and her friend towards photographs of his Eurasian Indian relatives is a prime example of the politics surrounding creolisation and the disturbing quality its unregulated occurrence can accrue. By following a notionally 'Western' religion, however, such as Catholicism, Tom's family refutes complete exoticisation and, to a degree, resists this containment and control, proving themselves to practise a living and fluid culture that is not restricted to external assumptions regarding what their religion, as Indians, 'should' be. Whether their ancestors' Catholicism derived from colonial violence and imposition, or older Indian Christian practices, is unclear and, to an extent, not important, for it is demonstrated throughout the novel that Tom's family practices a changed and localised form of Catholicism which they have made their own. It is perhaps this reflection of a syncretised, seemingly Western religion depicted back at a white Australian gaze that evokes the uncanny and unnerves Karen's friend, whose immediate reaction is to proclaim its non-belonging and in-authenticity in an Indian context.

Several points can be elucidated from this scene of white cosmo multiculturalism, namely the presence of the *humanitas/anthropos* divide in Australian attitudes towards race and culture. Within Australian attitudes towards racialised difference, furthermore, there is a colonial desire to take pleasure in and appropriate 'safe' and

controlled forms of exoticism (Ashcroft *et al* 2000, pp. 77-78), and, I argue, a fear of porous, fluid and uncontrolled interminglings between whiteness and colour, 'East' and 'West'. This intermingling would in effect, undercut the simplified idea of 'East' and 'West' or whiteness and colour as discrete entities in themselves (Young 2005, p. 18). In particular, the tension depicted here, between difference and likeness, highlights both the flawed aspects of multicultural sentiments in Australia and one of the central components of mixed race subjectivity and experience, and race relations in colonial and postcolonial societies more generally. As Hage argues, multiculturalism is equipped only to deal with a specific and easily defined sense of difference (2010, p. 245). As a concept it fails when faced with indefinable identities that meld likeness and difference in equal measure. Australian multiculturalism, Hage further points out, prefers difference to likeness as it preserves 'true' Australianess as the domain of whiteness, allowing difference to be, as de Kretser writes, "easily corralled" (145) – conditionally included and appreciated for exoticism, but never truly allowed to belong.

Additionally, the seemingly celebratory attitude towards cultural diversity – which, Hage emphasises, involves only 'safe' forms of culture – is in fact another form of cultural dominance and control (1998, p. 163). Karen's friend's love for 'spiritual' India and her collection of Asian cultural motifs therefore, can be read as a form of colonial appropriation and exhibition, which values the exotic qualities of what is 'ethnic' so long as they conform to white Australian expectations. As Hage writes, the inclusion of 'exotic ethnics' in the nation is conditional – they are "imagined as dead cultures that cannot have a life of their own except through the 'peaceful coexistence' that regulates the collection" (1998, p. 163). As a result, the cultures are 'dis-armed' and their undesirable aspects, which are capable of harming white Australian society, are removed. The 'ethnics' then, become "living fetishes, deriving their significance from the White organising principle that controls and positions them within the Australian social space" (Hage, 1998, p. 161).

Similarly, Hage emphasises that such practices are far from being a progressive indication of improving racial and cultural relations, but are rather a continuation of colonial practices, which historically involved the exhibition of controlled and contained 'exotic natives'. In this way, perceived racial and cultural differences are

moulded and shaped by Western colonial modernity into specific types of difference, which either justify Western control or have “broken spears” and are rendered containable and non-threatening (Hage 2010, p. 242). Glissant describes this as the process of Western “understanding” (*comprendre*), which entails categorising difference and placing it in a pre-existing hierarchical order, thereby reducing its humanity (1997, p. 194). According to Glissant, this type of understanding involves grasping, enclosing and appropriating difference, in much the same way Karen’s friend decides that Tom’s family are being ‘inauthentic’ Indians in their Catholicism.

While this clearly demonstrates the power imbalance between whiteness and non-whiteness in Australia, it also has more global and historical antecedents and is indicative of the divide between the *humanitas* and the *anthropos* (Mignolo 2011). As I have discussed throughout this thesis, Australian multicultural sentiment has been described as replicating colonial structures within Australia’s national borders, and Hage himself likens the white cosmo-multiculturalist desire to consume difference and the exotic to a multicultural “zoo”, where racial and cultural difference occupies a non-human position (1998, p. 161). This position, which Mignolo describes as being excluded from the *humanitas* and relegated to the *anthropos* in modern colonial thought (2011a), also strips the racialised subject of any authority or autonomy with regard to perceptions of race and culture. As Tom observes in the novel, “[t]o be eclectic was a Western privilege, as was the authentication of cultural artefacts” (145), and processes of cultural change or alternative ways of perceiving difference that fall beyond this ambit are suppressed or pushed aside.

### **“Expulsion from the nation”: Tom’s racialisation and trauma**

While the focus in the scene described above is primarily cultural and religious, there are definite racial undertones in both the observation of Catholicism’s inauthenticity in India, and Tom’s reflection that, in this context, “likeness was more subtly unnerving” (145). As Hage and others argue, multiculturalism in Australia similarly deals, ostensibly, with cultural difference, however race is a constant and implicit presence that is entwined in discussions of culture (Hage 1998; Gunew 2004; Stratton 2003, p. 9). *The Lost Dog* explores this interrelationship through the juxtaposition of Tom’s experiences of hostile racism and cosmo-multiculturalist consumerist

appreciation. It further deals with the traumatic effects and power inequalities that processes of racialisation – whether negative or seemingly positive – create.

While Tom does not exhibit the same signs of trauma manifested in the narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made* or Jasmine, Israel and Manny in *Shanghai Dancing*, the novel conveys his feelings of racial stress, disempowerment and abjection in subtle ways. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed Hage's concept of the "shattered racialised person", and I argue that Tom undergoes a similar shattering as a young non-white person in Australia. Tom learns to deal with this shattering as an adult by maintaining a, not unproblematic, sense of belonging and identification with India rather than Australia. He further develops a sophisticated knowledge and awareness of modernity, along with its attributes of rationality, irony and cynicism.

In *The World Waiting to be Made*, the narrator observes that one of the ways she feels she can overcome the disempowering effects of racialisation and exoticisation is to appear "more knowingly and sophisticatedly international" (Lazaroo 2000, p. 199) than those around her. In *The Lost Dog*, Tom reflects that he "was ashamed of ... seeming out of date" (234), and he buttresses his sense of security with a highly developed rational intellect and fluency in modern Western culture. The fears and desires of both these characters reflect the implicit ties between modernity and racialisation (Mignolo 2011b, p. 83). The narrator realises that she can use her foreign and exotic qualities to counteract her status as a non-white member of the anthropos. She enhances her social and cultural capital by exhibiting modern traits that are not always within the reach of the suburban white Australians her narrative examines – worldliness, global knowledge and sophistication. Tom similarly strives for a rational, scientific, clearly delineated intellect, and, I argue that his fear of being unmodern is linked to his other fear made explicit in the novel – that of "expulsion from the nation" because of his racialised body (209).

The actions of both Tom and the narrator of *The World Waiting to be Made* are problematic, as they involve an acceptance of the category Mignolo calls the *humanitas*. They also involve attempts to assimilate into it by positioning their identities in class-based hierarchies in order to compensate for their racial impurity. Although it is easy to dismiss Tom's experiences as less racialised than the narrator's,

it becomes clear that Tom's background, and what he experiences as a result, does have a profound impact on his adult life, although it is masked by his ironic, educated outlook. As I have mentioned, Tom's identification with India as a place of belonging can be understood in terms of Ghassan Hage's work on what he calls first-generation immigrants (2010). As the place of his birth and childhood, Tom feels an affinity with the nation. Furthermore, it was made clear to him when he arrived in Australia that he was looked upon as an outsider. However, in spite of Tom's love for India, it is evident throughout the novel that he has a vexed relationship with Indian-ness and Asian-ness. As a teenager, he corrects his mother's words when she says her back is "paining", telling her it "hurts", as to his ears it strikes him as "*sounding Indian*" and therefore incorrect. Later, he realises that "her locution...was not after all geographical but historical" after coming across the term in "a book of good Edwardian prose" (230). That Tom feels a need to validate his mother's speech as "good Edwardian prose", a phrase which is replete with connotations of British literary high culture, indicates the suppressed but ever present shame he carries at being marked out as Indian. He similarly feels "ashamed for" Nelly when they are at a market together and she insists on haggling, so much so that he "look[s] away from these scenes". Tom himself "always [pays] whatever [is] asked, not wishing to appear *typically Asian*" (original italics) (73).

Tom's shame at appearing 'Asian' exists in tension with his derision for Australian naïveté and cosmo-multiculturalism, and his sense of solidarity with people of colour. This tension illustrates the continuation of colonial concepts of racial hierarchies and understanding, in Glissant's terms, which are evident in Australia's particularly ambivalent and at times antagonistic relationship with racialised difference. The shame and abjection-inducing quality of the Australia's attitudes towards race is depicted most clearly when Tom experiences the wake of the events of September 11. He realises that Australia, for all its modern conveniences and shiny novelty, is not a nation beyond the reach of terrible, historic events and reflects "[i]n the same spring as the towers fell, boats making their way to Australia foundered on the treachery of current and destiny. People looking for sanctuary drowned. They might have been found; they might have been saved. But what prevailed was the protection of a line drawn in the water" (208).

Tom is profoundly affected by the news of the sinking of the ‘SIEV X’, during which over three hundred men, women and children drowned on their way to Australia.<sup>20</sup> He feels “the convergence of public and private dread”, making the link between Australian public hostility towards people seeking asylum by boat and the knowledge:

[b]uried deep in Australian memory...that strangers had once sailed to these shores and destroyed what they found...A trauma that had never been laid to rest, it went on disturbing the nation’s dreams. In the rejection of the latest newcomers, Tom glimpsed the past convulsing like a faulty film. It was a confession coded as a denial (208).

This reference to the foundation of white Australia alludes to the dispossession of the country’s Indigenous inhabitants by the British settlers arriving by sea, and the nation’s subconscious guilt regarding this frequently suppressed history of violence (Rutherford 2000, p. 12; Gelder and Jacobs 1998, p. 46). It furthermore, links the nation’s xenophobia with a guilty fear that racialised others arriving by boat will repeat this foundational violence against the body of the white nation (Stratton 2004, p. 236). Here, de Kretser is engaging with a well-known aspect of Australian history in order to demonstrate and critique the racial and racist traits of Australian society that continues to permeate the consciousness of a seemingly affluent, peaceful and tolerant nation. The insecurity of the foundations of white Australia is a recurrent theme throughout the novel, and it reappears frequently, indicating the resurgence of race, and the trauma it causes, in spite of official denial. In a scene where Tom reflects that Australia was a comfortable modern nation, “keeping up with the great elsewhere” of Los Angeles and London (101-102) de Kretser nevertheless writes, “[t]he past was not always past enough here. It was like living in a house acquired for its clean angles and gleaming appliances; and discovering a bricked-up door, at which, faint but insistent, the sound of knocking could be heard” (102). This image clearly evokes repression, ghostliness and the gothic literary tradition (Wallace and Smith 2009, p. 7), indicating that racial trauma, and the non-modern, haunt the

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<sup>20</sup> For more information on this incident, during which 353 asylum seekers lost their lives in the seas between Indonesia and Australia, see Frank Brennan (2007) and Tony Kevin (2004).

modern nation, both critiquing its past and present violence and threatening to disrupt its modernity.

Tom occupies an ambivalent position in this narrative as his critique of the history of white Australia is intermingled with his own sense of privilege and guilt, and fear at the precariousness of this privilege. De Kretser employs an informed, intellectual character to engage with well-known critiques of both whiteness and the foundation of the Australian nation (Stratton 2004, p. 236). While watching the news coverage of the event, Tom identifies with the asylum seekers and feels “the guilty rage of those who have crossed to safety”, however he also fears that his safety is not secure and, “[i]nstantly identifiable as foreign matter, he feared being labelled waste. He feared expulsion from the nation” (209).

Tom’s fear of “expulsion from the nation” can be understood in terms of abjection. “Instantly identifiable” on the basis of phenotypical characteristics alone, Tom’s fears reflect that, in spite of his defensive intellectualism and carefully maintained modern identity, he nevertheless suffers from the effects of insidious trauma as a result of repeated experiences of racialisation and mis-recognition. This trauma manifests itself in both his ambivalence with regard to his combined Asianness and whiteness, and his heightened sense of insecurity and awareness of the unreliability of his access to privilege. Tom’s fear of “being labelled waste” furthermore, evokes Judith Butler’s interpretation of abjection, as developed by Julia Kristeva (1982). Butler writes that the “‘abject’ designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered ‘Other’” (1990, p. 133), and she emphasises that it is only through the process of expulsion that the abject becomes alien and not part of the subject. Furthermore, “[t]he boundary of the body as well as the distinction between internal and external is established through the ejection and transvaluation of something originally part of identity into a defiling otherness” (1990, p. 133).

Tom’s fear of “expulsion from the nation”, therefore, can be seen as representative of the wider tensions in Australia regarding national identity and border control, the preservation of whiteness and the containment and control of racial difference. Butler engages with Iris Marion Young’s reading of Kristeva, arguing that while “through the [creation], exclusion and domination” of the Other, identities can be reinforced

and strengthened, there remains a constant tension as the boundaries of the subject which exclude the Other are tenuous (1990, p. 134). Butler argues that it is impossible “[f]or inner and outer worlds to remain utterly distinct [as] the entire surface of the body would have to achieve an impossible impermeability. This sealing of its surfaces would constitute the seamless boundary of the subject; but this enclosure would invariably be exploded by precisely that excremental filth that it fears” (1990, p. 134).

In an Australian context, attempts to delineate borders and regulate, contain and control racial difference illustrate an anxiety not only over the preservation of a white Australia, but also its foundation. Butler’s reading of abjection indicates the presence of the abject exists as part of the subject before its expulsion, just as there has been a multiracial and Asian presence in Australia for its entire colonial history, and a history of Indigenous Australian settlement which predates colonisation by thousands of years. These histories, particularly that of the dispossession of Indigenous Australia, which Tom views as a “trauma that had never been laid to rest, [that] went on disturbing the nation’s dreams,” are the “excremental filth” feared by white Australia which, as attempts are made to seal boundaries and contain difference, threatens to explode. Furthermore, in *Power of Horror*, Kristeva writes that in the process of expelling the abject, “I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish *myself*” (1982, p. 3). In terms of Kristeva’s conceptualisation of abjection, the Australian preoccupation with border protection and the regulation and control of racial difference within the nation creates a far-wider abjection, that affects the country as a whole rather than solely the ‘Others’ the nation wishes to repulse.

Tom’s relationship with Asian-ness and his reactions to the sinking of the SIEV X provide insights into the complexity and ambivalence of his identification and his link with Australia. While, in dealings with his mother and Nelly, a deep sense of shame is apparent at their “typical” Asian-ness, Tom nevertheless feels a strong sense of affinity with the asylum seekers attempting to start a new life in Australia. He thinks of himself as one who was once like them, but who “crossed to safety” (209). Similarly, Tom notices with satisfaction the increasing number of South Asian faces in Australia, however he frequently thinks “[b]ut there are so many more waiting” (145). This frustration is once again conjoined with an irrational fear that Tom will be

sent to join those waiting, and become “a human commodity...competing with thousands of identical products, waiting to be chosen” (146).

Elsewhere, the novel relates that as a youth Tom would spend time imagining a double life, one where he inhabited Australia, and the different path he would have taken had he remained in India. At the time, Tom believed that “if he imagined an Indian life, he would not be returned to one” (197). In spite of the fear that accompanies his imaginings, he nevertheless sees himself as an Indian man, “[o]n a bus bulg[ing] with bodies, ... reach[ing] past hands that matched his own” (197). The solidarity Tom feels with South Asians and the subcontinent in general is confirmed by the Australian schoolyard, however its certainty is complicated by his mixed heritage and position of wealth and privilege in India as a member of the Eurasian community and the son of a white Englishman.

As the majority of Tom’s life is spent in Australia, his perceptions of race are shaped accordingly, however de Kretser also highlights the ambivalent position of Eurasianness in India. She indicates that the Portuguese Eurasian de Souza’s fortunes have declined substantially by the time Tom’s mother Iris is a young woman during the Second World War. Furthermore, by Tom’s childhood in the sixties, having a “hybrid” face that “branded them the leftovers of Empire” in decolonial India is seen as a disadvantage, and he witnesses the emigration of many of his mixed race friends (18). De Kretser writes of these friends and their families, “[p]assed for Canada. Passed for England. People [Tom] had known all his life had been scrutinised like cashews and declared fit for export” (18). Tom’s parents, Iris and Arthur, are able to migrate to Australia based on a family connection, as Arthur’s English sister Audrey had moved there after the war. De Kretser writes, “[p]assed for Australia” (19).

De Kretser’s choice of word, “passed”, evokes the trope of racial passing whereby multiracial individuals move in and out of a variety of racial categories to which they may or may not have ancestral claim (Sollors 1999, p. 247). This is significant in the context of mixed race, Asian families moving to predominately white nations. While de Kretser does not discuss the White Australia Policy, it is clear that race plays a part in the Loxley’s migration and settlement in Australia through her use of the word

“passed”, and the familial English connection. As a result, the mixed race Tom is able to migrate freely, leaving behind those who are less wealthy and less European.

Significantly, the very racial mixedness that allows Tom to migrate to Australia becomes the source of Tom’s discrimination on his arrival. A young Tom in India, when first confronted with the departures of his Eurasian friends, is distressed, reflecting the “[h]e glimpsed, for the first time, the flux inherent in human affairs” (18), a sentiment which highlights the chance and cruelty of race and access to racial privilege. This links back to Tom’s adult musings of his parallel Indian life, his fear of being returned there, and the “brown hands that matched his own”. However it also brings to the fore the role of racial privilege. Tom’s white European heritage differentiates him from these hands, and yet significantly, only allows him a contingent and unreliable privilege.

De Krester makes much of Tom’s conflicted attitudes towards whiteness and Asianness, the history of the Old World and the modernity of the New. This is similar to the narrator’s ambivalence in *The World Waiting to be Made*. The conflict reflects their struggles as individuals assigned to the anthropos, who nevertheless pass in and out of the humanitas at often unpredictable and uncontrolled moments. The two characters are aware both of their ability to inhabit the humanitas, and of the capital required to do so – rationality, knowledge, sophistication. They also have ambivalent feelings regarding the times when they do find themselves members – if only honorary, conditional members – of the humanitas. What neither character is able to fully do, however, is delink from the racial imaginary, and the divisions of humanity into the anthropos and humanitas.

Glissant argues that as long as colonised peoples define themselves in reaction or opposition to a colonial worldview, full decolonisation cannot take place (1997, p. 17). In *The Lost Dog*, this is, significantly, a point evoked by Nelly Zhang. At one stage, she says to Tom, “doesn’t setting out to reject the past guarantee you’ll never be free of it? It’s like being modern means walking with a built-in limp” (103). While Nelly does not explicitly refer to either race or colonialism, racial categories and colonial expansion are intrinsic aspects of modernity. The use of a bodily wound from a past physical trauma to describe the process of being modern is also significant. It

evokes the transgenerational limp in the multiracial Castro family in *Shanghai Dancing*, and it demonstrates, as Glissant argues, the constraints and limitations racialised peoples face if they seek to engage with colonialism and modernity on its own terms, as do Tom and the narrator of *The World Waiting to be Made*.

Mignolo similarly explores a number of possible reactions to the modern colonial construction of the *humanitas* and the *anthropos*, suggesting that those allocated to the *anthropos* can choose to submit to “his or her inferior epistemic and ontological status vis-à-vis the model of *humanitas*” (2011c, p. 168). Alternatively, he suggests the *anthropos* can fight the *humanitas*, in order to demonstrate their own humanity and be recognised as such. This, according to Mignolo, is the “the path of assimilation, of being happy to be accepted in the palace of *humanitas*” (2011c, p. 168). Mignolo describes the third option as the “most rewarding and hopeful” whereby the *anthropos* reveals the pretense and artifice of the *humanitas* (2011c, p. 168). This is not motivated by a desire to be recognised by the *humanitas*, but is done in order to demonstrate the *humanitas*’ insanity in still believing that “humanity is divided between *humanitas* and *anthropos*, and the authoritarian control of knowledge gives them the privilege of seeing themselves *as humanitas* and not as *anthropos*” (Mignolo 2011c, p. 168).

Throughout *The World Waiting to be Made*, the narrator struggles with this divide between the *humanitas* and the *anthropos*. This can be seen in her endeavours to both assimilate into white Australian society and to contest this society through seeking an ‘authentic’ Asian identity. The novel as a whole, however, intervenes in the racial and colonial imaginary by demonstrating the unevenness, injustice and, as Mignolo describes it, “insanity” of this way of seeing the world (2011c, p. 168). For much of *The Lost Dog*, Tom is similarly engaged in a fight against the *humanitas*. Throughout the novel he at times desires to be recognised and accepted into the *humanitas* in its form of Australian whiteness, which is evident in his strategic interactions with British high culture and his pursuit of rational knowledge. Writing a book on the works of *Henry James and the Uncanny* (3), Tom uses his familiarity with Euro-centric intellectual pursuits to improve his class position and protect himself from lower-middle class Anglo-Australian prejudice. His shame at his mother’s antiquated English speech, or Nelly’s practice of haggling, are further evidence of his desire to

distance himself from that which is seen as “typically Asian” in favour of that which is modern and, implicitly, white.

He also, however, like the narrator of *The World Waiting to be Made*, engages in both a reactionary rejection of the modern colonial imaginary, and a process of self-definition that stands in opposition to a white Australian identity. This is most evident when he, in contemplating a life in India had he not migrated to Australia, imagines a seamless solidarity with “brown hands that matched his own”, and in his rejection of Australia as a place he could feel an affinity with or love. As with the case of the narrator in Lazaroo’s novel however, *The Lost Dog* as a whole problematises both Tom’s attempts to assimilate with whiteness and his forays into positioning himself in an idealised Asia in opposition to the West. The novel achieves this primarily through an exploration of Tom’s mixed heritage, which I argue can be read in terms of demonstrating the “insanity” of the *humanitas* and *anthropos* divide (Mignolo 2011c, p. 168). Tom’s mixedness questions the racial solidarity he briefly dreams of in India, and the discreteness of whiteness from all those who are racialised. I will more fully explore the ways in which concepts of mixed race are employed as a disruptive force which can potentially delink from concepts of the *humanitas* and *anthropos* in the novel in the following sections.

### **“Very World of Suzy (sic) Wong”: Nelly’s multiracial ambiguity and femininity**

In this section I would like to examine the ways in which the novel depicts a gendered and sexualised racially ambiguous person of mixed ancestry, and its implications. While Tom is the central character in *The Lost Dog*, the novel also focuses closely on Nelly Zhang, an Australian artist who is also of mixed heritage. Nelly’s subjectivity, and the depiction of her racialisation, varies from Tom’s experiences. While both experience forms of racialisation, Nelly, as a woman, undergoes a more complex form of gendered racialisation that involves multiple intersecting points of inequality and oppression.

Nelly is introduced in the novel early on, however, unlike Tom, the nature of her mixed ancestry is not initially revealed. She is at first introduced to the reader with a Chinese surname, accompanied by stereotypical oriental accoutrements such as striking black hair that is often pinned up with chopsticks, and the reader is

encouraged to assume that she is of solely Chinese ancestry. Throughout the early section of the novel, Nelly's seemingly quintessential 'Asianness' is highlighted and there are references to her "sooty fringe" (8) and "cheekbones... broad as a cat" (26). When Tom comes across a photograph of her at age twenty, with "jet hair drawn into a topknot" he thinks of her as appearing thirteen and "desirable, bruised, corrupt, infinitely oriental. 'Very *World of Suzy* [sic] *Wong*.'" (32). Tom's observation references the novel and film of the same name, and the character famously brought to screen by actress Nancy Kwan. I will return to this allusion in more detail in the following section, as its seemingly stereotypical depiction of exotic and sexualised Asian femininity is rendered more complex on closer reading.

On page 44 of the novel, however, the simplicity of Nelly's Chinese-ness is called into more overt question. When she refers to certain of her habits as stemming from "Ancient Chinese Wisdom" Tom becomes exasperated and asks, "You're like what? Third, fourth generation? Why do you pretend you're Chinese?" Nelly responds:

You think I should pretend I'm Australian? ... like the ones who think they own the place. The Australians won't let me, for one thing. Want to know how many weeks I can go without getting asked where I'm from? (44).

Nelly's use of the term 'Australian' is significant, as it presumably represents the word 'Australian' spoken with an exaggerated Australian accent, which is typically associated with the working to lower-middle class Anglo-Saxon Australians who were once Australia's 'national aristocracy,' and still arguably maintain strong ties to this role (Hage 1998, p. 17).

It is only now that it is revealed to the reader that, like Tom, Nelly is also mixed race, having a mother who "was a Scot" and "among her ancestors she counted a Pole and an Englishman" (44). She is also shown to be a multi-generation Australian on the Chinese side of her family, and descriptions of her personality and appearance become more complex. The novel states "the cast of her adulterated features was only vaguely Asiatic" (44), suggesting both that Nelly has aspects of a European phenotype and bringing to mind historical stereotypes of racial impurity and degeneration embodied by mixed race people via the term "adulterated" (Young

1995). The novel emphasises, however, that Nelly “exploited [the Asian aspects of her features] to the hilt, exaggerating the slant of her eyes with kohl, powdering her face into an expressionless mask. Stilettos and a slit skirt, and she might have stepped from a Shanghai den” (44), while “[s]he wore her hair cut blunt across her forehead, and drew attention to what she called her ‘thick Chinese calves’” (45). The novel also states, however, that, “[s]he was not for the taxonomy-minded...She was smoke and mirrors; a category error” who wears mixed ethnic signifiers one day and “anti-chinoiserie” the next (45).

Nelly’s performance of Chinese-ness and exoticness can be read as both capitulation and resistance to white Australian multiculturalism and its rules of cultural identity. She is, like the narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made*, consistently mis-interpellated by white Australians and racialised as foreign in spite of her familial connections to the country, and this constitutes a repeated rejection by the white centre. Like the unnamed protagonist of Simone Lazaroo’s novel, furthermore, Nelly is only allowed to belong as long as she remembers her place as the oriental woman who is permitted to remain by white multicultural tolerance. Unquestioned belonging is not allowed, as Nelly emphasises to Tom when she states that the “Australians” won’t let her be anything but Chinese.

While Tom’s frustration with Nelly’s ostentatious and kitsch Chinese-ness appears logical given Nelly’s multiracial ancestry and her Australian birth and upbringing, her defensive response to his questioning reveals certain tensions in Australia society regarding who can and cannot belong and self-identify as belonging to the nation. Nelly identifies the ‘Australians’, that is, the allegedly egalitarian Anglo-Saxon Australians, as “the ones who think they own the place”. Her acknowledgement that they do have a degree of control over her identity calls into question whether it is only “they” who think they own the place, or whether there is a degree of acquiescence to their control on the part of the non-Anglo Australians, highlighting the power imbalance faced by racialised subjects.

Nelly’s response to the constant mis-interpellation and fragmenting racialisation that she experiences is to accept the marker of Chinese-ness and perform it to excess in a way that both parodies and subverts expectations. It could be argued that this is a

form of power and resistance as Judith Butler states “parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalised and essentialist gender identities” (1990, p. 138). She also notes, however, that “[p]arody by itself is not subversive” (1990, p. 139) as all gender involves a form of parody. Writing about another racially ambiguous woman, Josephine Baker, Anne Anlin Cheng argues that “subversion always tends to reproduce the very stereotype it means to dismantle” (2008, p. 45), an argument that can be applied to Nelly’s “concubine” look.

Nelly’s performative Chinese-ness certainly mocks Australian assumptions about the Orient, as there are times when she mixes ethnic signifiers. At one point “a rosary strung with mother-of-pearl serve[s] her as a necklace, while a red glass bindi glitter[s] on her brow” (45). On another occasion when she deliberately dresses in the unflattering “anti-chinoiserie favoured by the ageless Chinese females who can be observed presiding over bok choy and cabbages in vegetable markets” (45). While Tom can see “wit...parody...and defensive flaunting of caricature” in Nelly’s self-representation, he also finds it “kitsch...sad...[and] diminish[ing]” in a way that is “painful to him” (45). Tom’s sentiments about Nelly reveal his own fixations on being accepted by, or else fighting against, the *humanitas*, and his need to fortify himself against discrimination by accumulating qualities valued by Western modernity. However, there is also a sense of limitation in Nelly’s performative Chinese-ness, which differentiates it from Arnaldo’s performance of Asianness in *Shanghai Dancing*. While Arnaldo takes pleasure in his ability to pass as a refugee in Australia, de Kretser illustrates Nelly’s sense of restriction and structural limitation with regard to her subjectivity, as she feels Australia won’t “let her” be anything other than Chinese.

Similarly, while Tom’s “sad” reaction to Nelly’s performative kitsch cannot be taken at face value, de Kretser’s use of the term, “diminish” in the quote above evokes Glissant’s employment of the word “reduce” to describe the effects of *comprendre* on the object of knowledge (1997, p. 190). In terms of race, all racialisation reduces the other, and Nelly’s parodic embracing of her own racialisation is, while disruptive in its deliberate inconsistency, also complicit with her own reduction. This reflects, however, the racialisation of culture and national belonging in Australia, and the replication of colonial structures by Australian multiculturalism (Gunew 2004, p. 10),

rather than a deficiency in Nelly's own actions. However it does reveal an underlying level of sadness and disempowerment in Nelly's attempt to control her own subjectivity. Butler defines subversive parody as disrupting "naturalised and essentialist" identities, particularly hegemonic perceptions of such identities (1990, p. 138), and Nelly's parodic fashion sense is disruptive to a degree, as she is a permanently troubling figure in the world of the novel. Nelly's adaptation and combination of Catholic and Hindu symbols similarly has an element of transgression and her "anti-chinoiserie" costume is also an anti-exoticised interpretation of Asianness that resists the hyper-sexualisation of Asian women. Nelly, for all her resistance, nevertheless remains constrained by white Australian perceptions of Asianness, her body, and what it means to be Australian. As her parodic appearance is always in opposition to these ideas, there is a sense that she remains restricted and constantly under-siege by rigid conceptions of culture and race in an Australian multicultural framework.

While Nelly may intend her appearance to be a form of subversion or resistance, as readers we are not given access to her interiority, and her actions are mediated by Tom's perspective. Furthermore, while Nelly does have agency and intention, Cheng points out that it is a complex process to determine "what agency can mean in a situation where the very idea of subjective integrity is already compromised" (2008, p. 45). While Cheng writes primarily about Josephine Baker's situation as a racialised woman in early twentieth-century France, subjective integrity is also compromised for racialised people in contemporary Australia, and it could be argued that Nelly's performative appearance is a form of refuge from becoming "a shattered racialised person" (Hage 2010, p. 245).

By attempting to accept the identity imposed on her, Nelly tries to avoid the shattering affect of mis-interpellation that occurs to the narrator of *The World Waiting to be Made*. Nelly does not seek to combat continual racial (mis)identification but rather tries to carve a new ethnic niche for herself, which aims to both satisfy white multicultural orientalist fantasies and allow her the racial and ethnic ambiguity she desires for herself. It is, furthermore, strongly implied in the novel that Nelly would like to be able to claim an Australian identity, and relax her deliberately disruptive dress sense, at least at times, however, as she tells Tom, the Australians "won't let

her” and this power imbalance continues to shape her actions and reactions regarding her image.

While her self-representation may not accomplish either complete resistance or total refuge, Nelly remains a troubling figure to Tom and those around her, as a result of her unsettling combination of the familiar and the foreign. Tom’s apparently straightforwardly orientalist comparison of a young Nelly to the character of Suzie Wong is a troubling double allusion that highlights both her ‘Asianness’ and her ‘whiteness’ and disrupts entrenched notions of Asian femininity. Suzie Wong is a fictional Hong Kong sex worker in the 1957 novel by Richard Mason, *The World of Suzie Wong*, and who was famously portrayed on screen by Hong Kong actress Nancy Kwan in 1960. Kwan’s portrayal of Suzie as a good-natured sex worker is often seen as an early icon symbolising Western fantasies of Asian women (Cheng 2001, pp. 50-51), however Kwan herself is, significantly, at once white and Asian, having Scottish and Chinese ancestry, much the same as Nelly Zhang. Furthermore, as Anne Anlin Cheng points out in her analysis of Kwan’s performance and character in the film *Flower Drum Song*, Kwan’s cultural and racial signification is “anything but stable” as throughout her early film career she played an Italian, a Tahitian and two English sisters (2001, p. 51).

Similarly, after her breakthrough performance as Suzie Wong, Kwan was featured in *The Week* magazine in guises of various ethnicities such as Spanish, Parisian and Indian (Cheng 2001, p. 51). Cheng describes the public’s fascination with Kwan as not so much representing a fascination for “exotic otherness but for its ability to continually transforms itself into *other* otherness” (2001, p. 51). This racial changeability, however, is also unsettling and threatening, and Cheng points out that “[a]ssimilation as a cultural ideal demands a tasteful makeover on the part of the unassimilable, racial other, but if the latter shows itself to be infinitely transformable, then that body will exceed the bounds of taste and normalcy” (2001, p. 51). The “threat” then, posed by Nancy Kwan and Nelly Zhang, involves a body that can be “resignified” (2001, p. 51), and an Asianness that can also be coded as “white” (Cheng 2001, p. 46).

It is significant that even attempts to orientalise Nelly by evoking seemingly straightforward tropes about Asian women through references to Suzie Wong loop back into “a snare” that implies her whiteness and sameness (125). In his exploration of the uncanny, Freud cites the example of the “double”, which involves unexpectedly meeting one’s “own image” and perceiving it as the form of a stranger (2003, p. 162). He describes an episode in his own life, where he was travelling by train and mistook his own reflection in the mirror of a door for another passenger (Freud 2003, p. 162). Although he was not terrified by this image, it evoked within him a feeling of dislike, which Freud attributes to an “archaic reaction to the ‘double’ as something uncanny” (2003, p. 162), an effect that can be compared to the reactions of white Australians to racially mixed white people. Attempts to corral Nelly into permanent difference, therefore, continually fail, and Nelly’s whiteness, her constant familiarity and Australianness in spite of continual disavowal by “the ones who think they own the place” (44), becomes the uncanny that is so “unnerving” (145).

Similarly, Nelly’s subjectivity and appearance are a source of constant conflict in the novel. Not only does she feel that the “Australians won’t let” her be Australian (44), but she also encounters public hostility as a young woman after the unsolved disappearance of her white Australian husband, Felix Atwood. By 2001, when the novel is set, Nelly’s husband, a successful investment banker accused of embezzlement, is presumed dead after a mysterious disappearance. His disappearance was widely covered by the Australian media, and Nelly’s otherness and duality of being both “native but foreign”, were perceived as suspicious and dangerous qualities in the eyes of the Australian public. Atwood is shown to the reader through old newspaper photographs, where he is depicted as going surfing and having an “angular, inviting muzzle” (105) or at a concert with a bow tie and “good, or at least expensive, teeth” (106). Tom observes that “he looked straight into the camera and smiled” and “it was clear he did not make the mistake of underestimating his effect” (106).

Atwood is depicted as the quintessential white Australian man, while Nelly fills the role of the dangerous and unpredictable female other. While Atwood remains a shadowy figure throughout the novel, who is only ever encountered by both Tom and the reader through hearsay or old newspaper archives, Tom’s impression is that he

possesses the public's sympathy and "was halfway to being a hero in Australian eyes" (125). When he is suspected of fraud, his crimes are discounted as being only against bankers, and eventually "with the practised ease of sleight-of-hand, [public] disapproval passed from the man to his wife" (125) and Nelly becomes, in the eyes of the press, guilty of orchestrating her husband's disappearance and possible murder. While Atwood went surfing and robbed the rich, appealing to quintessential Australian sensibilities, Tom reflects:

Nelly Atwood failed the first universal test of womanliness, which is to appear meek. She failed the first Australian test of virtue, which is to appear ordinary... [and] Nelly Atwood was also Nelly Zhang. She was A and Z, twin poles, the extremities of a line that might loop into a snare. She was double ... native yet foreign. Duplicity was inscribed in her face (125).

Here, Nelly's Australianness becomes just as disturbing as her difference. Indeed the combination of the two renders her a highly suspect member of the nation. This is heightened by her mixed race status. While Nelly's 'race' is rarely mentioned, and she is never called 'mixed race', the sentence "[d]uplicity was inscribed in her face" highlights the duality that is written into Nelly's features. Moreover, *The Lost Dog* itself also evokes this possibility, stressing the unsettling nature of a different sameness, as particularly embodied by the multiracial Nelly Zhang. Tom himself reflects that while Nelly's face delights him, it also induces within him a "brief, disconcerting sense of a familiar face overlaid with strangeness" (43). Her racial ambiguity combines the European and the Asian, identities that are historically the ideal and the terror of white Australia respectively (Jupp 2002, p. 125, 209). The combination of Nelly's familiarity and difference and her unwillingness to conform to one category are portrayed as the key elements to Nelly's ability to perturb the Australian public, which evokes Tom's earlier reflection on the unnerving nature of recognising likeness in the body or culture of the other.

The novel's exploration of Nelly's marriage brings to the fore the issue of race, power and sexuality. Nelly's identity and her self-representation are depicted as a battleground throughout the novel, as she is shown as consistently struggling to control her own body and subjectivity. This battle does not apply solely to Nelly's

inability to call herself 'Australian', as a struggle over her body and subjectivity is also present in her marriage to Atwood. Nelly married Atwood at twenty years of age, when she looked "thirteen" and "very *World of Suzy Wong*" and remained married to him until his disappearance when she was twenty-five. This point is alluded to early, however it takes on more significance towards the end of the novel, when Nelly reveals the difficulties in her marriage to both Tom and the reader. Nelly implies Atwood had paedophilic tendencies, and was attracted to her youthful appearance. "I got married so young", Nelly tells Tom. "That was *it*... That was what he liked" (241). She reveals they had protracted arguments over her appearance, as her body and image were gendered battlegrounds that mirror her struggles with racialisation and later attempts to define her own identity in the national space. Nelly informs Tom that Atwood endeavoured to dress her in "pintucked frocks of English lawn", "baby-doll nighties" and "pigtails", or over-sized silk and chiffon, so that "lipsticked, hung with flashing paste jewels, she was a child essaying a sexual disguise" (242). After a time, Nelly begins to enact a resistance by cutting her hair and refusing to wear the clothing he bought her, or else wearing them "incongruously... a Peter Pan collar half-hidden under a polyester shift or a safety-pinned T-shirt" (241). Atwood is "infuriated" by her resistance and as a result her "clothes – her appearance, her image – became the site each struggled to control" (241).

Atwood undermines Nelly in retaliation for her refusal to play out his fantasies, telling his colleagues that her appearance and behaviour is a symptom of post-natal depression and mental imbalance after the birth of their son. While race is not explicitly mentioned in the novel in these particular scenes, the power struggle and inequality within Nelly's marriage alludes to both her position in the nation, which I have already discussed, and prevalent tropes regarding the submissiveness of Asian women that circulate in white Australia (Robinson 1996; Ang 1996; Khoo 2003). Similarly, while the novel is not explicit in linking Atwood's attempt to dress Nelly as a child with her racial appearance, there is clearly a connection, as when Nelly tells Tom the details of her relationship with Atwood, he immediately thinks of the photograph of her at twenty, when he not only thought that she looked thirteen but also that she looked "desirable, bruised, corrupt, infinitely oriental" (32). Here, a direct thread is evident between Nelly's perceived race and a child-like yet sexualised appeal, which demonstrates the layers of oppressive categorisation that Nelly faces.

Like the narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made*, Nelly is sexually racialised, and her body is given meaning according to racial stereotypes of Asian women, involving fantasies of the submissive, sexually available exotic.

While Tom does not inscribe Nelly's body with racialised meaning in the same way, he does see her as "a category error" (45), as someone who avoids being transparently open to understanding and continually perplexes him. Tom's preoccupation with assigning Nelly a fixed meaning and category is significant enough for one of her friends to reprimand him, telling him, "[s]he is not some kind of sign for you to study, you know" (45). As someone who also has a subjectivity shaped by mixed heritage and a racially ambiguous body, and who has at times struggled against restrictive concepts of understanding such as cosmo-multiculturalism, it is interesting to see Tom's attempts to categorise and understand Nelly. They differ, however, from the cosmo-multiculturalism of Karen and her friend, as part of his attempts to understand Nelly can be seen as endeavours to make sense of his own position. As I have discussed, Tom has also internalised key aspects of colonial modernity, and his outlook is shaped by a reliance on rationality, and the process of understanding that Glissant critiques. As a result, Nelly troubles his already ambivalent relationship with modern knowledge and by the end of the novel Tom is actively questioning his reliance on the idea of the modern, and its associated binary of the *humanitas* and *anthropos*.

While I have discussed the racial divisions of the *humanitas* and *anthropos*, these categories also produce a binary that is gendered in nature. Tom's attempts to categorise Nelly illustrate the gender bias implicit in the concepts of the *humanitas* and *anthropos*. In deploying this concept, Mignolo is concerned with who is able to know and who is known. I would argue that women are easily placed into the latter category, and often only tenuously occupy the former. For example Tom's preoccupation with rationality and being modern is directly contrasted with his mother's perceived superstition and irrationality. It is also perturbed by Nelly's non-categorical and arguably 'alternatively modern' (Ashcroft 2009) outlook and behaviour. It is furthermore, indicative of Tom's attempts – even if they are ambivalent, uneven attempts – to be accepted into the *humanitas* by distancing

himself from that which goes against the grain of the modern colonial imaginary, namely that which is irrational, feminine and Asian.

His attempts to categorise Nelly can also be seen as trying to bring her back into modernity, and the worldview of the *humanitas*, and they have a gendered and possessive connotation, as for much of the novel Tom is romantically and sexually pursuing Nelly. In one instance, Tom's desire for her is described as "a hunger for possession" (156), and he is uneasy with the complexity of her life and the distinctions between the successful artist he knows and the woman she was with Atwood, whom he refers to as the "*other Nelly*" (original italics) (213), which evokes Nelly's role as the racial and gendered other in the nation. It similarly suggests Nelly's, like Nancy Kwan's, "*other otherness*" (Cheng 2001, p. 51), and her ability to continually transform herself. This ability, involving her bodily racial ambiguity, brings to mind Arnaldo's ability to remake himself into multiple 'races'. It is also this fluidity which makes white Australia so uneasy and so quick to constrain Nelly into permanent 'Chinese-ness'. Nelly delays commencing a romantic or physical relationship with Tom until the end of the novel, so that his perception of her is constructed of a sense of presence yet "bodily absence" (156), which again emphasises Nelly's elusive qualities and Tom's inability to fully categorise or understand her. While Tom's possessive tendencies towards Nelly are not representative of racial domination, as they are in Atwood's case, they do highlight gendered social inequalities that can manifest in heterosexual relationships.

They also demonstrate, however, Tom's uneasiness with his own racial position and his reliance on modern, colonial modes of 'understanding', in Glissantian terms. Tom's desire for Nelly, then, is complex. It at once depicts a man pursuing an enigmatic woman in order to, ultimately, know himself better, yet it also represents an isolated, racially mixed person seeking solidarity with another, and a means of reinterpreting his own marginalised, racialised subjectivity. I will argue later in this chapter that Nelly symbolises, at least partially, Mignolo's third option regarding the *humanitas/anthropos* divide, which is a process of 'de-linking' from the modern racial and colonial imaginary.

### **Knowledge and transformation**

In the preceding section I have examined the theme of likeness and difference in relation to racialised bodies, however this theme is also evoked in the novel in relation to Nelly's artwork and Tom's scholarship on the literature of Henry James, which explores concepts of the double and the uncanny. Nelly's artworks also allude to the notion of the troubling double, as she only ever exhibits or sells photographs of her work. She apparently destroys the originals, however rumour informs Tom that she actually hoards them secretly, in order to "make a killing" in profit one day (49). The photographs of Nelly's artworks, furthermore, are reputed for instilling a sense of unease and disquiet in the viewer, a reaction which mirrors Nelly's own effect on those around her.

Tom also feels uneasy with both Nelly's work and art in general, and in one scene he admits to Nelly with difficulty, "[s]ometimes I think I'll never really get what's going on in a painting" (132). He further notices, "where he spoke of knowledge, Nelly talked of transformation. It confirmed his sense that pictures exceed analysis. Art was ghostly in a way, he thought, something magical that he recognised rather than understood" (132). This description brings to mind Glissant's concept of understanding (*comprendre*) as it operates in the colonial imaginary as a rational, categorical and ultimately reductive method of engaging with others. Tom, who operates in the framework of Western academia and Euro-American literature, feels troubled by and inadequate about his inability to understand, render transparent and categorise Nelly's art. His discomfort highlights his fear of being "out of date" (238) – that is, out of touch with the qualities valued by Western modernity, which render his position in Australia more tenable. Nelly, on the other hand, speaks of "transformation", and creates that which Tom considers "magical". In this way, she can be seen as alluding to processes of Relation, whereby identities are extended through relationship with the other, and the potential for resistance and change represented by magical realism.

Tom, however, feels uneasy by these intangible aspects of Nelly and her work, which appear to appeal to his sensibilities and emotions in a way that bypasses his rational intellect. When he first sees one of Nelly's paintings, Tom tells a mutual friend Yelena, "I can't get it out of my mind...I keep coming back to how beautiful it is"

(33). Yelena asks why that bothers him and, wanting to impress her, he “answered with deliberate scorn. ‘It’s an amateurish response. It doesn’t exactly advance understanding, does it?’” (33). Yelena’s reaction is to read the definition of amateur from the dictionary, and to highlight its origins. “‘It says here, from *amare*, love’. She looked at Tom. ‘Love is amateurish. You wouldn’t say it advances understanding?’” (33). Yelena’s challenge to Tom points to a different mode of ‘understanding’ that does not involve the reduction or hierarchies that Tom engages with and Glissant critiques. Tom, however, is shown to be unsettled by and ambivalent about such forms of perceiving the world. The novel depicts him as believing:

what he risked in showing empathy was to appear unironic. Irony was the trope of mastery: of seeing through, of knowing better. And it was a reflex with Tom. He had invented himself through the study of modern literature, and it had provided him with a mode; the twentieth century mode. To be modern was to be ironic. Among the things he was ashamed of was seeming out of date (238).

The reference to Tom’s shame links back to his attitudes towards overt ‘Asianness’ as manifested in the actions of his mother and Nelly, and his fear that he will be racialised and expelled from the body of the nation. It is clear in this scene, then, that his invention of himself as a Western modern being, equipped with the ability to see through and know better, is a means of protecting himself and assuring his position in the *humanitas*. Glissant’s call to abandon transparency – of seeing through the other, rendering it transparent and ultimately reducing it – threatens Tom’s position, although he is also shown as desiring a new way of engaging with the world that does not rely on reductive knowledge. This links to Mignolo’s concept of delinking from the racial and colonial imaginary, which involves rejecting the *humanitas/anthropos* divide rather than attempting to assimilate into it or simply fight directly against it, and becoming, ‘non-modern’ (Mignolo 2011a, p. 279), or developing an “alternative modernity” (Ashcroft 2009). I will discuss these concepts in relation to *The Lost Dog* in more detail in the following section.

## **Interventions and Alternatives**

Throughout this chapter I have discussed the destabilising and disruptive potentials of aspects of the *The Lost Dog*. Focusing on mixed race subjectivity, specifically the depiction of Nelly's engagement with performative ethnicity, I have analysed the troubling but also repressed nature of the likeness and difference of a racially mixed person. I also argue, however, that *The Lost Dog* depicts disruptive alternatives to the racial imaginary. In this section I examine these alternatives using concepts developed by Glissant and Mignolo, which I have adapted to examine race in an Australian context. I therefore build on the work of these two theorists to think through concepts of mixed race subjectivity. In this section I look in particular at how forms of Relation, border thinking/sensing and the supernatural converge to disrupt the modern racial and colonial imaginary, and through that disruption create space for alternative imaginaries and forms of knowledge.

Having said that, I am not arguing that *The Lost Dog* aims to completely dismantle all aspects of the modern imaginary. As Mignolo argues, border thinking and delinking from the modern racial imaginary do not involve an outright rejection of all forms of Western Enlightenment knowledges (2011a, p. 279). Rather they involve situating Western Enlightenment knowledge and the modern imaginary as a localised knowledge system shaped by its own location and history. It also involves acknowledging that this form of knowledge has, in recent history, had a "global design" (Mignolo 2000). Therefore the disruptive qualities of *The Lost Dog*, and its potential alternatives, claim space for imaginaries and knowledges that delink from colonial modernity without necessarily either disparaging all aspects of modernity or becoming locked in a struggle to disprove it. In this way, they create "alternative modernities" (Ashcroft 2009).

One of the primary ways in which *The Lost Dog* both disrupts the modern colonial imaginary and pursues an alternative imaginary is through its depiction of transracial relationships. These relationships involve emotional and affective knowledges and can be understood in terms of Glissant's concept of Relation. While *The Lost Dog* acknowledges the history of violent colonisation in India by the British, and the differences in power relations between the local population, the Eurasian communities, and the British colonisers in the twentieth century, it also allows for the

individual human experiences that cross racial boundaries and both problematise and are problematised by these same boundaries. Furthermore, through a reconfiguration of the racialised family, and an engagement with magical realism in unexpected ways, the novel begins to delink from the segmented mentality of the *humanitas* versus the *anthropos*. It thus begins to explore the possibility of becoming ‘non-modern’. I argue that *The Lost Dog* can be read in terms of “border thinking/sensing” (Mignolo 2011a, p. 274) in order to explore its engagement with and acknowledgement of the gendered nature of knowledge, and the validity of bodily knowledge and sensing.

### **“To stroll around the back of knowledge”: border thinking, opacity and delinking**

In the *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant demands “the right to Opacity” (1997, p. 194). He argues that in Western thought, the process of trying to know and understand the racialised Other involves categorisation and judgement. This then results in locating difference in a hierarchy of otherness and sameness. Furthermore, as well as placing the object of study in a hierarchy, Glissant argues that these attempts to know the Other also result in a reduction of the complexity, nuances and multifariousness of other human beings and cultures. According to Glissant, any attempt at racial and cultural categorisation results in reduction, and endeavours to know the Other lead to comparisons, judgements and categorisation. Opacity, on the other hand, involves the acceptance of difference, and an agreement “to the right to opacity” (1997, p. 194). This agreement both upsets hierarchical categorisations and indicates a state where the Other and his or her differences can be accepted without being grasped, controlled or owned (1997, p. 194). Glissant’s concept of Opacity is particularly relevant to the three novels this paper examines, as they all mount a critique of the oppressive aspects of forms of knowledge and rationality that constrain, reduce and wilfully misconstrue multiracial and transcultural identities and experiences.

Mignolo addresses the complexities of being racialised to an extent, when he discusses border thinking/sensing in relation to both geo-politics and body-politics. He refers to Frantz Fanon’s statement at the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, “Oh, my body, makes me always someone who asks questions” (2011a, p. 274) and argues that this expresses, in a single sentence:

the basic categories of border epistemology: the bio-graphical sensing of the Black body in the Third-World anchoring a politics of knowledge that is ingrained both in the body and in local histories (Mignolo 2011a, p. 274).

Mignolo's argument that "the point of origin of border thinking/sensing and doing is the Third World, and its routes of dispersion travelled through migrants from the Third to the First World" (2011a, p. 274) emphasises both the embodied, contextual and historical nature of knowledge and thinking and perceiving the world.

Mignolo does not specifically address the relationship of this embodiment with those who have racially mixed bodies, experiences and histories. However, his concepts of border sensing and delinking addresses the pressure and, in some cases, trauma, that is portrayed in relation to the characters of mixed heritage throughout *The World Waiting to be Made*, *The Lost Dog* and *Shanghai Dancing*. While the narrator of *The World Waiting to be Made* experiences her mixed ancestry as something that is always about to be "split in two", and as Nelly's racialised identity is frequently a battleground, border sensing potentially allows for space for less traumatic forms of creolisation and mixed subjectivities. Border sensing delinks from the worldview that insists on compartmentalised, racialised identities. As Mignolo elaborates, "border thinking created the conditions to link border epistemology with immigrant consciousness and, consequently, delink from territorial and imperial epistemology grounded on the theological (Renaissance) and egological (Enlightenment) politics of knowledge" (2011a, p. 274).

While these concepts can be applied to *The World Waiting to be Made* and *Shanghai Dancing*, they are particularly relevant to *The Lost Dog*. The central character, in the latter novel, Tom, who is also mixed race, has an ambivalent relationship with knowledge and rationality that coexists with his ambivalent multiracial Australian-Eurasian-Indian identity. For Tom, knowledge is at once a shelter and security, and a source of reduction. As I have discussed, he holds onto knowledge as a means of remaining in the humanitas, and has internalised ideas regarding knowledge's power. In his application of knowledge towards Nelly, his mother, and Nelly's art, he demonstrates the reductionist and callous tendencies Glissant critiques, as he attempts to categorise others.

Tom, furthermore, recalls an incident with a former girlfriend in his youth where, “[s]eeking to amuse” her (149), he mocks the idiosyncrasies of a mutual acquaintance. Frustrated with his antics, she tells him “there are alternatives to seeing through people... [like] seeing into them for a start” (149). While his relationship with her is brief, her words stick with him, indicating his own ambivalent attitude to his unfeeling engagement with rationality and modern knowledge forms. Throughout the course of the novel he increasingly questions his relationship with knowledge, particularly in relation to his mother Iris’ superstition and Catholicism and Nelly’s more intuitive engagement with people and situations. Both Iris and Nelly are, like Tom, racially mixed with Asian and European heritage, and Tom’s ambivalence towards aspects of their personalities reflects his own sense of shame at his mixed racial and cultural background, and his attempts to gain access to the *humanitas* through emulating modern, colonial and male epistemologies.

Significantly, Tom as a younger man mocks his mother’s superstitions, sensing they, and she, are “irrational” (173), un-modern and unsophisticated. It is only later that Tom realises “it never occurred to [him] that superstition might be an expression of humility: an admission that knowledge is limited and possibility infinite” (173). Tom feels a similar hostility as Nelly helps him in his search for his missing dog, as she draws a rough map of the area in which the dog went missing to assist them in their search. He feels angry at Nelly and mentally dismisses the map as “[a]pproximate, not to scale, unscientific” (210), an attitude that mirrors his attitude of dismissal towards Iris for her “irrationality” (227) and his discomfort at the “mute, elemental; the animal invitation to feel *with*” (230) nature of his relationship with her. At one stage as a teenager, Tom attempts to distance himself from his mother. Thinking of her as “left over from another time”, he “studied her as though she were a page in an anthropological text” (232). This, quite literal, casting of his mother into the *anthropos*, however, is contrasted by an equally strong desire to “carry her to a place of safety. But where, where?” (232). The ambivalence, and the helpless, repeated question in this scene demonstrate the difficulties of being a racialised subject and ‘delinking’, to use Mignolo’s term, from the imaginary that renders Iris, and to an extent Tom, a member of the *anthropos*. Alongside Tom’s ambivalence towards aspects of his relationships with both his mother and Nelly, de Kretser depicts both

women, and their engagements with their transcultural and multiracial identities, as contributing to an alternative, more expansive worldview and connection with difference.

As Mignolo emphasises, there is a link between rationality and racialisation (2011c, p. 163), and de Kretser makes clear throughout the novel how closely entwined modernity is with racism. Knowledge, science, the rational, wealth and the ahistoric are depicted in the novel to be essential parts of a new, first world country such as Australia, but they coexist closely with racism, discrimination and exclusion, as well as ethnic and cultural othering and consumption. While the novel does not criticise intellectual curiosity, it does challenge the knowledge that reduces and judges others, that constrains what is acceptable in difference, and that refuses to acknowledge or engage with racial or cultural fluidity and mixity. Instead, the novel stresses that “knowledge is limited and possibility infinite” (173) and advocates a more nuanced engagement with difference.

More significantly, towards the close of the novel, de Kretser encapsulates the core themes of *The Lost Dog* in a pair of descriptions about religions that shape Tom’s understanding of knowledge. While Tom grew up in a Catholic Eurasian household in India, he “lived half a mile from a large Hindu temple” that “delighted the child Tom’s eye” (282). Tom’s grandfather, however, “would slap” him if he caught him looking at the temple, and took great pains to disparage the temple and Hinduism to him, so that “[i]n this way, Tom’s pleasure in the place was smudged, and the temple became associated in his mind with fear” (282). As a slightly older boy, a ten year old Tom becomes enamoured with his family’s religion, Catholicism, and endeavours to convert a six year old Hindu girl, Madhu, aware of the “consideration, only half-formed, that her low social status would protect him from serious repercussions should the enterprise go awry” (282). In this second important scene, Tom takes Madhu to a nearby church, believing that if she were to see the image of Christ on the cross “the splendour and force of his faith could not fail to impress itself upon her heart” (283). Instead, on seeing the stained glass window, Madhu does not perceive it as an “allegory of suffering and redemption” but as an object of terror, and the young Tom finally realises that while he sees “his god’s infinite compassion”, Madhu sees

“a man whose broken white body and crimson wounds the light endowed with awful verisimilitude” (283). Tom reflects:

That a sign might proclaim a truth as well as its opposite was itself a disturbing magic. Further reflection brought a more profound revelation: for if Madhu saw violence and cruelty at the heart of his religion, might not there be loving kindness in the barbarism attributed to hers?

It was an insight both liberating and shocking. Tom Loxley, dusty-toed, felt the foundations of his world tremble. It would always be possible to stroll around to the back of knowledge and look at it from the other side (284).

The positioning of this realisation at the close of the novel is significant. It at once encapsulates the novel’s themes regarding the unfixing of knowledge and seeing the humanity of the racial, cultural or religious other, while also revealing that Tom’s journey towards Opacity is not a linear one (Glissant 1997). Insights from his childhood are obscured by time and an adult, ironic, modernity, and it takes the shock of the lost dog for the adult “foundations of his world” to once again “tremble”.

In addition to challenging an excessive reliance on rationality and knowledge, and revealing its constraining effects on the “category error” (45) of the transcultural and multiracial, *The Lost Dog* also engages with syncretism and magical realism as a means of disrupting the boundaries of the modern colonial imaginary and constructing a space which allows transcultural and multiracial subjectivities. While none of the novels this thesis examines are excessively magical realist, they all include magical realist traits. These traits reference a postcolonial tradition of creating a literary space which resists the:

‘othering’ that accompanies Western colonialism, supported as it is in the modern period by the universalist claims of reason... [and] attempt[s] to escape from the violence, epistemic or actual, of rational truth’s ‘grasp on things’ by calling into question post-Enlightenment certainties about what is real and what is not (Warnes 2009, p. 152).

As my analysis of these novels demonstrates, a key aspect of “post-Enlightenment certainties” is the construction and hierarchical arrangement of racial categories, which inevitably leads to problematic placings of multiracial individuals and groups amongst this hierarchy. Assumptions of racial reality, however, which in spite of their logical incoherence have in the last two centuries been strongly linked to rationality and science, are also present in Asian as well as Western contexts. *Shanghai Dancing*’s inclusion of Willy’s facial mutilation, for example, depicts the racialised violence and preoccupation with racial purity that also occurs in non-Western environments in a most vivid and confronting manner. The unnamed narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made*, furthermore, experiences discrimination in the established Singaporean Eurasian community for being recently mixed race; that is, the child of a Eurasian man and an Anglo-Australian woman.

Elements of magical realism in these novels are employed to resist not only Western colonialism and universalist claims of reason, but to disrupt all racialised worldviews which rely on racial categorisation and narrow and restrictive conceptions of ethnicity and culture. In this way, magical realism is utilised to create a space that articulates and accepts both multiracial and transcultural identities and interactions, and allows for what Glissant describes as “Relation, in freedoms” (1997, p. 190).

What is also significant about the novels’ engagements with magical realism is the strong relationship between ‘magical’ occurrences in the mixed race characters’ lives and their communities, families and close inter-personal relationships. Similarly, the novels also incorporate elements of syncretic religion and spirituality, quite often as part of the magical occurrences within the characters’ lives. The religious and spiritual elements are also tied to depictions of the characters’ community and family, which is significant in light of the emphasis on isolation and the experience of insidious trauma. For example, Tom’s search for his dog becomes, as the novel progresses, a metaphor for a much deeper search, depicted most clearly when he begins to call “the dog’s name backwards. To shake things up a little” (226). The dog’s name is never revealed, so to the reader, when Tom calls his name backwards, he is essentially calling ‘God’.

As with the two preceding novels, a form of Catholicism is referenced and plays a significant role in the identifications and processes of resistance the racially mixed characters undergo. I have mentioned in Chapter 3 that concepts of a Christian subjectivity and self played a substantial role in the construction of race, as well as being complicit in the violent colonisation of the non-European world. What is notable in these novels, particularly *The World Waiting to be Made* and *The Lost Dog*, is the type of Catholicism that is depicted. Rather than being portrayed as authoritarian, centralist and discriminatory, as it may well be considered, a very transcultural, fluid and grassroots form of Catholicism is depicted. Neither Lazaroo nor de Kretser engage in Catholic dogma or restriction, although its violent tendencies are alluded to. Rather, they depict a lived Catholicism in a Eurasian Indian living room, a ‘superstitious prayer’, or the syncretic practices of a Malaysian shaman. What is clear in these representations is that a changed, unrestricted and unorthodox Catholicism that is endlessly syncretising with other traditions, is depicted as its own intervention in the colonial imaginary.

Furthermore, *The Lost Dog* hints at elements of magical realism, which are woven in with a syncretised Catholicism. This is evident in the brief appearance of Arthur Loxley, Tom’s deceased English father, whose ghost manifests itself for a few moments towards the end of the novel. Arthur’s ghost appears after Tom undergoes the trials and suffering of losing the dog and questioning his reliance on the modern colonial imaginary. During this time he also regains an appreciation of his mother’s Catholicism as well as her superstition and “irrationality” (227), which is mirrored by Nelly’s performative identity and her fluid world view which accepts what may be considered, in the world of the novel, small miracles.

Tom’s loss of the dog can be linked to a loss of meaning in his life that is otherwise filled with the urban, ironic and modern. The loss is depicted as rectified by his mother’s traditionally Catholic “unfailing prayer to Saint Anthony” (165) and the older, pre-Christian European belief in “the magic in knots” (263), as both appear to lead to Tom finding the dog, or, alternatively, the dog finding Tom. When Tom first reveals the dog is missing to his mother, Iris, he expects her to react dramatically and is unprepared for her calmness, which, it is shown, is possible because of her belief that “importun[ing] the Almighty...[for] the safe return of a dog was a...

straightforward matter” (234). During the course of her prayers to Saint Anthony for the dog’s return, Iris has her own spectral vision, which confirms to her that her “prayers were heard in heaven” (235). She sees the apparition of Matthew Ho, her childhood friend and, it is implied, the man she wishes she had married, “hung in the sky” (235).

Nelly accepts the good fortune of the dog’s return with a similar disposition. While Tom muses on the unlikelihood of the dog returning to him, and speculates on how the dog could have escaped from his lead, which Tom had a habit of tying fast with a knot, Nelly mentions the “magic in knots”, alluding to the pre-Christian European practice of attributing special powers to certain knots for “good or evil” (226). Upon being told of Iris’ belief in miracles and her “unfailing prayer” Nelly responds to Tom, “[w]ell, there you go then” (263). Nelly’s attitude reveals a syncretic attitude to religion, which mirrors her eclectic manner of dressing in which she pairs rosary beads and bindis in a single outfit. Nelly’s own religious or spiritual beliefs are not portrayed in the novel, but her matter of fact response to Iris’ faith in miracles reveals, if not beliefs of her own, then a non-judgemental accommodation of difference, and an ability to engage with it without “seeing through” it (238), or, in Glissant’s terms, rendering it “transparent” (1997, p. 111).

Tom’s search for the dog to an extent reflects a quest-like narrative, and the dog is described as unleashing in his life “a kind of grace, a kind of beastliness” (168). Of the dog, de Kretser writes, “his core was wild. In accommodating that unruliness, Tom’s life flowed in a broader vein” (168). The significance of the dog is further highlighted by an experience Tom has as a child in India. Upon leaving his house to begin his travels to Australia, the child Tom takes one last look around his house. He sees, through the window on the “shadowed edge of the lawn: a tiny, heraldic beast, one forepaw raised; milky as marble. Then it was gone” (20). Tom assumes the dog is a neighbour’s new pet, and he fears the sudden changes already occurring in his familiar life (20). The image of this dog, however, is familiar to the reader, and its spectral appearance and disappearance lends it a greater significance. In the novel’s opening scenes, Tom’s dog in Australia is described as a “lean white dog” (5) with “one forepaw raised” (4), demonstrating its similarities with the “heraldic” dog of Tom’s childhood.

The term heraldic, furthermore, has a medieval connotation, and the slightly mystical appearance of the dog at a pivotal point in Tom's life, as well as Tom's quest to find his missing dog, also evoke medieval European literary traditions. These traditions involve quests and occurrences of the "marvellous", whereby supernatural events occur, often in realistic environments, and remain unexplained and accepted. French medievalist Jacques Le Goff describes the marvellous in medieval literary tradition as stemming from pre-Christian European traditions and as "intimately associated with the individual knight's quest for individual and collective identity. The knight is tested by a series of marvels" (1992, p. 29). Le Goff also argues that the marvellous functioned in medieval literature as a "resistance to the official ideology of Christianity", as occurrences of the marvellous did not have a clearly defined author in the form of a monotheistic deity, and did not always conform to the "rules" assigned to categorise miracles (1992, p. 31). As a result, medieval Christianity attempted to "rationalise" the marvellous by removing its "unpredictability" (1992, p. 31).

These aspects of the marvellous are significant in relation to *The Lost Dog* for several reasons. Firstly, they relate to Tom's own analysis, inspired by Nelly, of a story by Henry James, 'The Jolly Corner'. Tom struggles with the story's significance, until he interprets it in the form of "the fairy-story, a humble, enduring form" (135). He sees the central protagonist as having "bravely stared down peril, securing selfhood and winning union with a beloved other" (136), a description that mirrors Tom's own life within the pages of the novel. Tom confronts the perils of the lost dog, grows to accept his position on the borders of Western understanding and Glissantian Relation, and begins a relationship with Nelly, the "beloved other". Secondly, the medieval marvellous as a technique of resistance relates to the twentieth and twenty-first practice of magical realism. As I have discussed, *The Lost Dog* engages with instances of the supernatural, or marvellous, as well as the syncretic miraculous. In the context of the novel, in twenty-first century Australia, both these forms take on subversive attributes, as they do not conform to the secular or the rational, or 'official' Christianity.

When Tom absorbs the miraculous significant of the return of the dog, he is drawn both to a local “ugly” church and to think of his father, whose naïve trust in other people and life once had the effect of rendering an established conman honest. It is only after Tom’s adjustment to the dog’s return, and his acceptance that it represents a form of “grace” of which he is “unworthy”, that he sees his father’s ghost, who appears to him as “an incurably benign face” in the haze of his bathroom’s mist, who vanishes, “before his son ... [can] confront him, a sweetly ineffectual ghost” (275). Arthur’s spectral presence disrupts Tom’s preoccupation with the rational, the modern and the ironic in a deceptively unobtrusive way. While his mother and Nelly, and their syncretic worldviews, provoke ambivalent feelings in him, ranging from shame, to derision, to puzzlement, to desire, affection and respect, what is striking in the novel is the simple acceptance with which the sceptical, rational Tom greets the spectral image of his father. It is portrayed as an almost mundane occurrence that occupies two short paragraphs in the novel. The brevity and normality with which the occurrence is treated emphasises its ‘magical’ reality and, as a result, its potential to disrupt a modern reliance on rationality and colonial knowledge. However, as with Tom’s non-linear relationship with colonial and border knowledges, Arthur’s ghost does not represent an uncomplicated progression towards or culmination at an arrived point of delinking from the racial imaginary. Rather, Tom, whose mind is on his relationship with Nelly, greets Arthur’s image with a “live impatience” thinking “[w]hat he required was resolution, not the ambiguity of visions” (275).

Once again Tom dismisses that which disrupts a rational and therefore racial, worldview in favour of definitive resolution, however the inclusion of Arthur Loxley, Tom’s white English father, in the ‘magical’ destabilises conventional race relations. Whiteness is usually partitioned from relations with the non-white and the magical real (Dyer 2013), and Arthur’s ghost alludes to the white presence and absence that haunts the white/non-white multiracial person. *The World Waiting to be Made* employs a similar technique in relation to the narrator’s white mother, who is described as “becoming her own ghost” (Lazaroo 2000, p. 134), and whose heritage and ethnicity has a limited effect on her multiracial daughter’s attempts to articulate her identity. Arthur Loxley’s spectral appearance after death, and the narrator’s mother’s ghostly demeanour in life, both allude to the ambivalent status occupied by white individuals who choose to build relationships and family with people of colour.

Both Arthur, as a white man in mid-twentieth century India, who marries a mixed race woman and becomes part of her family, and the narrator's mother, as a white woman who marries a mixed race man, are portrayed in contrast to historical tropes of interracial relationships, which frequently reference promiscuity, violence, abuse or abandonment (Stoler 2002).

While neither the narrator's mother nor Arthur are flawless individuals, they both nevertheless attempt to build relationships and families across racial divides. They are engaged in consensual interracial relationships, and are fully involved in parenting their mixed race children. There are, however, significant impediments to their attempts, as the narrator's mother finds herself ostracised by both her husband's family and her own white Australian community, and Arthur is derided by his Eurasian father-in-law for failing to live up to the standards of an ideal Englishman. Arthur's gentle paternal role, furthermore, is cut short by his sudden death while Tom is a child, an event that symbolises the resistance with which interracial relationships and first generation multiracial identities are met. Neither the narrator's mother nor Arthur are assumed by white Australian society to play a significant role in the subjectivities of the narrator or Tom, and the narrator's mother becomes ghostly in the face of perpetual marginalisation. Arthur, however, while violently excised from Tom's life, lingers on as a supernatural reminder of both his son's multiraciality, and the perpetuation of familial bonds across divisive racial categories, representing the potential for "the disappearance of racism through a generalization that would prevent segmentation within the human family" (Loichot 2009, p. 50).

While it is not my intention to imply that the racial and colonial imaginary is dismantled by transracial families and racially ambiguous people of mixed ancestry alone, I do want to suggest theorising mixed race experiences and subjectivities does provide a way of intervening in this imaginary. Furthermore, throughout this thesis I have endeavoured to examine and highlight the links between the subjectivities of racialised, racially ambiguous people, and the processes of border sensing, Relation and delinking from the racial imaginary. In *The Lost Dog*, in particular, Nelly's experience and representation demonstrates the ways in which race is inscribed upon her body and resisted, and how these processes inform her attitudes towards the colonial imaginary. Mignolo argues that decoloniality and border thinking/sensing is

informed by the body, and is writing “with our bodies in the border” (2011a, p. 277). In Nelly’s case, her ambiguously racialised body and mixed racial and cultural ancestry is constantly put under scrutiny and is mis-recognised by white Australia, which is troubled by her unregulated combination of sameness and difference. I speak here primarily of Nelly’s material body, and her physical features which are assigned racial meaning. Nelly’s uncanny body in itself, without intention on her part, disrupts the clarity of the modern racial imaginary by combining both ‘Asian’ and ‘white’ features. Her own performance of racially eclectic fashion and parody, however, is an example of intent and agency. This parody, and her willingness to allow and claim the right to Opacity, enhances her disruptive and transformative potential.

In *The Lost Dog* Nelly can be understood as being in the process of delinking from the racial and colonial imaginary, primarily through her disruption of racial categories and her willingness to engage with and accept cultural and epistemological multiplicity. Mignolo defines delinking as not accepting the options that are available under the auspices of colonial modernity. He states that:

once you realise that your inferiority is a fiction created to dominate you, and you do not want to either assimilate or accept in resignation the bad luck of having been born equal to all human beings but losing your equality shortly after being born because of the place you have been born [or because of the ways in which one’s body is racialised], then you delink (2011a, p. 276)

In this process a person delinks from modernity and becomes ‘non-modern’. I am not arguing that Nelly ‘achieves’ a state of complete Mignolian ‘non-modernity’, however I do not read this as a flaw. I suggest it is the dynamic process of engaging critically with both border thinking and specific Western epistemologies that prevents superficial celebrations of what Jacqueline Lo terms “happy hybridity” (2000). Glissant’s concept of Relation enhances this process, as it involves what he calls the other of Thought, which involves being prised open and changed by one’s relationships with other human beings, rather than engaging in relationships of hierarchy and domination. In the eyes of Glissant, furthermore, true Relation is an endless process which must always be practised and engaged with, rather than allowed to solidify into a static achievement. I argue that any sort of static

‘achievement’ of creolisation is vulnerable to tokenistic appropriation by cosmopolitanists and white Australian national interests. Examples of these tendencies can be seen in the novels, particularly in the consumerist exoticisation of the narrator’s racial ambiguity in *The World Waiting to be Made*. This appreciation of her ‘hybridity’, however, does not extend to her challenging, complex cultural heritage, which is as alike as it is different to Anglo-Australia.

Throughout this chapter I have explored both the disruptive potentials of racially ambiguous bodies and mixed race subjectivities and the ways in which this potential is enhanced by an engagement with Relation and border thinking/sensing. Glissant argues that as long as “colonized peoples” conceive of their identity in opposition to Western thought, it will remain limited, and full decolonisation cannot take place (1997, p. 17). This is demonstrated in these novels. It is also a process that scholars have noted has not occurred within Australia for a number of reasons (Moreton-Robinson 2003, p. 30). De Kretser’s decision to restrict Nelly’s articulation of her subjectivity can be seen as a fictional rendition of this point. Furthermore, Relation – including Glissant’s concept of opacity – and border thinking/sensing provide a way of both enhancing the interventionist potential of racial and cultural fluidity, as well as allowing a space that accepts and accommodates racially mixed bodies and subjectivities. This is particularly important, because these bodies and subjectivities frequently encounter both insidious and directly violent trauma, often as a result of attempts to restrict them within a specific racial category. Border epistemology and sensing, however, disavow racial categorisations and hierarchies and allow for bodily forms of knowledge usually excluded from the racial and colonial imaginary. Opacity, moreover, resists colonial, ‘grasping’ forms of understanding and categorisation. Instead it advocates Relation, whereby identities are extended through an endless process of relating with one another without engaging in dominating knowledge practices, while allowing double consciousness and creolising ethnicities.

My analysis of *The Lost Dog* emphasises that decolonising epistemology is crucial (Shih and Lionnet 2011, p. 27). This is a sentiment which is reflected throughout the two other novels, *The World Waiting to be Made* and *Shanghai Dancing*, however *The Lost Dog*, in particular, engages in what Mignolo describes as decolonial thinking, in which the anthropos unveils:

the pretentious sense of superiority of those who inhabit the humanitas – not to claim recognition but to show how insane the inhabitants of the house of humanitas are, because they still believe that humanitas is divided between humanitas and anthropos, and the authoritarian control of knowledge gives them the privilege of seeing themselves *as* humanitas, and not as anthropos (2011c, p. 168).

By placing itself both in the context of global colonial history and the white settler nation of Australia, this analysis of *The Lost Dog* both reveals the colonial and racial antecedents of Australian attitudes towards perceived racial difference, and intervenes in it. Furthermore, by depicting the tensions and ambiguities surrounding people of racially mixed ancestry, the novel undercuts the validity of racialisation and cultural essentialism. Through its engagement with decolonial knowledges it hints at, even if it does not quite reach, a potential for a more equal world of Relation.

## SEVEN

### Conclusion

#### **‘Mixed Race’ and Resistance in contemporary Australian Literature**

*seeking a now that can breed  
futures  
like bread in our children's mouths  
so their dreams will not reflect  
the death of ours*

‘A Litany for Survival’, Audre Lorde, 2000

#### **Introduction**

Throughout this thesis, I have examined the ways in which *The World Waiting to be Made*, *Shanghai Dancing* and *The Lost Dog* intervene in the racial and colonial imaginary. I have focused in particular on how the subjectivities and experiences of mixed race characters are represented in the novels and how this constitutes an intervention. I have demonstrated, furthermore, that the novels draw on and acknowledge multiracial trauma first, to critique by rendering visible the status quo, then also to transform the elements of dominant culture into something new in moves that attempt to “dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde 2012, p. 112).

Significantly, the novels’ depictions of mixed race subjectivities do not solely demonstrate the fictiveness of race, but also gesture towards alternative modes of being in the world. In order to examine these alternative forms of knowing and sensing the world I have engaged with concepts of Relation (Glissant 1997) and delinking and border-thinking (Mignolo 2000). Reading the novels through these concepts has enabled me to critique binaries of the self and the other in both Western and non-Western contexts that more traditional approaches to race and difference tend to reproduce.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

As I have demonstrated, all three novels engage in a substantial critique of the racial imaginary, both in an Australian and broader Asia-Pacific context. My discussion of racial trauma, the lived body and racialisation, and mixed subjectivities demonstrates the at times disturbing and repressed nature of sameness which courses through categories and groups of people designated as ‘other’ or different. The denial of this sameness, and the fear of the potential of the racially marked other to alter the interior of the nation, often comes to the fore in the context of racial mixing and people of racially ambiguous appearance. This can be seen in the exclusionary and controlling tendencies of cosmo-multiculturalism, and the mis-interpellation and racialisation of Australians of colour.

Significantly, by depicting multiracial subjectivities and complex, interracial family relationships, as well as engaging with more established postcolonial themes of diaspora and migration, the novels avoid a depiction of two antagonistic blocks of East and West, whiteness and colour, pulling away from or colliding into each other. Instead, they challenge the humanitas/anthropos divide, and the options of only assimilation or what Mignolo terms dewesternisation (2011a, p. 280), through an in-depth exploration of racially mixed bodies and subjectivities. The novels in particular use the characters of the narrator in *The World Waiting to be Made*, António in *Shanghai Dancing* and Tom in *The Lost Dog* to depict multiracial interiorities, and the complexities that arise in situations that do not encourage articulations of mixed race identity. Through a depiction of the narrator’s mother, furthermore, in *The World Waiting to be Made*, and Arthur Loxley in *The Lost Dog*, the novels undercut the distinctions between whiteness and colour, and depict whiteness as persisting in new and multiracial forms. This latter aspect is evident in *The World Waiting to be Made*’s depiction of the narrator’s bodily racial markers, and Nelly and Arnaldo’s engagement in racial performativity in *The Lost Dog* and *Shanghai Dancing*. These literary interventions have the effect of demonstrating the fictive qualities of race and the permeability of racial categories.

While there are depictions of multiracial pleasure in passing and performativity, most notably in relation to Arnaldo in *Shanghai Dancing*, the novels’ primarily depict the racial imaginary as a source of tension and potential trauma for mixed race people.

The novels encapsulate the complexity and ambiguity of this tension, and they particularly draw attention to the power discrepancy people of mixed race face in attempts to assert their multiracial heritage in a world that still adheres to monolithic and rigid ideas of race and culture. As the novels demonstrate, racial mis-identification, and a societal resistance to multiracial, creolising subjectivities, is not solely a Western phenomenon. It significantly occurs amongst both the Asian and Western strands of the characters' heritages. This further signifies the power imbalance some people of racially mixed heritage encounter in attempts to articulate a sense of racially ambiguous subjectivity, and I argue that this forms a core theme in all three novels. As a result, the novels not only portray the fictive nature of racial categories, they also demonstrate the violence of these categories, and the ways in which multiracial subjectivities are split and constrained in order to maintain racial power structures.

The novels are notable for their depictions of multiracial trauma, which is shown to occur in the lives of mixed race characters as a result of racial categorisation, mis-recognition and marginality. This trauma takes the form of the internalisation of racial categories and racial shattering in *The World Waiting to be Made*, fear of expulsion from the nation in *The Lost Dog* and embodied trauma and speechlessness in *Shanghai Dancing*. Furthermore, the novels, and this thesis, examine the layered, contextual and intimate forms of racial trauma. The complexity, changeability, private and affective qualities of racial trauma render them difficult to express to an 'un-attuned' audience. The theme of speech and silence in the face of racial trauma is recurrent throughout *The World Waiting to be Made* and *Shanghai Dancing*, with an inability to articulate either processes of identification or experiences of racialisation representing a symptom of racial trauma. Furthermore, this inability to communicate the effects of racialisation or a sense of self-identification is tied to experiences of mis-interpellation, where a mixed subjectivity is mis-recognised, and the complexity of cultural heritage and racialised experiences is ignored or trivialised. Significantly, however, by portraying this trauma and its effects, the novels break this silence, and the texts serve as a form of speech or testimony in the face of multiracial trauma.

The sexualised and gendered nature of multiracial trauma is also a key theme in all three novels. Sexual transgressions, exoticised objectification, colonial violence,

racial trauma and genocide are all raised and entwined within these novels. It is significant that texts exploring the implications of being mixed race, and therefore embodying interracial sexual relationships in a racialised and colonised world, all allude to various forms of sexual violence or taboo – be it rape, paedophilia, or incest. None of these topics are sensationalised. On the contrary, they are inserted into the novels obliquely. In the case of *The World Waiting to be Made* and *The Lost Dog*, there is a deliberate evasiveness regarding both the twin sister's rape and the paedophilic tendencies of Nelly's husband. Neither of these aspects are explicitly named within in the novel, and the reader learns about them hazily – each instance is never spoken of clearly, and is mediated to the reader through the narrator and Tom. The reader is never shown the event, or given direct insights into Atwood and Nelly's relationship. Jasmine's rape in *Shanghai Dancing* is similarly implied.

The oblique ways in which the novels deal with these instances of sexual violence are significant, particularly in light of the theme of silence in the face of multiracial trauma. Similarly, Israel's belief that "he was to blame for such worlds" of incest and genocide (Castro 2003, p. 110) represents the ways in which a mixed race person is seen to embody a sexually transgressive, often violent, colonised racial history which configures them as a living taboo, and a perpetually sexualised being by virtue of their parents' relationship. The racialised nature of this sexualisation manifests itself in Israel's vision of incest and genocide. Both the configuration of interracial relationships as transgressive, the exoticisation of racialised female bodies, and extreme forms of racial violence and extermination are all entwined with and reliant on the concept of race, demonstrating its oppressive effects.

These concerns are most clearly encapsulated in *Shanghai Dancing's* depiction of Willy's racial surgery, where his Chinese father Virgil attempts to surgically remove traces of his son's European ancestry. Virgil uses his English wife's alleged promiscuity to justify his actions. Interracial relationships are here portrayed as resulting in racial chaos in the body of a mixed race person, which is then violently re-configured according to acceptable racial categorisation.

While multiracial trauma is explored as a site of pain and shattering in order to critique the racial imaginary, it is also depicted as resulting in multiracial survival and

resistance. This is evident in the pivotal scene in *Shanghai Dancing* regarding Willy's forced racialising surgery, which is witnessed by the multiracial and deliberately subversive Arnaldo. Arnaldo at first appears horrified and helpless in this scene, as he does not understand what he sees and turns his face away. He does, however, look back, and the novel emphasises his role as a witness of this instance of attempted multiracial erasure. The novels themselves, in their depiction of racial trauma and the shattering of subjectivity and speech that often accompany it, bear witness and testify to the violence of racial categorisation. Like Arnaldo, the reader's first instinct is to look away and avert their gaze, when confronted with these images. However, like Arnaldo, the reader is encouraged to look back, to perceive and interpret scenes of racial trauma, and to not only resist and be resilient to these scenes of suffering, but to also use them to creatively imagine other ways of engaging across differences and relating to other human beings.

The novels similarly imagine these alternatives, and to an extent, all three novels take steps towards a "barbarian theorising and knowledge construction" (Mignolo 2011c, p. 168) both through their characters' actions, worldviews and relationships and the novels' uses of non-linearity, magical realism and multi-genre forms. As Shih and Lionnet argue, "decolonising epistemology is crucial" (2011, p. 27), and this sentiment is reflected throughout the three novels. *The Lost Dog* in particular seeks to unsettle accepted Western concepts of rationality and knowledge, and the racialisation which attends them, through an engagement with opacity and border thinking/sensing. The novel also engages with the potential of creative expression such as art to assist in perceiving the world in different ways, and it depicts superstition and syncretic forms of faith as a means of both disrupting the racial imaginary and creating a space that allows transcultural and multiracial identities. This primarily occurs through the acknowledgement that "knowledge is limited and possibility infinite" (de Kretser 2009, p. 173), a sentiment which undercuts the surety of racial categories and stereotypes. This surety is further destabilised by depictions of the supernatural in the form of Arthur's ghost, which upsets Tom's clearly delineated reliance on the rational and scientific. The apparition of his white father, furthermore, is also significant, as it demonstrates relational connections across racial categories.

The focus on syncretic religion as an intervention also occurs in *The World Waiting to be Made*, where Relation and syncretism combine in the figure of Linus at the close of the novel, offering the narrator a space which encourages her mixed subjectivity. While *Shanghai Dancing* does not engage in the same way with transculturalism or syncretism, it emphasises processes of Relation as both a way of disrupting the racial imaginary and an alternative. It, together with *The Lost Dog*, can also be read in terms of delinking, although neither Nelly nor Arnaldo, are necessarily liberated from the racial imaginary. Both remain, on the contrary, restricted by racial thinking and confined by its limitations. As a result their “subjective integrity” remains compromised (Cheng 2008, p. 45).

In spite of this, active processes of Relation that never settle into a static achievement are arguably presented as viable alternatives, and they open up spaces that allow mixed subjectivities without relapsing into identity based categorisation and violence. The open-ended process of Relation, therefore, must always be interactive and worked towards with a willingness to “prize” oneself open, “change and exchange” (Glissant 1997, p. 155). As a result, it emphasises the agency and intentionality within acts of Relation, which are not the domain of any one racial group.

### **Implications of this research**

This thesis makes a significant contribution to the fields of critical race studies – specifically mixed race studies – as well as Australian literary and cultural studies. It does so through its focus on mixed race subjectivity, which is then used to critique and undercut the value of racial categories. It further contributes to postcolonial trauma studies by focusing on multiracial trauma, and highlights the ethical and transformative potential of literature. Furthermore, this thesis contributes to postcolonial studies more broadly by drawing on Latin American and Caribbean postcolonial thinkers to examine Australian race relations. As such, it makes transcolonial connections and attempts to broaden Australian understandings of race and the colonial experience by engaging with “relationships among different margins” (Lionnet and Shih 2005, p. 2).

### **Recommendations for future research**

While this thesis does have significant implications for scholarship in race studies and Australian literary and cultural studies, there are areas explored in this thesis that

warrant further research. These primarily involve current gaps in race studies, specifically a focus on Asian racisms and theorising the connections between Indigenous and racialised non-Indigenous Australians. Mixed race studies, as a field of enquiry, also warrants further attention, both globally but also in a specifically Australian context, while there is also room in postcolonial studies to explore concepts arising from alternative arenas of colonisation.

While I have touched on the occurrence of racism and racialisation in non-Western societies this was not the sole focus of my thesis and as such I was unable to engage with this area in greater depth. My research did indicate, however, that this is not a well-known area of critical race studies, yet it is one which is of growing relevance in a globalising world. Chen similarly points out the need to further investigate and critique processes of Han Chinese racism in his 2010 study (p. 267). As an area of future research then, it would be of particular usefulness to examine processes of Asian racism within Asia, as well as Asian societies' growing relationships with other non-white populations and ties with postcolonial power structures and the Western world.

Another area that warrants further research relates to a long-standing limitation in Australian race studies, namely the division between Indigenous and racialised non-Indigenous concerns. I have acknowledged this briefly in Chapter 3, and touched on some of the recent scholarship which aims to address this divide (Stephenson 2007; Edwards and Shen 2003). However, it has been beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in-depth with the implications of the division, and only one of the novels, *The World Waiting to be Made*, examines relationships across this divide. Nevertheless, this is a site of research which requires further attention in future scholarship.

Similarly, further research into mixed race subjectivity is also required, since there are limitations attached to this thesis' focus on literature. While an in-depth reading of imaginative texts by multiracial authors is an important contribution to mixed race studies, other articulations and understandings of mixed race subjectivity also need to be examined. This is particularly the case in Australia, where discussions of race and mixed race have been rare except in Indigenous contexts (Fozdar and Perkins 2014).

In-depth qualitative research into Australian mixed race experiences would contribute greatly to mixed race studies.

Furthermore, the works of Glissant and Mignolo, and other theorists from diverse colonised locations, also warrant further attention and application to an Australian context. In this thesis, I have only touched on aspects of both scholars, however as Lionnet and Shih point out, postcolonial studies more broadly would benefit from an engagement across colonial and marginalised contexts, as opposed to situating studies solely concerned with relating the margin to the centre (2005, p. 11). This thesis has been concerned with examining the marginalisation of mixed race subjectivities in relation to the dominant imaginary, however it has also attempted to theorise alternative possibilities. There is certainly scope for future research to further investigate this potential.

### **Final comment**

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated that these novels are all significant interventions in the racial imaginary. While the “subjective integrity” (Cheng 2008, p. 45) of all racialised characters is compromised to a degree within the novels, they nevertheless testify to the resilience and survival of racial ambiguity, which undercuts the surety of racialisation. Furthermore, they demonstrate the ethical and interventionist potential of literature, and its ability to imagine alternative ways of knowing and sensing the world.

Through my analysis of these novels, I have also attempted my own intervention and contribution to race studies and postcolonial scholarship. I have done this primarily through a focus on racially ambiguous bodies and mixed race subjectivity, and a transcolonial theoretical approach, as well as engaging with poststructural and phenomenological understandings of race and the body. I have aimed, throughout this thesis, to critique all processes of racialisation, rather than elevating the category of ‘mixed race’, and to broaden and deepen understanding of race and racial mixing in an Asia-Pacific context.

As a final note, Glissant’s concept of Relation has been at the centre of this thesis. Like many ways of discussing cultural blending and transracial relationships, there is

a certain vulnerability about the concept of Relation, and there is always the possibility that this term could be employed to gloss over racial and gender-based inequalities and be used for simplistic and celebratory ideas of cosmopolitanism and “happy hybridity” (Lo 2000). The strength of Relation, however, is its thorough articulation, including Glissant’s emphasis on the equality of relationships, the endless process of creolisation and mutual change, and freedom from grasping forms of knowledge and appropriation. In many ways, this thesis has only scratched the surface of Glissant’s work, and its potential for application in a variety of postcolonial and postcolonising contexts.

Although this thesis has focused in great depth on presenting and critiquing the trauma of racialisation, it has also attempted to imagine, as difficult as it may be, alternative ways of seeing the world that do not rely on race. While it may not always be possible to conceive of a de-racialised, equitable future as an achievable reality for all, it is perhaps, in itself, the constant process of engaging with creolisation and striving for the utopian potential evoked by Lorde’s “futures/like bread in our children’s mouths” (2000) that “Relation, in freedoms” becomes possible (Glissant 1997, p. 190).

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