"SAY NO TO BURQAS"

contested geographies of nation and citizenship in Newtown

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Acknowledgements

This thesis was written on Aboriginal Land; the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Sovereignty was never ceded. The privilege to attend this institution and to produce this thesis relies, in part, on the benefits that settler society continues to derive from occupation and continued processes of colonisation.

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the ways in which instances of everyday racism reproduce geographies of national belonging and exclusion in the city, focusing specifically on an activist campaign in Newtown, Australia, which called on the community to ‘Say no to burqas’. The focal point of this one-man campaign was a large, street facing mural, depicting a veiled woman, crossed out inside a red circle. The mural attracted much community opposition, and was defaced over sixty-four times. This thesis deconstructs the ways in which the mural campaign inscribed a particular national imaginary onto Newtown, constituted through the exclusion of the Muslim other; attending to the roots of this imaginary in racialised and gendered regimes of citizenship which privilege white, liberal civility. It goes on to show how the mural both reproduced, and was implicated in, the classed geographies of Australian multiculturalism, which figure the inner city as diverse and cosmopolitan, in opposition to the suburban as a site of ethnic criminality and multicultural failure. Finally, this thesis looks to various instances of organised opposition to the mural as examples of insurgent citizenship, capable of reimagining the relationship between place, nation and political community, in response to the ethical, political and practical task of living together in the multicultural city.
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Introduction

The ‘Say no to burqas’ mural campaign

In 2010 a controversial mural calling on passers-by to ‘Say no to burqas’, and depicting a woman wearing the niqab inside a red circle with a cross through it, was painted in Newtown, a trendy and progressive suburb in Sydney’s Inner-West. The burqa and niqab are body and face covering garments, worn by some Muslim women for complex religious and cultural reasons. The mural was painted by local artist Sergio Redegalli, on a street facing wall of his custom glass art studio on Station Street in Newtown, and is clearly visible from passing trains on one of the busiest public transport corridors in Sydney. Over the past two years the mural has been tagged, jammed and defaced over sixty four times (Cordell Jigsaw and the ABC2012) and each time, Redegalli has repainted the mural with a variation on the original theme.

Redegalli states that he painted the mural in order to start a conversation about Muslim extremism, and sees the burqa as symbolic of the ideological threat which Islam supposedly poses to Australian institutions and the Australian way of life (Budd 2010). He also expresses more specific concerns: that the burqa is oppressive to Muslim women, that it could compromise public safety if women drive while wearing the burqa, that it poses a security threat, and that it prevents face to face interaction which should be a ‘right’ in Australia. I will offer a more thorough depiction and analysis of these claims in chapter one.

Those who oppose the mural appeal to a variety of multicultural, feminist, anti-racist and anti-imperialist politics. They see the mural as part of a broader
racist nationalism, in whose name great atrocities have been, and continue to be, committed, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, mandatory detention of refugees, and a climate of violent Islamophobia. They also claim that the mural is sexist, targeting Muslim women as ‘objects of suspicion’ (Boyle 2010b), and advocating for the control and regulation of women’s bodies. Chapter three will offer further discussion and analysis regarding the form and content of various counter campaigns.

Figure 1: ‘Say no to war’ mural (NewtownNinja 2011d)
Figure 2: ‘Racist pig’ mural (NewtownNinja 2011b)

This thesis does not primarily focus on arguments around the wearing of the burqa. Instead, I look to the ways in which the ‘Say no to burqas’ campaign, and the counter campaigns, inscribed onto the spaces of Newtown contesting critiques of social and political life, and opposing dreams for the urban and national future. These contestations throw into sharp relief the problem of how we are to live together, with others, in the city and in the nation. This problem is all at once practical, ethical and political, calling on us to consider all manner of
seemingly fundamental questions: what are the conditions of citizenship and national belonging? What are the conditions of access to public life? What are the conditions of access to urban space? This thesis is not directed towards answering such questions, or defining these conditions, in a strictly normative sense. Instead, I devote much of this thesis to considering the political and ethical consequences for citizenship, democratic publics and the city that these everyday contestations bring to bear.

**Methodologies: reading the mediated materiality of the city**

To do this, I map out the ways in which these abstract political contestations are produced at the level of the city and everyday life. Specifically, I will consider the spatial and temporal ecology of images, art, events, individuals, groups and media, which coalesce to produce these contestations, attending to the ways in which textuality and materiality work together in the writing of the city, inscribing shared places with meaning through discursive and material practice. As such, when I speak of “the mural campaign”, I will not just be referring to the paintings on the wall, I will also be attending to the mediations which enable the images to communicate with mobile publics and circulate across social geographies (Iveson 2009). Additionally, I will be looking to the cultural, economic and political contexts which position the campaign both within the city, and the nation.

As the mural campaign, and counter campaigns, primarily instantiate themselves on the streets of Newtown, I am choosing to begin from the idea of *the city*. Drawing on the theory of Marxist geographer Henri Lefebvre (1996 [1968]), I will conceive the materiality of the city as constituted through the
spatial and temporal *mediation* of social relations. Lefebvre departs from classical theories of the city, arguing that it is not an *entity* modelled on the Greek polis, or an *organism* evolving towards rationalisation, rather, it is the historicised ‘production and reproduction of human beings by human beings’ (101). He makes an important departure from the orthodox Marxist notion of cultural life as simply a *reflection* of economic processes, arguing instead for the city to be seen as an *oeuvre*, a dynamic body of work, creatively produced through the interactions of everyday life rhythms of inhabitants and social institutions (101-102).

The production of the city as *oeuvre* requires us to think the material and the discursive as inseparable: while the city is inscribed by the discourses of powerful institutions, it is not simply a *projection* of society, it is also materially constituted through the everyday ‘life rhythms’ of its inhabitants (108). In turn, the city inscribes itself back onto our lives; a cycle of mutual constitution in which city, society and the everyday are always imbricated. So, the city as *oeuvre* is written, but it also writes, and it can be read. However, for Lefebvre, we cannot read urban reality as a fully written book, for we are always already writing. Likewise, we can never apprehend the city as a whole from any one analytical standpoint, we can only reflect critically by looking to the relations between everyday life rhythms, institutions and *other* places (109).

Lefebvre’s critical urban theory enables the politicisation of both everyday practice and urban space. If the city is not just a value free physicality, but a material and discursive production, then everyday practice has the potential to intervene in and (re)produce the city in ways that are equitable and democratic, Lefebvre terms this claiming ‘the right to the city’. While other
theorists, specifically Michel de Certeau, also address the political potential of the city, I chose to work with Lefebvre because I am more concerned with the everyday material/discursive production of place in the city, as opposed to the everyday negotiation of those places.

**Multiculturalism and the Muslim other**

This thesis contributes to a body of research which grapples with representations and governance of people of Arab, Middle-Eastern and Muslim backgrounds in Australia. Within this field there is general agreement that, post 9/11, we have seen the emergence of a national imaginary constituted through the exclusion of the Muslim other (Hage 2003; Poynting et al. 2004; Turner 2003). Poynting et al (2004) deconstruct various Islamophobic panics, pertaining to ‘Lebanese gangs’, ethnic rapists, ‘boat people’, and suburban terrorism, in order to show how the media, politics and the repressive arm of the state have collaborated to constitute diverse groups of people as a Muslim/Arab other. Conversely, Ghassan Hage (1998, 2003), attends to the social pathologies which enact this ‘othering’, exploring the links between white nationalism, the limits to multiculturalism, and paranoid border politics in Australia.

Other researchers have concentrated on analysing very specific racially charged events, for example the Cronulla riots (Johns 2009; Moreton-Robinson and Nicoll 2006), the Bankstown rapes (Abood 2009; Chalmers and Dreher 2009) and the Tampa affair (Perera 2002), looking to the ways in which law, media, political discourse and everyday nationalism worked to dehumanise and demonise Muslim people, thus constituting the limits of national belonging through the exclusion of the Muslim other. My research is most akin to Noble and
Poynting’s ‘White Lines: the Intercultural Politics of Everyday Movement in Social Spaces’ (2010), which seeks to map the geographies of national belonging and exclusion instantiated through instances of everyday racism. While Noble and Poynting’s research draws on interviews which document the experiences of Muslim people, my research reads the discursive and material practices coalescing around the mural campaign, attending to the ways in which various claims to citizenship and belonging were made on city spaces.

However, this thesis does not seek to undertake a merely disinterested discursive mapping of these webs of events, people and places. As someone who lives in Sydney’s inner-west, who actively supported the counter campaigns, and is connected to the political networks which mobilized against the mural, I am interested in grappling with my own implication in these struggles over citizenship and place. I want to consider the political and ethical responsibilities of non-Muslim Australians in this current climate of Islamophobia, and the possibilities for new forms of citizenship based on everyday solidarity and activism.

My research does not directly engage with the experience of Muslim people in Australia, the reasons that people have for wearing or not wearing the burqa, or even whether or not the burqa is a “good thing” or a “bad thing”. Rather, drawing on the work of Graeme Turner, I approach the ‘Say no to burqas’ campaign in terms of how it contributes to ‘processes of nation formation’, in the mediated social geographies of the city. I have chosen to circumscribe my approach in this way for both practical reasons of scope, and for ethical reasons. My position, as a white university student, living in the inner west, and peripherally implicated in the campaign against the mural, means that I am far
better placed to both critique the ways in which relations to the nation are constituted through the figure of the Muslim other, and to explore the possibilities for enacting anti-racist practices of solidarity.

**Overview of chapters**

In chapter one, *Australians have nothing to hide*: gendered and racialised regimes of citizenship, I perform a material/discursive analysis of Redegalli’s mural campaign. In this chapter, I attend to the various incarnations of the mural, the ways in which the mural addresses a public, public statements made by Redegalli about the mural, and a political stunt connected to the mural in which Redegalli and friends dressed themselves in burqas and attempted to enter public buildings. Drawing on Lefebvre’s notion of the city as written, writing, and readable, I argue that the campaign seeks to inscribe social, territorial and political imaginaries on to Newtown, challenging its addressees to see themselves as part of a national community constituted through the exclusion of the Muslim other. From here, I unpack the ways in which the figure of the veiled Muslim woman functions as a metonymic construction, standing in for a whole host of fears for the health, safety and identity of the white nation. This metonym effectively erases the real bodies and voices of women, entirely evacuating them from beneath the burqa, while at the same time, constituting Muslim women as the ultimate Strangers (Ahmed 2000) to the nation.

In chapter 2, *This is an arty farty place...*: racialised and classed geographies of multiculturalism, I look at the ways in which the mural campaign interacts with, and reinforces, already circulating place relations, specifically between cosmopolitan Newtown and ethnicizing Lakemba. Through an analysis
of scenes from the 2012 documentary *Dumb, Drunk and Racist* (Smith 2012), I show how the mural campaign figures Lakemba as the encroaching ‘un Australia’, threatening to swamp Newtown, and the nation, with burqa clad extremists. However, Redegalli’s attempts to claim Newtown on behalf of this particular brand of nationalism fall flat, with media, the local council, and some activists identifying it as incongruous with the multicultural values of the area.

I argue that these characterizations of place reflect a ‘class aesthetics of multiculturalism’ (Hage 2003), where the economic and cultural effects of globalization combine with an emerging governmentality of diversity, to privilege the lucrative ‘cosmo-multiculturalism’ (Hage 1998) of Newtown, just as disadvantage in Lakemba is recast as an ethnic problem, indicative of the failure of multiculturalism. Turner refers to this spatial split in multicultural Australia as ‘the Cosmopolitan city and its ethnicizing suburban other’ (Turner 2008). Furthermore, I argue that the phenomena of paranoid nationalism (Hage 2003), espoused by Redegalli, emerges from these same classed conditions, a reactive response to decline of economic and social amenity in the suburbs. As such, Newtown is not only implicated, but privileged, in the same constellation of relations which give rise to the racialization of Lakemba. I draw attention to these classed relations in order to position Newtown in a ‘geography of responsibility’ (Massey 2004), suggesting that people in Newtown who oppose the mural are strategically placed to undermine these relations.

In chapter 3, *’Racists out of Newtown’: insurgent citizenship and practices on solidarity* I attend to three cases of opposition to the mural campaign: a community meeting held at a local Town Hall, a community demonstration which sought to reclaim the mural site, and ‘No Disrespect!’, an art project and
exhibition which curated a number of works created in opposition to the mural. I argue that these three cases enact insurgent forms of citizenship (Holston 1999), which contest both the hegemony of state based citizenship, and Redegalli’s claims to a highly privileged and exclusionary citizenship.

These insurgent claims do not treat the city as a stage, but work to, produce the material, discursive and social geographies of place in various ways. This place production is never a neutral activity, but is always implicated in questions of ethics and politics. As such, I approach the cases both descriptively and normatively: providing a reading of the ways in which the claims were instantiated, as well as evaluating the ethical and political consequences of the claims. In doing so, I consider frameworks for enacting insurgent citizenship based on practices of solidarity, which are capable of grappling with both emergent and unassimilable difference and the relational construction of place.
1.

‘Australians have nothing to hide’

Gendered and racialised regimes of citizenship

This thesis hinges on the notion that territorial and social imaginaries are (re)produced materially and discursively in everyday life, specifically at the level of the city. The task of this chapter is to attend to the particular imaginaries inscribed on the city by Redegalli’s mural campaign. Working in the vein of the Lefebvrian analysis outlined in the introduction, this chapter provides a reading of the mural campaign as a particular slice of urban reality, writing onto the city through the everyday practice, but also relying upon, and reinscribing, powerful institutional discourses. Yet, the mural campaign does not produce the city unproblematically in its own image, rather it produces Newtown as a site under contestation. I will look more closely at these contestations in the following chapters. However, my task now is not to celebrate this contestation of the city as a free-for-all, democratic production of urban space. Rather, I contend that Redegalli’s mural is supported, discursively and materially, through gendered and racialised regimes of citizenship, such that the mural must be addressed politically as a site of power, not merely as a democratic expression of opinion.

I contend that Redegalli’s campaign is worth responding to from the perspective of an intersectional feminist and anti-racist politics. Ultimately, I argue that the veiled Muslim woman is figured as the Stranger (Ahmed 2000) through which white liberal citizens construct their relationship to the national imaginary. A focus on the construction of the Muslim woman as other reveals to us the limits to national belonging, illuminating unacknowledged hierarchies of
citizenship, both formal and substantive, which are always racialised and gendered. These hierarchies are maintained through the privileged discourses of civility and universal liberal values, relying on the Orientalist relation between the seemingly transcendental Western subject, and an objectified and particularised Muslim other. In the Australian context, these discourses of liberal civility function to tie whiteness to proper humanity, naturalising and invisibilising the racial contract upon which our settler society is predicated.

I begin by situating Redegalli’s campaign in the post 9/11 transnational climate of Islamophobia, where the face veil has become metonymically invested with all manner of dangers that Islam poses to the West. I go on to analyse Redegalli’s mode of address, showing that the mural campaign evokes a version of the public sphere constituted through the exclusion of the Muslim other. From here, I attend to specific formulations of the Muslim woman as other, arguing that she is variously figured as an ideological threat to national institutions, as oppressed and in need of saving, as the cause of Muslim men’s aggressive hypersexuality and as the phantasmic harbinger of future terrorist violence. Most importantly, each of these constructions produces a way for white liberal citizens to relate to the national imaginary through the figure of the Muslim woman as a stranger.

The gendering of the transnational Orientalist imaginary

The force of the mural derives from the fact that these racialised and gendered discourses are not confined to one wall in Newtown, but circulate as part of a powerful post 9/11 transnational imaginary, epitomised by the ‘with us or against us’ rhetoric of the ‘War on Terror’. This imaginary invokes ‘the clash of
civilizations’ (Huntington 1998), bifurcating nations along allegiances to either the free world of Western civilisation, or the barbarous and backwards Islamic order. This opposition between the West and Islam is part of the post 9/11 resurgence of the Orientalist social fantasy, in which the West is able to imagine itself as universal and transcendent only through opposition to a fantasy of the Oriental other as a particularity, mired in tradition and culture, and thus irrational and uncivilised. Specifically, the post 9/11 Orientalist imaginary constructs Islam as a monolithic and uniquely sexist religion, where Muslim people are figured as both incapable of rationality and inherently violent, and where it is the task of the West to spread democracy, and stem the tide of Islamic terror (Kumar 2010: 257).

According to Meghana Nayak (2006), this othering is highly gendered and racialised, with the USA constructing a hypermasculine militarised state identity in opposition to the feminised Muslim other, figured as helpless, inhuman and sexually available. According to Meyda Yeğenoğlu’s (1998) feminist reading of Orientalism, Edward Said, the father of Orientalism, recognised this sexualisation and feminisation of the Orient, but saw it as a specific field of inquiry (25). However, Yeğenoğlu theorises sexual difference as a structuring element of Orientalism, arguing that while the unmarked West bears the privileged status of masculine rationality, the Orient is always marked as feminine, metonymically represented by the figure of the veiled women (10-11).

Redegalli stakes his allegiances in this transnational imaginary willingly. Tying in his anti-burqa stance with an opposition to Palestinian struggles, he amends his ‘Say no to burqas mural’ to protest mayoral support of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel (see figures 3 and 4 below).
The most controversial mural variation read ‘Say no to Fiona Byrne’ (Marrickville mayor at the time) and depicted a dotted outline of a figure with a stake labelled ‘BDS’ piercing through a star of David, drawn at the belly. Here, the Israel-Palestine conflict is mobilised to stand in for the broader battle between Islam and the West, a war which is not just fought in situ, but which must also be waged ideologically across this transnational imaginary, with the most evocative battle front constructed in the everyday over the bodies of veiled Muslim women.

Figure 3: ‘Say no to burqas’ dotted outline mural  (NewtownNinja 2011a)
Figure 4: ‘Say no to Fiona Byrne’ mural (NewtownNinja 2011c)

This gendered transnational Orientalist imaginary is mediated through the liberal nation, which, claimed on behalf of the West, must be defended against encroaching Islamism. The Burqa ban in France, which was passed in 2010 and came into effect in 2011, is a particularly salient example. Here, a garment worn by less than 2000 (Ramdani 2010) already marginalised women, was banned from public spaces in order to protect French secularism. The ban gained much media attention worldwide, and in May 2010 Australia’s very own Reverend
Fred Nile introduced an ultimately unsuccessful Private Member’s bill into the New South Wales Parliament, calling for a ban on the wearing of full face coverings in public. According to Nile, Australia needed to take advantage of the French momentum, and put restrictions on the burqa so as to avoid ‘overseas problems developing in our nation’ (Nile 2010). These ‘overseas problems’ included the oppression of Muslim women, and the risk of Islamic terrorists hiding bombs under burqas. At around the same time, Liberal Party Senator, Cory Bernardi (2010), publicly stated that the burqa is, in fact, ‘un-Australian’ as it ‘establishes a different set of rules and societal expectations in our hitherto homogenous society’.

Redegalli initiated his mural campaign at around the time that the French burqa ban was making waves in Australian politics and media. While he is insistent that he never called specifically for a ban (Smith 2012), that the mural is framed by the ‘no sign’, universally understood as signifying that a particular practice is prohibited, or an item banned, makes a strong discursive connection nonetheless. His campaign deploys all of the themes hinted at by the above mentioned parliamentary representatives, including worries about the burqa as a security threat, a concern for the welfare of ‘oppressed’ Muslim women, and anxieties around the burqa as a threat to the integrity of Australian culture and institutions.

However, the mural is not merely a representation or projection of far off Orientalist discourses, but an iterative moment which both relies on, and (re)produces a discursive climate which has real, material effects of power. This very sense of a (trans)national Islamophobic climate is constituted through constant discursive (re)iterations, which produce the orientalising conditions in
which veiled Muslim women are constituted as antithetical to liberal society and the nation. Contributing to this discourse are juridical, political, media, activist and everyday iterative moments. Of course, some (re)iterations have more distinct effects than others, for example, the political and juridical discourses on the veil in France empower state policies which directly police, discipline and punish the veiled bodies of Muslim women. However, media, activist and everyday (re)iterations, whilst not directly mobilising state power, nevertheless contribute to the production and maintenance of Orientalising discourses and Islamophobia.

The public sphere, civic republicanism and the ideal of community

It is not just the representational content of the mural’s which reinforce this Orientalist imaginary, the mural’s very mode of address also works to claim space on behalf of the West, territorialising Newtown as a polity constituted through the exclusion of Muslim others. The imperative to ‘Say no to burqas’, or anything else for that matter, implicitly raises the questions of who exactly is being called on to say no, what exactly does saying no involve, and where does this saying no apply? Redegalli himself claims that he painted the mural in order to spark conversation and to foster debate within the ‘community’ (Smith 2012), but who constitutes this community, and from where does the authenticity and authority of this community derive? Through inscribing the notion of community debate on the urban environment, the mural campaign invokes the streets of Newtown as a civic space. Such spatial configurations rest on assumptions of a coherent community of people, authentically belonging to a particular bounded
territory, corresponding to a polity capable of administering and regulating both people and territory.

Redegalli is at pains to distance himself from both a statist and an individualist engagement with this polity, emphasising that he chose not to write ‘Ban the burqa’ or ‘Fuck burqas’ (Smith 2012). Instead, with ‘Say no to burqas’ he proffers a strategy of community deliberation over norms reminiscent of the Habermasian public sphere (Habermas et al. 1964). Ideally, ‘public opinion’ is produced dialogically, through the robust debate of unaffiliated individuals within a sphere which is independent from the state and commerce, in order that parliamentary representatives may be kept accountable, and in order that the operation of the state may be kept in line with community standards.

Counter the rhetoric of universal participation, Nancy Fraser (1990) argues that early liberal bourgeois public spheres not only formally excluded women, working class men and many non-whites, but were actually constituted through these exclusions (59-61). Through attending to revisionist historiography, she shows how the public sphere was never just a neutral stage, open to any sort of content posed by any sort of person, but was actually encoded by a white bourgeois masculinist culture, which demanded adherence to particular codes of decorum and civility. In contemporary bourgeois liberal democracy, the formal inclusion of all people within the public sphere is meant to be ensured through bracketing inequality, suspending status so that every person can speak from the position of a universal individual. However, the act of formally bracketing difference, and the assumption of a homogenous and culturally neutral space, actually serves to invisibilise the patriarchal, colonialist, bourgeois culture which does, in fact, condition the sphere (63).
Redegalli is very concerned with defending his universal democratic rights, particularly the right to free speech within the public sphere, as evidenced by the addition of a second ‘FREE SPEECH’* mural (see figure 5 below). However, he underscores this mural with the text ‘*CONDITIONS APPLY’, implying that what should be a universal right is actually under threat. In an interview with the local Newspaper, Redegalli hints at the source of this threat: ‘this mural has come from frustration that political correctness has gone so far you can’t say anything about Muslims without getting in trouble’ (Murada 2010, my emphasis ). With the telling use of ‘you’, he universalises his own unquestioned status as a speech bearing liberal subject, rhetorically producing the collective of individuals entitled to speech in the public sphere in his own image. Muslim people are not included in the ‘you’, rather, they are constructed as the monolithic other which is, apparently unfairly, resisting objectification.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 5: 'Free Speech' mural (Bull-McMahon 2012a)**

Redegalli continues to rhetorically exclude Muslim people from the public sphere, mobilising discourses of incivility, stating: “‘This is a stance on rights for ourselves, we can say something peacefully without having violence”’ (Murada 2010). Here, the use of ‘ourselves’ invokes a community of citizens, whose rights
to speech ought to be granted due to their decorous expression. Meanwhile, Muslim people, constructed as violent and uncivilised, are excluded from this community precisely because they are considered unable to adhere to these same codes of decorum and civility. In this way, Redegalli’s claim to free speech, figured as a universal right under threat, can be read as a defence of the public sphere as the privileged space of white, male liberal subjects.

It is not strictly correct to characterise Redegalli’s political stance as a purely liberal, individualist one. While he makes much use of the rhetoric of individual free speech, the crux of most of his arguments revolve around the rights of the ‘community’ and public safety. He takes this to almost to the point of self parody with his ‘Say no to burqas before it kills’ mural (see figure 6 below) which depicts a veiled Muslim woman driving a car. Apparently concerned with the traffic safety consequences of limited peripheral vision, the image cannot help tap into car bombing panics.

![Mural: Say no to burqas before it kills](image)

*Figure 6: ‘Say no to burqas before it kills’ mural (JihadWatch 2012)*

Fraser (1990: 71-72) differentiates this version of the public sphere as *civic republicanism*, as opposed to liberal individualism. We are still dealing with a universal, “rational” Western subject, but instead of an atomised laissez-faire contract society, we have a ‘public-spirited collectivity, capable of acting together
in the common interest’. Through reasoning together publicly, self serving individual preferences can be transcended, and a common good arrived at. However, Fraser rightly points out that the problem with this formulation exists in the presumption of a unifying ‘we’.

Iris Marion Young (1990) argues that the ideal of community, as a bounded group with mutually identified interests, is always necessarily constituted through exclusions. Drawing on the poststructuralist philosophy of Jacques Derrida and the critical theory of Theodor Adorno, Young argues that ideals of community play into the ‘logic of identity’, or ‘metaphysics of presence’ (302), a will towards unity and synthesis which, by seeking to enclose a set of authentic socialities, necessarily defines itself through the exclusion of an outlying other.

The social ontology of community demands a direct and unmediated identification between members, requiring that communities both homogenise internal difference, and exclude the unassimilable remainder. Young suggests that this desire for mutual identification through the ideal of community can sustain national projects predicated on racism and ethnic chauvinism (311). Redegalli’s unquestioned and implicit exclusion of Muslim people from the civic community, coupled with his objectification of Muslim women as a problem for, and a threat to, that community, provide a sobering example.

**The national imaginary, Sharia law and the maintenance of whiteness**

While the mural purports to be playing the role of a democratic intervention into the public sphere, we cannot assume that this sphere exists a priori, hovering above already territorialized, democratic social bodies, just waiting to be injected with all manner of content. Instead, we should see the
mural as part of a discursive chain which invokes and reproduces a certain configuration of the public sphere, and in so doing, writes certain territorial and social imaginaries onto Newtown. My contention so far has been that the version of the public sphere invoked by the mural campaign, while using the language of formal inclusion through the mobilisation of ‘community’, is in fact constituted through significant exclusions. I now want to examine the relationship between the public sphere, the geographically bounded national imaginary, and the state.

Whilst I do not mean to entirely conflate discourses pertaining to the public sphere, nation and state, I do contend that there is a significant connection between the three, which pivots around the national imaginary. According to Benedict Anderson (2006), the imagined national community relies on both the mediation of imagined national simultaneity, as well as the geographical and institutional limitation of national boundaries (7). The mural campaign, through relying on, and performing, a particular version of the public sphere, contributes to the mediation of a certain version of the national imaginary, which, in turn, is bounded by state enforced sovereignty. I contend that inclusion within the terms of all three analytics is entangled, and contingent on citizenship as a mode of belonging, where the conferral of full citizenship itself is always gendered and racialised.

Redegalli figures the veiled Muslim woman as Stranger to the nation, embodying the limits to multicultural hospitality by posing an ideological threat to Australian law and state. In Sara Ahmed’s concept of stranger relations (2000), the Stranger is not simply unknown ‘but already recognised as not belonging’ (21), and it is through the very proximity of this Stranger that the nation space is produced and reinforced as a certain type of community for a
certain type of national subject. Redegalli claims that his mural is not anti-Muslim, anti-Islam or anti-women, but is "anti-extremist, attempting to stop violence in the future" (Murada 2010). He sees an apparently growing prevalence of the niqab and the burqa in Australia as symbols of this growing extremism; the beginnings of a slippery slope which may eventually threaten the Australian rule of law, stating: "If you let it [the practice of covering your face] go, someone, somewhere down the line will say we would like Sharia Law" (Budd 2010).

The imagery of hoards of multiplying extremists, crowding out the Australian population and eroding national culture and institutions, tells us more about who belongs to the nation, how they belong, and the limits which condition this field of belonging, as it does about who is excluded. Aileen Moreton-Robinson describes these conditions of national belonging as operating through the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty, a regime of power where hierarchies of citizenship are gendered and racialised, and which is ‘operationalised to circulate sets of meanings about white ownership of the nation as part of common sense knowledge, decision making and socially produced conventions’ (2004: 5).

Building on feminist critique of the modern liberal state, Moreton-Robinson argues that Australia was not just founded on a patriarchal/fraternal contract, but also on a racial contract (Moreton-Robinson and Nicoll 2006: 150). Specifically, the Australian nation was born through the violent and genocidal colonisation of Aboriginal people and, until as late as the 1970s, sought to maintain and cultivate itself as a white nation through the White Australia Policy. In a move similar to Fraser, Moreton-Robinson argues that the exclusions upon
which the Australian nation is predicated are not just originary, but continue to operate ‘ideologically, materially and discursively to reproduce and maintain its investment in the nation as a white possession’ (2006: 150).

While citizenship has now been expanded to formally include Aboriginal people, non-British and non-white migrants, inclusion is always limited because the national fold into which these diverse subjects are drawn is not neutral, but conditioned juridically, politically and culturally, by notions of virtue and civility, which act to bind proper humanity to whiteness, but are in fact arbitrary qualities, given their legitimacy through the colonial regime of power (2011: 646-647).

I use whiteness here as a mobile and socially constructed category, which is not conferred by biological or phenotypical attributes, but by a historically and socially contingent ‘transnational technology of racialised power’ (Pugliese 2009: 16). It involves a constellation of cultural practices, institutions and behaviours, which have come to be signified racially, including liberal notions of civility and rationality. In Multicultural Australia it is no longer acceptable to maintain the whiteness of the nation space directly through discourses of biological race. Instead, culture and ways of life have become the categories around which inclusion and exclusion pivots. People of colour can be included in the multicultural national imaginary only via prosthesis: the conferral of an artificial whiteness. However, this ‘prosthetic white citizenship’ (Pugliese 2009: 16) can always be taken away.

Redegall’s fears that extremist Muslims will attempt to impose their own, non Western legal systems on the nation reveal the limits to Multicultural tolerance, as that which threatens the universal whiteness of Australian law and
culture. According to Ahmed, Australian multicultural inclusion was always a matter of aesthetics, where specific social, cultural and economic differences are erased, and \textit{difference} itself is fetishized and assimilated into the national project of ‘cultural diversity’. While multiculturalism may have been figured as a national identity, white masculinity is still the embodied national ‘we’, assimilating strangers as fetish objects (2000: 101-113). However, not all strangers are able to be assimilated aesthetically:

‘the strangers who refuse to receive the gift of multiculturalism by being natives, in the very act of appearing as different, hence function to define the limits of multicultural hospitality.’ (2000: 113)

Of course, it is covered Muslims women who function as this unassimilable and inconsumable Stranger. They are hypervisible in their failure to corporeally incorporate white prosthetic citizenship, not due to the actual colour of skin, for even ‘white’ Muslim women may be coded as ‘not white’. Rather, due to the cultural and religious alterity worn on their bodies.

\textbf{Intersections of gender and race in regimes of citizenship}

Redegalli encodes the “incivility and barbarity” of Muslim culture and law, as opposed to the “universal rationality” of the Australian counterpart, through continual allusions to violence. He claims that his campaign is directed forwards curbing future violence, framing the Cronulla riots as symptomatic of a national tension which is threatening to boil over:

"We've had our own taste of the Cronulla riots. It may not have been fundamentally religious-based, it may have been more cultural-based, but there is tension in Australia and what I wanted to do was start a debate, rather than just leave it alone and then in five years' time or ten years' time have a problem occurring." (SBS 2010)
By linking his mural campaign to the Cronulla riots, Redegalli frames Muslim people as the source of violence, and a problem which ‘we’, the national community, have to discuss.

The notion that the burqa and niqab somehow precipitated the Cronulla riots, or could precipitate similar violence in the future, at first seems like an odd claim, given that the riots were, by and large, a very masculine affair. However, if we look closely at the constructions of masculinity which circulate around this event, it becomes clear that both white women and Muslim women are implicated in ways which reinforce a particular racialised and gendered relationship to nation and national citizenship.

Moreton-Robinson and Nicoll (2006) show how white male protestors at Cronulla mobilised rhetoric of “protecting local women and children’ from the fear inducing ‘anti social behaviour of middle eastern gangs’” (154). Here, white men are constructed as the entitled beneficiaries of citizenship, chivalrously protecting ‘our’ women and children, who function as metonyms for the nation space. In this way, the nation takes the form of a white, heteronormative familial regime (Chalmers and Dreher 2009: 145), towards which the Lebanese man, constructed as an uncivilized, animalistic and threatening invader, poses a sexual threat. White male violence, while condemned, is constructed as either anomalous, or the preserve of a few bad eggs, while the violence of ‘men of Middle Eastern appearance’ is generalized across whole ethnic communities. Within this regime, veiled Muslim women are ‘seen as both oppressed and the cause of the unbridled aggressive hyper-masculinity of Muslim men’ (Chalmers and Dreher 2009: 135-136). This double bind constructs Muslim women in relation to white patriarchal citizenship as both in need of saving, and as a
dangerous threat to the nation.

This saving discourse is often conveyed through the language of women's liberation, where Muslim women are figured as prisoners of an outdated and misogynistic culture, who need to be liberated from the constraints of tradition. Through his mural campaign, Redegalli pictorially and rhetorically links the notion of ‘Submission’ to the wearing of the burqa and to female genital mutilation, a practice associated with some cultural groups in North Africa which has gained worldwide notoriety as the epitome of third world women’s oppression (see figures 7 and 8 below).

![Mural of 'Say no to female genital mutilation' and 'Say no to submission in all its forms'](image)

*Figure 7: ‘Say no to female genital mutilation’ mural (Hotheads 2012)*

*Figure 8: ‘Say no to submission in all its forms’ mural (Bull-McMahon 2012b)*

Submission here has a double meaning: on the one hand, it references women's oppression and the struggle for equal rights. On the other hand, it references the meaning of the word “Islam” in its verb form, as submission to the will of Allah. By ‘saying no’ to burqas, female genital mutilation and ‘Submission in all its forms’, the community is being called on to see itself as a defender of women’s rights, but also to see Islam as a uniquely sexist religion. This same discursive conflation was made by former Prime Minister John Howard, where Muslims were constructed as failing at “Aussie Values” due to their backwards
attitudes towards women (Dunn 2009: 34).

This version of liberal feminism assumes that the West’s hands are clean when it comes to oppression. However, what is meant to pass for feminism here does not actually promote women’s empowerment, but rather bolsters a ‘logic of masculinist protection’ (Young 2003: 224) in which a benign masculinity is figured as the gallant hero, and where women constructed as in need of protection are forced into a subordinate relationship with their protectors. The notion that Muslim women need to be saved was used to justify US led military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (229).

It is important to note that it is not just Western men who can adopt this paternalistic attitude. According to Yeğenoğlu’s (1998) feminist account of Orientalism, Western feminisms are also implicated in an Orientalist imaginary in which ‘whether male or female, the Western subject’s desire for its Oriental other is always mediated by a desire to have access to the space of its women…’ (72). Young points to pre 9/11 Western feminist campaigns against the Taliban’s treatment of women, arguing that many feminists adopted ‘superior tones of enlightenment and righteousness’ (230), which figured Afghani women as exotic, passive victims. As such, she argues that Western feminist discourse may have sown the seeds which led to the US administrations cynical feminist legitimation of paternalistic military intervention.

The notion that the Australian community must ‘Say no’ to the apparently oppressive practices of the burqa and female genital mutilation, fetishizes these practices as the limit to the multicultural nation. For Elizabeth Povinelli (1998: 577), this is an affective move, rather than an ideological one. It relies on the “self evident” barbarity of such subaltern practices, to produce a relationship of prima
facie unacceptable alterity between the Western subject and the Muslim woman other. Thus, it produces the limits to multiculturalism without engaging directly with notions of liberal universality, which have been discredited to some degree by the cultural contingency that multiculturalism has forced onto the West. The above arguments should not be taken as suggesting that there are no patriarchal and misogynistic cultures in Muslim communities, or that the burqa and female genital mutilation are, in fact, expressions of feminist empowerment. Rather, I am arguing that sexism and patriarchy cannot be analysed in isolation from racism, imperialism and white supremacy.

‘Compulsory visibility’: face to face democracy and state security

Paternalistic liberal feminism is not the only feminist valency engaged to oppose the burqa. The mural depiction of the burqa clad woman as an empty dotted outline on a white backdrop (see figure 1) references the liberal feminist argument that, through covering the face, the public identity of the Muslim woman is erased. In celebration of Belgium’s burqa ban, Sydney Morning Herald feminist commentator Elizabeth Farrelly, writes:

'Democracy pivots on the universal franchise; the presumption for each individual of a public identity, as well as a private one. To cover someone’s face in public, to reduce them to a walking tent, is to declare them lacking such identity, destroying any possibility of their meaningful public existence. It is, literally, to efface them.’ (Farrelly 2012)

In media comments, Redegalli echoes a version of Farrelly’s argument, claiming face-to-face communication as a right of all Australians (Murada 2010), thus figuring the unveiled face as a precondition of citizenly relations.
The feminist messaging, that Muslim women have a right to be seen, and a right to participate publicly, harbours a reversal that plays into Orientalist critiques of the Western gaze: that the unmarked ‘we’ have a right to see the Muslim woman. Here, we see the logic of identity operating in a specific historically and socially constituted moment. The Western subject yearns to construct itself as a unity, but in order to do so, it must assimilate the other, or objectify the other through the voyeuristic gaze. However, the veiled face, as both a barrier to the gaze, and posing the threat of a returned gaze, resists both assimilation and objectification. The veil simultaneously agitates and frustrates the desires of the Western subject to visually penetrate, and thus dominate, the veiled Muslim woman, and it is through this failure of the gaze that the Western subject, whose very self is constructed through apprehending the other as object, fails to achieve full identity (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 62-63).

According to this Feminist reading of Orientalism, yes, the veiled Muslim woman is erased, but not by the veil. The western gaze constructs the veiled Muslim woman as an ‘absent-presence’ (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 63). She is evacuated from beneath the veil, yet her presence also looms larger than life, externalised as a threat; to democracy, to security, to public safety. It is this ‘presence’ which underlies a second argument referenced by the dotted outline mural, which figures the lack of facial identification that the burqa confers as a threat to public safety and security, and a problem for state surveillance.

As part of a political stunt intended to illustrate the security risk posed by the burqa, Redegalli and a group of Australian Protectionist Party members dressed in the burqa, and attempted to enter the Downing Centre Local Court, a city pub, a bank, and the NSW Parliament House, (7News 2012). In a radio
interview Redegalli, states that from the time they got on the bus ‘all the normal security devices that we have to protect ourselves’ could not be applied (Fordham 2012). Men dressed in burqas even entered a women’s toilet without anyone questioning them as to their true gender. According to Redegalli ‘...it became really obvious that no one had the guts to come up to people in these garments and actually question what we were doing...’

In fact, anonymity is more likely to be conferred on the white-citizen, whose racial privilege accrues to them an unproblematic belonging, and thus a public invisibility. In Australia we are all subject to various forms of surveillance in public spaces (both civic and commercial); from security cameras on buses, age checks at the pub and signature checks at the bank. However, in the banality of everyday life, many of us remain anonymously surveilled, never directly approached and asked to account for ourselves. Unless, of course, we are marked as out of place, for example the gender policing which accompanies a non gender conforming person entering a public toilet, or the police targeting of Lebanese young people in public space. Redegalli’s contention that people should, in fact, be asking burqa clad people to account for themselves in banal public settings betrays that he sees them as always already out of place.

By way of Foucault, Joseph Pugliese (2009) argues that the niqab and the hijab insert their wearers ‘within scopic regimes of compulsory visibility’ which:

‘mark them as prime targets of race hate and violence, whilst simultaneously marking them as infralegal criminals who will breach the contract of the Western liberal state.’

(26)

The burqa is not invisibilising, in fact, it compulsorily draws attention to the wearer as a potential threat, and thus, a potential target of violence. We have
already seen how Redegalli constructs the veiled Muslim woman as a *symbolic* harbinger of future violence in the form of an amorphous extremism, he also hints that she poses a much more imminent violent threat in the form of the bomb under the burqa. According to Pugliese, the burqa and the niqab have taken on a *phantasmic* relationship with the events of 9/11. In this case, the real events of 9/11 become imagined over and over through a climate of Islamophobia, where this reimagining of the real comes to be ‘corporeally coextensive’ (9) with the generalised bodies imagined to have caused the event: bearded Muslim men and veiled Muslim women. In a society which is, quite literally, on the alert for future attacks, the burqa and niqab are transformed into everyday reminders of terrorism, figured as ‘an inexhaustible futurity that is destined to erupt in the present’ (11).

With this argument, I do not mean to claim that terrorist attacks have not been committed by Muslim people, or that they will not be committed in the future. However, I do claim that the *phantasmic* rendering of the veil unfairly targets and marginalizes many Muslim women, as it relies on the unequal power relations produced through the Orientalising gaze of the Western subject. There have been numerous racially and politically motivated terrorist attacks perpetrated by white people, for example the 2011 attack in Norway, and the recent massacre at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin. However, such phantasmic associations are never loaded onto the bodies of white men. In the first case, perpetrator Anders Breivik, despite having produced a detailed far right political manifesto, was initially found insane by psychiatrists. While he was eventually found sane by the courts, this points to, as Priyamvada Gopal (2012) argues, a tendency to attribute terrorism committed by whites to an ‘individual
psychopathy’. Yet in the case of Muslims and other people of colour, such crimes are seen as the ‘problematic pathologies of our time’, generalized across whole ethnic, religious and cultural communities.

The language of public security and identifiability grounds both the French burqa legislation and Nile’s defeated bill: both apply to all forms of face and eye coverings, yet the public debates around focus on the wearing of the burqa and the niqab. In this way, the sanitised rhetoric of public security and identifiability neutralises and generalises what is, in fact, an ideological and targeted move. It discursively bolsters the figure of the Muslim woman as phantasm, opening her up to racialised surveillance and violence. Such legislation has not been enacted in Australia, and so Redegalli’s campaign could be seen as ineffectual or fringe. Yet while veiled Muslim women are made the object of political and media panics in Australia, and are subject to racially motivated violence, campaigns which play off this phantasmic Islamophobic climate should not be discounted or ignored.

**Conclusion**

Redegalli’s four wheel drive ute is plastered with anti burqa bumper stickers which read: ‘Australians have nothing to hide. Say no to burqas’. As we will see in the coming chapter, he drives this ute around Sydney as part of his anti burqa campaign, venturing into suburbs with high Muslim populations. The slogan infers that Muslim women who wear the veil are untrustworthy and secretive, and thus inherently un-Australian. Conversely, real Australians are transparent, open and clearly visible. The slogan can be read as drawing on all of the constructions of the veiled Muslim woman that we have canvassed in this
chapter: fears that her veil symbolises ideological insurrection; that she is literally covered up by Islamic misogyny and hyper-masculinity; that her veil denies both her, and others, authentic democratic public participation; and that she, quite literally, may be hiding a bomb somewhere under there. In one simply phrase, it figures the practice of wearing the burqa as the limit to national belonging.

![Figure 9: 'Australians have nothing to hide... Say not to burqas' ute (FreeRepublic 2011)](image)

I conducted this analysis in order to reveal the powerful and privileged regimes of white liberal citizenship which Redegalli draws on and reinscribes through his mural campaign. Through figuring the veiled Muslim woman as the ultimate Stranger to the nation, Redegalli’s mural campaign (re)produces a national imaginary predicated on white masculine possession. In this configuration, the limits to the multicultural nation are embodied by both the Muslim woman as threatening and violent, and the Muslim woman as passive and oppressed. Both constructions legitimate a masculine protectionism, directed at maintaining the white, liberal civility of the nation space.
2.

‘This is an arty farty place...’

Racialised and classed geographies of multiculturalism

This chapter takes its name from the six part Australian documentary reality show, *Dumb, Drunk and Racist* (Smith 2012). The show examines Australian racism through the eyes four Indian recruits (Amer, Mahima, Gurmeet and Radhika) who, after the 2009 attacks on Indian students in Melbourne, see Australia as a racist and dangerous place. With journalist Joe Hildebrand as their guide, the four Indians must decide whether or not Australia really is ‘dumb, drunk and racist’. In the first episode, the show visits Redegalli’s mural in Newtown. During filming Muhammad, a passer-by on the way to his yoga lesson, confronts Redegalli:

**Muhammad**: ... is that how you’re gonna make a name for yourself by fucking marginalising an already fucking marginalised fucking community you fucking idiot?

**Redegalli**: Go away, you don’t scare anyone...

**Muhammad**: I’m not trying to scare you brother, don’t you wanna talk? How many fucking Muslims have you talked to anyway?

**Redegalli**: Mate, mate, can you speak Australian?

**Muhammad**: (mocking) ‘Can you speak Australian?’ you fucking wop fucking guinea bastard dago cunt.

**Redegalli**: You’re a moron mate...

**Muhammad**: How many times have you gone to Lakemba and tried to spark up a conversation with Muslims anyway?

**Redegalli**: Mate, mate, mate this is an arty farty community...

**Muhammad**: (interjecting) ...this is a nice place, I like it here...

**Redegalli**: if you come into our area...
Muhammad: It’s not your area, it’s my area, because Australia’s my country so I can go wherever I want.

The exchange is tense, an instance of ‘everyday racism’ (Essed 1991), but who is the racist here? Ghassan Hage holds no illusions about the racist capacities of many different migrant groups, but insists that racism should be taken up from a structural perspective, not a moralising one, the core question being: who has the power to activate their racism? (2003: 117). While Muhammad’s racial slurs are explicit, Redegalli’s subtle racism mobilises powerful discourses of a nation predicated on white liberal civility. Despite the fact that Muhammad addresses the group in English, Redegalli infers that he is unable to ‘speak Australian’, rhetorically excluding Muhammad from the realms of citizenship. He continues to mobilise these same racialised regimes of citizenship, characterising Muhammad as violent, uneducated, poorly spoken and thus, out of place in Newtown.

A connection is made between Newtown and nation, as the racialised invocation to ‘speak Australian’ functions to territorialize Newtown on behalf of the bordered regime of white liberal citizenship, from which the Muslim other is excluded. Muhammad contests this exclusion, invoking his rights under formal citizenship. He reminds us that the threatening presence of this Muslim other is not abstract, asking Redegalli how many times he has spoken with Muslim people in Lakemba. Here, we see the ways in which Redegalli’s mural campaign implicitly figures other suburbs as ‘un Australian’, and thus as spatial threats to the nation space.

In this chapter, I am concerned with the geographies of power which map this racialised organisation of place within a national imaginary constituted
through the exclusion of the Muslim other. To do so, I attend to the mural campaign as an everyday material practice of ‘social containment and enablement’ (Noble and Poynting 2010: 497) which seeks to manage regimes of national belonging across different social spaces. I argue that the mural campaign makes a claim to Newtown on behalf of this exclusive national imaginary: annexing it as part of the ‘real Australia’, in implicit opposition to the ‘un-Australian’ Lakemba, home to the Muslim ‘problem’ to which the national community must ‘say no’.

However, this claim to Newtown is not entirely successful, due to the apparent incongruence between Redegalli’s parochial nationalism and Newtown’s cosmopolitan openness to difference. I look to the relations between Newtown as cosmopolitan and multicultural, Lakemba as an ‘ethnic problem’ and this imaginary of the ‘real Australia’ as under threat, arguing that each pivots around changing economic conditions and processes of neoliberal governmentality. Ultimately I argue that, within this racialised network of place relations, Newtown holds a privileged position, and is thus implicated in ‘geographies of responsibility’ (Massey 2004).

**Everyday life and the mediation of relational place**

In the preceding chapter I examined the ways in which the mural campaign inscribes socialities and territories on to Newtown, (re)producing national and transnational Orientalist imaginaries at the level of everyday life. To do this, I did not limit my analyses to the content of the mural variations themselves, but attended to the ecology of events, encounters and modes of public address which bring the mural into circulation, mediating its claims to city
space. In this chapter, I look to the ways in which the mural campaign interacts with, and is taken up by, the city. Here, I do not understand the city as an immediate physicality, but as a materiality which is always already discursive, produced through social relations, which are always invested with meaning and power.

In this chapter, my readings of the mural campaign and its interaction with place engage with various media forms, including television, film, newspaper articles, interviews and blogs. While the mural campaign is physically situated, the geographies it animates are not limited to a fantasy of unmediated urban space. Rather, the campaign is both circulated and instantiated through various mediations, where these mediations not only invest place with meanings, but also play a role in constituting and territorialising those places.

While urban politics are often conceived of as addressing a co-present and unmediated public in a particular physical place, everyday face to face interactions are always mediated by the knowledge and expectations that people bring to interactions (Iveson 2009: 242) as well as by the spatial and temporal distancing which is constitutive of interaction (Young 1990: 314). The places in the city in which politics are played out become objects of mediated public address, through which debates are had about the identity and proper use of such places. Additionally, the claims to the city made by various people and groups are articulated through media, constituting the meaning of place through mediated contestation (Iveson 2009: 243).

For example, the scene elaborated above shows how everyday encounter is mediated through the mural, which itself mediates a variety of social and political imaginaries. This encounter is then made the object of mediated public
address, drawing Newtown into national conversations about multiculturalism and racism. In this way, Newtown is territorialized within the nation space, invested as a place where national concerns are played out. Finally, this mediated encounter enacts geographies of national belonging, both in the everyday and in the “national conversation”, which contest the meanings of both Newtown and Lakemba.

To map the relationship between the mural campaign, Newtown, Lakemba and the national imaginary, I look again to Lefebvre’s three point guide to reading the city. This analytic requires us to grapple with the points of connection between the inscription of the city through (1) institutional power and social processes, (2) the plurality and simultaneity written onto the city through the patterns of everyday life and (3) the ensemble of differences produced by relations within and between cities (1996[1968]: 109). While Lefebvre separates these processes analytically, he emphasises that they are in fact always imbricated, such that the city is, all at once, produced by patterns of quotidian habits, the inscription of broader socialities, and the relations of difference which spill beyond, linking it to other places.

Geographer Doreen Massey provides a more specifically articulated theory of relational place as ‘constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus’ (1993: 66). With this ‘progressive’ theory of place, Massey brings grand social forces back to earth, emphasising the ways in which capitalism and globalisation are enacted through specific and situated social relations, which are always gendered and racialised. This notion of relational place is termed *progressive* because it is not just a descriptive tool, it also posits a political strategy, which Massey terms
‘geographies of responsibility’ (2004). Here, those places privileged in the constellation of relations are called on to take responsibility for the injustices and power imbalances from which they benefit.

Taking Newtown as my locus, I show the ways in which it is constituted as a place in relation to the ‘ethnicizing’ suburbs of Sydney, namely Lakemba, and an imaginary of white suburban decline. This constellation of places is produced through changing economic conditions and neoliberal systems of governance, giving rise to a ‘class aesthetics of multiculturalism’ (Hage 2003: 108-119) where Newtown is figured as diverse and cosmopolitan, Lakemba is figured as a site of multicultural failure, and the ‘real’ Australia is figured as under threat.

I contend that the deployment of the mural campaign can be understood in virtue of these relations. To begin with, I will show how Redegalli attempts to claim Newtown on behalf this ‘real Australia’, which must be defended from the encroachment of ‘un Australian Lakemba’. To do this, I analyse a scene from *Dumb, Drunk and Racist* in which Redegalli drives his anti-burqa bumper stickered, Australian flag bearing, four wheel drive ute from his home in Newtown to the high street of Lakemba. I go on to show that Redegalli’s claims to Newtown are not entirely successful, with his particular brand of nationalism figured by media, the local council and an anonymous local dissident as incongruous with the cosmopolitan values of Newtown.

**The border regime: Lakemba as the ‘not Australia’**

As I argued in the previous chapter, the national imaginary invoked by the mural is constituted through the exclusion of Muslim people as other. Pontying et al describe this process of othering, attending to the ways in which the categories
Arab, Muslim and Middle Eastern have been entangled, conflating many ethnically and religiously diverse groups and identities into one monolithic other (2004: 12-13). This monolith is constructed as a source of criminality, terrorism, incivility and inhumanity through the cumulative effect of various moral ‘panics’, where fears about boat people, terrorists, burqas, Lebanese youth gangs, and ethnic rapists are sutured into a ‘shared narrative’, such that discrete events are seen as symptomatic of a general ethnicized social problem (Poynting et al. 2004:50)

Graeme Turner (2003) argues that, throughout these moral panics, Arab/Muslim people have been ‘described in ways that denied them membership to the Australian community,’ (412) leading to the redefinition of the Australian nation as an imagined community predicated on the necessary exclusion of the Muslim as other(413) (413). I am concerned with the ways in which this national exclusion is enacted through the management of place, specifically through the discursive and material deployment of a securitised border regime where certain places are figured as the ‘good Australia’, in opposition to a threatening ‘un Australia’ (Johns 2009; Perera 2002; Turner 2003). This regime is not only comprised of the physically patrolled national border intended to protect the nation from outside Muslim others, but also a corresponding internal cultural border intended to protect the nation from the threat within.

The imperative to ‘Say no...’ stakes a claim to Newtown on behalf of this securitised national imaginary, figuring the place as under threat, and calling on the ‘community’ to defend its territory from the encroaching un Australia. Noble and Poynting (2010) point to the ways in which instances of ‘everyday racism’
are linked to systemic structures of racism, such that everyday instances, like the mural campaign, are both enabled by, and reproductive of, systemic racist structures. The cumulative effect of these incidents, across a range of public places, works to regulate people of particular migrant backgrounds, producing a ‘spatialisation of racism’, where national citizenship is claimed and denied according to geographies of (un)belonging (494-495). The mural campaign attempts to draw Newtown into these racialised geographies, marking the unbelonging of Muslim people within the suburb. Newtown must be defended from this encroaching ‘un Australia’, yet the threat is somehow distant and abstract: the burqa is not an everyday feature of the Newtown street scape.

For Redegalli, the burqa has a home, and that home is Lakemba. In the first episode of *Dumb, Drunk and Racist* (Smith 2012) we learn that, as part of his campaign against the burqa, Redegalli drives a large red four wheel drive ute, plastered with stickers that read: ‘Australians have nothing to hide. Say no to burqas’, and with an Australian flag mounted at the rear of the cab. The show follows him on a drive from Newtown to Lakemba in south-western Sydney, a trip that he has undertaken a number of times before, seemingly in order to do laps of the high street.

The camera zooms in on Muslim men with beards, women in long flowing dress and head scarves and one woman wearing the niqab, the point being made visually that Lakemba, with its everyday performance of Islam, is ‘different’ to the more properly Australian streets of Newtown that we have left behind. Through referencing Lakemba, the mural campaign does not just figure the burqa as symbolising an amorphous ideological threat, but also a concrete spatial and temporal threat. Boasting one of the largest mosques in Australia,
and with a 51.8 per cent majority of the population identifying Islam as their religion (profile.id 2012), Lakemba’s streets are inscribed by the religious and cultural affiliations of its inhabitants. Islam has already claimed a slice of the city, and thus a slice of the nation, at the mundane level of everyday life.

Redegalli’s flag bearing intervention into, what is for him, the absolute alterity of the Lakemba streetscape, can be seen as a practice of everyday nationhood (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008); while the nation is projected and enacted at a state level, it is also produced and reproduced in everyday life. Post the Cronulla riots in 2005, everyday ‘wearing’ of the flag has become associated with a parochial and macho nationalism, to the extent that in 2007 one of Australia’s most popular music festivals, the Big Day Out, asked attendees to leave Australian flags at home, in order to discourage anti-social behaviour and ethnic violence (AAP 2007).

Redegalli’s four wheel drive ute is part of a recognisable nationalistic cultural form, which draws together masculine car culture, the flag, and racist bumper sticker slogans. By penetrating the ‘un Australian’ suburb with this everyday symbol of masculinist nationalism, Redegalli reproduces the internal cultural border that was invoked and defended during the Cronulla riots, where the beach was defended as a white/national possession against the ‘polluting’ Lebs (Noble and Poynting 2010: 499). This time, in Newtown, the ‘real’ Australia, is figured as under threat from the burqa infested, ‘un Australian’ suburb of Lakemba. As with the events at Cronulla, territorial claims work so that ‘the local and national become entwined in practices of inclusion and exclusion...’ (Noble and Poynting 2010: 499-500).
Paranoid nationalism, neoliberalism and cosmo-multiculturalism

These everyday tensions across multicultural borderlands operate in the context of the racialised criminalisation of Lakemba. Since the 1990s, Sydney’s south western suburbs, most notably Lakemba and Bankstown, have been figured as sites of social and moral decline, attributed to the supposed criminal tendencies of the ethnic/Arab/Muslim others who live there. In Bin Laden in the Suburbs (2004), Pontying et al track these processes of criminalisation, from the ethnic ‘Gangland’ panics, triggered in part by the shooting up of the Lakemba police station in 1998, and the subsequent racial profiling and policing of men of ‘Middle Eastern appearance’, to the post 9/11 transformation of criminality into a terrorist threat (52). These processes of criminalisation are both discursive and material, operationalized through a nexus of media representations, xenophobic political discourse and the repressive actions of the state, such that:

‘raids at dawn are conducted by secret services in conjunction with tabloid journalists.

Politically opportunistic and sensationalist paper-selling ‘attacks’ in headlines lead to and give ideological licence to racist attacks in shops, streets and workplaces.’ (177)

Taking this context into consideration, Redegalli’s campaign cannot help but be sutured into these criminalised narratives of Lakemba, and thus bound up in effects of power with consequences reaching far beyond an everyday discomfort with difference.

These generalised fears of ethnic crime and terrorism, expressed through a variety of panics, and instantiated through bordered geographies of (un)belonging, have been theorised as symptomatic of more specific economic, political and social anxieties (Poynting et al. 2004: 50). Ghassan Hage’s paranoid nationalism theory argues that this ‘colonial white paranoia’ has been
reactivated in response to the neoliberal dismantling of the welfare state and a resulting classed aesthetics of multiculturalism (2003: 20-21). According to Hage, paranoid nationalism emerges when the once caring nation is no longer meeting the needs of its citizens. The white suburban imaginary is felt to be in decline yet, in the face of an unacknowledged poverty of social and economic amenity, nationalists divert themselves from this fragile reality by entertaining a fantasy of idealised nationhood, which is under threat from the ‘un Australian’ other. Thus, the securitised border regime is mobilised in order to protect ‘the fantasy of the motherland against the reality of the motherland’ (2003: 43).

According to Hage, this paranoia was ‘repressed’ during the dismantling of White Australia, and through various versions of multicultural policy which sought to manage new migrant populations, socially, culturally and economically (2003: 54-58). However, this white paranoia resurfaced in the 1980s and early 90s in response to the Hawke and Keating Labor government’s redeployment of multiculturalism as a national identity project, in tandem with a project of economic deregulation, aiming to open up Australia, both culturally and economically, to diverse new markets (2003: 60-62).

This pairing of multiculturalism and neoliberal economic policy is well expressed in Keating’s Productive Diversity policy, which sought to ‘support the needs of Australian businesses in a global trading environment while at the same time, take advantage of Australia’s multicultural workforce’ (Pyke 2005). Here, the same multicultural moral register which encourages the Australian population to “celebrate diversity”, is now deployed in the interests of Australian business. Here, we see a process of governmentality (Foucault 1991; Rose et al. 2006) emerging, specific to the management of multiculturalism, where diverse
populations are managed through an individualising and moralising logic of economic productivity. In this formulation, the ‘good’ multicultural subject is also the productive multicultural subject and, as we will see, the ‘bad’ multicultural subject is also the economically disadvantaged and unproductive subject.

This neoliberal multicultural policy agenda has cultural effects at the level of place production in everyday multiculturalism. According to Hage, the inner city is mobilised as an aesthetic object in order to attract transnational capital (2003: 20), inculcating a ‘cosmo-multiculturalism’ (Hage 1998) where difference is commodified through various consumer experiences, providing an aesthetic environment suited to the transnational cosmopolitan business class. However, In order to maintain these classed aesthetics, the most marginal, including new migrants, are pushed out of city spaces into the economically declining suburbs. This leads to a split in everyday multicultural Australia, what Turner describes as the opposition between the Cosmopolitan inner city and its ethnicizing other (2008: 569). On the one hand, the economically productive ‘diversity’ of the inner city is a celebrated, on the other hand, the economic and social disadvantage experienced by new migrants in the suburbs is discursively recast by government and the media as an ethnic problem of criminality and laziness (574).

Turner (2008) describes the ways in which this multicultural governmentality has led to a cultural identity crisis in the Australian suburb. Once mythologized as an extension of the rural and figured as a site of ‘ordinary’ Australian values and identity, the suburb is increasingly represented as a site of ethnic criminality and social decline (571). Turner attributes this to the visibly
diverse changes manifest in the suburbs; restaurants, shops and places of worship which deviate from the white Australian norm. He also attributes it to the effects of globalisation, citing increased unemployment due to the shift from suburban manufacturing to the inner city based service and creative industries, and the decline of welfare and social services. These shifts have impacted the most on non-English speaking migrants, particularly on Arabic speaking youth and their communities (573-574). Thus, the paranoid nationalist’s feelings of white decline are intimately linked to changes in the conception of the Australia suburb, where fear of the ethnic other has come to stand in for anxieties regarding the social and economic shifts in Australian cities.

**Newtown as the Cosmo-Multicultural Inner City**

I now turn to the ways in which the mural campaign draws into conversation the ‘cosmopolitan inner city’ and the ‘ethnicizing suburb’ through a lens of paranoid nationalism, where the relations between these cultural imaginaries pivot around the neoliberal governmentality of Australian multiculturalism. I have already discussed the ways in which paranoid nationalism produces the suburbs as a borderland, a contestation between the ‘real Australia’ and the ‘un Australia’. I now turn to the ways in which Newtown resists placement in the terms of this paranoid national imaginary, attending to representations of the apparent disjuncture in classed aesthetics between cosmo-multicultural Newtown and Redegalli’s performance of nationalism.

While the mural campaign can be seen as engaging in a practice of place making, writing particular imaginaries onto the social spaces of Newtown, its intelligibility relies on its interaction with already circulating place meanings. In
the first episode of *Dumb, Drunk and Racist* (Smith 2012), presenter Joe Hildebrand describes Newtown as ‘a place that prides itself on its tolerance, and where pretty much anything goes’. The introductory scenes cut between young people with coloured hair sitting in cafes, fashionable lesbians holding hands on the street, and the inside of the car where our protagonists pontificate on hipsters:

*Joe:* All the groovy white people decided that the inner city was quite cool and funky. Little funky hipsters. Annoying people.

*Mahima:* How do you recognise hipster?

*Amer:* Coloured hair, toned stockings, listening to music you can’t understand and have never heard of. They’re kinda cute, probably drawing somewhere, sitting in a park...

*Joe:* Probably drawing something about their feelings...

Hildebrand’s voiceover cuts in sardonically: “This is easy going Australia at its best. Surely there’d be no intolerance in this Benetton rainbow of racial harmony, right?” The scene cuts abruptly to the ‘Say not to burqas’ mural, setting up a dissonance between what the viewer expects of Newtown, and what is lurking beneath its ‘dark underbelly’.

The showcatalogues the mural campaign as one of several seminal racist moments in the national consciousness and this as seen as incongruous with its location on the progressive and cosmopolitan streets of Newtown. The meanings that the show reads onto Newtown are, at face value, exemplary of multicultural urban life. However, the tone of Hildebrand’s description deploys a more cynical reading, constructing Newtown as the land of the ‘hipster’ where tolerance and a love of difference are more about ‘groovy white people’ maintaining a particular aesthetics than about ethical encounter with the other.
The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), Australia’s public broadcaster dedicated to providing multilingual and multicultural content, also published ‘special coverage’ of the mural campaign as part of their online presence, further drawing Redegalli’s situated protest into national public sphere conversations on urban multiculturalism. The article positions Newtown as bohemian and gentrified:

‘Considered the home of Sydney’s Bohemian community, Newtown in the city’s inner-west, boasts soaring real estate prices, more cafes and restaurants than you could eat at in a year, and a mural that’s divided some sections of the community.’ (SBS 2010)

The reporting goes on to hint at the incongruous classed aesthetics that some ‘locals’ have read (and written) onto Redegalli’s particular brand of racism, recounting an early instance of local resistance where the word “bogan” was written in graffiti across the mural.

Pini et al compare the Australian bogan to the British chav, describing it as a term used to identify and denigrate the white poor (Pini et al. 2012: 145). As a class descriptor, ‘bogan’ operates within the Bourdieuan analytic of distinction, mobilising aesthetic qualities such as taste, fashion and accent, as markers of moral inferiority in order to create and maintain class distinctions (146). The nationalist culture which Redegalli enacts is invested with these classed connotations. Identified by the graffiti artist as distasteful, the mural campaign is challenged aesthetically, implicitly cast in opposition to tasteful multiculturalism, and thus figured as antithetical to the culture of Newtown.

However, Redegalli disavows the classed associations read onto his mural, seeking to identify his campaign with the bohemian diversity of Newtown:
"...I thought by actually doing this in Newtown, the Bohemian centre of Australia you could say, that people would see that hey, there must be a topic here if someone in Newtown wants to talk about it that is not aligned with anything, because we're not rednecks. We're not this, we're not that. We're basically a mixing pot." (SBS 2010)

It would seem that Redegalli is perfectly happy with cosmo-multiculturalism, it is only Muslims that he has a problem with. We also saw in the introduction that, as a local artist, Redegalli identifies with Newtown as an 'arty farty place'. In fact, Newtown is known for its street art, in particular its iconic, large scale public murals, a form which Redegalli seeks to emulate with his campaign. Yet, his mural is not always read as part of this tradition, with the mayor of Marrickville council going so far as to state that the mural 'goes against the values of the community' (SBS 2010).

The cultural labour done by the local Marrickville council externalises a particular view of Newtown, and what it stands for. In 2012 the council sponsored free screenings of the documentary *I Have a Dream: The Making of a Mural* (Baker and Paddison 2012) at the Dendy independent cinema on King Street, the main shopping area of Newtown. The ‘I Have a Dream’ mural, also located on King Street, depicts the face of Martin Luther King, next to an image of the globe with the quote ‘I have a dream’, taken the civil rights leader’s most famous speech. According to the film, the message that the artists were hoping to deliver with this mural is that Newtown is a place of great tolerance, where you can ‘be who you want to be’. Originally, the base of the mural was a crowd scape, depicting a mix of races and genders, reflecting the suburb’s diversity. However, due to tagging, the streetscape was later painted over with an Aboriginal flag.
Despite the illegality of the mural’s origins, it is now protected and promoted by the local council, projected as an iconic and definitive image of Newtown. While the mural projects progressive and anti-racist values, referencing civil rights struggles, these continuing social antagonisms are somehow repackaged as contributing to Newtown’s identity as a ‘tolerant place’, a haven for diversity and difference. While the mural could be read in many ways, this particular account casts it as a symbol of progressive, cosmopolitan, individual freedom, figuring Newtown a place where all of this is possible. However, what is lacking from this account is an acknowledgement of the economic privileges that make this politicised lifestyle accessible.

**Conclusion: class aesthetics and geographies of responsibility**

Newtown may well be externalised as a progressive haven, but this cannot be attributed to an inherent place based identity. As we have seen, Newtown’s cosmopolitanism emerges out of the same set of relations which give rise to both paranoid nationalism and the criminalisation of the south-western suburbs. As such, counterposing Redegalli’s mural with a weakly formulated, identity based cosmopolitan multiculturalism cannot bring to bear the complex of classed and racialised inequalities which in fact produce these place relations.

Similarly, by approaching the mural campaign as ‘Bogan’ and thus culturally distasteful, the graffiti artist runs the risk of unselfconsciously reinforcing the privileged position of Newtown in this constellation of relations. As Pini et al point out, the ‘bogan’ is geographically defined, seen as culturally belonging to rural areas and the outer suburbs, not cosmopolitan urban spaces (2012: 145). These maps of taste are implicated in the socio-economic spatial
politics described by Turner (2008), producing a classed aesthetics of multiculturalism which 'reflects quite dramatic differences in how the winners and losers in the process of globalization in Australia have experienced cultural and economic change' (579).

I have made this argument in order to set up the ethical and political frameworks which I will be investigating in my next chapter. By showing the ways in which Newtown itself is implicated and privileged in the relations which give rise to the mural campaign, I will argue that ethical responses to Redegalli should engage with this implication, rather than culturally distancing Newtown from the distasteful politics of the mural. While I have read Newtown as 'Cosmo-multicultural', this does not mean that I see the area as morally and politically bereft. Rather, in responding to the mural, anti-racists and feminists situated in Newtown have the opportunity to engage strategically with these 'geographies of responsibility'.
3.

‘Racists out of Newtown’

Insurgent citizenship and practices of solidarity

In chapter one, I attended to the social imaginaries and regimes of belonging that Redegalli’s mural seeks to inscribe onto the city through his mural campaign, arguing that they reproduce highly gendered and racialised regimes of citizenship. In chapter two, I looked to the complex ways in which both the mural campaign and Newtown are implicated in, and reinforce, classed and racialised geographies of multicultural citizenship. The task of this chapter is to both unpack the ways in which Redegalli’s mural was challenged by counter campaigns, and to offer ethical and political commentary on these contestations.

Drawing on Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1996[1968]), I have argued that the city, and modes of belonging, are materially and discursively produced through mediated material practice, and that this production is never neutral, but is always implicated in ethics and politics. If this is the case, then both Redegalli’s mural campaign and the responses to that campaign are constitutive of particular ethical and political relations between people and place. In this chapter, I will conceive of the mobilisations against the mural as enacting insurgent forms of citizenship (Holston 1999), capable of reimagining the relationship between people, territory and democracy in ways which disrupt and challenge the mural campaign's paranoid nationalist imaginary.

Specifically, I will consider a ‘community meeting’, a ‘community demonstration’ and an art project and exhibition. Of these three events, I only physically attended the latter, yet the reliance of my research on mediated
accounts speaks to the fantasy of immediate experience, and the inescapable status of place itself as a mediation of various meanings, stories and perspectives. The events in question are instantiated through a complex ecology of mediated claims, circulating through web presences and social media, the corporate and independent print media, word of mouth and personal networks, in addition to the performance of these events in the spatialities and temporalities of city spaces.

Each of these events formulated claims to place and citizenship in different ways, employing various strategies and vocabularies and thus enacting a variety of ethical and political imaginaries. We will see that, while the ‘community meeting’ enacts a counter public which seeks to rearticulate the centrality of democratic civic space, the ‘community demonstration’ enacts a ‘right to the city’ which seeks to appropriate the mural space directly, and the art exhibition enacts a politics of difference forged through the creation of new solidarities and activist relationships. My analysis of these events will employ both descriptive and normative registers, attending to the ways in which these events articulated and enacted insurgent citizenships, as well as evaluating these claims in relation to the possibility of a normative framework which could respond to the material and representational violences perpetuated by the mural campaign.

Ethical and political trajectories

Before attending to these events, I want to further develop the ethical and political trajectories of this thesis so far, in order to make more explicit the normative terrain upon which the critique of Redegalli’s campaign situates us. In
the first chapter, the key ethical point being made is to do with the constitution of universal categories and groups through politically salient exclusions and othering, such that the historical contingency of dominant groups is invisibilised and privileges are maintained. The national community, as a unifying social body, is constituted through the homogenisation of membership and the exclusion of an unassimilable remainder (Young 1990). In this case, the veiled Muslim woman is constructed as the Stranger (Ahmed 2000), through whom the limits to national belonging are constituted.

Official national multiculturalism is not an adequate response to this process of othering, as Ahmed’s reading of multicultural policy framework reveals (2000: 95-113). Multiculturalism as national identity consumes and fetishizes difference in order to produce a national ‘we’ through diversity. However, this diverse identity still must be rooted in a common culture and law, which are assumed to be neutral organising principals, but are in fact cultural artefacts conditioned through histories of colonialism (109). As such, the nation must both consume and assimilate real social and economic differences as an aesthetic ‘diversity’, whilst also defining itself through those Strangers who are still too strange to be celebrated as ‘diverse’. As we saw in previous chapters, Redegalli himself has no problem with the reality of ‘mixing pot’ diversity, but draws the line at difference which he deems to be antithetical to Australian liberal democracy: the ‘barbarous’ and violent Muslims, with their Sharia Law.

If national multiculturalism does not provide an adequate ethical framework for living with others in the city, what alternative modes of relating might be possible? I take as a starting point Iris Marion Young’s normative ideal of the ‘unoppressive city’ (1990: 317-320), where relations are characterised by
a politics of difference and an openness to unassimilated otherness, rather than through a basis of commonality. She comes to this normative model through a critique of the ideal of community as necessarily homogenising and exclusive, positing instead a way of living together which departs from, and builds on, the heterogeneity, possibility, anonymity and dynamism of city life.

Young sets up the conditions for this unoppressive city by assuming a level of economic and social equality, which she recognises is not currently available, but would be necessary to envision such an open and differentiated society. Here, various emergent groups, formed around interests and identities, would both have democratic control of the governance of the city, and would be recognised and celebrated in their difference, not in their sameness. This ideal can be summed up as a kind of radically democratic urban citizenship, where political engagement need not occur at the level of the nation, and need not be mediated through homogeneous political community, but is instead directed at the heterogeneous spaces in which people live, and mediated through encounters between different groups.

However, in the second chapter, we see that cultural systems of gendered and racialised oppression are intertwined with the material and the economic. I attempted to map the connections between the often monolithically conceived phenomena of state governance, media and globalisation and the cultural politics of everyday life in the city, in order to show the ways in which the mural campaign is implicated in, and iterative of, regimes of power which mediate beyond the specificity of the site. Returning to the critique of multiculturalism as national identity, we can now see that is insufficient not only because it plays into a logic of identity which seeks to assimilate the other, but also because it is
implicated in a project of neoliberal governmentality, where the gearing of multiculturalism towards “the maximisation of profit in the interest of ‘the Australian economy’” (Ahmed 2000: 108) produces a ‘class aesthetic of multiculturalism’ (Hage 2003) which privileges elite diversity and criminalises disadvantage experienced by less ‘productive’ migrants.

How then are we to think this matrix of gendered, racialised and classed relations? It is incredibly difficult, and perhaps even undesirable, to pull the three apart analytically. The stigma of racialisation is a factor in producing economic inequality; however, we also find that effects of economic inequality are recast as ethnic pathologies, such that class differences are racialised. As for gender, the body of the Muslim woman is put forward as an object which somehow bears the brunt of this classed and racialised criminality, the ultimate metonym for the other and the threat it poses to ‘our’ way of life. Given this interplay of gendered, racialised and classed relations, Young's utopian ideal of simply assuming economic equality, and from there working towards a politics of difference, cannot properly grapple with the intersectionality of social relations which produce others. Economic conditions are not simply background to social and political relationships, but are imbricated and constitutive of these relationships.

In a critical reading of Young, Nancy Fraser (1995b) advocates for a schema which can deal with different types of differences: some differences are constituted through social and economic oppression and should be abolished and some differences are instantiations of cultural variance and should be celebrated and affirmed in their difference. As such, she suggests a critical theory of recognition which ‘would help us to identify, and defend, only those versions
of the politics of difference that coherently synergize with the politics of redistribution’ (179-180).

Fraser (1995a) argues for a transformative politics of recognition, which would work to destabilize the privileged identity categories which constitute the oppressed identity as other in the first place, and a transformative politics of redistribution which would work to critique and reconfigure root systemic causes of inequality (1995a: 90-91). I propose that a combination of Young’s politics of difference, and Massey’s geographies of responsibility could provide such an approach. Young’s deconstruction of unified identity, combined with a notion of emergent difference provides for a transformative politics of recognition, while Massey’s relational sense of place takes into account the systemic conditions which structure relations of classed, gendered and racialised inequality.

**Insurgent citizenship**

Citizenship, most broadly conceived, refers to systems of rights and duties corresponding to membership within a political community (Brown 1994). The web of groups and events contesting and producing relationships to community and place in Newtown could be seen as enacting practices of ‘insurgent citizenship’ (Holston 1999): those claims which, whether through grassroots political articulation or everyday practice, seek to ‘empower, parody, derail or subvert’ projects of a state based citizenship (167). The term is descriptive of new possibilities for citizenship claims which emerge as increased flows of migration, and the subsequent proliferation of difference in cities, in tandem with globalizing economic processes, challenge the normative basis of a
nationally defined citizenship. Here, the city is not just a stage upon which these claims are made, but is materially and discursively constituted through such claims, contesting the territorialisation of city and nation and the meanings and bounds of place.

These insurgent citizenships are not necessarily progressive or radically democratic, and can include both elite and subaltern groups (Holston 1999: 167). Redegalli’s vigilant liberal nationalism, whilst it in many ways calls for a recommitment to, and intensification of, national citizenship, could be conceived of as a practice of insurgent citizenship, as he is clearly unsatisfied with the current formulation of citizenship, and calls for a new grassroots nationalism.

Whilst insurgent citizenships may be reactionary and chauvinistic, the normative potential is in the possibilities opened up by the newly destabilized hegemon of national citizenship. However, as Michael Keith (2005) stresses, it is important not to romantacise these grassroots claims, as they occur in a context where the power of the state to both circumscribe and produce place and modes of belonging is still, in many ways, present (42). We can see this in the enforcement of Australia’s border protection regime, in racialised policing in the suburbs, and in the logic of multicultural governmentality, which as I write, is leading to the implementation of welfare quarantining and management in ethnicizing Bankstown (Brereton 2011). Rather, these insurgencies should be seen as emerging in ‘simultaneous presence of regimes of governmentality alongside the cultural construction of forms of political subjectivity’ (Keith 2005: 44). If we can identify that the politics of these regimes are enacted in everyday life, in the constitution of place and citizenship, then the practice of contesting these claims, as well as mounting new claims, offers strategic possibilities for
both opposing racialised political and economic violence, and enacting new possibilities for living together in the city.

The ‘community meeting’: insurgent citizenship through the creation of counter publics

One of the earliest events organised against the mural was a ‘community meeting’, held at Erskineville Town Hall, and called by trade union official, Amanda Perkins, and Socialist Alliance activist and electoral candidate, Pip Hinman (Boyle 2010e). Those invited to present included Sally McManus, Australian Services Union state secretary; Aisha Chaabou, a student activist from the University of Western Sydney, Father Dave Smith, Holy Trinity Church and Pip Hinman. All were against a burqa ban, and opposed to Redegalli’s mural (Boyle 2010d, 2010c, 2010b, 2010a, 2012) (digital videos).

Perkins opened proceedings, outlining her shock and disgust at the mobilisation of ‘boat people’ panic for electoral gain, and questioning the feminist credentials of those, namely Fred Nile, who seek to ban the burqa. She said that, although she is not ‘in favour’ of the burqa, she is unequivocally against banning it, and that those who are committed to women’s liberation should ‘hold their hands out in friendship and in community’, not turn Muslim women into ‘objects of suspicion’. She goes on to infer that this meeting addresses concerns held by the community:

‘...I talked to lots of people, girls at the gym and people at the park and at the shopping centre and everything and people were saying, look... these sort of debates shouldn’t just be the preserve or Fred Nile and Alan Jones and all the nutters on late night radio and stuff. Like, progressive people should be able to come together at a town hall, and have an intelligent, reasoned discussion around the many complex issues...’ (Boyle 2010d)
There was time allocated, after the official proceedings, for questions and comments from the floor. Redegalli spoke against the burqa, along with an Australian Protectionist Party member who, clad in a burqa, made his way to the front of the hall, before whipping off his face covering in order to illustrate the security risk posed by the burqa. Mainstream media devoted most of their coverage of the meeting to this stunt (Boyle 2010e).

While, in opening the meeting, Perkins mobilised much of the rhetoric of the public sphere, including liberal standards of ‘reasoned’ and ‘intelligent’ discussion, the meeting it is not set up as a space which gives equal weight to all views. While dissenting views are given airtime at the end, ‘progressive’ people who oppose the mural are given scheduled priority. In liberal conceptions of the public sphere, this bias would be considered undemocratic. However, as we saw in the first chapter, liberal conceptions of the universal public sphere privilege certain identities and cultures of interaction, corresponding to dominant social groups. According to Fraser (1990), an insistence on an overarching universal public would always accrue more privilege to dominant groups, silencing those who are disenfranchised. Instead, she advocates for the creation of a multiplicity of emergent counternpublics as a better strategy for enacting a democratic politics, providing discursive spaces from which the needs, strategies and demands of subordinated groups can be formulated and articulated (66).

The ‘community meeting’ enacts a particular counternpublic as a strategy for mobilising against the mural and, more broadly, against sexist and racist attitudes in society and the mainstream media. However, as we saw in chapter one, publics are not hovering, transcendental political realms, they are enacted spatially, producing particular relationships between people and places. The use
of the Town Hall, and Perkins’ emphasis on the Town Hall as a place for
discussion, enacts a practice of urban citizenship modelled on the classical polis,
where certain spaces are privileged as places of civic authority, in which the
politics of the ‘community’ is carried out. Perkins offers a rhetorical map of that
community, plotting the gym, the park and the shopping centre as places where
public opinion is formulated, and deploying a sense of grounded ordinariness
which lends authenticity to her claim that the ‘community’ has called for such a
‘progressive’ conversation. Yet, as we have seen, this apparent direct authenticity
and authority of community members, places, and events is in fact a political
claim, operating through mediation and representation.

Rhetorically, Perkins infers that the meeting speaks from, and to a
territorialized and authentic urban community. However, I suggest that
‘community’ is mobilised strategically, functioning to confer legitimacy and
authority onto those who have come together to organise against the mural.
Accounts of the meeting speak to the diversity of people in attendance (Boyle
2010e), and the invited speakers come from a range of localities, genders, ages
and religious backgrounds. As such, notions of authenticity do not map on to any
preformed communitarian identities, or bounded geographies, acting instead as
an affective and aesthetic point of connection for an active project of group
emergence and formation, coalescing around opposition to the mural and what it
stands for. Thus, the meeting could be seen as part of a project which seeks to
enact and produce a form of urban citizenship, not predicated on communal
identity, but on the active articulation of shared interests and solidarity.

As such, we cannot strictly say that this mobilisation of ‘community’ plays
into Young’s formulation of the ‘ideal’ of community, as it does not seem to
spring from a desire for mutual identification. Yet, if left uninterrogated, the strategic mobilisation of ‘community’ as a source of discursive authority and authenticity could prove to be problematic. As we saw in the last chapter, internalised narratives of ‘community values’ do little to challenge systems of oppression, which are rooted in the same relations that afford Newtown the privileges of a progressive lifestyle and aesthetic. To simply state that a place and a community reject certain values can play into a territorialisation which does not take into account these geographies of responsibility.

The ‘community demonstration’: enacting insurgent citizenships through claiming ‘the right to the city’

Throughout this thesis I have drawn on Lefebvre’s urban theory to emphasise the city as a material and discursive production. For Lefebvre, the city is not just a stage where politics is played out. Rather, the material, cultural and economic production of the city is political, and open to the possibility of intervention at the level of everyday life. Diagnosing the disproportionate influence of private interests and state planning over the production of the city, Lefebvre articulated ‘the right to the city’ as a political strategy for contesting this monopoly (1996[1968]: 148-159). Asserted from below, by ‘the people’, the ‘right to the city’ is not just a demand for equal access to the city and its resources, but the right to democratic involvement in all decisions which influence the production and reproduction of everyday life, as an all at once material and cultural praxis of the city.

‘The right to the city’ has been taken up as a strategy by various urban social justice campaigns and social movements, from the events of 1968 to the
more recent Occupy movement (Marcuse 2012). In fact, the ubiquity of ‘reclaiming space’ and ‘taking back the city’ as strategies for engaging in an urban politics have influenced the forms of protest enacted by both Redegalli and his opponents. Both seek to appropriate the mediated spaces of the city, both materially and discursively, in order to put forward a critique of urban reality, and to contest its future.

Redegalli has clearly come to a different urban diagnosis than Lefebvre, where it is women in burqas and Muslim extremists who threaten democracy in the city, not capital and the state. Yet his response is characteristic of claiming ‘the right to the city’ – appropriating a slice of urban reality, and producing it in a way that inscribes his own desirable political future. While Redegalli actively projects his campaign as an impassioned cry from the grassroots, we saw in previous chapters that his mural campaign is supported, both materially and discursively, by the institutions of bourgeois liberalism, and to that we must now add private property rights. In response to the constant “rewritings” of the mural, Redegalli asserted his private property rights, setting up security cameras, hiring a security guard (Budd and Deeks 2010) and calling on the police. His insistence that the mural is intended to ‘start a conversation’ (Smith 2012) is clearly not an invitation to engage in democratic contestation of the mural site.

Radical left groups put forward an analysis in Sydney Anarchist ‘zine Mutiny, linking Redegalli’s mural to both the state violence of the border protection regime and the everyday violence directed at Muslim people on the street:

‘The mural in this place inscribes the functioning of the border into the very lived experience of people in the area and brings with it a persistent threat of potential physical
violence... the sense of intimidation, fear and exclusion that the mural creates is in itself a form of violence.’ (Anonymous 2011)

They go on to link his mural to systems of patriarchy and authoritarianism:

‘Sergio articulates one form of patriarchy in the guise of being against what he perceives to be the patriarchy of another culture. The act of determining what is suitable behaviour for others and calling on the government to regulate this is typically authoritarian and patriarchal’ (Anonymous 2011)

Finally, they contest the protection and privileges conferred through private property, calling on people to ‘self organise’ against Redegalli’s private monopoly on public space:

‘Sergio hides behind the authority he derives from owning that building and by protecting it with security cameras and security guards. So it is up to the rest of us to self-organise and mobilise against this racist presence and to ensure its immediate removal by whatever form people see fit.’ (Anonymous 2011)

This analysis was published as part of a call to action. The ensuing ‘community demonstration’ saw more than one hundred people gather at the Hub in Newtown, a public space often used as a venue for markets, soup kitchens, protests, busking, community events and festivals. From there, the protest traveled down King street to Redegalli’s studio on Station street, carrying banners which read ‘fascists off our streets’ and ‘racists out of Newtown’ (Editors 2011). When they arrived, demonstrators threw paint at the mural, pasted anti-racist posters over it, made noise and chanted. Police attended the protest, arresting and charging eight people. Reports of the event in Mutiny described the police as heavy handed ‘with punches, grabbing people by the neck, and threatening to break bones’ (Editors 2011).

Here, claims for ‘the right to the city’ envision a different sort of insurgent
citizenship again, not tied to a territorialized community, but to the practice of inhabiting, and to the processes of material and discursive production of the city. The protesters enact this citizenship in direct opposition to the monopoly of private property on city space, contesting the state protection of ‘opinions’ which both rely on and reinscribe systems of state violence and everyday racism. The written statement in *Mutiny* makes clear that this insurgency was intended by the authors as an act of solidarity with ‘Muslim women in particular, and to a degree other non-white people...’ (Anonymous 2011) who bear the brunt of this spatialised racial violence. As such, the mural is not conceived as merely a message on a wall, but as an act of spatial segregation which supports and reinscribes systems of oppression. By appropriating the site in solidarity, protesters enact a politics, which not only undermines racism as a discursive phenomenon, but also in its spatial and institutional forms.

However, the politics of solidarity and spatial justice are in tension with a defensive localism, deployed through an aesthetic of radical community. Through staging the ‘community demonstration’ at the Hub, the protesters draw on the discursive meanings of the site to suture themselves into an authenticating narrative of place and community. The banners ‘racists out of Newtown’ and ‘fascists off our streets’ contest the mural by mobilizing a sense of local authority. This forms part of a rhetoric of grassroots radicalism, utilising an aesthetics of authenticity in order to privilege the direct, the local, the ‘self organised’ and the unmediated as more democratic ways of relating to citizenship and place.

Young’s critique of the ideal of community was prompted by her engagement with radical feminist politics, and a suspicion of the rhetoric
employed (1990: 301-303). Likewise, Massey (Massey 1994) critique of
defensive, bounded localisms extends to left wing movements (168). Their
concerns are that unified notions of community and place homogenise
difference, exclude the unassimilable, and reinforce notions of authenticity and
immediacy which fail to grapple with the complex mediations and relations
which constitute places and groups. However, at this protest, as with the
meeting, “community” does not necessarily seek to reinforce a communal
identity within a bounded place. Instead, it works to affectively confer authority
to particular political claims. As we have seen, the radical localism which lays
claim to Newtown’s streets is deployed in order that those streets are made open
to difference, and in order to disrupt geographies of racialised violence.

Young recognises that many leftist claims to the ‘ideal of community’ are
often under defined, evoking an ‘affective value’ in opposition to individualism
and capitalism, but not necessarily engaging with the social and theoretical
implications of the ideal (1990: 302). The question is, how does this affective
appeal to authenticity interact with the other political claims made: including an
openness to difference, gestures of solidarity and practices of spatial justice? The
danger is that, in contesting the right to authentically speak and act on behalf of
‘the community’, the radical left and the nationalist right in Newtown may
continue to produce their relationships to citizenship and the nation through
contesting the objectified body of the veiled Muslim woman.

Largely white and Western social movements, especially feminism, and
associated emancipatory theories, have long been challenged by a politics of
speaking and representation, which highlights the unequal power dynamics at
play when dominant groups speak on behalf of, or seek to represent, subjugated
groups (Dreher and Ho 2009: 8-9). These debates are well known in progressive and radical left circles. Anecdotally, I am aware of conversations had at the time of the demonstration around what a practice of solidarity with Muslim women would really look like: with some arguing for an ‘ally’ relationship, where the role of solidarity is to support those who are oppressed in leading their own struggle, while others argued that racism is everybody’s struggle, and that forms of solidarity which seek out Muslim women as mouth pieces can be tokenistic.

Shakira Hussein (2010) gives evidence for both of these perspectives, writing of the ways in which Muslim women feel sidelined and silenced, as well as impelled to constrained speech, in debates over the hijab. A constant invitation to speak loads onto Muslim women a “double responsibility”, where their public discourse is confined to defending Muslim women’s issues, like wearing hijab, whilst also implicitly defending Muslim men’s perceived misogyny. On the flipside, there is a “double bind” experienced by Muslim women, who cannot speak openly about any dissatisfaction with gender norms in their communities due to the warranted fears that their voices will be appropriated by those with Islamophobic agendas (159-160). Yet, when they speak about harassment and racism experienced by their communities, they are ignored or greeted with hostility by these same agendas: ‘thus while the “double responsibility” impels a particular type of speech, the “double bind” generates silence’ (159)

In an opinion piece published in the Sydney Morning Herald, ‘Muslim by birth’ Ruby Hamad (2010) is concerned by the tendency of well meaning, progressive non-Muslims to leap to defend the burqa, arguing that the back and forth between non-Muslim progressives and conservatives universalizes a
reified version of Muslim culture, leaving no room for nuanced perspectives of Muslim women:

‘Any change to the position of women in Islam must come from within Islam. And, crucially, it must be spearheaded by Muslim women. The real trouble with the burqa-banning bandwagon is that it is obliterating any chance of a progressive female Muslim voice.’ (Hamad 2010)

Of course, Muslim women are not rendered physically voiceless by these representations, but they are rendered culturally voiceless. The repeated Orientalist tropes which circumscribe the limits of what can be said about, and by, Muslim women mean that the complexity and multiplicity of identities and affiliations struggle to be recognised.

This example brings to light problems that a politics of difference, practiced from a distance, can pose, where a lack of engagement with others tends towards universalising one version of a ‘culture’, the most prominent version, and often the most patriarchal. Here, the homogenous other, the Stranger, is maintained as the difference which must be respected. Ahmed (2000) is critical of Young’s politics of ‘listening carefully across difference’, proposing instead a politics premised on close encounters ‘with those who are other than “the other” or “stranger”’ (180). This is not to be confused with process of assimilating or ‘eating’ the other, but rather attends to the ways in which differences are revealed through the labour of encounter. Here, the very work of building relationships through strangeness becomes the basis for a solidarity directed towards the future. For Ahmed, ethical alliances should not be based on pre-formed identities, but should be established ‘through the very process of being unsettled by that which is not yet’ (180).
'No Disrespect': Insurgent citizenship through the labour of encounter and experimental utopia

I have argued against authenticity as signifying anything more than a strategic and affective relationship to place. As such, the question of whose claim bears most authority is moot. Rather, I have considered claims in terms of their political and ethical consequences. Ahmed’s (2000) notion of an emergent solidarity, oriented towards the future and built through the labour of strange encounter, offers a promising model for an activist insurgent citizenship which can grapple with the problem of living with difference. This citizenship would not rely on authentic claims to place, instead it would challenge the reification of Newtown as inherently radical or progressive, and potentially undermine the relations, which produce Newtown as a privileged place within the multicultural imaginary. The spatial praxis of such a citizenship might also involve claiming ‘the right to the city’. Lefebvre speaks to this future orientation, developing a notion of experimental and practical utopias, through which our dreams for the future can be tested on the ground in ways that destabilise hegemonic claims to space. Such utopias engage with the political conditions from which they emerge, are multiple, historically contingent and up for revision (1996[1968] :151).

Among the many responses to the mural was one such experiment. The public art exhibition, 'NO DISRESPECT', was called to 'create opposition and alternatives' to the mural by asking the question:

'What wider themes of racism does the mural represent? What would women's emancipation REALLY look like? And how can we work together to make emancipation for all, Muslims and non-Muslims, a reality?' (Indymedia 2011).
The exhibition was organised by diverse groups, including Muslim Youth of Sydney, the inner city based Cross Border Collective, and the Justice and Arts Network. The organisers put the call out through a variety of networks, both Muslim and non Muslim, soliciting works from practicing artists, dabbler and amateurs alike. Upon entering the exhibition, attendees were able to express their own dreams for emancipation and empowerment, writing or drawing as part of a participatory work, evolving on the wall in the lobby. Inside, the artworks on display canvassed various themes, from religion and spirituality, to self representation and women’s empowerment, to critiques of Australian racism and burqa panic.

Organiser, Najiyah Khan, contributed a review of the event to Sultana’s Dream, an Australian e-magazine dedicated to publishing the opinions of Muslim women:

Beneath the splashes of colour, delicate inks and stretches of canvas came a very loud message: How about letting us represent ourselves? And who exactly is “us”? Simple. It is women anywhere. But in particular Muslim-Australian women who are constantly spoken for: without authority, without consultation and most dangerously— without truth.

‘No Disrespect’ presented an important opportunity for dialogue between these women (many of whom were contributing artists), the general public, academics, activists and the media. And the result was absolutely phenomenal! Featuring a collection of beautiful art, stellar female performances by Miriam Waks and Soul Beat, aka Rima, and plenty of intelligent dialogue to engage and inspire, it was hard to ignore the energy and elation buzzing through the crowd. (Khan 2011)

According to the callout for artistic contributions, the collaborative production of this event was based on a desire to create alternative futures, in opposition to the troubling political claims advanced by Redegalli. This speaks to
the capacity of art to simultaneously pose a critique, and to imagine possible futures. The event imagined an open ended space, where a multiplicity of imaginary futures, free from racism, sexism and inequality, would be on display together. Yet, this mode of artistic “display” does not adequately capture the way in which the gallery space itself became a site of dialogue, and future oriented labour. The exhibition, as a temporal and spatial mediation, drew various people, from various places and groups, and from various levels of participation, including organisers, performers, artists and attendees, into the labour of creating this imagined future. While this experimental utopia was transient, in that space and time a commitment was made to the labour of imagining a political future, where citizenship is based on dialogue and strange encounter.

Conclusion

According to Rainer Bauböck, ‘democratic citizenship, as we understand it today, is the outcome of struggles over who should be included in or excluded from the polity’ (Bauböck 2010: 139). While citizenship is often conceived of as the domain of the hegemonic nation state, formally bestowed from above, I have argued that it is also reinforced and contested at the level of everyday life and practice. Both the mural campaign, and responses to it, enact insurgent forms of citizenship – putting forward claims to possible political futures which contest not only space in the city, but how that space ought to be constituted and territorialized.

I have argued that Redegalli’s mural campaign annexes Newtown on behalf of a paranoid nationalist imaginary, thus seeking to reinforce a highly exclusive and privileged regime of national citizenship. In opposition to this, I
read the ‘community meeting’ as constituting a resistant counterpublic, enacted through a localised urban citizenship, and structured around democratic civic participation in city spaces. I went on to read the community demonstration as seeking to subvert state citizenship by asserting ‘the right to the city’, through the appropriation of the street and the mural site.

While both these events engaged in practices of solidarity, enacting a politics of difference and spatial justice, they also deployed an ideal of ‘community’ in conjunction with an authentic sense of place, evoking an ‘affective value’ (Young 1990: 302) which conferred political authority. Given Young and Massey’s respective critiques of authentic community and place identity, I argued that this rhetorical reliance on authenticity could elide the complex place and identity relations at stake in the mural campaign. I concluded by attending to the ‘No Disrespect’ exhibition, arguing that it enacted a relational, future oriented solidarity, which sought to produce alternative forms of citizenship through the dialogic labour of encounter. While we should not romanticise or overstate the effects of such insurgent events, the ‘No Disrespect’ exhibition puts forward a model of insurgent citizenship which could inform future activism directed towards creating ethical forms of multicultural urban citizenship.
Conclusion

For the past four years, Newtown has been part of my neighbourhood. I moved to Sydney’s Inner-West from Bega, a small country town on the far south coast of New South Wales, in 2008 for university. Before moving to Sydney, I had very little contact with the reality of multicultural Australia, yet I was a fierce supporter of it. Tucked away in our small, fairly culturally homogenous town, the figure of the Muslim loomed large. When I was sixteen, I served a Muslim couple at the supermarket where I worked. I only knew they were Muslim because the woman was wearing the hijab. I was nervous and eager to please: finally, I could prove what an accepting Australian I was. After the sale, my supervisor called me over to the smokes desk and asked me if I thought they might be terrorists.

In the workplace, I was called upon to assert my unquestioned right to national belonging through managing access to Australian citizenship. I needed to take a position: are Muslims a threat to Australia, or should they be welcomed as a symbol of multicultural acceptance? Either way, actual Muslim people were fetishized as an object through which my relationship to the nation, as a white Australian, was produced. Now, as an adult, living in the Inner-West, engaged in both the politics of the street and academia, the mural campaign again calls on me to produce my relationship to citizenship and the nation through the figure of the veiled Muslim woman.

One task of this thesis has been to show how the mural campaign institutes limits to national belonging through the construction of the veiled Muslim woman as unassimilable Stranger, where these constructions are not just isolated messages on a wall, but are sutured into regimes of governmentality,
and operationalised through a nexus of media, political discourse, repressive state power and everyday encounter. The above experience speaks to just how quotidian and banal this racialised management of citizenship can be – reiterated through everyday encounters at the supermarket. Meanwhile, the limited range of prior encounters available in Bega speaks to the already mediated expectations that both my supervisor and I brought to these situations, such that they cannot be divorced from the various panics around suburban terrorists, ethnic criminals and ‘boat people’. Here, the veiled Muslim woman is encountered metonymically, constructed to stand in for all manner of menacing threats that the Muslim other poses to the nation space.

The cumulative effect of this constant and widespread everyday vilification of Muslim people in public space works to institute racialised geographies of exclusion and containment. Qualitative research undertaken by Noble and Poyning (2010) demonstrates just how ubiquitous experiences of everyday racism are for Muslim people, with many interviewees regarding verbal vilification and the threats of physical violence as an everyday feature of living in Australia. The hijab in particular was seen by non-Muslims as a visible marker of unbelonging, and was often the impetus for, and the focus of, verbal and physical abuse directed at Muslim women (494, 493, 498).

I have approached the mural campaign as one such example of everyday racism, arguing that it stakes a claim to Newtown by reinscribing exclusionary national imaginaries onto city space. In chapter one, we saw how Redegalli’s media commentary invoked a version of the public sphere predicated on liberal civility, and constituted through the exclusion of the ‘violent’ and uncivilised Muslim other. From here, we unpacked his construction of the veiled Muslim
woman as symbolic of an ideological threat to national institutions; as both
oppressed by, and responsible for, Muslim men’s supposed aggressive
masculinity; as compromising the right of Australians to face to face democracy;
as a threat to public safety and security; and as a potential terrorist. Ultimately, I
argued that these constructions worked to maintain the nation as a white, liberal
space, in need to masculine protection.

In chapter two, we saw that these imaginaries are not directly productive
of Newtown, but rather produce it as a place under contestation. While the mural
campaign reinforced already racialised geographies which work to circumscribe
the ‘real Australia’ against the encroaching ‘un Australia’ lurking in Lakemba, the
classed connotations of Redegalli’s nationalism rendered the campaign
somewhat incongruous on the cosmo-multicultural streets of Newtown. We saw
how Newtown is implicated, and privileged, through the same set of relations
which produce Lakemba as a site of multicultural failure, and give rise to
paranoid nationalism (Hage 2003). As such, I argued that this incongruity was
not an adequate argument against the mural in itself, as it uncritically relied on
reproducing the same classed relations which privilege Newtown within the
multicultural imaginary.

By showing the ways in which neoliberal governmentality produces a
‘class aesthetics of multiculturalism’ (Hage 2003), this chapter questioned
responses to racism based on moralising appeals to ‘diversity’ and ‘tolerant’
multiculturalism. Instead, I argued that the mural campaign draws Newtown into
geographies of responsibility (Massey 2004), providing a strategic opportunity
to undermine the classed and racialised relations which structure
multiculturalism within the national imaginary.
In chapter three, I attended to three cases of organised opposition to the mural, arguing that the constellations of events, groups, places and media which instantiated these counter campaigns could be read as claims to insurgent citizenship (Holston 1999). These claims reimagined the relationship between place, nation and political community, contesting Redegalli’s nationalist claim to Newtown, and asserting various counter political imaginaries; tied to the democratic urban polity, enacted through the production of city space and rooted in ideas of ‘community’ control. I questioned a perceived reliance on notions of authentic local community and place identity, arguing that this approach fails to grapple with the emergent identities and place relations at stake, and may reinforce a situation where relationships to citizenship are negotiated across the, still objectified, Muslim woman as other.

My concluding remarks explored the possibilities for an activist insurgent citizenship based on relationships of solidarity and produced through the labour of close encounter with others (Ahmed 2000). These relationships could be put to work in the creation of experimental utopias (Lefebvre 1996[1968]); dreams for the future, instantiated in urban space and rooted in the current political situation, which are oriented towards creating emancipatory futures, whilst also recognising the contingent nature of such projects. I took the art exhibition ‘No Disrespect!’ as an example, drawing on the event to work through how such an activist citizenship might be enacted.

In part, this thesis has been a way for me to work through my own ethical and political responsibilities in the context of an increasingly popular Islamophobic and exclusionary nationalism. As a white Australian, my racial privilege confers to me a relatively unproblematic sense of national belonging.
While I myself may not put much store in the nation, and do not consider myself to have an affective investment in nationalism, my unquestioned entitlement to citizenship confers on me systemic privileges such that I can move in public space without fear of racialised violence, exclusion or containment, and such that most spaces within the nation are produced with my belonging in mind.

By looking to the ways in which the national imaginary is materially and discursively produced and contested at the level of the city and everyday life, I have been able to explore the possibilities for enacting resistant social imaginaries, and insurgent formulations of citizenship. My focus on the mediation and social production of place speaks to the political potential of critical geographical readings of the city. However, there are also limitations to the methodologies I have employed; most significantly, that they cannot take into account the experiences, desires and attachments of the people involved. While such accounts fall beyond the scope of this thesis, they raise important challenges for any future research, which could benefit from a more expansive and varied ethnographic approach.
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