Editorial: Race/Matter - materialism and the politics of racialization

A materialist turn in the humanities and social sciences has revitalized work in feminism, science and technology studies, critical social theory and phenomenology. Nonetheless, we want to ask what’s at stake when ‘race’ is grasped from a materialist standpoint? Is the focus on materiality able to track and unravel the manifold neo-racisms of contemporary globalization? Does it supersede the limitations of social constructionist accounts of race? And could a materialist ontology of race transform and invigorate anti-racist praxis?

This second journal issue of darkmatter explores materialist theorizations from a range of perspectives engaged with the lived realities of the persistence of race. Racialized power is increasingly deterritorialized, and the transgression of extant borders is constitutive for their reproduction. Power is not simply a function of the symbolic, but is an operation of the ‘real’. In other words, interrogating the materiality of race is underwritten by how race inhabits the real – its actual conditions of mutation-emergence-proliferation.

How many times have we repeated the mantra of race as a social (and discursive) construct and still be left with a feeling that it fails to tell the whole story. So called ‘post-race’ discourses are found to be wanting for their potential to erase why race matters. The point is not to privilege the real over symbolic determinations (representation) vis-à-vis invoking a new found neo-materialist ontology of indeterminancy. Nevertheless, our intention is to consider what happens when we move away from constructionist approaches of race predicated on the pursuit of anti-essentialism or on the forgetting of the materiality of signification. How can we understand the materiality of race in a non-foundationalist, non-determinist, non-reductionist way?

Undeniably, constructionist approaches focusing on the discursive production of race have been crucial for analysing racism, even if a politics of representation and the pedagogy of changing the conditions of representation ostensibly have become an anti-racist orthodoxy. Yet, are these practices wholly effective for challenging the persistence race and incarnations of differential racisms in new realities emerging from the neo-liberal transformations of capitalist production, the implosion of borders (geographic, symbolic, psychic), new media virtualities and the reproduction of life through bio-tech/genomics. While the association of phenotypical differences with cultural categories is a socially and historically contingent process, we continue to be confronted by the irreducibility of race. From the perspective of materiality embodied difference is not the end point which has to be discursively negotiated or dissolved. Rather, difference is an actual point of departure and struggle, in order to contest the constitution of race on the very ground of everyday life. What’s at stake here is not so much how race is produced but how we confront racism in its multifarious materialities. In this special issue, the opening article by James Arvanitakis and Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel raise this in their conversation on the predicaments and possibilities of anti-racist politics today.

Thus, the aim is to move away from this ‘hyper-productionism’, in Donna Haraway’s words, towards a more involved and thicker grasp of race. This can strengthen anti-racism as a political praxis which has as its starting point the material embodied experiences of people and as its target the change of the everyday material conditions of existence. This is the topic of a first set of contributions to the special issue which try to come to terms with the making of race in everyday relations and to explore how race is un/done through the continuous re/formations of space and place. While Arun Saldanha and Daniel Swanton focus on the geographies of racism, whiteness and the arrangements of bodies in the Goan village Anjuna and in the British community of Keighley, Zanny Begg interrogates the making of racism through the gentrification of Sydney’s Redfern area which has traditionally been home to migrant and Aboriginal communities.

The anchoring of race in space corresponds directly with its materialisation in the human body. In this
context both, issues of embodiment as well as the problem of the biologization of race are crucial for understanding the problem of materiality. We know that race is a culturally contingent category and not a biological given, simply because, as Steven Rose argues, genetic differences between populations do not correspond with the social formation of ‘racial’ divisions.4 Questioning the biological reductionism of race gives rise to post-race fantasies and the possibility of ‘race overcoming’ as Paul Gilroy puts it.5 While this position seems to be important for a vision which points beyond the tyranny of race it can neglect that racial exclusion is sustained not because it has a biological existence, but because it is literally made to have one (consider genetic screening, new databases which classify populations, genetic kinship and ancestry etc). What we are interested in here is how ‘matter comes to matter’,6 that is, how the social and material aspects of race are inextricably conjoined to create the actual worlds in which people live. Fanon said that racism enters the colonized through the skin.7 This is epidermalization. Forty years later racism enters the colonized through paths which lie beneath the skin, a deep epidermalization or deep essentialism — the double of genetic purity through ancestry on the one hand and social mixture through migrational movements in population genomics on the other maintain the persistence of these new forms of epidermalization, (e.g. in the Human Genome Diversity Project, the Genographic project, or the conjuncture of behavioural and molecular genetics).

The social reality of race emerges through a dangerous ‘ontological choreography’8 which includes many different actors and many different levels of social organisation, as Jenny Reardon shows in her piece in this journal issue. How can we contest this material reincarnations of race? The journal issue attempts to make a case that these developments cannot (only) be contested by proclaiming that the category of race is merely produced through genomics. The questions of biological essentialism is much more complicated and has various social and political consequences some of which are debated in Ben Pitcher’s article. Rather we could say that racism needs to be contested on the level where communities shift the new (biologized) meanings of race and un/do them through their everyday practices which change the conditions of their material existence; race is an embodied phenomenon which is felt, lived, re/made through multiple habitual ways in our everyday lives. Damien Riggs and Debbie Epstein & Robert Morrell in their contributions discuss how race is both manifested and made contestable on this level of the everyday.

This is also the topic of Marianne Pieper, Vassilis Tsianos & Efthimia Panagiotidis’ paper on the embodied experiences of precarious migrant workers in post-Fordist conditions. Among the main reasons which many believe that facilitated the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism is the exodus of certain parts of the working class from industrialism to a new form of capital production which incorporates all of social relations, affect, and subjectivity of workers.9 Despite its fruitfulness for a materialist analysis of the conditions of production in contemporary capitalism this story seems to be one-sided because it refers only to specific parts of the working classes in North-Atlantic societies. There are at least two neglected dimensions to this story which both refer to the persistence and materiality of race. Firstly, when the 1970s and 80s exodus from the factory was taking place, there was another form of social struggle unfolding, this of migrants and racialized groups: spontaneous autonomous migrant resistance and black wildcat strikes in the factories of Europe and the USA. These social conflicts and struggles never found their expression in the hyper-productionist tale of Post-Fordism and cognitive capitalism which was mainly an affair of the white working classes as they attempted to reposition themselves in the new conditions of employment. Migration and race remained outside of the traditional ‘materialist’ history of class struggle. But they were not erased, they materialised in memory and affects of the ‘great deterritorialized’, that is the movements of the migrant proletariat which Angela Melitopoulos evokes in her video clip extract from her film ‘Passing Drama’.

The second neglected dimension of the hyper-productionist story of post-Fordism is the issue of dirty work: migrant, female and de-skilled labour. The exodus from industrialism to post-Fordism corresponds with a class recomposition that is immanently sustained by allocating dirty work to particular social groups through direct processes of racialization and sexism as Anna Curcio and Pieper et al explore in their papers. Thinking of the materiality of race as part of this story force us to challenge the ubiquitous reductionism in traditional ‘materialist’ politics of the left which understands social relations as ultimately formed by the antagonisms between capital and labour. One of the effects of this is, as Angela Mitropoulos argues in her contribution, the crisis of multiculturalism and the insertion of new tactics of differential inclusion and decrees of superfluity organised through reconfigurations of racism around simultaneously intimate and contractarian norms.

The articles in this special issue turn our attention to the materiality of race for rethinking the
transformations of labour, migration, space and embodiment from a perspective committed to changing and strengthening the praxis of anti-racism today.

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Notes

1. Brian Massumi (2002) Parables for the Virtual, London: Duke, while stressing the 'ontological priority' of movement and indeterminacy, does not simply characterize signification as some kind of second-order process or effect. [↩]
2. Kobena Mercer (1994) Welcome to the Jungle, London: Routledge, draws upon Bakhtin/Voloshinov for maintaining that the sign ‘Black’ needs to be grasped in ‘materialist’ terms. [↩]
4. 'Modern genetic evidence demonstrates that whilst there are average genetic differences between human populations, these do not map on the socially ascribed 'racial' divisions. … In fact the overwhelming proportion of the genetic difference between individuals lies within rather than between so-called races – leading most modern biologists to discard as unhelpful the term 'race' in the human context.' p.95 in Rose, S. (2006) The 21st century brain. Explaining, mending and manipulating the mind. London: Vintage. [↩]
5. 'Genomics may send out the signal to reify “race” as code and information, but there is a sense in which it also points unintentionally toward ‘race’s overcoming. This cannot be a single, bold act of creativity, a triumphant, once-and-for-all negation. It must be more like a gradual withering away arising from growing irrelevancy. At the smaller than microscope scales that open up the body for scrutiny today, ‘race’ becomes less meaningful, compelling, or salient to the basic tasks of healing and protecting ourselves.” p.37 in Gilroy, P. (2000) Against race. Imagining political culture beyond the color line. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press. [↩]

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This contribution is a reflection, conversation and debate between two people struggling to understand their own prejudices and interrogate the meaning of anti-racist politics. Acknowledging our own positions of privilege, we see ourselves as embodying whiteness: Dinesh as an Indian velakaran (Tamil expression for ‘white man’) and James as a ‘white-wog’ (being ethnic in name and heritage only). In the process of self-acknowledgment, we ask each other to answer four questions honestly (and brutally): How do we embody whiteness? How do we embody racism? How do you do anti-racist politics? Can we be free of racism?

We conclude by reflecting on how anti-racist politics might be possible, even when guided haphazardly by ‘racists like us…’

**How do we embody whiteness, even if we are not?**

**DW:** Race is not merely peripheral to the surface of the body, but is subcutaneous. We are enfolded by race, in an inescapably fleshy way. Race is translated, not merely by words or logic, but through a woven fabric that simultaneously binds others, the world and myself. This is the world that Maurice Merleau Ponty imagined as continuously connected between apparently autonomous corporeal entities: “between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is an overlapping or encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we pass into things.”

This fleshy interconnection is coloured. Race gives meaning to the deep tissue, the structure of the bones and skull, it construes the deportment of the body and its inescapable connection to the world of others. It offers signification to the food that is digested by this body, the way it is digested, the way it is shitted out. It deciphers smell and touch. In this regard, we all share something with Klaus Theweleit’s fascist males: whiteness is not merely an idea, but comes to metamorphose the body.

It was for this reason that in my life, avoiding sunshine, applying talcum powder or using a skin whitening cream was never going to completely obliterate the stain of race. More drastic measures were taken. A program was initiated, beginning from the earliest point of self awareness, comprehensive albeit intensive in scope, aimed at reorganising the physical self in order to systematically extrude the dark stain, and navigate the interminable path to the bodiless transparency of whiteness.

For example, learn quickly that there are good blacks and bad blacks. Decide which one you want to be. I remember with curious shame the first time that I, a child of Indian descent, was accused of “acting like a savage.” It is a curious shame, because it reflects a shame within a shame on the margins of whiteness. And although it is with shame that I now recall my almost childhood shame, I can also recognise what this absurd shame signified: namely the aspiration known by all - yet unspoken - within the economy of whiteness to become already whiter than you are. Confirmation, if you like, of Cheryl I Harris proposition that “becoming white increased the possibility of controlling critical aspects of one’s life rather than being objects of other’s domination.”

Avoid being called a curry muncher by not being seen munching curry.

**JA:** I grew up close to surfing beach and knew that I was never going to be a surfer. I hated myself for not having blond hair or blue eyes. I was crap at riding a skateboard and was told that, because of this, I could never surf.

So I compensated by making friends with the surfers and being ‘just like them’ in other ways. There were some wogs that were like me - white wogs - and that made us ok. Once I was told that you could not even tell I was a wog. This made my shame of not surfing or being good on a skateboard partially dissipate.
there were bad wogs - the brown wogs - which must be avoided. I could not get too close to them in case I was confused with them. Everything made me different from them - a different accent, an Anglicised name, I did not play soccer (or wog-ball as we called it). I even had an Australian girlfriend.

Race defines who we are and who we want to be: and just as importantly, it provides us with a map of what we do not want to be. It defines the way we see the world, ourselves and others. It shapes the way we speak, walk, talk and our pastimes. Without even knowing it, it comes to shape everything about us. For those of us who are not quite white on the outside, we make ourselves as white as possible on the inside. Lurking underneath, however, is the fear that we are not as white as we think we are.

How do you embody racism - are we all racist?

JA: If race is not periphery in who we are but defines us, then we must understand any biases that we have as embodying racism. I, however, am a left-leaning, progressive, anti-racist activist, how can I be racist? If I am honest with myself, then I must say that I am.

But how is this manifested? One time while working in the Solomon Islands I took a short cut to get downtown and was confronted by eight young men - local boys - ranging in ages from 18-25 years. As they approached me I was terrified, convinced that I was soon to be attacked. As they harmlessly passed me, greeting me as they did, I understood how deeply ingrained racism is: here I was in a nation with black people and I was fearful when confronted by them.

I believe that we all embody racist tendencies - fearing the other that we may not understand. We are confronted with stereotypes of the other from the moment that we see our first advertisement, watch television, hear jokes about Lebs, wogs or Abos and, learn that we must distinguish ourselves from those who are different (the brown wogs for example). Racism enters our bodies through the signs that we read and the conversations that we have. We breathe it in and reproduce it in a multitude of ways such as holding our bag closer and a little tighter when the black kid walks past.

DW: If we are raised in the midst of whiteness, our thoughts and corporeality constructed by it, our deep fantasies and aspirations configured by it, then how can we imagine ourselves as non-racist?

We should of course be careful about what we mean by our declaration that “we are racist.” Sara Ahmed’s recent challenges to describing whiteness and racism⁴ suggest the inherent difficulty in placing ourselves within these discussions. In particular, Ahmed highlights the potential for the confession of racism to be used as a way to also distance oneself from being a racist. For example the institution that owns up to its racist past, simultaneously appears to remove individual responsibility: “to say ‘we are racist’ is here translated into the statement it seeks to replace, ‘I am racist’, where ‘our racism’ is describable as bad practice that can be changed through learning more tolerant attitudes and behaviour. Indeed, if the institution becomes like the individual, then one suspects that the institution also takes the place of individuals: it is the institution that is the bad person, rather than this person or that person”⁵.

We are not letting ourselves off the hook. Rather we, or I, must declare the operation of race on my own body, the impossibility of stepping outside the field of its power, and therefore the impossibility of declaring oneself not racist. This does not preclude anti racism, but reframes the situation of anti racism as strategy.

How do you do anti-racist politics?

JA: I was confronted by Sara Ahmed’s article⁶ and have spent a great deal of time reflecting on the themes she raised around the non-performativity of anti-racism. Do our claims of anti-racist politics merely make middle-class ‘wannabe’ whites feel better about themselves? I agree with Dinesh, maybe acknowledging the impossibility of being ‘not racist’ can become the first step in doing anti-racist politics.

Ahmed ends her article by arguing that we should not think in terms of ‘what can I do’ but, rather, asking ‘what can be done?’

To answer this question, I begin with the belief that an anti-racist politics is both an individual and social matter. As an individual, it is an attempt to journey through the anti-racism while at the same time acknowledge my own motivations for this path. As an individual, it is important to note that the issue of
whiteness, like power, is everywhere around us. In the classes I run, to the way that train ticket inspectors target specific people.

I am attempting to do anti-racist politics by acknowledging that I am not colour blind - John Rawl’s ‘veil of ignorance’ is not possible. I see skin tones including whiteness. While Rawls’ discussion revolved around the distribution of goods, his position that an appropriate position of justice could only be achieved if the person judging removes specific knowledge of their actual situation - physical attributes, skin colour, educational background and so on - has relevance here. For Rawls, if the individual is placed behind this ‘veil of ignorance’, they would preclude any constructing of social arrangements tailored to benefit any one person specifically: this would include a hierarchy of whiteness. We, however, can not claim that we can hide behind this veil.

Even when I work with an anti-racist group, I see bias emerge with skin colour. Such tendencies cannot be fought in terms of John Locke’s rational and liberal subject. It is only through a desire to confront the irrationality of prejudice on both a personal and social level.

On a social level, then, anti-racist politics is an attempt to engage in both formal and informal politics. One way to do this is to confront race issues where possible - from the class room, the stadium at the football to the ballot box. I have no road map how this can be done, however, and can only tread carefully attempting to engage rather than yell; maintaining outrage while balancing my own ignorance and motivations; realising that anti-racist politics can itself substantively add to racial tensions.

DW: I think there are some theoretical perspectives that may offer an alternative to John Rawls’ fantasy of the liberal subject who is able to rationally dispose of their veil of ignorance. Anti racism should not be understood as simply an attempt to cleanse the mind through rationality, but rather as the difficult process of escaping the intractable deportment of the flesh of the self within the field of race. What is needed is an understanding of how we might become something that we are not - and may never in fact be - not as a process of imitation or false alterity, but as a genuine transformation towards a different state.

I am in part here thinking of the concept of ‘becoming,’ understood by Deleuze and Guattari as a process of movement from one state to another. This transformation begins at a point that has no essential connection to what one will become; further while the trajectory of one’s movement may align with a point that resembles one’s intended destination, the becoming inevitably achieves an entirely different state: “becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes.”

Thus, and to refer here to Deleuze and Guattari’s “becoming animal,” to run “like a horse” is not to transform to a horse, nor simply to imitate a horse, but to transport one’s molecular self along a trajectory that is distinctly inhuman, a movement that in retrospect can only be described by the analogy “like a horse.” To transfer this into our discussion here, anti racism necessarily proceeds through a path that propels the anti racist away from what one is, a transformation that we may wish to label ‘anti racist’ but which in fact is simply a process of change that defies the routine coordinates of the racist self. The anti racist subject must in truth be considered the racist subject who is becoming something else.

Can we be free of racism?

JA: No, we cannot. I return to Rawl’s veil of ignorance and believe it is not possible. We will always judge people by their appearance - be it their skin colour or that their eyes are too close together. Levels of repulsion or attraction based on physical features are so embedded within us they have become - and probably always will be - part of human history.

In a way we must ask, ‘do we want to experience this veil of ignorance’? For me, the answer has become increasingly ‘no’ - even if it was possible.

By saying this, I am not following a path that prejudice is acceptable, but that we will always experience prejudices. We can never be free of them, the challenge is to confront them and the way they manifest. On this journey, however, there is a desire for hope: the hope that others will continue to join in and that resistance to racism becomes a motto for our lives.
As a self-accepting racist then, how do I do anti-racist politics and attempt to deal with what is embedded within me? It is by not submitting to my own condition, but by confronting it and extending the personal into the realm of the political. Racists like us can move in this direction while humbly accepting our own limitations.

DW: If we follow to its conclusion Giorgio Agamben's statement that "Western politics is a biopolitics from the very beginning."9, then we might argue that racism is sewn deeply into the structure of politics in the west. Although Agamben's claim is extraordinary, it is not without justification. For example, if we take Plato's Republic, which is regarded as the cornerstone of western political philosophy, and consider the commitment by Socrates to the idea of breeding and cultivation in his utopia, in particular the intense regulation by the State of child rearing - a program for citizens to produce better children, who are "better able produce still better children in their turn, as can be seen with animals"10 - it difficult to escape from the conclusion that racism, the idea of race, has been the secret desire of politics all along. We might say that today 'racists like us' reside at the end of a very long, and very bad trip.

I acknowledge, like you James, that confronting racism may be a journey without end: anti racism considered here as a process of continual becoming. In this respect, Jacques Derrida's use of concept of the aporia - a logical contradiction that cannot be resolved through reason; an interminable experience - is potentially very useful for our discussion here. Derrida associates the aporia with gestures that demand the impossible: for example forgiveness necessarily demands that we forgive the unforgivable; similarly, generosity calls upon us to give when in truth there is no reason to give. Anti racist politics might also be thought of as aporetic in the same sense, in so far as it seeks to displace from politics that which might be considered inherent to its functioning.

I do however have a hope for existence beyond race. This would require either a profound break in the way in which we understand politics, or alternatively, a momentary suspension in the operation of racist biopolitics. I cannot yet say whether the former is possible; I do however believe the latter condition is within our lived reality. I am talking here of the rare moments in one's life where even momentarily it becomes possible to imagine relationships unmediated by the violence of race. This is the space where the most unlikely bodies break free from the hold of race and become something quite different. This is the moment of understanding, where it would seem two different worlds touch each other, like enemy soldiers sharing a cigarette. These moments are over within the space of a glance, but are heavenly, pleasurable, beyond measure. Perhaps for want of a better descriptor we might call this 'love.'

Notes

5. Ibid. para. 19
6. Ibid.
White ravers in a Goan village: race as machinic assemblage

Posted By arun saldanha on 23 Feb 2008 @ 5:59 pm in 2-Race/Matter [Feb 08], Issues | No Comments

1. A Goan village

let’s see. when we came in there was a huge number of brits and some rich indians and a few backpackers, still very few tranceheads. so it wasn’t entirely sure whether it would get to be a ‘good party,’ in the sense that the party would survive the morning and thus become magical. i met t- when it was starting to get light. he was sitting at the banyan tree with some japanese guys, and he said, after he’d seen that dark indian trancehead with long hair, isn’t it a coincidence, every time he decides to go party every so often, at that time, it turns out that the people he knows also go there. perfect telepathic timing. a good sign, he said, it’s going to be a great party, i don’t know but i’ve got a feeling, and he decided to take a quarter of a hofmann [LSD]. we smoked some chillum and joints and for sure, the israelis trickled in, they sat next to the bar on the right on two mats (i mean, two mat businesses) waiting patiently, like on new year, [this time] not really for the indians to disappear but for an adequate momentum, enough compatriots and other rave psychotics to claim the party.

The field notes were about an open-air party for tourists at a ground called Dolce Vita, in the Goan village called Anjuna. Goa is known throughout the hip and cosmopolitan world as rave tourism Mecca. But why Anjuna, how did the music attract Europeans there? What’s with the Israelis, and Japanese avoiding Indians? What are ‘tranceheads,’ and why are they watching out for Israelis to turn up at the party? Why do they wait for Indians to leave? What does a ‘magical morning’ consist of? What is a ‘mat business’? How does ‘momentum’ of ravers come about? And why were these notes written down in the first place? Why does a half-belgian-half-indian guy go study foreign ravers in some third-world village?

This sort of puzzlement forces a reassessment of what one knows. Anjuna’s music and drugs tourism is legendary and it is probably the only village in the third world that brought forth an own kind of electronic dance music, Goa trance, which is played at outdoor parties across the globe. Goa trance makes a fascinating case study in cultural geography. It appeared shortly after house and techno music established themselves in the UK and other European countries around 1990, but the conditions for Anjuna’s trance scene go back to the early seventies. The coastal village was ‘discovered’ by hippie travellers at a time when there was much interest in the mind-altering qualities of India. Although Goa is generally considered ‘less Indian’ by tourists because of 461 years of Portuguese colonial influence, the hippies eagerly took to its tranquil tropical beaches and tolerant locals. By 1975 Anjuna was a secluded haven for a semi-resident community of hippies who could freely indulge in drugs, nude sunbathing, and all-night full-moon parties.

Music was always central to Anjuna’s tourism, but it was with Goa trance that it boomed. Goa’s festive image long attracted large numbers of domestic tourists too. Charter tourism from the UK and other European countries was consolidated at about the same time that Goa trance became available in large music stores in Europe, in 1995. What began with Goa regulars simulating Anjuna’s parties in their home countries grew into a transnational underground rave/club scene, stretching from Tel Aviv to Stockholm, from Brasilia to Cape Town. The excerpt above describes a key attraction in Anjuna’s music and drugs tourism: sunrise. This is when for many dancers the party only begins, in part because for others-mostly middle-class Indian tourists- it is the time to leave. At this particular party, Dolce Vita was unusually charging an entry fee, hence there were hardly any Indian tourists. In fact, it was probably deliberate policy to limit their number. This is because the hard core of party revellers, who stay in Anjuna for months, would rather there was just them and the local women selling tea at the parties.

In the perception of this hard core, charter tourists and especially domestic tourists lack an affective connection to Goa trance, LSD, personal style, and budget traveling. Ravers like T, are almost obsessed with protocol and with making the party just right. They are quite serious about what Goa means to them: a place to be transformed in. Domestic tourists are not there to transform themselves and are therefore...
unwelcome. What the experienced ravers do (unlike the mostly British charter tourists and backpackers) is wait on the mats supplied by the local women, until dawn makes the Indians leave.

I felt this segregation. It was what annoyed and frightened me, and it was what spurred me on. I realize now, some years later, that my thinking on race was at the very least accelerated through the intensities of the ethnographic fieldwork I was doing for my PhD. I wanted to make sense of what I encountered. What I have been trying to find out since then is what sort of theoretical vocabulary is needed to make sense of situations like the above, of racism when it’s not supposed to be there. Race is to be understood in the flesh, in between things, as vague and continually changing. It turns out that making sense of Anjuna needed some new concepts, and a theoretical reconsideration of race itself. So, why Anjuna? To form new concepts.

2. Psychedelic whiteness

It is by observing the event of a party as something fully physical that I could appreciate the segregation of the morning. Nobody likes to talk about it, and hardly anyone has described it in writing. What matters is not the representations of an event, but its actual unfolding. I had to be there, among other bodies, checking what they were doing, what they did with mats and chillums (traditional Indian hash pipes) and trees and the Goa trance flowing through the landscape. I had to find out where they were sitting and dancing, how their appearances differed, why they were looking at each other all the time. What is it that gave ravers’ bodies ‘momentum’? Three conditions: that they were dancing and on drugs—a question of the embodiments of rave tourism; that they cared about looks and who was around them—a question of familiar faces; and that their skin color betrayed where they come from, by and large rich countries such as the UK, Japan, Israel, and Germany—a question of locations. Embodiment, face, and location are three theoretical principles that structure my materialist understanding of race.

A fourth concept that I would like to introduce, and perhaps the most salient one, is viscosity. Viscosity enables a rigorous grasping of social spaces by putting the dynamic physicality of human bodies and their interactions at the forefront of analysis. In basic terms, viscosity pertains to two dimensions of a collective of bodies: its sticking together, and its relative impermeability. At that Dolce Vita party, at 8 a.m. on January 6, 2000, there was a viscosity of predominantly white ravers. They stuck together in time and space because they all saw each other regularly, smoked chillum together, danced to Goa trance, wore flashy clothing, and had money to spend on LSD and Ecstasy. Others, especially domestic tourists, weren’t habituated to all this; they didn’t have the cultural or economic resources to join in. When the sun came up, most Indians felt visible and out of place between so many white bodies. The denser the collective, the more difficult to cut through it: these are the two dimensions of viscosity. There is no downright exclusion; Israeli and Japanese bodies might be more ambivalently white than Germans or Canadians. Still, the net effect is that there is a strong tendency of dancers to be lighter-skinned, tanned, cool-looking. Therefore, the observable fact that the Indians leave is a contingent effect of music, subcultural rules, mutual stereotypes, economic inequality, and differential experiences with drugs.

The problem is why viscosity of white bodies comes about in Anjuna. After all, Goa is popularly known as a former hippie hangout—isn’t it all peace and love, aren’t those backpackers and ravers really into India, is Goa trance not the most cosmopolitan of electronic dance musics? Why would a white microcosm be re-created if the whole point of going to India and Goa is adventure, escape, becoming different? My concept of ‘psychedelic whiteness’ attempts to explain how it is that Euro-American countercultural experimentations with music, drugs, and travel can coexist with the reinstatement of where one is coming from, of who one is. Young whites are in Anjuna seemingly to sample and develop a lifestyle quite different from what they’re used to, but the way they do this betrays the limits of their escape and rebellion; that is, by virtue of being tourists in an exotic place, recognizably different and wealthy in a poor country, they contribute to the inertia of old racial divisions. Studying the parties in Anjuna will pave the way to an understanding of whiteness that stresses its inherent capacity to spread, change itself, and become unexpectedly viscous.

The set of practices of self-transformation that my work focuses on is called psychedelics—in the singular, like ‘economics’ and ‘aesthetics.’ Psychedelics is the hedonistic, sometimes mystical structure of feeling that, as the name implies, was epitomized in the sixties cult of LSD. But I enlarge the term significantly: insofar as whites use the pleasures of drugs, art, ritual, travel, the risky, and the exotic to alter their minds and position in the world as whites, I call them psychedelic. The fact that bodies involved in psychedelics can be Swedish, Israeli, Japanese, Indian, Canadian, or Zimbabwean does not make psychedelics ‘less white’. What is significant is that these bodies are most probably white: whiteness, like all of race, is a
dynamic system of probabilities and contingencies, not a static grid. Hence psychedelics isn’t antithetical to white modernity. On the contrary, to argue for the creativity of whiteness is to show to what extent it can reinvent and reinforce itself. The ethnography will demonstrate how the viscosity of whites can arise from the very fact that they succeed in mutating themselves. Psychedelics shows the many possibilities of whiteness.

Here I need to mention the last theoretical concept of the book, derived mostly from Gilles Deleuze: virtuality. Deleuze produced a long string of concepts that in their sheer intensity and variation innovated philosophy, but it was virtuality that they were all implicating. Very briefly, virtuality refers to the connections that things are potentially capable of. Virtuality is tendency, probability, latency. Without a concept of virtuality, the analysis of whiteness cannot appreciate how it comes to be-and why it seems so difficult to dismantle. Whiteness gathers its strength from being versatile, not from mere ruthless oppression. I attempt to understand whiteness in order to change it.

3. Phenotype matters

Although the human sciences have been ardent in criticizing the inequalities that remain in place because of race, what race actually is often elides analysis and commentary. According to the dominant paradigm, race is necessarily ‘constructed’ through language and culture, so what it is ‘itself’ cannot be known. What then counts, in human geography, cultural studies, anthropology, and sociology, is often the discourse on, media images of, people’s opinions about race, instead of the realities of embodiment, face, and location. Thus Richard Dyer’s White has discussed cinematic representations of whites and shown how whiteness is insubstantial without a profound symbolism of virtue and control. The work of Dyer and others in white studies has been valuable in exposing how whites have historically erased their own racial specificity. Although blacks and reds are colored, that is, deviations from white, whites are just human. Humanity is itself defined on white terms.

My work falls broadly under white studies, but I take issue with the latter’s theoretical basis, what is commonly called social constructionism. Against positivism and realism, social constructionism holds that the meaning of social and even physical phenomena is not given once and for all, but depends on how they are understood in society. In its critical versions, social constructionism studies how different groups struggle over the meanings of phenomena such as whiteness, nation, poverty, and disease. Social constructionism, then, tends to understand these phenomena primarily through their ideas, their ‘representations’ in language and images. Against pure idealism, social constructionists hold that these representations are not mere fictions or fantasies, as they have ‘real effects.’ However, how these effects occur (for example, what impact cinematic depictions of whites have on actual bodies in physical space and time) is usually left unscrutinized.

Deleuzian materialism attempts to grasp the geographies of social/physical reality as constituted only by ‘real effects.’ Whites taking up the dance floor in the morning and somehow managing to dispel Indians again and again in Anjuna is hardly a question of representation. Psychedelics is primarily about what happens to bodies and how it is that these bodies tend to be white, even if these bodies are using ‘representations.’ The first, obvious way that a Deleuzian take on race differs from most research following the constructionist paradigm lies in that it tries to address race as a series of events, not how it is known through discourse or in people’s minds. When analyzed as a system of events, whiteness in Anjuna can be shown to be both creative and constricting. Arguably, only ethnography could establish the conceptual imbrication of psychedelics and viscosity.

It is a commonplace assumption that whites have for a long time been fascinated and transformed by drawing on other people’s cultures and landscapes. These fascinations and transformations have been notably given systematic attention in Edward Said’s Orientalism. Yet the fact that white appropriations of otherness were fuelled by a conscious effort to transcend the constraints of white society—that European exoticism and primitivism, though intertwined with colonial subjugation, also tell of the self-critique and self-transformation of whites—has seldom been put at the centre of theorization. The second way in which my book departs from most theories of race is that whiteness is treated as something positive, not necessarily in dialectical struggle with what it is not. Whiteness is much more than simply the negation of nonwhiteness. Through psychedelics, white racism will need to be conceived as a system involving not just exclusion, but more complex shades of differentiation and interaction prior to any distinction between self and other, West and East.
Usually in the constructionist paradigm, instead of virtuality and creativity, the oppressive and rigid nature of racial boundaries is emphasized. For many theorists of race today, such as Paul Gilroy, race is always already racist because it is fundamentally about drawing a sharp boundary between white and nonwhite. Hence Gilroy’s title: Against Race. Populations have been ‘othered’ as inferior or evil by white people, a process that was institutionalized and globalized during European imperialism and American slavery, but continues to inform current portrayals of nonwhites in insidious ways. Race is indeed just one contingent way of classifying humans, and from this Gilroy concludes that a future without it is conceivable and desirable.

In contradistinction to this kind of antiracism, and as a third departure from social constructionism, my theorization of race calls not for an abolishing of the idea of race, but its critical reappropriation so as to combat racism more adequately. In this way it joins sociologists working broadly in a Gramscian framework such as David Theo Goldberg and Howard Winant. My recent book Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race (2007) gives evidence toward a conception of race as a heterogeneous process of differentiation involving the materiality of bodies and spaces. The ethnographic description and reflection will draw attention to events and constellations in Anjuna that permit, or rather encourage, thinking race in terms of bodies and spaces. Race is a shifting amalgamation of human bodies and their appearance, genetic material, artefacts, landscapes, music, money, language, and states of mind. Racial difference emerges when bodies with certain characteristics become viscous through the ways they connect to their physical and social environment. Race is a machinic assemblage, to use a concept of Deleuze and Guattari. Machinic assemblage is an ontological concept and therefore apt for tackling the question ‘What is race?’ Basically, the concept presents constellations, especially biological and sociological constellations, as fully material, machinlike interlockings of multiple varied components, which do not cease to be different from each other while assembled. A machine in the narrow sense works because bolts are bolts and cogs are cogs. Thus, there is order-for example, there is a relatively stable constellation that can be called whiteness-but order is a shifting effect of many little connections and flows. The whiteness of the space and bodies at Dolce Vita was achieved through components such as skin colour, cannabis, tea, sunlight, conversation, trees, entry charge, and dancing skills.

What is more important than distinctions between nature and nurture, innate and environmental, or culture and economy, is how an assemblage functions, how it manages to emerge and persist in its own right. One consequence of thinking race as a machinic assemblage is that the phenotype of bodies cannot be something incidental to how bodies act as visible vehicles for racial differences: phenotype matters. This does not mean that every body can be assigned one phenotype, as phenotype is itself continuous and hugely complicated by dress, behaviour and context. This is precisely because of its virtual reservoir of ways to connect to its changing environment. Deleuze has a powerful notion of virtuality that enables conceiving matter such as phenotype as active and full of potentiality, instead of completely curtained or frozen by ‘discourse.’ It cannot be predicted what phenotype is capable of, as the myriad instantiations of racial difference attest.

My philosophical sources are not restricted to Deleuze and Guattari. Prior to them, feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz and Doreen Massey taught me how to affirm the differential materiality of bodies and places. As in feminism, the theorization of the body presented here is linked to a political and ethical project of reorganizing human differences, so that privilege is not an automatic implication of one’s corporeality or where one comes from. It is not that the dominant constructionist conceptions of race and gender actively prevents this, of course. But it certainly seems that a more rigorous understanding of the material dynamics of privilege based on phenotype-what is race?-can contribute to such a project.

Crucial is also an understanding of emergence, which I treat as a subcategory of virtuality. Far from being fixed in either genes or culture, racial difference emerges through a host of processes at different levels of organization. The concept of viscosity, moreover, allows for a fundamentally spatial way of imagining race, as opposed to collapsing it into a disembodied and mental contraption, as tends to be done in some critical race theory. Therefore, I have developed, with the lasting influence of Frantz Fanon, on critical race theory. By positing race as primarily a dialectical system of exclusion and recognition (self versus other), and despite of his rich descriptions, Fanon failed to appreciate the fully entangled and effervescent nature of both race and racism. Understanding the complex materiality of race means abandoning his basically Hegelian perspective on human difference, that continues to inspire much of critical theory in general.

Instead of identity politics (black, national, local), the downright negation of whiteness and ‘race’, a celebration of hybridity and anarchy, or a regime of multiculturalism and tolerance, the politics that follows
from Deleuzian materialism begins with the acknowledgement that an escape from whiteness can perversely reinforce it. This is what happens in Anjuna. This is no reason to deny the emancipatory possibilities inhering in racial difference, somewhat like feminism does not deny the energies for change in sexual difference. Whiteness and race need to be understood and proliferated in new ways, not abolished or silenced. In contrast to what is usually expected of bringing phenotype back into the human sciences, we need to assert that a machinic analysis of race cannot be appropriated by eugenics or biological essentialism, while it can definitely contribute to the battle against white supremacy. It was during my encounter with Anjuna that my thinking on race slowly started forming. In fact, rave culture and hippie travel might be the quintessential places to start thinking the strange materiality of race.

Notes


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URL to article: http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2008/02/23/white-ravers-in-a-goan-village-race-as-machinic-assemblage/
The sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few metres; the evident
division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least resistance
which is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation to the physical
contour on the ground); the appealing or repelling character of certain places - all this
seems to be neglected.¹

Contact zones [are] social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with
each other. Often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination - like
colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today.²

Contact Zone

Coronation Mount. A wide road dissecting a post-war council estate of boxy, pebble-dashed houses
pockmarking the moor. A bleak roundabout punctuates this arterial route. A local store and off-license
with shutters half-open; a fish and chip shop; a Chinese take-away; a battered bus stop. This scruffy
cluster of defended shops - alongside potholed roads and unkempt grass - contributes to the neglected,
unloved feel of this area. Walking away from this roundabout you approach a primary entry/exit point
into/out of Braithwaite. Zones of distinct psychic atmosphere meet. There are abrupt changes in the
moods and atmospheres of the street. Crossing West Lane - just two hundred metres up the road from
the Reservoir Tavern, the pub in which Nick Griffin was secretly filmed by a BBC documentary telling
British National Party sympathisers that the Qur'an sanctioned the drugging and raping of white girls³
- you leave behind the working class council estate. A space charged by assemblages of mini motorbikes;
oisy kids; vandalised playgrounds; boarded up houses; notorious pubs; flags bearing the cross of St
George; BNP posters adorning some windows; NF, C18, BNP - far-right graffiti etched into walls, fences,
bus stops, shop shutters operating, perhaps, as a ‘temperature chart’ for tensions in the town; neighbours
talking and smoking at adjacent front doors as they look out across the street; tales of kids hurling stones
at taxis driven by British Pakistani men as they penetrate the estate; stories and gossip about drug abuse,
about teenage pregnancy, about welfare cheats; and so much more. A space vibrating with distinct
resonances, forces and intensities as arrangements of, and connections between, bodies, things,
architecture and surroundings generate unwelcoming, diffusely intimidating moods (through the incessant
buzz of mini motorbikes, extended gazes thrown at unrecognised faces passing by, and manifest support
for the BNP) and induce frictions and tendencies to repulsion. Brown skin is abjected. White middle class
bodies steer clear. But as you cross West Lane, you traverse an invisible, but tangible frontier. Contact
zone. A fissure in the microclimates of multiculturalism.

Heterogeneous elements - architecture, sounds, faces, smells, language, clothes, shops, etc. - produce
intensive differences and within a few short paces the atmosphere is jarringly different. Highfields. A
South Asian area. No-go? Encounters with white faces become less frequent. And white bodies are not
only marked out in this space by conjunctions of skin and clothing, but also by their speed as they cut
through this neighbourhood on their way elsewhere. The contrast between this speed, and the slowness
of South Asian women standing in doorways, arms folded, watching over children playing in back alleys
or clusters of teenagers leaning lethargically on a wall, admiring a black Lexus parked on the other side of
the street that pulses with a deep rhythmic bass beat, produce a quite different ambiance. And raced
differences do not only surface through the relative speeds of differently raced bodies. Race emerges
continuously, but ephemerally, through conversations that fuse English, Urdu and gangsta speak; through
the uncanny architecture of a mosque that used to be a Methodist chapel; through the smell of Kashmiri
cooking; through the dormer windows that crown Victorian terraces and betray the extension of homes
into the roof-space that seem to automatically summon Orientalist imaginaries of ‘the South Asian family’;
through a halal butcher’s shop; through salwar kemeez hanging on washing lines; through the beautified
streetscape funded by a Single Regeneration Budget gentrification project that has stirred resentments in
the town; through the noise of Urdu and Punjabi satellite television spilling out into the street; and so on.
Race materialises fleetingly as stories about drug dealing, grooming, misogyny, areas ‘taken over’, bodies
being abused and abjected, are summoned in encounters with street signs, a particular car, the relative
slowness of South Asian bodies and so on. And so the intensities through which Highfields is
encountered are shaped and modulated by gossip, lurid newspaper headlines, urban myth, biographical
events, hearsay and prejudices, but also through the very materialities of the streetscape in ways that
bleed into perceptions (a ‘South Asian area’), fashion judgements (‘no-go’, ‘taken over’, scary, etc) and
guide action (moving out, walking briskly, taking a detour…). For some - at particular times, or under
certain intensities of sunlight - connections between particular bodies, things and spaces stir swirling
intensities of terror, hate, fear and loathing. For others these temporary fixings of race inspire curiosity
and engagement. Then again these assemblages might constitute an affective depression, laden with
routine, banality and indifference. But race also takes form in surprising and unexpected ways, disrupting
- fleetingly at least - the feel of this neighbourhood. In a newsagents at the junction of Belgrave Road
and Highfield Lane a white man hands a small bottle of whisky over the counter and his customer - wearing
salwar kemeez and a kufi cap - briskly secretes it into a hidden pocket before returning to the street; a
friendly conversation between Italian and Kashmiri neighbours; the clustering of mums at the gates of a
Sure Start nursery. And tracking the emergence of race through these assemblages underscores that
race is never only about discourses, representations, or images, nor is it something that is simply
attached to human bodies. Focussing on the emergence of race through these arrangements involves
thinking about what race does in moments of encounter; how race modulates the affective registers
through which bodies, things and spaces are encountered, increasing or decreasing a body’s capacity to
act, to feel at home or comfortable.

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but
of a fundamental encounter. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It
may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever
tone its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed.

Our intention, first, is to consider the city as a field of movements; a swirl of forces and
intensities, which traverse and bring into relation all kinds of actors, human and non-human,
in all manner of combinations of agency. The city becomes a kind of weather system, a
rapidly varying distribution of intensities.

Encounter

A walk. A purposeful drift. An imaginative reconstruction weaving a set of stories together. An exercise in
what Marc Augé (2002) would call ethno-fiction. This narrative of passing through and feeling contact
zones and the fleeting emergence of race enrols go-along interviews, urban myth, photoethnography,
interview material, participant observation, newspaper archives, gossip, walking, and philosophy to evoke
something of the life, intensity and passion of multicultural Keighley, West Yorkshire. It begins to
animate a particular encounter with a northern mill town. An encounter that is necessarily partial. An
encounter constructed through the intensely embodied practices of fieldwork (complexly marked by my
body’s whiteness; its inquisitiveness; my clothes; my satchel, notebook and camera; my accent, my
outsider status; the absence of obvious employment; the convivial, but often awkward and ultimately
superficial ways my body related to other bodies in Keighley; etc.) and the multiple research practices I
employed to encounter this space with others. This encounter was also shaped by a simultaneous
encounter with a minor tradition of philosophy through Deleuze and Guattari, that provided a line of flight
from the social constructionism that dominates academic talk of race by encouraging an attentiveness to the turbulent socialities of multiculture and the emergent, momentary ways in which race takes form.

Through these encounters I developed particular modes of inhabiting, researching and animating multicultures in Keighley that play on specific understandings of space. In addition to acting as a provocation to thinking, encounters are a vital concept to my analysis of the spatialities of race and the dynamic socialities of urban multiculture. By thinking of places less as sites than 'moments of encounter', multicultures can be fashioned as accumulations of 'billions of happy and unhappy moments of encounter' in ways that foreground the practised, emergent nature of places. This ontology of encounter envelops a disparate set of sensibilities. First, encounters are not confined to face-to-face interactions and face-work but also include encounters with things, architecture, vegetation, minerals, sounds, tastes, smells and so on. An ontology of encounter embraces what Kracauer called 'surface level expressions', what Jane Bennett would recognise as the 'force of things', or what for Georges Perec was the art of noticing 'what’s happening when nothing’s happening', in a materialism that sorts through the mundane materialities of everyday spaces and is alive to ways in which raced affects and memories might be distributed across particular arrangements of bodies, bricks, things and settings. And the work of tracing materialisations of race focuses attention on the processes through which human bodies are sorted and sifted in interaction, but also opens possibilities for thinking about how race is also trapped in particular times and spaces, particular geographies and histories, and particular urban materialities. Second an ontology of encounter enables us to trace the affective contours, the moods and the atmospheres of urban multiculture. For me, thinking through encounters opens up spaces in which we can turn both to psychogeographical tactics of the Situationists (or more recently Iain Sinclair and film-maker Patrick Keiller) to grasp the distinct atmospheric zones, currents and vortices that constitute experiences of multiculture in Keighley, and a theoretical language developed through Deleuze and Guattari in which we can begin to understand the interplay of forces, intensities and resonances that charge spaces, generate frictions and induce tendencies to attraction or repulsion. Third, and finally here, an ontology of encounter emphasises the event-fulness of place. Place as always becoming. Here, I play on recent emphasis on the excessive potential of encounters, where the promise of encounter is excess and endless novelty. These observations are crucial, but they also need to tempered with the recognition that so many encounters fall into fairly stable repetitions (of anxiety, suspicion, resentment, indifference, curiosity...). And so I emphasise that encounters are never just a point in time, but occupy a duration that prolongs the past into the present. And here Bergson helps us develop a concept of encounter with history, where the weight of tacit reaction, micropolitical technique, past experience and repetition come to mediate and shape perception, judgement and action in the here and now of an encounter.

Through these sensibilities an ontology of encounter enables a rigorous grasping of the hybridity and confusion of urban multicultures, and heterogeneous processes of racial differentiation on the ground. Foregrounding encounters in my storying of the contact zones that arc through Braithwaite and Highfields directs attention to the coming together and collision of multiple bodies, things, ideas and spaces through intensities of hatred, indifference, mutuality, fear, love, suspicion and excitement. And to end, I want to suggest that my encounters with these contact zones in Keighley provide momentum to at least two lines of argument.

**Race/matter**

The first line of argument calls for a materialist engagement with race. Echoing, and responding to, recent criticisms that presenting race as a social construct tends to restrict social scientific engagements with race to questions of epistemology and interpretation, my account of contact zones in Keighley carefully traces the material processes of racial differentiation in interaction. Constructionist accounts dwell on how we know race, in ways that distil race to a problem of language and narrow an empirical focus to discourses, narratives and images, at best downplaying and at worst disavowing the materialities of race. But by animating these contact zones in Keighley I constantly try to move beyond questions of interpretation by focussing on more practical questions of what Deleuze and Guattari call experimentallation that ask: What does race do? How does it function? These practical questions work towards an assertively non-essentialist, non-determinist conception of race that nevertheless takes seriously the materialities through which race comes to matter immanently in moments of encounter. This concept of
race is absolutely not about imposing grids that arrange human bodies into groups, divisions or hierarchies. Experimenting with race involves thinking in terms of the formation - or becoming - of race in a field of emergence. Race is plastic, dynamic and immanent to the processes it expresses and any ontology of race needs to grasp both the multiplicity and rhizomatic nature of race. It involves grasping the promiscuity with which drug dealing, exoticism, Islam, sexual predation, terrorism, misogyny, segregation, etc. sticks to, arranges, and connects all kinds of bodies - both human and non-human - in a new form of racism where loose racial summaries ground heterogeneous processes of differentiation becoming the basis for rapid judgments that mediate encounters, align bodies, infuse dispositions, stir suspicions, inspire resentments and so on.

Encountering and feeling contact zones in Keighley is part of an empirical project that is beginning to trace the materialities through which race operates. Politically, this work has two ends.

First, it encourages new materialist lines of inquiry that focus on how race works. The task is neither deconstruction nor the transcendence of race, but to trace how race emerges, how it acquires force, how it aligns bodies. Lines of inquiry might include diagramming the transversal, extensive and connective capacities of race. Sketching assemblages of race in specific situations - like the contact zones presented here - emphasise how race is creative and capricious, and how the wildness of race opens lines of flight from oppressive and hierarchical forms of race thinking by proliferating or multiplying racial differences, that also never escape the danger microfascisms that threaten to make oppressions anew through these lines of flight. Alternatively, a materialist engagement with race can open up new conceptual languages to apprehend processes of racial differentiation on the ground. For example, Arun Saldanha has developed a concept of viscosity to grasp the immanent and temporary formation of racial aggregates out of the turbulence of interaction between the bodies, object, architecture and sunlight that constitute social spaces. I would extend viscosity through a related concept of stickiness that asks, for example, how moral panics about drug trafficking, violence or grooming stick to, and becoming distributed across, particular assemblages of bodies, things and spaces (crumbling wall + brown skin + dusk + black Lexus = becoming-dealer) transforming the capacities of these bodies to affect and be affected, exposes how the force of race and racial difference accumulate not only through repetitions of discourses, representations and image but also through the intensity of encounters with the everyday materiality of multiculture.

Second, engaging materially with the everyday, habitual operations of race in places like Keighley has important implications for how we think about racisms. In contact zones racisms are less about enactments of racist beliefs and ideologies (Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown (1989), Racism (London: Routledge); David Theo Goldberg (1993), Racist Cultures (Oxford: Blackwell).)) that remake racism a problem of epistemology, and more about considering the practical questions of how the force of race - always multiple and emergent, but also repetitive - comes to mediate, infuse and shape judgements, disposition and action in moments of encounter. This concept of racism involves a slow-fused notion of power that is diffuse and mobile, but nevertheless one that gathers force through repetition in moments of encounter, and becomes sedimented through the formatting of perceptions. And so by flattening an account of what race does, we do not arrive at an ever-more sophisticated theory of what racism might be, but begin to understand the enduring force of race and racisms in everyday lives as they surface through accumulations of indifference, incivility, rejection, antagonism, avoidance, discrimination or fear.

**Beyond segregation**

Drifting through contact zones in Keighley also seeks to provide momentum to - and exemplify - alternative modes of thinking about and approaching multiculture in northern mill towns. In my narrative the work of evocation summons a sense of the multicultural city that is quite different from academic talk of the segregated city, of anxious urbanisms and the dystopian spaces of urban terror, of the city as theatre of identity and community politics; or the site where state-led multiculturalism plays out through urban governance. My emphasis on embodied and sensuous inhabitations of multiculture is driven by a frustration with a resurgent ‘white assimilationism’ and confused debates about race, segregation and parallel lives. And these have been aggravated in particular by urban disturbances in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford during 2001 and the London bombings in July 2005 my encounters with Braithwaite and Highfields purposefully emphasise how multiculture in Keighley is lived, sensed and felt. In Keighley white
assimilationism, masquerading as concerns about segregation, parallel lives and cultural difference, surfaces routinely in responses to drug trafficking, the activities of racist organisations like the British National Party, stories of South Asian men grooming under-age white girls for sex that refuse to be laid to rest, neighbourhood change, forced marriage, talk of no-go areas, terror alerts and inter-ethnic resentments about the allocation of government monies for regeneration and community infrastructure. But here, I am not interested in enrolling distributions and densities of census categories as transparent indicators of ‘parallel lives’ and intercultural interaction in a manoeuvre that worryingly resurrects Robert Park’s equivalence of social distance with geographical space to argue that civil unrest, suicide bombings, or indeed drug dealing and paedophilia, can be explained simply by segregation and cultural insularity, and remedied therefore by ‘community cohesion’ and more interaction. Neither do I want to rely on more nuanced talk of the spatial construction of race that tends to sort urban spaces into patchworks of go and no-go areas, strange and familiar spaces, white and South Asian neighbourhoods, zones of safety and danger. ((Les Back (2005), ‘Home from Home’: Youth, Belonging and Place, in Claire Alexander and Caroline Knowles (eds) Making Race Matter: Bodies, Spaces and Identity (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan); Keith, After the Cosmopolitan?)). Both talk of parallel lives and racially coded landscapes of Otherness neglect so many of the modalities, intensities and registers of ongoing intercultural interaction, and the visceral, elusive and fragmentary ways in which multicultures are inhabited in places like Keighley.

Encountering the contact zones of Braithwaite and Highfields offers one attempt to feel towards an apprehension of how multicultures are practised and felt. Passing through and feeling contact zones immerses you in the turbulent socialities of multiculture. It evokes the messy and challenging underside of inter-ethnic and moves us beyond talk of segregation. In particular, it emphasises an emergent, eventful notion of space, through which race materialises fleetingly through arrangements of bodies, things and surroundings. This notion leaves behind the stiff invocations of space accompanying talk of segregation or an A-Z of racist geographies, emphasising that even apparently stable configurations of race are constantly performed in moments of encounter. By mapping the emergent, transversal geographies of race through the precise modalities and intensities of intercultural encounter (where what is encountered is never just other human bodies, but also sounds, things, architecture, vegetation, intensities of sunlight, smells, etc.) it becomes evident that the tangle of race in northern mill towns can never only be a question of where people wake up in the morning. It is about the screened encounters in rush hour traffic; the ill-tempered rub and indifferent contact of the street, over newsagent counters, in parks, at pedestrian crossings; the coming together of bodies in cafes, taxis, supermarkets and schools; the distribution of bodies in gyms, playgrounds, pavements, and shopping centres; encounters with street signs, calls for prayer, souped-up cars, graffiti, pubs, rucksacks and veils, all of which stir raced memories and affects; and the distinct atmospheres and moods encountered as you pass through particular neighbourhoods, parks, or back alleys. And gathering just a few of the moments of encounter that make up urban multicultures forces us to register the multiple intensities - love, hate, fear, suspicion, terror, abjection, curiosity, indifference, suspicion, generosity, etc. - through which human and non-human bodies come together in places like Keighley. Acknowledging the swirling intensities that modulate encounters compels a questioning of the rush of appeals for more face-to-face interaction between strangers and for mixed neighbourhoods enshrined, for example, in the impulse to ‘build cohesive communities’. Such appeals rely on the uncontested assumption that more human interaction is necessarily a good thing, failing to recognise that an encounter’s promise for intercultural exchange, dialogue and mutuality that might form the basis for an agonistic politics of living with difference and getting along, always already holds the potentiality to confirm ingrained suspicions and resentments, entrench petty prejudices or spiral into violence and abuse.

Notes

1. Guy Debord (1955), Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography, 2. [↩]
2. Mary Louise Pratt (1992), Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge), 4. [↩]
3. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/3896213.stm [↩]
4. And this emotive talk of areas being ‘taken over’ or ‘colonised’ in Keighley quickly slide into discourses of ‘self-segregation’ that elide the complex and confusing dynamics of neighbourhood change that are the effects of chain migrations from Azad Kashmir, racist practices in both public and private housing economies, efforts to produce homeliness through varied cultural and religious practices, alongside white flight and avoidance of areas perceived to be South Asian. [↩]
5. Gilles Deleuze (2004), Difference and Repetition (London: Continuum), 176. [↩]
7. My reconstruction of this walk is inspired in part by the Situationist International and their spatial
practices of dérive. Alongside other psychogeographic practices the dérive was never intended a merely neutral description of urban life. Rather it intended to scandalise and provoke a crisis in happiness by producing subversive spaces that might liberate people from what Debord would call the ‘Spectacle’ and constraining roles and values (like family, community, church and ideology). While acknowledging some commentators are disturbed at how academic engagements with psychogeography have evacuated the Situationist’s original political project (Bennett, 1991), here I argue that the techniques and tactics of psychogeography offer productive modes of investigating and intervening in the life of urban multicultures.  

8. Marc Augé (2002), In the Metro (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).  
12. Seigfried Krauss (1930), The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). 29-30. Krauss suggests: ‘Every typical space is created by typical social relations which are expressed in such a space without the disturbing intervention of consciousness. Everything that consciousness ignores, everything that is usually just overlooks, is involved in the construction of spaces. Spatial structures are the dreams of society. Whenever the hieroglyph of any such spatial structure is decoded the foundation of social reality is revealed.’  
13. Jane Bennett (2004), 'The Force of Things: Steps Toward an Ecology of Matter’, Political Theory 32:3, 347-372; Jane Bennett (2005), 'The Agency of Assemblages in the North American Blackout’, Public Culture 17:3, 445-465. In particular Bennett (2005, 463) emphasises how the force of things might be thought of more accurately as the ‘agency of assemblages’, arguing: ‘To be clear: the agency of assemblages of which I speak is not the strong kind of agency traditionally attributed exclusively to humans. To make such a claim would be simply to anthropomorphise. The contention, rather, is that if one looks closely enough, the productive power behind effects is always a collectivity. Not only is human agency already always distributed in tools, microbes, minerals and sounds, it only emerges as agentic by way of a distribution into the ‘foreign materialities its bearers are eager to exclude’.  
19. ibid  
20. For example in Bodies that Matter Judith Butler (1993) asserts that presenting race as a social construct 'in no way deprives the term of its force in life' and social constructionist routinely emphasise the material effects of the idea of race these arguments rely on wiping out material differences between bodies, for example, to avoid descending into essentialism. Here, I argue for an alternative conception of race that draws on a dynamic, non-determinist understandings of its materiality.  
24. Saldanha, Reontologising Race; Saldanha, Psychedelic White.  
25. Saldanha, Psychedelic White  

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2016: archive project

Social space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships... - Henri Lefebvre

2016: Archive Project is an artistic investigation into the inner city Sydney suburb of Redfern - the title representing both the postcode for Redfern and the expected completion date of this ten year project. This archive does not intend to be an objective study of the suburb - but a subjective exploration of the changes taking place within the area through the lens of the artists' mutual interests in community and Post-situationist urban life. Each time the archive is exhibited it is re-invented but the emphasis on the local area of Redfern continues.

Redfern has an important place within the history of Sydney. It has traditionally been a poor area, home to migrant; Aboriginal; and low income communities. The opening of the Eveleigh Rail-yard bought many working class people into the area before it was closed down in the late 80s. Today over 40% of Redfern residents still live in public housing.

The Block forms the heart of Redfern and was one of the first urban areas bought back by the Aboriginal community for Aboriginal housing. It has existed as a quasi-autonomous Indigenous zone within the centre of Sydney and has been the focal point for important moments of anti-racist resistance such as the Redfern "riots" and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

With the rapid rate of real estate development throughout Sydney and the high costs of property, Redfern has become a prime target for “gentrification.” Redfern is situated between Sydney central and the airport, and is part of the land known as the city-airport corridor - its proximity to the city and (so far) lack of intensive development making it a key site for real estate speculation. A special government agency has been created, the Redfern-Waterloo Authority (RWA), to force through the rapid pace of urban change, making Redfern the only suburb in Australia with a designated minister of parliament.

We have chosen nine physical sites for exploration in this archive - the same sites identified by the RWA for urban renewal. The Archive will not only document the physical changes in the suburb, however, but also the voices of the Redfern community who are affected by these changes.

What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and kinks it makes use of, and whose code it embodies - Henri Lefebvre

The 2016: Archive Project has had two installments: an exhibition at Mori Gallery in February 2007 and an exhibition at Artspace in August 2007. In mid 2008 the Archive will participate in a month long residency organised by Performance Space but situated offsite in The Redfern Community Centre (RCC). The RCC is in the heart of the block and is a key organizing place for the local community. It provides after school care for local kids, computer access for the community, a meeting place and a cultural centre. The 2016: Archive Project has been given complete access to the RCC during this month to share this space with the community and develop a new installment of the archive.

The Archive seeks to not only chronicle the changes taking place within the urban environment of Redfern but also participate in moments of resistance to these changes. Both artists have been long term residents of Redfern and supporters of community campaigns against forced gentrification and urban "renewal”.

Keg de Souza and Zanny Begg
We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal people.

Lily Shearer, interviewed The Block, November 25th 2006:

Zanny: How long have you lived in Redfern?

I lived in Redfern from 1981 to 1984, and I now work here at the Performance Space. I like that I know lots of people here, that you can walk through the block and talk to people and there are Black fellas from all over Australia - its like an extended family. I have my great niece here with me today and she is playing in the park and now she has wandered across the road and I don’t have to worry because she is talking to an uncle and aunty. I couldn’t do that is I was in the city, it would be too dangerous.

After the disbandment of the missions and reserves a lot of people were coming to Sydney for work, it was after the depression too, and everyone seemed to congregate here in the block. They were squatting in the old houses, it’s a meeting place, a gathering ground.

Zanny: What will be the impact of the changes proposed by the government?

The changes that they want to bring in… they may as well round us back up and put us on the missions, if its going to go ahead like that. They may as well relocate people again, ‘cause that is what is happening, people are being relocated to other areas, like when they relocated people to Mount Druitt where I have been working for the last 15 years, they relocated everyone here straight to Bidwell in Mount Druitt. There are 11 suburbs that constitute Mount Druitt and Bidwell has to be the worst and lots of Aboriginal and Islander peoples end up there. It fragments the community, you break down family relationships, some have been on a hard journey to find their families and then they break apart again. And that’s grief, and we are already born with 218 years of inherited grief, and they are just adding to it. This will affect not just Aboriginal people on the block, but Aboriginal Australia. This place is the Black heart of Australia.

Zanny: How would you like to see the community change?

…I like the Pemmuway project, I think you have to tap into tourism, it’s a gold mine for our community. I know my kids are talented, I know they have all these deadly skills and they understand politics from a really young age and I just want to support them and give them a voice. Our kids were not raised with the racism that we were raised with, they are on the ball and able to act. I think we have some deadly leaders coming through. We need a tourist centre here, some shops, artworks, it could resource the community.

Ray Jackson, interviewed Redfern Department f Housing, November 25th, 2006:

Zanny: How long have you lived in Redfern?

I have lived in Redfern for 15 years when I was first moved into this Department of Housing apartment in James Cook Building (of all places). When I first saw the name I thought, well I am going to change that, but I found out that all these building here are heritage and because they originally started out with the navy they all have naval names of some sort.

…I don’t mix much, I just tend to be here working or I am out of the place, but its reasonably quiet, the sirens go every now and then and we call that the Redfern lullaby… but it doesn’t bother me, it’s a neighbourhood that’s vibrant, we have our crime but then so do other places, we have an over zealous police force but then so do other places, I love living here, thirteen flights up, I only wish I was higher…

Zanny: What will be the impact of the changes proposed by the government?
The changes will destroy us, they are not only out to remove the black face out of Redfern/Waterloo they want to move the department of housing out too, they want to move the poor out, for such an area as this to be on such valuable land and its been subsidized so the poor can live here goes against any patterns of what the government understand’s as the bottom-line. This place is valuable, very, very, valuable and they want to make money out of it. Their first push, of course, is to get the block, but that is going to be a fight and a half, and I don’t they are going to win on that, I think it will be a compromise, but it will be loss for us nonetheless. The block remaining in Aboriginal hands is the only way we is the only way we will see it. What Mickie Mundine wants to do there with the housing company, personally I don’t fully agree with, but its much preferable to what the government wants to do with it.

Now when it comes to removing the Department of Housing, which covers a huge area, again they are going to have a very large scale fight on their hands. One of the humorous stories, if there is humour in these situations, is that we have a large contingent of Russians here - what is termed the white Russians - and they have been here since the Department of Housing took the units over in the late 70s and they have told Frank Sartor and the respective ministers “you leave us alone, we must die here and then you can do what you want with the buildings”. Now that is solidarity for you! They are all ancient mate, they are bloody ancient, and they are not going to last long. So we are here by the grace of their ghosts! But there is a grit and a determination - bugger it we will not be moved. We will stay here, they can blow the place up around us.

Zanny: How would you like to see the community change?

…I would like to put more resources into the neighborhood. They start good they put in a tennis court but when the nets start to rot that’s it, they never maintain it. They say that the community should maintain it - but this is Department of Housing, its poor, the community can’t maintain it. Welfare these days is really a welfare, welfare, its people with mental health issues, addictions, all that sort of stuff. There needs to be a lot more done. I would also like to change how cliquey this place can be - these days there is more emphasis on privacy than community. We had one person in the unit opposite there who was dead for five weeks and nobody found him! Later when people were talking about they said they hadn’t seen him for a while…

Zanny: Keg and I are making this archive over ten years, how do you see this suburb in ten years time?

I like to think we will still be here in ten years, better managed and better self managed. I certainly hope that we have a better class of copper, ‘cause the police are brutal here.

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How do bodies matter? understanding embodied racialised subjectivities
Posted By damien riggs on 23 Feb 2008 @ 1:53 pm in 2-Race/Matter [Feb 08], Issues | No Comments

Issues of materiality and their relation to racist practices continue to represent a key issue of concern for any theorisation of the ongoing operations of racial categories. In my own work I continue to be challenged to find ways to talk about racial categories without contributing to their reification. Two brief examples may serve to illustrate this point more clearly.

Following the series of celebrity big brother held in the UK earlier this year, I felt it important to at least begin a project of piecing together some sort of analysis of how Jade Goody's behaviour against Shilpa Shetty signified the complex operations of race, class and gender at the very heart of empire. Yet in writing about Goody's evocation of the term 'Shilpa Poppadum', I couldn't help but feel that my writing was mirroring the behaviour of Goody herself when, in her exit interview, she repeated the term in her account of her behaviours and in her apology for using the term, only to be told by an audience member 'well stop using it then'. When watching the interview I felt that the audience member had made an important intervention into the repetitious functioning of race talk by highlighting the ways in which the very evocation of racist words continues to enact hurt. How, then, was I as a white academic to analyse Goody's behaviour without myself continuing to wield the very categories that were deployed so viciously against Shetty? In regards to the second example, I refer to an experience last year of marking exam papers, the task of which was for students to analyse a media report about the mapping of the human genome and its implications for the supposed 'biology of race'. Repeatedly I read the work of students who (for the most part) deftly provided examples of interpretative repertoires or particular rhetorical structures that were evident in the extract. Yet at the same time I felt a distinct dis-ease with the ways in which the very terms upon which the extract was premised (i.e., the refutation of race as a biological fact) seemed to perpetuate racial categories precisely in their refutation. This was not something that I had originally identified as a 'marking point' when I began reading the exams, yet the inadequacy of my marking system was brought home when only 1 student out of 150 actually identified the problematic way in which the author of the extract refuted the existence of race as a biological category, only to then go on to use existing descriptive categories that have historically been taken as referencing biologically racially different groups of people (i.e., 'Caucasian'). This made me question how it is that we teach students to challenge 'race talk', and how the provision of particular analytic tools (such as those of discourse analysis) may fail to adequately equip students with ways of 'seeing' the reality of race as it plays out in everyday ways.

In what remains of this paper I extend an argument I initially begun elsewhere in order to begin the work of thinking through some of the ways in which the materiality of race is played out, and how we might talk about this in ways that move beyond simply recounting one of two common 'yes but' mantras: either beginning with an understanding of race as a social construction but then demonstrating its social reality, or beginning from 'real' examples but then deconstructing their facticity. Instead, I suggest that what is required is an account of race that attempts to bring both of these understandings of race together in ways that acknowledge that race has a materiality that is partly to do with the aspects of racial discourse that are constructed as being material (i.e., stereotypes about bodily markers), and partly about the ways in which bodies come to matter on particular racialised terms. In other words, although it must be recognised that racial categories are the result of particular power relations and histories of oppression, they are nonetheless constructed as mattering - they are accorded a materiality that renders them foundational to subjectivities. Thus it would seem important to me that an anti-racist practice involves not only challenging racist stereotypes, but also challenging the very frameworks of subjectivity upon which race is made to matter. Moreover, examining how race matters not simply in the lives of those who are typically rendered visible within normative discourses of race (i.e., those who are racially marginalized), but how it is central to the lives of those of us who occupy racially dominant positions, would appear to be key to examining how racial discourses continue to circulate.

Racialised Embodiment

One of the ways in which I (amongst others) have attempted to understand the materiality of race is to...
develop an understanding of the networks of power in which racial discourse circulates. As a starting place in this regard, I would suggest that the subject who comes into being under the sign of race is one that is prescribed by the hierarchical forms of knowledge that are deemed intelligible within the framework of race itself - only certain bodies are ascribed with power, at the expense of those bodies positioned as being without (or unable to have) power. Racialised differences are thus achieved primarily through sets of contrasts, wherein the racial other is marked as ‘having race’, whilst the white self is not marked as raced. This is what Fanon\(^1\) termed ‘epidermalisation’, or as Hall defines it: “the writing of difference on the skin of the other”.\(^2\)

I would suggest also that epidermalisation marks the practice whereby difference is actually constructed on the terms of the same - racialised difference is built upon the incorporation of incommensurable difference into a logic of sameness. Hook suggests much the same thing in his incisive analysis of the racial stereotype, where he expands and clarifies the work of Bhabha.\(^3\) Hook, following Bhabha, suggests that the racial stereotype represents an attempt at achieving the impossible: “the fixity of mutually exclusive subject categories for colonizer and colonized”.\(^4\) In this sense, ‘recognising’ racial difference actually has little to do with ‘seeing’ difference, and more to do with incorporating a range of bodily forms into a cartography of racialised embodiment that is organized through a logic of sameness. In this logic all people are defined according to a set of terms that are constructed as mattering by those in positions of power or by those with investments in maintaining social hierarchies. To ‘see’ ‘racial difference’ is thus not to actually see differing bodies, but to see bodies as fundamentally marked by a particular way of viewing, with a particular emphasis on certain aspects of embodiment.

My point here is thus not to posit an objective point of racial difference - such an argument would be counterproductive to a critical understanding of how racial embodiment is produced. Rather, my point is that the co-option of difference (marked in this instance as race) into a logic of sameness (through, for example, the racial stereotype of the other), serves to mask the incommensurable differences that in actuality undermine white hegemony, and thus render visible its limitations as an absolute site of power in the materialization of race. This leads me to suggest that, under the signifier of whiteness, discourses of race thus do not function to ‘describe’ the differences between people, but rather operate to incorporate these differences into one particular way of understanding the world. Thus as Alcoff\(^5\) suggests, race as a practice of visibilisation works to “enclos[e] the entirety of difference within a taxonomy organized by a single logic”. This point therefore demonstrates the importance of examining how race is materialised, and how it is used to legitimate practices of oppression.

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

> The materiality of the prison, Foucault writes, is established to the extent that (*dans la mesure ou*) it is a vector and instrument of power. Hence, the prison is *materialized* to the extent that it is invested with power. To be grammatically accurate, there is no prison prior to its materialization; its materialization is coextensive with its investiture with power relations; and materiality is the effect and gauge of this investment. The prison comes to be only within the field of power relations, more specifically, only to the extent that it is saturated with such relation and that such a saturation is formative of its very being. Here the body - of the prisoner and the prison - is not an independent materiality, a static surface or site, which a subsequent investment comes to mark, signify upon, or pervade; the body is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive.\(^6\)

This passage from Butler usefully draws our attention to the ways in which subjective investments in whiteness function through the materialisation of race, and how this demonstrates the ways in which race is materialised in the service of white dominance.

To elaborate: if, following Butler’s logic, there is no ‘race’ prior to its materialisation, and if this materialisation occurs through the investment of race with power, then it would seem important to grasp how materialisation occurs concomitantly with subjectification. In other words, how is it that the materialization of particular bodies as mattering occurs as a result of their location within ongoing histories of domination, and how does this position such bodies as products of practices of subjectification that occur within *racialised* networks of power?
Towards the end of the passage Butler suggests a potential answer to this question, namely that “the body… is not an independent materiality… which a subsequent investment comes to mark… the body is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive”. In regards to race, then, the racialised body does not exist outside of a particular context, nor does it become racialised upon the choosing of particular individuals. Rather, in the context of nations built in the context of empire, bodies come to matter precisely as markers of race that are used to shore up the project of empire. Bodies must thus be invested with race as a prerequisite for intelligibility within nations that are founded upon racial difference (and it ascription of racial hierarchies) as the primary site of their legitimation. The question is not then whether the racialised body is brought into being through racialised networks of power, and is then inhabited by a subject differentially invested in said power (or vice versa), but rather that bodies are spoken into being specifically as racial bodies - as bodies whose existence relies upon the corollary of particular subjective investments in the project of empire. In regards to subjectivity, then, the racialisation of bodies is the very grounds for subjectification - we come into being as knowers/subjects or objects in the form of particular racialised bodies.

It is important, however, to acknowledge here that this may at first seem to be a rather overdeterministic reading of racialised embodiment, and one that subsumes the experiences of those who are marked as racial others yet again into a logic of ‘difference in sameness’, whereby racialisation occurs in the same ways (and for the same purpose) for all people. This is not my claim at all. Instead, my point has been to mark precisely how those bodies that are typically not designated as racialised under white hegemony (i.e., white bodies) come into being through discourses of race. This, I would suggest, was a large part of Fanon’s project - not to maintain a focus on how the white man constructs the black man, but how the white man constructs the white man through his constructions of the black man. Racism, and the investment in racialised practices (such as the materialisation of race) are thus formative of white subjectivities as material practices.

The important point that arises from this understanding of racial subject formation and its material affects, then, is how the racialisation of white subjects is for the large part denied (in order to legitimate the a priori status of white privilege) by focusing on race as a ‘regime of looking’, whereby the white subject (rendered intelligible within networks of racialised power) does the looking, rather than being a recipient of a racialised gaze. Thus as Seshadri-Crooks suggests,

> although race cannot be reduced to the look… it is common knowledge that some ‘black’ people can be very white, and some ‘whites’ can be very dark; identity is a question of ‘heritage’, not skin colour. Once claimed, however, heritage is ultimately marked by the body… thus by visibility I refer to a regime of looking that thrives on ‘major’ and ‘minor’ details in order to shore up one’s symbolic position.7

The desire to control the gaze (and to do so by controlling what counts as ‘major’ and ‘minor’ details) thus demonstrates what I (along with Martha Augoustinos) have termed elsewhere the ‘anxiety of whiteness’.8 That is, whilst on the one hand there would appear to be a desire to ‘be whiteness’ (to occupy the site of the signifier), such a desire is predicated upon an illusory notion of wholeness - that those of us who are white could exceed the racialised categories of whiteness, and thus occupy all positions (or more accurately, deny any position other than the ‘whole white self’) within a racialised system of representation. Yet the paradox (and thus anxiety) is that such a fantasy of wholeness would effectively obliterates constructions of difference, resulting in the destruction of the self/other binaries that racialised systems are reliant upon.9 In this way the ‘double nature’ of white anxiety is always already evident in the ways in which the gaze circulates as a purported site of power. Obviously this is not to deny the ways in which the gaze does exert effects over racially marginalised people, but instead my point is that attempts at controlling racialised looking through marking particular bodies as ‘raced’ is always an incomplete project - it never totally encompasses signification or representation.

**Conclusions**

In this paper I have attempted to map out one particular understanding of how race is materialized, with particular reference to the formation of white subjectivities and their fundamental inculcation in racialised networks of power. My intention has not been to deny resistance to white hegemony or the potential for anti-racist practice, but rather to account for the materiality of race in ways that move beyond either constructionist or realist accounts of racial embodiment. My aim has been to examine race as *constructedly fundamental* - it is fundamentally constructed as mattering to embodied subjectivities.
'race' as a category may well be a convenient fiction that serves to legitimate social hierarchies, it is nonetheless one that operates as a reality. Talking about race as fundamental in this way allows for an account of racism that sees it as functioning in all aspects of subjectivity, rather than as an add on or as only relevant to particular forms of analysis.

To return to the two examples I provided in the introduction, then, any examination of the operations of race, class and gender in the celebrity big brother household requires not simply the recounting of how racial categories were deployed by Goody, but also an extrapolation as to the location of those categories within histories of empire that serve to render them intelligible, and which produce particular racialised bodies that are played out through the materiality of talk. In other words, it is not necessarily all that productive to solely either examine the bodies of Shetty and Goody and the ways in which they functioned as racial markers in the celebrity big brother house, or examine the racist talk of Goody. Rather, it is important to examine how racialised embodiment was materialized through the talk of Goody and the other British women in the house. In this sense, race comes to matter through the collective actions of people who locate themselves as holding the authority to mark race, an authority that comes precisely as a result of their preceding racialised materiality (as explained above with reference to Butler).

With regard to the exam marking I undertook, it is important to recognise how our pedagogies may serve to both render visible racism, and yet also render invisible the banal operations of racial categories and their materialization of race. Examining race in talk requires the examination not only of the specific discursive resources that speakers draw upon in order to warrant racial privilege or racist actions, but the ways in which this produces an embodied racialized subjectivity that is warranted through the simultaneity of the speaker’s cultural location and the content of the speaker’s talk. Embodied subject positions are thus not reducible to specific forms of talk, nor are they extricable from it.

In conclusion, then, examining the materiality of race continues to be an important area of study precisely because of the complexities of race as a category and its thorough imbrication in the formation of subjectivities in the context of empire. Challenging racism requires the ongoing theorization of these complexities, with specific attention to the ways in which materiality occurs in conjunction with the formation of racial subjects.

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Notes


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Material effects: race, class and masculinities among South African teachers

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Introduction

Current debates about race are not always successful in capturing issues of materiality which were a strong feature of social history and Marxist work twenty and thirty years ago. In this paper we approach the issue of race and the way it is experienced by exploring the life narratives of teachers in South Africa. In this exercise we show that race was experienced within material contexts which were themselves characterized by racial inequality and by material inequalities. The result of this overlapping set of factors and power relationships is to be found in the memories of childhood of three black teachers. In his article, ‘Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance’, Stuart Hall used South Africa as a case in point for his (then) Althusserian approach to understanding racism. He made the point that:

One must start, then, from the concrete historical ‘work’ which racism accomplishes under specific historical conditions—as a set of economic, political and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation.²

In this paper we take up Hall’s call to start from the concrete historical context and the work of race/class focusing on the complex interactions of race, class and gender in the lives of men in a specific profession - teaching. Drawing on four out of nine life history accounts obtained from male teachers in greater Durban³, we show that race and class are materialised through and imbricated in the identities of these South African teachers but that they cannot be reduced to effects of these factors. Nevertheless, their accounts show how race and class shape the teachers’ gendered narratives and demonstrate the links between their stories and their contemporary pedagogical attitudes and practices as teachers. The paper begins with a succinct account of the historical conditions of South Africa when these men were growing up. This is followed by a brief discussion of life histories as method. The next section presents the four teacher biographies. Three further sections explore contrasts and continuities in their lives, their experiences of and attitudes to punishment and discipline and what they regard as their achievements and failures.

We have approached the transcripts of our interviews from two directions. First, we have seen them as providing stories that our informants have narrated about their lives. In this sense, the transcripts may be seen as identity statements and representations. Second, we regard the men’s narratives as testimony to the material and emotional conditions of their lives that provided the context for the masculine-making processes that they engaged in. This paper is not an exercise in psychoanalysis or a psychological examination of the motives or the subconscious of the teachers. We are more concerned to understand the explanatory frameworks that they deploy, while at the same time paying attention to the material circumstances in which their choices were made. In our research about teacher masculinities in South Africa, we have been concerned to unpick the complex ways in which race, class, gender and sexuality are woven into their lives and what this means in terms of the materiality of their current lives and their life histories.

The material conditions of apartheid and its legacies

So what were the specific historical conditions under which our four teachers grew up? As is well known, the South African regime prior to 1994, when the first democratic elections were held, imposed the system of apartheid. Unlike racial discrimination in, for example, the UK, apartheid was systematic in imposing racial segregation through law. Among a myriad of laws imposing segregation of all kinds were laws (a list of such legislation can be found at http://africanhistory.about.com/library/bl/blsalaws.htm) which:

- reserved skilled jobs to white people (Job Reservation Act, 1954);
- created the bureaucratic classification of people into ‘European’, ‘Indian’, ‘Coloured’ and ‘Bantu’ - i.e. black (Population Registration Act, 1950);
- prevented sexual relationships and marriage between people classified as being of different race (Immorality Amendment Act, 1950; Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, 1949);
- forced people to live in areas designated as being for their classified race (Group Areas Act, 1950);
- established ‘Bantustans’, which were supposed to be self-governing tribal areas where Africans without permission to work in white areas were supposed to live (Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, 1959);
- established intentionally inferior education of Africans designed to hold them in positions of subservience (Bantu Education Act, 1953);
- prevented black people from going to ‘white’ universities (Extension of Universities Education Act, 1959);
- and forced black men to carry the hated passes at all times (Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act, 1952).

There was also a range of legislation that imposed such draconian punishment for dissent as imprisonment without trial for up to 90 days, during which people were held in solitary confinement, subjected to torture and even murdered while in custody (most famously, Steve Biko).

The ending of apartheid and the first democratic elections held in 1994 did not, of course, automatically end the race/class structuring of South African society. The bureaucratic classification of individuals’ racial categories no longer exists but social distinctions continue. The terms ‘white’, ‘African’, ‘Indian’ and ‘coloured’ still exist both in every day parlance and reflect the social divisions of South African society. There is an emergent black middle class of professionals and entrepreneurs but poverty continues to be largely racialised, ‘informal settlements’ (known as ‘locations’ in apartheid parlance) continue to be populated by black people and while there are no longer white-only schools the schools in the townships continue to be black only.

The early years of South African children are lived in vastly different circumstances. Race has long been a key determinant. Particularly in the era of apartheid, the racialisation of poverty meant that many black children grew up in harsh, resource-poor conditions, although, as we show below, neither race nor poverty determine experiences or outcomes.

**Life histories as method**

The most obvious danger of using life history method is the temptation to treat the story told, whether in written auto/biography or in life history interviews, as being a simple and unvarnished reflection of the ‘truth’ of someone’s life. In such an approach, little or no note is taken of the role of the interviewer in the creation of meaning and the eliciting of particular stories in the course of the interview. The problem with the alternative approach to life history as narrative and discourse is the tendency to reduce it to text, without reference to the materiality of people’s lives and experiences. We note the importance of recognising the conditionality of interviews and how their relationship to reality needs always to be understood as contingent on many factors (the self, the interviewer, the interviewee-interviewer relationship, the various agendas floating in this space and so on). Our approach builds on these insights and treats a personal life as:

> a path through a field of practices which are following a range of collective logics, and are responding to a range of structural conditions which routinely intersect and often contradict each other.

Our methodology is also informed by the goals of social history, using oral sources to establish the nature of the material conditions that impacted on the subject’s narrative and life. These material circumstances can be deduced from secondary literature but they are correlated and confirmed by the interviewees’ responses. Such are the class and race fault lines in South African society and history that it is possible to get, from the words of the interviewees, some validation of the classed and raced grand narrative generated by social history.

Our selection of interviews reflects a mix of race and class factors. We also compare teachers whose pedagogic attitudes can broadly be described as ‘progressive’ (child-centred, respectful, tolerant) with those whose styles reflect more authoritarian approaches. Accordingly we present the stories of two black African teachers, Mxolisi and Velile, a white teacher, Matthew, and an Indian teacher, Vijay. The interviews were conducted in three government schools. Oak High, a middle class, now multiracial boys’ school; Gladstone Secondary, a school formerly reserved for Coloureds but now with a substantial
number of African, isiZulu speaking students; and Dingiswayo Secondary, a school providing for poor, working class black students in the African dormitory suburbs (townships) and flanked by a large informal settlement (squatter camp).

Four teacher biographies: childhood, family, growing up

Our youngest teacher, Mxolisi, teaches at Oak High. He was an infant during the Soweto student uprising of 1976. He is a man with an easy smile and an engaging manner. His spoken English is good though his first language is isiZulu. He is one of only a small number of black teachers at school.

Living in apartheid South Africa, the material conditions of his childhood reflect those of millions of his fellow black South Africans. The Group Areas Act 1950 formalised the geographical separation of ‘African’, ‘Indian’, ‘Coloured’ and ‘European’ (i.e. white) groups such that non-whites were excluded from white areas and needed specific permission to be there as workers. Mxolisi grew up with his parents in a rural area, living in a mud hut with no electricity, running water or telephone. His mother died when he was very young and his father, a farm labourer, followed shortly thereafter. Yet his parents and extended family valued education and he was encouraged to do well, walking 75 minutes to school each day. Of ten siblings, he was the only one to get to university, obtaining bursaries for higher education, successfully completed in 1998.

Mxolisi’s childhood was shaped by racialised poverty. The story he tells is of difficulty, scarce resources and few opportunities. His advantages were intellect, determination and a supportive family, which he holds to be sacrosanct. There is no question of doing anything that might damage it. A key principle ensuring family cohesion is respect.

RM: And do you respect them [the family elders]?

Mxolisi: I do respect them.

RM: At what point do you withhold your respect?

Mxolisi: At no point (laugh). Um, at no point. I always respect them. I can’t think of a situation where I will do things that they tell me not to do.

As a child, Mxolisi attended the local Catholic church but this is not a major source of inspiration or stability in his life. Nor is political commitment. Mxolisi was not involved in student politics in the turbulent 1990s, believing in the importance of forgiveness. Even though his forebears were badly treated workers on white farms and often not paid, he expresses no anger towards the farm owners or whites in general.

Mxolisi had to cope with death from an early age. Both parents died when he was young, and when he was at university a brother died. Since then, a number of friends have died of AIDS. Mxolisi admits that the combination of being at university and his brother’s death depressed him and, unusually, he consulted a psychologist. Although Mxolisi has had to deal with poverty and all its associated challenges, he has not adopted a stoical masculinity. He has turned inward to examine himself and has, at the same time, kept up his links with his family. He returns to see them in the countryside as often as he can. In addition, he intends to build a family of his own. He already has three children (aged seven, four and three years) by
three different mothers. He is proud of being a father and wants to marry the mother of his last-born.

Overall, Mxolisi has responded to his life experiences with a tenacity and creativity that has enabled him to move into the ranks of the middle class. His life is a case of dramatic upward social mobility from orphaned black rural existence to the professional role of a teacher in a formerly white, but now mixed, elite school in Durban.

Matthew, a white man now in his early 60s, has taught at Oak High, where he has become a legend, for 30 years. He grew up in Durban with his parents and four sisters. His father was a lawyer and the main breadwinner. Thus Matthew's family of origin was seen as a model of middle class white respectability. However, his father, while admired in white middle class circles, was a bully at home and his mother bore the brunt of it, but Matthew was on the receiving end as well. Although his father's behaviour 'verged on the autocratic or almost despotic', Matthew grew up respecting him:

He was very loyal to his family, and he was supportive. There was no hint of ever, neglecting the family. He would provide and that was it, he would always be there. And, he was a very, very strict in terms of um morality. You know that's a vast concept morality, but swearing was a no-no, he didn’t swear. You were respectful, almost chivalrous, you know, the old style chivalry coming out of the 1820 settlers and English background/colonial style of opening doors and that sort of thing. So he’s highly respected in that way, but he went down to play bowls, which he did, people had high regard for his integrity, that sort of idea. So he had a tremendous strength in that way.

Matthew seems to have tried to satisfy his father in terms of public recognition and achievement. He excelled at sport, particularly at rugby, which made the most demands of a physical masculinity and gave the greatest recognition. He captained rugby teams all the way through his school and university career and played representative provincial rugby. This was one area where he both brought glory to the family name and rebelled:

I revolted against, I mean I got into the university thing and I became a little bit of a rebel, you know the normal ...through those years of the hippies and that sort of stuff. And I was probably the first in fact I think when they described me as I ran onto the rugger field at Kings Park [the Durban stadium] as lacking sartorial elegance. I was the first rugger player from varsity to run onto that field with long hair.

Despite official recognition of his talents, Matthew never neatly fitted the standards of the day. He was left-leaning in his politics and was never promoted up the teacher hierarchy. He was often at odds with headmasters at the school, several of whom he found to be unfeeling, cruel and competitive bullies.

In some respects, Matthew is an archetypal white, middle-class man. Sport is important in his life. He occupies space in a confident way, is comfortable in his body and sure of his views. He is heterosexual. He has children although he is no longer married. In some ways, he occupies all the unmarked categories of a range of social binaries - being, as the title of Catherine Hall’s book has it, white, male and middle class both through is family of origin and by profession. But it is not easy to read a hegemonic masculinity into or off Matthew’s own accounts of his manhood. The contradictions are strong and conformity with conventional white, English-speaking, middle-class values is marginal.

Velile is an African teacher in his late forties (born in 1957), the middle child of seven children. He teaches at Dingiswayo Secondary. Velile grew up in a township area, with an African only population, outside Johannesburg. His father was a Mozambican, like many other black workers in the cities of South Africa, a migrant worker. He managed to Johannesburg and settled there despite the pass laws, which limited the urban settlement of Africans. He had a job in manufacturing and earned reasonably well by African standards. Unusually within his community, Velile remembers having a car when he was a child and his family was also the first in the community to have a television.

Velile’s parents were devout Christians, who directed him into teaching. He attended a College of Education and qualified in 1976, the year of the Soweto school uprisings which, in many ways, were the beginning of the end for the apartheid regime. Velile battled with these developments:
It was very tough [in 1976] but because I was from an organized family, I didn’t go too much into this politics and things, because my father was very strict and my mother was very strict. They couldn’t understand that you were not at school because of political reasons. They didn’t go for that.

Velile talks of his parents as being ‘very strict’ but does not display any resentment. Indeed, he says that he liked the fact that his father was, ‘first and foremost … a disciplinarian’. Not only did Velile receive regular thrashings, he was also required to take on a range of responsibilities including polishing the stoep (verandah), washing and polishing the cooking pots and preparing vegetables on a daily basis so that his mother could start cooking as soon as she got home. With this level of responsibility, Velile was, as he says, ‘too busy in the house’ but managed to find time, also, to work hard and play softball for the school team and, later, at college. At the same time, it seems that Velile was developing an active heterosexual social life. He became interested in girls in the first form of secondary school, which he describes as usual in his peer group, but did not take it further than that for another year because:

I was scared of my parents, that once they discovered I was having a date with a girl, they’d kill me. That’s why I think it took me such a long time.

He felt himself to be in competition with other boys to have many girlfriends and said that the boys who were heterosexually successful became a ‘sort of hero’ in the peer group. The outcome of this approach is that Velile has fourteen children, none of them with his wife, whom he met when he started teaching at Dingiswayo in 1992. Her first husband died in 1998 but it is not clear how long after that they married.

His oldest child was born in 1975, when Velile was eighteen, the second a year later, the year that he started teaching and the third nine years after that. Of his fourteen children, Velile has a relationship with three, primarily because they grew up and were schooled in the Durban area. He pays maintenance for his youngest child, born in an extra-marital affair, only two years before the interview.

Under apartheid black teachers could get teacher certificates without matriculating, by doing a two year course after standard eight (the third year of high school) and this is what Velile did. He subsequently matriculated and continued thereafter to improve his qualifications. He taught for five years before going to university. His long suffering father supported him financially, not knowing that Velile was, in fact, on study leave from his school and receiving pay and a bursary from the provincial government:

When the school opens, I was carrying cash [from his father] for the whole year. And I was on study leave and I was getting a pay and he never know about that. And I was having a bursary from the KwaZulu government. I didn’t tell him about that because, you know, I didn’t have money to live the life I wanted to live at school.

Unlike some of his colleagues, Velile is not interested in politics or active in the teacher unions. His views on politics reflect a generational and traditionalist commitment to the existing order and he expresses distaste for student rebellion of 1976 when ‘children were ruling adults’. He is not particularly enthusiastic about ‘the new South Africa’ and says that getting the vote has made little difference.

Vijay, and Indian man in his late forties, teaches at Gladstone Secondary and was born in Durban in 1959, the fifth of seven children. His grandfather, like most first generation Indian South Africans came from India and worked on the farms on the North Coast of what was then Natal as and indentured labourer in the sugar cane fields. Vijay’s parents moved around a lot because of his father’s job as a truck/bus driver. His mother was a housewife, who, presumably, kept on making a new home in each new place. Vijay had numerous relatives on both sides but seldom sees those on his mother’s side (she was one of 14 children, having 9 sisters and 4 brothers) because most live in Johannesburg. He says that most of his ten uncles on his father’s side have died.

Although Vijay grew up in a large family, this has not been replicated in his generation. He and his brothers have two children each, but the brothers and sisters still keep in close touch, moving between the families and sharing meals to which all contribute every couple of weeks. Family events are marked by Hindu observance - ‘there are various prayers we have during the year and whenever somebody’s having a prayer so we do come’.
Vijay was a talented sportsman and played professional soccer for a while, until he had a leg injury. He represented his school and province in 1974 and soccer loomed large in his emotional life as well. He played every day, playing with his friends before school, at break times and after school. Then, when he got home, he would go to the 'association ground' where, presumably, he was coached along with other talented youngsters. Vijay’s account is redolent of the enjoyment he had in this sporting activity and he has no regrets that the time spent playing soccer impacted adversely on his examination results.

Vijay’s father was also a keen soccer player and used to support Vijay and come to watch him play whenever he could. He died when Vijay was in standard six (about 13 years old), which was a tremendous shock. He is defensive of his father’s memory, insisting that, although he rarely saw him, he didn’t feel neglected at all. Nevertheless, this absence (caused both by working away a lot and by premature death) has impacted on his attitude to fathering:

I really didn’t want to take a job that took me away from my family. I had to do something that would be always with my kids. You know, be there with them especially academically. That’s why I stayed in education. That relationship that I missed in my life, you know, make sure my kids get it.

Vijay’s two children, a daughter aged 21 and a son aged 17, live at home. Vijay is close to them, saying that he would worry if he didn’t see them for a few hours a day. The daughter is in her final year of a pharmacy degree and the son is completing his matriculation. Vijay and his wife have considered emigrating to New Zealand because his wife’s brother is there, but this has not worked out, partly because he was in two minds about it and partly because of his daughter’s education.

Vijay has thought about his future in education and has some ambitions. He says that while, at one level, he would like to become a head of department, he would miss the interaction with the pupils:

I would like to [get promotion], but my real love is with kids now. When you go higher up, you’ll find you have fewer classes to teach. I don’t really want to get to a managerial position you know. I like to be more interactive with students.

In the past it has been difficult to survive on a teacher’s salary, but now his wife has taken up employment and things are financially better, though he hardly sees her as a result of her work. Of more concern is his perception that teachers have lost status - ‘When I was at school the reality is, if you were a teacher you were somebody, but now there is little respect from young people for teachers’.

Vijay is not politically aware. Although his life as a child was affected by apartheid - ‘you know we weren’t allowed to own our own homes’ - he did not feel particularly disadvantaged. He is not interested in teacher or national politics.

Contrasts and continuities

Of all the teachers, it is Mxolisi alone who had serious material problems as a child. Vijay and Velile were relatively secure in material terms and Matthew clearly benefited from the privileges of white middle class living, including private schooling and university.

All our teachers said that their fathers were important influences. All the fathers were either aloof or physically absent and all were strict, to say the least, yet it is Matthew who seems to have been worst affected. He struggled with the legacy of his father. It put him at odds with school rules but also gave him a healthy suspicion of decorum and a dislike for uncaring and overbearing authority. Velile’s father was stern and distant and seems readily to have resorted to physical chastisement. Yet Velile seems not to have been so affected as Matthew, seeking the company of friends and, particularly girlfriends, to establish a sense of himself. He accommodated himself to his father’s rules and, by deception, milked this relationship for his own benefit. He sought heterosexual affirmation behind his parents’ back to build his masculine status among his peers. He seems quite unapologetic and uncritical of his sexual exploits and the fourteen children that these begat.

Vijay and Mxolisi both suffered the trauma of parental death yet they both regarded their fathers as a positive influence. Vijay recounts his life in a stoical way that largely deletes memories of hardship. He notes his losses (the death of his father and subsequent deaths of many paternal uncles), his hardships
(being beaten, breaking his leg at soccer), without letting them become major features of his life narrative. Despite the material deprivations and early death of his father, Mxolisi’s account of childhood has little of the roughness or pain that are so evident in Matthew’s testimony. With the family support he chose a path to adulthood that many of his cohort, who became involved in politics or crime, did not take. Mxolisi pursued education, paid work and a teaching career - an unusual path for an impoverished rural African boy.

What we have in these four biographies is a jumbled picture that defies attempts to connect childhood experience with adolescent and adult outcomes in any neat or causal way. In the next section, we map race, class and experiential factors onto two themes relevant to the men’s profession of teaching: punishment and discipline; and achievement and failure.

**Punishment and Discipline**

Corporal punishment has a long history in South Africa and has been applied, especially, to boys of all races. In privileged white South African schools, corporal punishment played a similar role to that documented in elite British schools. Under *apartheid*, authoritarian pedagogies ensured that corporal punishment was commonly and widely used in all white and black schools. It was particularly common and vicious in black schools, where it was applied to girls and boys. Although corporal punishment was abolished in South Africa in 1996, it remains widely used and many, particularly African, parents and teachers support its continued use.

Corporal punishment was, historically, an important rite of passage for schoolboys. Silently enduring it was part of the process of becoming men. It was associated with other masculine values of toughness, ability to withstand pain, endorsement of violence and an acceptance of patriarchal authority, with the power of older over younger men and of men over women being expressed in very physical ways. Nevertheless, the experience of corporal punishment did not inevitably produce brutalised or brutal men.

All four men were beaten as children, although Vijay’s experience of this violence seems to have been less frequent and severe. Amongst those who were severely beaten, neither Mxolisi nor Matthew support corporal punishment. Mxolisi comments:

> I’ve always been against the use of corporal punishment because we sometimes were beaten for nothing. Um, I don’t see it work. You can beat a person today; they’ll do it again. You have to convince people why they shouldn’t or should do something. To beat them up, I don’t think it helps.

Matthew’s opposition is based on his observation of misuse and cruelty:

> [This] particular chap, was a terrible bully, terrible bully. He used to cane kids - literally break them in half … take a run before he hit them. And I couldn’t accept that sort of attitude.

Neither believes that corporal punishment works and Matthew, particularly, abhors the masculinity with which it is associated:

> The male, you had to be strong and you had to, you know, bump people out of the way and assert yourself and drink your beer fast and this sort of rubbish. And here they were in these positions of authority … That I couldn’t handle.

Vijay and Velile, on the other hand, both lament the abolition of corporal punishment and believe in its use as a pedagogic tool for discipline. As Velile comments:

> It’s hard for me to believe that it’s [abolishing corporal punishment] going to work. We always say in Zulu, which means that when you want to burn something, you burn it while it’s still young. Meaning you must be given some beatings when you still young … More especially our kids, they are, they are not as organized as the white kids. The white kids seem to, you know, find direction in their ways. But ours, they need some beatings all the time.
Justifying his own belief in corporal punishment, Velile harks back to his childhood:

What I liked about my father was, first and foremost, he was a disciplinarian. … And whenever he had a problem with you, he would call you to the bedroom to give you some beatings in the bedroom. So, I liked all those things when I grow up - I admired these things.

Vijay thinks that ‘they should you know really bring back that discipline in kids’. He believes that pupils don’t listen any more:

When kids realise that you can’t use that on them, they really do take advantage. They took the stick away form the teacher and they lost a lot of command.

As with Velile, Vijay refers back to his own childhood to justify the use of corporal punishment. He was beaten, sometimes for no reason, by teachers, but says the beatings ‘worked’, they ‘taught me how to bring up kids, you know, the right way’.

One cannot understand the diverse attitudes to corporal punishment by looking only at family and school disciplinary practices. While the men were all beaten, they received and responded to beatings in different ways. And their responses cannot be understood either through simple raced or classed lenses. The way our informants negotiated these experiences and the overall context of their lives (especially within families) enabled some of them to develop strong views against corporal punishment but left others firmly convinced of its efficacy and legitimacy.

Achievement and failure

Achievement and failure are important in constructions of masculinities. The process is fraught and failure is a highly threatening prospect to boys seeking to meet the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. In South Africa, sporting success, across racial divides, is the most important signifier. Failure at sport (and not only in South Africa) can elicit homophobic jibes that call into question one’s masculinity.

The situation with regard to academic performance is more complex. In some working class and ethnic minority contexts, for example, academic success is regarded with suspicion and this has been well documented in the UK. In South Africa, however, particularly for African boys aspiring towards upward social mobility, academic success has historically been very important. This is not to say that all African boys have sought success and, indeed, current indications in South Africa are that increasing numbers of African, working class boys are no longer vesting their energies in academic work and performance. But both of our African men have invested their emotions and energies in academic success, working hard and often against the odds to achieve their academic and professional qualifications.

Success and failure in our teacher narratives must be understood in two ways: first, their own achievements and failures; and second, the performance of their (male) pupils. Sometimes these are in alignment - pleasure in their own success is transmuted into pride for and endorsement of their pupils. At other times, their attitudes are less congruent. For example, they may see their own failures as learning opportunities but decry the failures of their pupils.

Our four teachers work in a system in which academic success was a prerequisite - they could not have become teachers without passing their examinations. We would, therefore, expect them to place a high value on academic achievement and to take a dim view of failure. However, amongst our four teachers, views about achievement varied and there was not universal regard for academic success.

In terms of their own academic achievements, none claimed to have been very good scholars. What is common is the fact that they passed. In their own lives, therefore, while they have experienced success and failure it is tenacity rather than achievement that has helped them to succeed as teachers. Under these circumstances we might expect to find an appreciation of perseverance and participation rather than outright success. On the other hand, globalising forces in education are inclined to emphasise success and to overlook the virtues of pupils who simply participate.

Matthew did not do well academically, despite attending an elite school, saying, ‘I was a poor scholar. I had no idea of how to approach learning … or I didn’t enjoy it’. Nonetheless, he felt impelled to strive ‘to
Vellie experienced borderline academic success, having achieved the bare minimum grades required and putting the emphasis on passing rather than excelling:

I was okay at school. Then I wrote all my 6 subjects [for the Junior Certificate], and I passed them. So I became a teacher, just like that, at that school. And after that, with the matric, I went to the University of Zululand to do my degree. I wanted to do a BSc, because I was doing maths and physics, only to find that my symbols were not so good … they were D, D, D … so I went for the BA.

Similarly, Mxolisi had difficulties getting the grades he needed to do the degree he would have preferred:

I, at the beginning, I didn’t want to be a teacher, I had other things in mind - doctor, doing engineering at varsity, but I wasn’t good at maths. That was a failure, but that did not discourage me to say no, because I can’t do maths. There’s nothing else I can do.

Turning to the men’s explanations of their academic performance, we can see that each makes different sense of their experiences. Vijay ascribes his underachievement to the hours spent playing soccer - ‘what was supposed to be a B aggregate was becoming a C because I spent little time [on school work]’. However he takes pride in his daughter’s academic success and expressed particular pleasure in the fact that she will be the first in his family to get a degree. In other words, he resolves his own sense of failure by enjoying his children’s success. Matthew offers an analysis of the pedagogic failures of his school to teach him how to learn and of his teachers to nurture him.

I didn’t enjoy [teachers who were] bullies or … that er what would uh probably from my father, the paternal figure, this dominant figure. I didn’t enjoy that sort of thing, the bullying aspect of teaching.

Mxolisi believed that school gave him opportunities and accepts that failing was a useful part of that experience:

You fail, you fail, you have to do something else, you try something else. You might fail again, but you have to pick up the pieces to start again. It’s not a shame. To me I want to try new things. I fail, I learn. … If I fail, what’s the deal, I fail. I try something else again. It’s not a shame to fail to me. It’s something you have to go through at some stage.

Vellie, in contrast to the others, offers no explanation of his low grades, accepting them as being adequate for gaining work and continuing to qualify himself. He seems unconcerned at the mediocrity of his academic performance. Paradoxically, even though he has never done more than pass, he has continually sought to upgrade his qualifications in what de Vries has described as a ‘paper chase’, a process that does not impact on pedagogy but is essential to personal advancement.

When it comes to sport, our teachers all experienced some measure of success, though Mxolisi, never achieved representative honours, which might be explained by the total lack of sporting facilities at his black school in rural South Africa. Matthew represented his province at senior level in rugby (a very prestigious sport for white South Africans); Vijay played high level soccer and was a professional for a short period until he suffered a serious injury; Vellie played softball, a low profile sport, for his school and university.

Matthew is self-deprecating and makes light of his own (sporting) achievements. Neither does he place emphasis on success for his pupils. Indeed, he is dismissive of Oak High’s obsession with competitive sporting success:

You asked the question of pressure and what’s the importance attached to winning - it’s very, very big at the top level … for a big school like this. … you’ll get a group whose parents pride themselves on their knowledge of games and they want to win, and their son must win. He’s sent to this school to win, so there’s this push. … But then you get some, particularly young coaches, coming through - got to win, got to win…winning’s all. You know
they tell the kids: we’ve got to win this one, or else this is a defeat for the whole school. You won’t be able to walk through the corridors, and all sorts of rubbish.

Vijay was proud of his soccer achievements and has fond memories of being coached and encouraged by his father. He now takes similar pleasure in supporting his pupils to play soccer. He is happy about his ability to get his pupils to participate, regardless of the levels of their proficiency. Equally, Mxolisi works with his pupils outside the classroom, believing there is a relationship between performance on the sports field and in class. He understands teaching to be about bringing out the best in pupils in a process that needs to be seen holistically and involves taking an interest in all aspects of the pupils’ lives:

There, there, they do give me pleasure, because I like, I like to see boys outside the classroom situation. I’ve learnt a lot from that. Boys behave differently. The way they behave in class might, because some of the boys, the way I see it, they, people are not the same. Some people enjoy, because they play sport. They come here to play sport. Although parents would like them to concentrate on, on, on their academics, but some are not that gifted. They come here for sport. When you see them on the field, you learn a lot from them, because they enjoy what they doing. When you compare it to what they do in class, it is totally different. I enjoy, I enjoy, I enjoy what I’m seeing outside the classroom situation.

All four teachers are concerned more with participation than success. However, there are major differences between them. The two Oak High teachers, Matthew and Mxolisi, do not wish to get sucked into the ultra-competitive sports ethos of the school, which is a feature of elite schools in a global context and which may be even more emphatically so in a sports-obsessed country like South Africa. The Oak High teachers relate to their pupils in a close and caring way. Despite their different class and race backgrounds, their pedagogy is shared. They condemn corporal punishment and oppose a ‘win at all costs’ philosophy. They are learner-centred and anti-authoritarian. Vijay and Velile, in contrast, are more focused on their own career development than on their relationships with their pupils. They maintain a strict social distance from pupils, which, for Vijay, takes a paternalistic turn. Associated with these attitudes are conservative views about society and about teaching including lamenting the abolition of corporal punishment. At the same time, they do not express inhumane or exploitative views, but nor do they adhere to human rights discourses or national transformation agendas.

Conclusion
What is the relationship between class, masculinity and race amongst our teachers? We address this question by looking at three indices of masculinity: work; authority; and respect.

Work is a key element of masculinity. Our teachers had varied understandings of work. Even amongst the African teachers, there were significant differences of approach. Vellie’s rationale for being a teacher is earning a salary, which he spends primarily on himself. Since beginning his teacher training, he has shunned the provider role, preferring to commit his financial resources to his own well-being, including girlfriends and drinking. Earning a secure salary is also very important for Mxolisi, but for different reasons. His project is to support his extended family of origin, to provide for his own children and create his own family by marriage. Vijay is similarly invested in family and also has concerns about financial security. His salary is important and he has committed this to supporting the academic successes of his children. These black South Africans were all disadvantaged, to varying degrees, by the economic system of apartheid and this is carried through into adulthood in their determination to secure their economic futures. Matthew, coming from a white middle class environment, expresses no such concerns. Financial security has never been an issue for him and continues to play only a small part in his thinking.

Power and masculinity are deeply entwined. To be powerful establishes a claim to manhood. But power is understood in diverse ways. Vellie understands power in terms of patriarchal hierarchy, which he applies equally to his pupils and in his private life. He needs social distance in order to feel powerful and consolidates this distance by his advocacy of corporal punishment and his authoritarian approach to teaching. Mxolisi is much more comfortable with an understanding of power which involves mutual acknowledgement of duty and respect. He has no need to be feared but is affirmed by the affection of his pupils, particularly those from the black townships. Vijay seems to have little interest in exercising power directly, but develops a paternalistic relationship with male pupils who participate in soccer. Like Vellie, he maintains his distance, but his approach draws on the model of the large extended Indian family in which he grew up. It contained hierarchies but, like Mxolisi’s, was united by reciprocal ties of duty and respect. Matthew’s authority in Oak High comes partly from his longevity as a teacher there. His pupils regard him
affectionately at least partly because he bucks the system of authority and competition and is highly approachable. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that he embodies the standards and values of his elite school, which, until relatively recently, was for whites only.

There is, then, no simple symmetry that we can trace between classed, racialised locations and attitudes to teaching. As we have seen, our teachers have negotiated their lives in individual ways that have, nonetheless, been inflected by their race and class. There is much that we can learn about teachers, their work and pedagogy by examining in more detail, the childhood processes which are critical in the shaping of gendered and racialised identities. Such research should not assume any linear or causal link between factors such as race and class, but paying attention to these social forces is equally necessary if we are fully to understand how teacher attitudes and pedagogies are formed.

Notes

1. We would like to acknowledge funding by the Ford Foundation, Grant No. 1035-0493, to Robert Morrell for the primary research for this article.


3. with interviews carried out by Robert Morrell in 2003.


7. Names of teachers and schools have been changed throughout.

8. In 1820 an immigration scheme brought the first relatively large group of British settlers to the Eastern Cape. They eventually formed a kind of ‘colonial aristocracy’ amongst English-speaking white South Africans and valued their descent.


10. Matriculation was, and remains, the school-leaving examination in South Africa. Students must pass ‘matric’ at a certain standard to qualify to go to university. Since the end of apartheid, black teachers who had previously qualified, in the way that Velile did, without matriculating have not been recognised as qualified teacher.

11. Soccer in South Africa has, largely, been a black game, while rugby has been largely white.


URL to article: http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2008/02/23/material-effects-race-class-and-masculinities-among-south-african-teachers/
reckless driving: race through mass spec and global capital on highway 5

Posted By jenny reardon on 23 Feb 2008 @ 10:50 am in 2-Race/Matter [Feb 08], Issues | No Comments

technology corridor, southern California

technoparks, surround me. equipped with a notebook, tape recorder and the questions of an
ethnographer of science, i arrive.

a man white, moustache, casual dress, waits for me outside of the bathroom. ‘jenny’ and a firm
handshake and i am walking down a hallway in a non-descript corporate building with none of the frills.

i arrive at an office. sparsely furnished. one round table with two chairs. a large desk with a computer that
looks like a space module. a scorpion trapped in amber on the table and a photograph of goldie hawn,
kurt russell and the man before me—a photograph that i will only really notice later.

i sit down. the man tells me he has less than an hour, and if our conversation takes less time, that would
be best. this is a man who moves fast. graduated college before 20. a full professor, and chair of a human
genetics department before 30.

i agree to the time stipulation and he begins to tell me stories.

about himself he tells me: ‘i’m iconoclastic. i like to do things differently.’

to a leading tech business rag, he explains, ‘i’m a technology developer.’

by this, i learn he means that he likes to invent new methods, not just new machines. methods and
machines that can visualize molecules that can bring into being a molecular vision of life.

technologies like the one that had solved the problem of molecules being stretched out and
indistinguishable on a gel. a smear on a gel, rather than a sharp, bright, easily resolvable and
distinguishable band. a distinction i am aware of from my own years of working with gels under
light boxes—as anyone who had done their time in molecular labs would be.

very early on he sought to visualize how dna got wrapped up in nuclei.

it makes a certain amount of sense. if we think about the history of genetics and molecular
biology. if we think about watson and crick. watson and crick won the nobel prize for demonstrating the
physical structure of a molecule: dna. it is easy enough to see why someone might think that visualizing
the physical structure of dna in the nucleus might be the next big step.

especially someone with ambition. like the man before me.

certainly he wanted to be ahead of his time. and he wanted to do something big. his interests lay at the
level of the human species.

at the level of its evolution.

at the level of its survival. over the course of the 2 and-a-half hours i spend with him, he presents me with
numerous scenarios for human destruction. ethnic bombs. viruses with the capacity to kill at the level of
the species. threats, he tells me, that he talks about with the u.s. department of defense.
but I don't know the details. Those are government secrets.

disease is a part of this human survival/evolution problem. Maybe disease would not kill the human species, but it could impede its evolution.

The biotech company that this leading geneticist joined a year and a half ago promises to attack this problem by learning more about genetic differences that determine disease resistance and sensitivity to drugs. His job is to lead the development of the new powerful technologies and methods needed to fulfill this promise.

This, he explains, is what it will take first and foremost: new powerful technologies. Sequencing the human genome? We can do that.

But that, he explains, brought us on board with a project of only size $10^9$ nucleotides. To study human genetic differences,

however, one needs the capacity to process and store 7 times more nucleotides. You see, if you multiply the number of humans by the number of genetic differences per human, you come up with a number at the order of $10^{16}$. That's a lot of nucleotides! Handling them requires technological breakthroughs. Greater sequencing speed and handling powers.

Speed. Jumping over the hurdles. The company setting, he tells me, facilitates.

The company, where peer review and academic departmental divisions are distant problems. The company, where money and minds can gather in large enough quantities to do something really new.

Innovation. Being ahead of the rest. The values that this day narrate a life, a new science and some-say industry. Pharmacogenomics.

Flying down highway 5, I am one of the many individual modules darting stochastically in an out of lanes like some spacecraft in a Hollywood sci-fi film. I look around me at the landscape. Bare, dusty. History erased, it becomes a dreamscape. A place to project and imagine what you like.

It attracts me. I am American enough, white enough. I have spent enough time under big sky and landscapes that rolled out for miles unimpeded, where the resting point for meditation is the horizon … I am enough something, anyway, to feel freedom and power in this landscape.

Looking at the synthetic space-age technoparks that dot the landscape from this point of reflection now, though, I ask myself, what do I not see? What is left out of this landscape? What do I leave behind as I speed down highway 5?

What is absent or lost? In that landscape? In that man's story? So many like his in biotechnopark America.

American biotechnopark 'Society'

In these stories 'Society' collapses into 'biology'. In particular, race, understood in post-civil rights America to be a social construct, becomes biological.

Race,
a central ordering tool in American society, used to oppress
and to segregate

and sometimes to empower …

disappears.

speeding down highway 5, weaving through the back streets of cambridgeport, surging across the bays of northern california in the midst of dna/silicon worlds, these social realms made up of job applications, census forms, lynchings, internment camps, the u.s. constitution, blood donor forms, segregation, eating practices, civil rights laws and

even just the mere pouring of concrete that makes all this highway travel possible … are nowhere in sight.

passed by too quickly to discern. in these biotechnopark worlds of speed, innovation and purity, where we are told that the holy grail is saving human life, *this* thick embedded social appears only as one big smear on the agarose superhighways of genomics. no technology yet invented too fix *this* resolution problem.

at these speeds, amidst these landscapes, this thick ‘social’ drops out. another replaces it. an american biotechnopark ‘social’. that which lies on the other side of biological dystopias. the dystopias i learned about on highway 5.

we are not evolving fast enough. we might go extinct in the face of the more rapid evolution of silicon. dna might lose out to silicon. humans to computers. just think about how much time we spend on email, he told me. we looked at his seventies sci-fi designed computer and pondered together.

in this ‘social’ it is all about survival-of-the fittest. and in the tradition of many of the ‘great scientists’ who have come before him, he has just written a fictional short story about it.

check your email, jenny. it should be arriving via the e-highway anytime now.

in these stories, on this highway, at this speed, society and biology collapse.

driving so fast, no technical assistance to disaggregate this smear, resolution becomes a different kind of power.

the power to create the belief that we see clearly the construction of a dna world. a world whose time has come. a world whose time will quickly pass. to be replaced by another world whose time will have come.

this is the belief. these are the socials i find populating biotechnopark america. evolutionary survival-of-the-fittest imaginaries. social imaginaries that might find a home in that white ethereal castle-like church that surged by me somewhere near la jolla …

but these stories have pushed me into wondering if we see anything clearly at this speed, with *these* technologies of resolution.
on highway 5 they say they have never made a mistake. they have never confused an 'a' with a 'c' or a 'g'
with a 't'. they see dna 300 times better than anyone else.

they have never made a mistake!

but if there is such clarity, why did i/we ride so roughshod through the landscape of race three
days ago? where did that mess of our conversation come from?

race through global capital and mass spec on highway 5

you tell me that your company’s technologies enable us to see a, g, c, and t with absolute clarity. these
a’s g’s c’s and t’s will be used to visualize human bodies in a “rational” manner so that cures and drugs
can berationally designed—so that you can "give people better medicine." ¹

to do this you imagine individual human bodies as your subjects. you promise to fit these individuals with
designer molecular drugs.
you tell me.
the advertisements tell me.
www.wallstreetradio.com reports.
it is the well-glossed goal: molecular medicine for all.

the new american dream???

but i ask more questions and the practical reality begins to materialize. three weeks ago your
company’s goals switched from individual-based DNA testing
to population-based. it makes good historical sense. it tracks a tried and true method in genetic
studies of diversity. locate diversity by looking at groups.

dobzhansky, for example, one of the fathers of population genetics, travelled the backroads of california
to collect drosophila from different populations.

populations isolated by geography and land form. canyons and mountain ranges. he believed that these
different populations of drosophila contained genetic differences that made them different from the fly that
thomas hunt morgan, that original of genome mappers, characterized back in his labs in new york city.

the flies of wildrose canyon, lone pine, pear blossom?

these flies were all-american flies, distinct in their own way: chiricuhua chromosomes; arrowhead alleles;
whitney gene arrangements…

so now you, your company and many other research groups in industry and government only want to do
for humans what dobzhansky did for the flies.

demonstrate their diversity. characterize their diversity.

right?

as simple as that?
In biology, populations are defined as breeding pools. Breeding pools differ from each other. They carry particular genetic differences at higher frequencies than other breeding pools. They aggregate, in this case genetic differences, so they are more easily found. They provide better statistics. They cluster. So yes, I understand.

Populations collect differences into a searchable domain. They are the haystacks.

The new spectropometric devices the company has devised to search and find. They are the reapers. They search and find quickly. Very quickly. 100 times faster than any other available method. Both (the populations, spec analysis) make it possible to discover human genetic differences with greater and greater speed.

As these differences are found, there will be more cocktail parties and promises of designer medicine for "individuals." For this many will receive money and prestige.

But today we do not talk about this. Today we only talk about the good of the human species and solving disease.

Eventually you direct my attention to the photograph on the table and tell me about your plans for a Hollywood cosmetics company.

'Vanity genetics'. The wave of your future.

But let's get back to those haystacks.

Because in the project you have proposed, as well as the countless others emerging in human genomics now, not only do you have to find needles, you have to find haystacks.

To do that you have to define them. And so I ask you, how are you defining the haystacks?

Who are the populations?

You tell me 'asians' and 'blacks.' These seemed to be your favorites. Oh, and 'the orientals.' You did best with the 'asians.' You could divide them into 'koreans,' 'japanese' and 'chinese.' You told me...
anyone could, just by visual inspection of their faces. humans are good at that, you say.

you explain:

*I think most of us can distinguish almost everyone we have ever met, right? And you are probably not rationally thinking about how you are doing this, but obviously the standard anthropological measures of the headwidth, head length and, you know, thickness of the lips and the way the nose is constructed, the color of the eyes and all this, ok? So there is no reason why you couldn’t segment by eye color if you wanted to.²*

you invite my assent, but i only shakily look back at you and ask:

‘what about the ‘blacks’? how would you subpopulate the ‘blacks’ into manageable, meaningful groups?

well i ask about ‘blacks’ and you want to dart back into the fast lane of highway 5 again, where just individuals negotiate the clearly demarcated lanes.

where the routes are already charted and you no longer seemingly need group organization: your population-based analysis.

i point this out to you and you back up. you say ‘ok, perhaps we can organize these ‘blacks’. you explain that what these technologies of speed are

*…going to allow people to do for the first time—because of the power that we now have—is to make hypotheses and test them … So if you have 10, 000 blacks, and you think you want to divide them this way or that way or this way or that way well, we can do … these studies quickly so you can try all of it and see which ones give you the sensible patterns of results. we could take facial measures.³*

you tell me.

but now you are no longer on highway five, my friend. you are on the dusty trails of the wild west. i thought respectable scientists gave up on facial measures in the 19th century! so why does this not strike you? have you not been reading the critiques made by your population geneticist and anthropologist colleagues?

facial measures, any physical marker, as a sign of meaningful biological groups? did you not read your history books? you see, because if you did they’d tell you that “this” notion of biologically meaningful races went out of style over 50 years ago now.⁴

maybe you’re ahead of the history books?

whatever is going on, could you please slow down? i mean, you did not tell me about all the technologies i would need to talk to you today. i left my spacecraft in the parking lot. and you made no mention of a need for a time machine. and without their help, this ride is getting a little too rough.

you see (or can’t you see) that all this is about more than just disease. the technologies, sciences, informed consent forms, blood donor forms, fancy light systems involved here will make more than just new approaches to medicine. where are the technologies to visualize these processes of scientific and social construction?

and what about this genomic medicine? the one recognized product of this whole endeavour. what kind of medicine, cures and drugs will be developed using these racially structured search and find technologies?

well, i don’t know, but i can say this. you and many other geneticists, chemists, anthropologists … scientists that are clustering together in new ways to form the emerging field/some-say industry of pharmacogenomics travel to points on the genome via funny roads.
categories used to facilitate this world’s obsession with sorting self from other, slave from non-slave, entitled from dispossessed quickly and rapidly reworked to build technologies to locate disease alleles on the human genome.

but is anyone sure that these are the best, most well-lit routes? why do we change lanes so quickly? in and then out. weaving madly through the traffic of racial and ethnic identities?

‘asiains’ then ‘orientals.’
‘blacks’?
perhaps a population geneticist could not define them, but an anthropologist could. the pygmies, right?

…everyone clusters the Pygmies. That is real easy.  
you tell me.

‘blacks’?

… a lot of the Blacks in this country are probably so mixed that it is probably useless to try to sort them out.  

but, that doesn’t matter.

…ultimately at the level of medical diagnostic it’s the individual .. all you really care about is what alleles does that individual have.

we are all individuals in the eyes of genetics, and at this level we can all be "treated" the same.

‘blacks’?

well, ok, if you persist in asking. ok, yes, they exist. facial measures tell us that …  
am i the only one who is feeling what this molecular vision of life, prosperity and health for all leaves out?

am i the only one who is beginning to feel the queasiness of building worlds outside of the (yes, i know) annoyingly slow political bureaucratic stuff of public oversight and peer review?

accept that ‘the public good’ is easily and clearly defined and yes, things do go a lot faster.

with a clear goal, and no social and political differences to mediate?

yes, the sky’s the limit!

with no questions about the construction of race and identity?

yes, we will indeed travel at high speeds!

and we will create massive amounts of data.
and we will find correlations between the groups and disease alleles we define.

and we will be able to demonstrate this to stockholders.
and there will be more glossy spreads.

and we will all surge into the future.

and i know the allure.

i drove down highway 5 today too.

but man, slow down.

this is reckless driving.

Notes

1. Interview with author, October 29, 1999 [↩]
2. Ibid. [↩]
3. Ibid. [↩]
5. Interview with author, October 29, 1999. [↩]
6. Ibid. [↩]
7. Ibid. [↩]
8. Ibid. [↩]
The materiality of race theory

Posted By ben pitcher on 23 Feb 2008 @ 8:49 am in 2-Race/Matter [Feb 08], Issues | No Comments

In this article I want to think not about the materiality of race, but about the material dimensions of race theory. In particular, I want to consider as material the relationship between race theory and an anti-racist politics in contemporary Britain. Though what follows is focused on the problematization of anti-essentialism, my object is not to construct some reactionary ‘materialist’ critique of anti-essentialist theory, but rather to insist that we need to be critically attentive to the materiality of theory itself. It is, I will suggest, only the recognition of this inherent materiality that equips any form of theoretical practice with the necessary tools to serve as the agent of a meaningful politics of anti-racism.

While anti-essentialist critiques of race-thinking are quite right to insist that race can never be fully grounded in the material, it is, as I have argued elsewhere, equally mistaken to deny or refuse a necessary relationship between the two. I therefore do not consider it particularly productive to reintroduce materialism to race theory from the outside, on account of it having been there all along.

Having said this, it is easy to see where the desire to augment race theory with an external conception of materiality might come from. The theoretical commitment to anti-essentialism that is dominant in the field of contemporary race thinking does not appear particularly well-equipped to deal with the social facticity of race, or to engage critically with many current sites of racial practice. The present relationship, for example, between racialization and the cultural, political and territorial reconfigurations of global capitalism seems to demand just such a materialist supplement given the way that pluralist models of race and culture alone appear to operate quite comfortably within the ideologies of neo-liberalism and the logics of capital.

While I have some sympathy with this kind of position, there is a real danger in adopting a model of materialism without due recognition of the already-material nature of race theory. Indeed, to make such a move would be to risk perpetuating a false theory/practice distinction that would result in the containment of that materialism within a theoretical discourse perversely unaware of its own materiality. It is, in other words, imperative that we first recognize the material dimensions of race theory if we are not to end up replicating the conditions under which a turn to materialism is considered necessary in the first place.

If recognition of the material dimensions of race theory is the precondition of its effectivity, there is little to be gained from embarking on a classically materialist critique of anti-essentialism. To pick a fight with anti-essentialism as such would effectively be to restage those rather empty tussles where a fashionable poststructuralist lexicon is berated for its ironies, equivocations and ambiguities by an unreflexively empirical conception of race politics. Such an argument would, among other things, neglect the extent to which the critique of concepts like hybridity has taken place within contemporary race theory itself.

Though I want to think critically about the orthodox status of anti-essentialism in contemporary race theory, the conception of materialism I want to employ here is based on an alternative critical framing that is not confined within an unproductive binary of essentialism and anti-essentialism. Rather than construct yet another conceptually workable articulation of the particular and the universal, the strategic and the contingent, this perspective does not derive from any crude distinction between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’; nor is it formed by differentiating the discursive and non-discursive, a distinction often retained by those working in the Foucauldian tradition. By insisting on the material character of discursive structures, I hold onto a conception of discourse as both material and semiotic. As well as guarding against the potentially facile mobilization of materialism to ground or ‘save’ race theory from a purely ideational existence, this understanding of discourse underlines the institutional embeddedness of beliefs and practices, and forces us to recognize the broader social and political contexts that underpin and give meaning to what might otherwise be thought of (quite erroneously) as occurring solely within a theoretical realm.

It is this understanding of the material dimensions of theoretical discourse that I want to use to
problematize a recent shift in dominant discourses of race. In particular I want to consider how an impeccably anti-essentialist vocabulary has effectively become installed as hegemonic in a variety of contemporary social contexts - and in particular mainstream political discourse. I not only want to suggest that some of anti-racism’s key conceptual resources have been appropriated to dubious political ends, but also that such approaches reveal a real problem with the capacity of contemporary race theory to obtain a critical purchase that is sufficient to contest such appropriations.

The Institutionalization of Anti-Essentialism
As an illustration, consider the example provided by the recently inaugurated (October 2007) Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). The CEHR is designed to incorporate into the British equalities framework new European legislation outlawing discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, religion and age. It has done this by replacing a ‘strand’ approach - where specialized quangos had focused on separate equalities strands - with a single body tasked with tackling them all.

What I want to highlight here is the sense in which the operational philosophy of the CEHR incorporates, and is to a degree legitimated by, the pluralist model of anti-essentialist identity construction that is dominant in contemporary academic race thinking. As Patricia Hewitt, Cabinet Minister for Women, argued in this speech that launched the CEHR white paper:

In a world where individual identities are becoming increasingly important we need to see people as a whole - not put them in boxes marked race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability (p. 4).

Those involved in the setting up and running of the CEHR go out of their way to emphasize a multiple and cross-cutting characterization of social discrimination; they stress the irreducibility of the individual to a sexual, racial or gendered identity, the degree to which the particular exceeds or escapes the general, placing emphasis on the hybrid, the contingent, and so on.

While such conceptualizations might be applauded for their attempt to recognize the irreducible multiplicities of social life and the subtle and complex mechanics of identity construction, this does not automatically mean that they provide a particularly convincing or workable framework for dealing with issues of social discrimination. My suggestion is not only that the mobilization of an anti-essentialist discourse of race within the CEHR is inappropriate to the task at hand, but moreover that it has encouraged an unhelpful focus on individual capabilities and foregone what would have been a more productive emphasis on collective and group rights.

Although it is, as feminists have for a long time argued, important to recognize the intersectional nature of social discrimination, the apparent move in social policy circles to construct a viable model of practice from the contingent triangulation of multiple identities fails to address the stubborn realities of social discrimination. While the unsubtle generalizations of ‘identity politics’ may be out of favour in contemporary race theory, it remains the case that many acts of prejudice and discrimination continue to be premised on just such grounds: to mobilize anti-essentialism as a means of combating racism might in some cases be about as effective as pretending that it doesn’t exist.

I am not trying to suggest that the weaknesses of the CEHR are in any simple and straightforward sense the result of the appropriation of anti-essentialist race theory within a governmental policy arena. Rather, I am trying to highlight a certain tacit complicity at the level of theory that prevents those working in this field being critical of such state projects. This failure to criticize, I want to suggest, is practically the same as approval, and effectively functions as a mechanism for the legitimation of those projects.

The Decontextualization of Theoretical Practice
To understand how this process of unsolicited or passive legitimation has come into being, it is necessary to consider the historical dimensions of theoretical practice that first made the kind of anti-essentialism I have been describing an important component of anti-racism (as well as the other political projects we associate with the New Left). This kind of critique was pioneered in the race theory of twenty to thirty years ago - particularly that deriving from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies - and was at that moment immensely important in curbing unhelpfully essentializing tendencies in social movement politics that prevented recognition of their own contingencies, and thus, amongst other things, the potential for their mutual articulation.
In particular, a theoretical anti-essentialism provided an important counterpoint to forms of anti-racist politics that mobilized a social constituency in accordance with potentially reductive and indeed reactionary forms of identity and belonging. In addition, and just as importantly, it arguably served as a foil to the institutional forms of representation that had been developed in governmental and quasi-governmental bodies on both local and national levels. In other words, the critical anti-essentialism of the British race theory of the 1970s and 80s was always in implicit dialogue with the very different models and forms of political identification and representation that it existed alongside.

This is an obvious historiographic point, but I think quite an important one. What has happened in the more recent history of race theory is not just a falling away of an awareness of the specific context of its earlier elaboration, but - more significantly - a falling away of that context itself. The anti-essentialism of contemporary race theory is no longer an important supplement to the essentializing tendencies of an organized black politics: a black politics (in this classic sense) does not in fact any longer exist. Race theory’s anti-essentialism is no longer pitched against the reductive tendencies of official representative and advocacy bodies: as I have shown, a form of anti-essentialism (however nominal) has recently been taken on as the defining feature of state-sponsored equalities practice.

Though I would argue that the anti-essentialism of race theory no longer operates as a critical resource within the broader political contexts it once did, many of its academic exponents - almost as a basic operating premiss - tend to assume that it has somehow retained this same political function. This example points, I think, to a wider problem with the status of theory within the humanities and social sciences: the operational logic of theoretical practice habitually transforms what began as strategic interventions into particular social and political conjunctures into universal theoretical truths. The universalization of anti-essentialism in contemporary race theory has worked to conceal from view the wider contextual underpinnings of meaningful political practice.

While, as I am trying to suggest, it was the particular historical conditions of its development that were the guarantee of anti-essentialism’s initial political efficacy in the 1970s and 80s, knowledge of this necessary context is rather limited amongst those studying race and racism today. This is arguably because such an understanding operates outside of the realm of theory. Theorists of anti-essentialism may never have fully acknowledged this, but successful work done in its name has nonetheless always depended on an implicit relationship to a concept of the political exterior to itself. Though this was no more or no less than a kind of background function of the theory’s specific historical context, it was nevertheless a relationship that underwrote its relevance as an effective political intervention.

There is a real problem here because, for a number of reasons, contemporary race theory has retained a serious commitment to anti-essentialism regardless of the changed social and political contexts in which it is now operative. Indeed, it could be argued that anti-essentialism has become the privileged content of the majority of the work that is now done on race and racism in the academy today, and is certainly a strong feature of the taught curriculum. While in fact there is nothing intrinsic to an anti-essentialist stance per se that makes it the agent of a progressive anti-racist politics, there still seems to be a widespread assumption that anti-essentialism will always remain a tool of the left.

It is this mistaken belief in the innately progressive character of anti-essentialist discourse that has in my view facilitated its appropriation to politically regressive ends. What remains in race theory is commonly an abstract, doctrinal anti-essentialism that no longer works within a broader political context. As a result of this lack of contextualization, it has become easier for a discourse of anti-essentialism to be put to work in the service of a range of different political agendas. This has simply been a classic case of hegemonic rearticulation. What had once made anti-essentialism work as a key part of the anti-racist project was its articulation within an expansive political framework. In the absence of these articulations, the political meaning of anti-essentialism has been largely up for grabs. Because it is still thought by many working on race and racism in the academy that anti-essentialism remains innately progressive in character, there is a mistaken belief that practices that take place in its name must similarly be part of a progressive political agenda. As such, it becomes very difficult to mobilize a critical vocabulary that is able to take its politically wayward appropriations to task.

**A Materialist Imperative**

It should now be quite clear what it is I mean by the need to recognize the material dimensions of race theory. A turn to materialism in the theorization of race is, without this recognition, effectively an idealist manoeuvre. The primary materialist imperative, in my view, is simply an injunction not to consider
Indeed, this conceptualization of materialism is receptive to a wide range of critical resources, ranging from the field of practice otherwise unhelpfully sutured by overly reductive understandings of what materialism is. Theory rather than being a theoretical supplement or alternative to an immaterial theory helps to open up a field of practice otherwise unhelpfully sutured by overly reductive understandings of what materialism is. Indeed, this conceptualization of materialism is receptive to a wide range of critical resources, ranging from a deconstructive anti-essentialism to a methodologically orthodox Marxism.¹²

I do not pretend here to be making anything resembling an original point. Any coherent political methodology would consider it axiomatic to recognize the broader functions and effects of theoretical practice. Yet it nevertheless remains the case that this procedural banality appears to have been erased from the field of much contemporary race theory. I have so far described this refusal to recognize the materiality of theory as an example of collective negligence, but of course it could be (and most likely is) sometimes the case that this refusal is made in full consciousness of its depoliticizing tendencies. The motives for such intentional refusals are not hard to understand: theory can be neater and in a way more ambitious when it remains contained within its own hermeneutic, for the political is a messy realm of bastardization and compromise, and will sometimes only be able to serve theory by proving its impotence. It is no wonder then that some contemporary race theorists will avoid acknowledgement of the materiality of theory (and if pushed might shyly confess that their interests are not really political at all).

Yet the political still retains its status as the key legitimating discourse of race theory, just as it remains the master signifier that bears meaning right across the humanities and social sciences. In the shape of contemporary race theory’s doctrinal anti-essentialism we therefore have a conceptual object perfectly tailored for the theoretical practices of those who have no real interest in an anti-racist politics. As I argued earlier, this anti-essentialism references a politics, but no longer has a real political project of its own. To retain an appearance of being politically engagé, those working on race and racism in the academy thus maintain an association with an idea of the political founded on the (now passed) historical conditions of effective anti-essentialist practice: even the intentional refusal of the political relies on the trope of politics. Anti-essentialism - as a signer of a ‘politically committed’ race theory - has taken on an iconic status as shorthand for the symbolic contribution of race theorists to anti-racist practice made necessary by the normative requirements of the academic field.

There are formal similarities here between the way anti-essentialism works in ‘apolitical’ race theory as a signer of a progressive politics, and the example of anti-essentialism’s hegemonic rearticulation to dubious political ends. In both cases, what needs to be understood is the strength of the lingering association between the concept of anti-essentialism and a politics of anti-racism. As I have already argued, the problem here is not one of recognizing that anti-essentialism does not ‘belong’ to anti-racism, but conversely of being able to account for the ways in which it maintains a semblance of belonging - often a primary association - even when that relationship no longer exists in any meaningful sense. It is all very well to acknowledge that a concept like anti-essentialism can have liberal, conservative, reactionary, etc., variants, but such acknowledgements do not capture the peculiar obduracy of anti-essentialism to retain an association - however nominal - with a progressive politics. An understanding of this phenomenon is absolutely crucial if we are to try to contest the (mis)appropriation of anti-racism, and defend a critical discourse that is able to retain a critical purchase on racist practice.¹³

Hegemonizing the Left
I therefore want to end this article by thinking a little about how this phenomenon of appropriation - crudely speaking, from left to right - takes place. I want to move on from thinking just about race theory, and broaden this problematic to take in a wider range of political projects. How and why is it, I want to ask, that putatively ‘progressive’ discourses are being installed as dominant in a wide range of contemporary social contexts? Though it might appear perverse in our current political climate, I want to suggest that one way of understanding these successes is to recognize that the left is winning a lot of the arguments. It is far more fashionable - at least in the public realm - to be anti-racist than to be racist; to support notions of gender equality than be sexist, and so on. These are examples of moral arguments pioneered by the New Left that have, I would suggest, been pretty decisively won.

Of course, these ‘successes’ are deeply problematic, in that they are all to some extent examples of putatively critical discourses (just like anti-essentialism) that have been incorporated into some of the very
practices they had ‘originally’ set themselves against. Their success extends beyond the politics they supposedly name, to the extent that they have in many cases served as a mechanism for the betrayal of that politics, a politics that has been stripped by hegemonic methods of its own critical vocabulary.

This is where I think it is useful to think about ethics. You can win a moral argument and still lose the war when the moral argument is co-opted by your political enemies. My thinking here is very different to a lot of the recent debates about ethics, in that I’m not interested in thinking about or defining the content of the ethical, but rather how it functions as a container for our idea of the good, with a focus on the social status of ethics as morally authoritative. Another way of putting this is that ethics signifies a linguistic marker that references - but does not necessarily coincide with - a set of politically progressive practices. Ethics therefore gestures towards an ‘original’ meaning (this is importantly from where is derives its moral power), but does not necessarily work in its service. The transformation of politics into ethics here is the transformation of a discourse your enemy finds unpalatable to one your enemy agrees with and signs up to. Ethics are the function of the moral incontrovertibility (the discursive hegemony) of a progressive politics. The non-negotiability of certain ethical positions has meant that their antagonists no longer argue against them, but incorporate them as their own.

How, for example, does a contemporary state construct legitimacy for the indiscriminate bombing of a sovereign nation like Afghanistan (or Yugoslavia, or Iraq)? If does so in the name of feminism. How does a contemporary political party attempt to garner the popular vote for socially and ecologically destructive policies? It does so in the name of environmentalism. These examples demonstrate incredibly clearly how what we might loosely term - and still defend as - a left politics is co-opted in the service of reactionary political agendas.

The difficulty here - just as with the hegemony of anti-essentialism - is to find a means of contesting these appropriations. What happens when those to whom you are opposed appear to speak precisely the same language as you do? While there remains a lot of thinking to be done here, it seems clear to me that the answer lies - at least in part - in being able to connect up our theoretical positions with the wider contexts within which they are operative. Although this does not involve an anachronistic reconfiguration of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’, it does nevertheless have much in common with the kinds of academic thinking that used to consider reflection on such issues to be the precondition of an effective politics. In particular, the version of materialism I have been promoting in this article could allow us to see more clearly the kinds of historical and socio-cultural contexts that have rendered particular theoretical positions politically productive, and those that have not. By recognizing the deeply material character of discourse - that even the most abstruse linguistic abstraction is linked into the social - and by working on the establishment of mechanisms to expose this materiality of theoretical discourse, it might become possible for us to retain a hold on progressive discourses that are otherwise at risk of becoming absorbed into the object of their critique.

Notes

1. Though my general argument is not confined to Britain, this relationship is set out in relation to a specific political conjuncture that has taken on different forms within, beyond and across other national contexts.
3. Where race was dealt with by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), sex discrimination by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and disability by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).
4. I am using the concept of legitimation here in the broadest of senses - that academic race theory helps to institute a hegemonic discourse that is held by cultural elites, and which therefore helps to shape a dominant intellectual consensus. I am also employing this concept to highlight the role that should be played (but which is not necessarily played in practice) by an explicitly political theorization of race, a key marker of which is precisely the capacity to contest politically regressive dimensions of state practice.
5. Plans for the CEHR were received with unremitting hostility by the vast majority of black and anti-racist groups and organizations involved in its consultation. Their concerns were, inter alia, about the marginalization of race within an enlarged equalities agenda and the general depoliticization of race issues, the adoption of an individualizing methodology, the CEHR’s clear contempt for existing campaign groups, a reduction in resources provided for corporate legal actions, and the
unrepresentative nature of key CEHR staff. For an overview of critical opposition to the CEHR consultations, see the chronology set out by the 1990 Trust, which can be accessed here.

6. The historical relationship between equalities campaigning and state recognition is a complex one. The European equalities legislation that the CEHR is supposed to promote would certainly not have come about without the pressure of social movements organizing in relatively autonomous ‘strands’. Though it is encouraging to see serious work being done that recognizes the difficulties of constructing a meaningful politics between and across strands, it is by no means certain that the institutionalized intersectionality currently being championed by feminist activists at the European level is going to be the best way of guaranteeing an effective plural equalities agenda. For a recent example of these debates, see European Journal of Women's Studies (2006) 13(3).

7. Of course, essentialism is live and well in a lot of contemporary race politics. The point I am trying to make here is not that race theory’s anti-essentialism is somehow unnecessary, but rather that its contemporary articulation does not work in the way in once did, and in fact risks being wielded to politically regressive ends (consider, for example, the way that the anti-essentialist critique of religious identities has neatly played into the hands of the right in the context of the War on Terror).

8. The irony here is that the adoption of an anti-essentialist stance 30 odd years ago was made in full knowledge of its strategic and contingent nature.

9. I am not trying to suggest here that the co-optation of progressive race discourse is in itself a new phenomenon: there is a long and complex relationship between anti-racism and the state where the latter is typically quick to recognize the political capital that can be accrued by speaking the language of its critics. My object here is really just to highlight the fact that these borrowings will always require a careful rethinking of anti-racist practice, and that this is a rethinking - in relation to the latest round of appropriation - that is in my opinion rather long overdue. I fear the relative absence of progressive academic voices in Britain engaging at a theoretical level in the critique of the CEHR rather proves my point.

10. It has been suggested that my refusal to name names in this critique of the ‘abstract, doctrinal anti-essentialism’ of contemporary race theory is testimony either to a failure of nerve, or to the sense in which I have indulged in caricature and set up a straw target to serve my own argument. I contest that my intention here is to point to a general tendency in academic race theory, and though it would indeed be possible for me to select examples, this would in my opinion occult the broader point I am trying to make. The tendency to privilege anti-essentialism (as a theoretical commitment) over the specific context of its elaboration is absolutely a function of academic work in the current historical conjuncture. To single out particular individuals rather misses the point, as such practices are very much the rule rather than the exception. Indeed, while I go on to argue immediately below for alternative materialist orientations, a similar critique of academic idealism can absolutely be made of the text you are currently reading. It is perhaps a little disconcerting to think that most academic work on race today effectively takes place in a political vacuum, but it is my belief that the argument I make here might bring us a little closer to tackling this problem, and as a result not an entirely pointless exercise.

12. To clarify my position here: this is not an argument against anti-essentialism as part of a progressive politics, and it is certainly not an argument advocating some kind of neo-essentialism. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the idea is to step outside of the rather unproductive binary of essentialism and anti-essentialism. While I’m therefore intentionally agnostic about the relative merits of either as the necessary conduit of a progressive politics, I would still be the first to acknowledge the historical importance of anti-essentialism as a key weapon in the theoretical armoury of anti-racism; indeed, it is precisely the significance of anti-essentialism to progressive political projects that motivates my concern with its ‘failures’. The point is that anti-essentialism alone is not a sufficient guarantee of political effectivity, and that the fixation on anti-essentialism as the sine qua non of race politics obfuscates this insufficiency.

13. Of course, there is far more to be said about the ways that we might go about tackling what Sara Ahmed has called ‘the non-performativity of anti-racist speech acts’. In particular, it might be useful to do some historical work on the development of progressive political struggles that is particularly attentive to the forms of discursive appropriation. This perspective might allow for a reassessment of currently unfashionable concepts like black self-organization, not as part of a politics of essence or even embodiment, but as a mode of rhetorically fixing an anti-racist politics that successfully links theoretical work to its wider realm of application along the lines of the methodological materialism I have been recommending here.

14. Essential to this understanding of ethics is what I can only describe as its psycho-affective dimension - the sense in which an ethical position convinces even if it has become entirely detached from the politics it ostensibly names. As such, it might be thought of as a secular equivalent to the category of religious belief.
15. While the truism about history being written by its victors still stands, we should note that the content of this history is often provided by history's losers. The ethics of historical struggles (for democracy, enfranchisement, emancipation, etc.) are not denied, but reappropriated (rearticulated). This is why moral victories are usually hollow victories. [↩]
To pose the question of the materiality of race is also, if one is inclined to trace the genealogy and circumstance of this problematic, to pose the question of multiculturalism’s ‘failure’. This is understood - and there are more or less conservative and liberal versions of this - as the failure of multiculturalism to sufficiently deliver on its promise of a redistribution or expansion of rights (and recognition) when confronted with what are said to be intractable racial differences. In other words: race marks the boundary of that which is considered to not be amenable to will; that which lies beyond or without will, that which is deemed as being neither responsive to liberalism’s ‘good will’ nor capable of assuming its inclination. It is the composition of a pre- or a-political category in the constitution and administration of the biopolitical, or the political as a ‘way of life’, and where the political is defined as the exercise of will. In this way, to speak of race is, presumably, not partake of politics but to present life, as such, within the domain of the political; and precisely because the political increasingly assumes the depoliticised demeanour of ‘a way of life’. It is the tension between the two principal axes of governance - the ‘management and care of populations’ and the ‘expression of the will of the people’ - seeking relief in identity, which is to say, by tracing the ends of the political in the termination of politics. In any case, there are more than a few ways to elaborate on the seemingly inexorable trajectory of multiculturalism’s ‘failure’. Nevertheless, let’s consider (what is widely, if superficially, regarded as) the passage in Australia from official celebrations of multicultural diversity and indigeneity in the 1980s to current systems of migration internment and border policing, alongside more recent moves to completely dislodge those indigenous peoples from lands that they are deemed to not be using ‘productively’ (for tourism, through contracts with mining companies, the leasing of land for uranium waste dumps, and so on).

It is likely not essential to reiterate here the changes to Australian border laws, which I’ve discussed elsewhere, but it is perhaps important to say something more about the history and recent predicament of indigenous politics in Australia so as to situate the above and subsequent remarks. After persistent campaigns for indigenous land rights that reached a high-point in the 1980s, in 1992 the High Court effectively voided the principle of terra nullius - ‘empty land’ - that had served as the legal condition of expropriation. Promptly following this judgement, successive Labor and Liberal-National governments elaborated a series of so-called Native Title laws. Those laws both sought to immunise postcolonial property and placed increasingly difficult and complex restrictions on which lands could be re-claimed by indigenous people and under what conditions. With such laws, as was the case with wider multicultural policies, the very sense of who was represented and recognised as part of discrete ‘ethnicities’ and ‘communities’ became a matter that turned both around inclusion and exclusion, which is to say,
the borders. Their introduction precipitated often bitter lengthy courtroom - and sometimes violent - contests for representation and its bureaucratic or (most often paltry) fiscal benefits. To put this another way: the really-existing consequence of multiculturalism was the ‘internalisation’ of conflict in the form of disputes over authenticity, identity and its borders.

Far from the tribunals, associated processes and conflicts, the enactment of Native Title laws were widely hailed as an accomplishment of liberalism, a sign of beneficience and national maturity. And it is this sense of achievement that would serve to situate questions about indigenous life - and the persistence of slow death in the form of the well-known diseases and blights of destitution that pervade many remote indigenous towns- as questions internal to indigenous ‘culture’, as dysfunction and pathology arising from an inherent failure by indigenous peoples to integrate, modernise, and ‘move on’. In “Disappointing Indigenous People: Violence and the Refusal of Help”, Gillian Cowlishaw put it this way:

The legitimating of cultural difference, especially in the recognition of land claims and native title, was always the target of contempt for those despised as rednecks and populists. Gradually, as the expected benefits were not apparent, as images of black people still sitting in the dust remained on our television screens, and as dispiriting statistics continued to be published, an uneasiness with self-determination and with recognition of Indigenous tradition extended into the most sympathetic and caring segments of the public. The earlier backlash concerned the continued drain on the public purse, which is widely seen to be generous toward Indigenous people. But now there is a perception that the Indigenous social body may be recalcitrant, unable or perhaps unwilling to be helped (Johns 2001), or being offered the wrong kind of help by mistaken politicians or bureaucrats (Folds 2001). In the midst of a generalized goodwill, pity vies with impatience toward those who receive as well as toward those who offer the nation’s beneficence.

Indeed, the traumatic encounter by liberals with those who seemed to refuse the ministrations of the ‘helping professions’ would become the righteous bridge that wouldshift many to clamour for punitive and, at times, paramilitary measures. Most notably, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) called for military intervention to stem ‘gang violence’, and the head of the Northern Territory branch of the AMA wrote to the Prime Minister declaring that indigenous people were “culturally incapable of managing health services”.

And so, in mid-2007 - and the affective landscape of an impending election, in which authoritarian sovereign gestures have long served as leverage in Australian politics, cannot be understated - the Australian government declared a ‘national emergency’ on the pretext of an anecdotal ‘epidemic’ of child sexual abuse in remote indigenous communities. On the one hand, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs could announce these ‘emergency’ laws by declaring indigenous towns and camps to be “a failed society where law and order and behaviour have broken down and where women and children are unsafe” - thus embellishing on the paternalistic (and racialised masculine) precedent of military and police intervention in the Pacific on the basis of proclamations of ‘failed states’. Here, the traversal of
the distinction between military and police action - initially spanned in the conduct of border policing operations and, not soon after, in the relaunching of Australia’s role as neo-colonial authority in the Pacific - acquired a particular clarity as chivalrous, patriarchal restorative in its presumable defense of women and children. On the other hand, conflicts between indigenous people were increasingly understood as proof of dysfunction, ‘gang warfare’ and, what is perhaps more traumatic for well-intentioned nationalism, of the ‘breakdown’ of a never-existing homogeneity of indigenous community.

The emergency and the exceptions it elaborated were both juridical - insofar as the measures suspended the normal functioning of the law - and depoliticising. One cannot deny the necessity and urgency of ‘doing something, anything’ - but, in reality, ‘doing this’ that the government has announced - to stop children being abused without risking moral and unquestionable rebuke. As Elizabeth Povinelli remarked:

One cannot answer the charge of sexual abuse. That’s why sex panics have been so important during large-scale political and economic transformations. They are experienced as so spectacular and catastrophic that all other, ordinary, cruddy, and corrosive forms of injustice pale in its wake. It’s like screaming fire in a movie theatre; no one is going to stop to ask: What’s going on here? 6

Therefore, questions about the specific measures enacted - including whether they might have any bearing or impact on child sexual abuse - have been constantly shadowed by accusations of denying the existence of abuse or, worse, excusing it on grounds of ‘cultural relativism’. In other words, that indigenous peoples were more liable to sexually abuse children had already been accepted as fact, just as in 2001 government reports - since falsified - that undocumented boat arrivals had thrown their children in the water was similarly widely believed, and denounced as the abhorrent pretext for even harsher border policing. There is no point in entering the arguments over whether or not there is child abuse or whether it is more prevalent in indigenous communities - assuming there is any basis for a statistical comparison, not least because the poor in Australia are subject to incomparable levels of surveillance and control by welfare and other agencies, because categorical slippages abound for the purpose of effect (eg., talk of under-age prostitution under the heading of child abuse), and more besides. Dealing with instances of child abuse is definitively not the point of this exercise. Here, racialisation has already stepped in as a priori determination of the guilt of others and, therefore, as the justification of every possible measure against them, not least those measures which liberalism regards as exceptional to its own doctrine. To put this another way: liberals of both Left and Right can persuade themselves that they are obliged to resort to punitive or draconian measures because of the actions of others, an alterity so repellent that there is simply no choice but to suspend one’s own cherished precepts (of trial as the condition of assigning guilt, of the separation of powers, of the distinction between civil and military spaces, and so on) where these loathsome others are concerned. ‘They’ made ‘us’ do it by - and by being far too ‘they’ in the first place. The conditions under which the contract might be suspended is already written into contractualism: the failure of will to prevail over ‘custom’, the non-identity of the contracting parties, the inability of certain people to ‘control themselves’.
The particular measures of this ‘national emergency’ pronounce Victorian-era, protectionist understandings of sex, prostitution, children, disease and welfare directed toward accomplishing what over 200 years of colonisation has thus far failed to do. But this is no simple return of what is past. More specifically, freedom here - that is to say, as freedom is understood by liberalism and (it is important to note) in the wake of the rights-based movements of the 1970s and 80s that apprehended freedom as the expansion of self-supporting, equal, contractarian subjects- became the lever for the proposition of a politically indisputable necessity, management and command. And it was a lever which found a ready pivot on the depoliticising norms and moralisms which are assumed by this apparently self-possessed subject. Under this ‘national emergency’ and in zones declared to be ‘affected areas’, alcohol and x-rated pornography are to be banned, the permit system which restricts those who can enter communal lands will be abolished, conditions are to be placed on welfare payments (such as school attendance in areas which have teacher shortages or there are, literally, no schools), and communal title will be suspended through government seizure of land. There are also suggestions, as yet to be detailed, of shifting patterns of land tenure from communal title to private holdings (rents, leases and ownership) as a means of instruction in contractual forms of subjectivation. Moreover, at the time of writing, the Government announced it would also abolish the Community Development Employment Programme on the grounds that income from it went to buying alcohol. This means that some 7,000 people, who currently do low-paid work keeping stores open and removing rubbish, will be declared unemployed and expected to fulfil job search criteria, including perhaps having to move to areas where there is less unemployment. There is much, almost too much, that could be said about the derangement of liberalism that sees greater levels of impoverishment and suffering righteously tendered as the solution to already-unbearable levels of destitution and anguish. But it remains to be noted that such delirium is occurring in the midst of the largest mining boom for decades, including an imminent expansion in uranium mining, and that many of these measures will undoubtedly produce significant movements of populations, whether as the effect of job-seeking conditions, to areas where it is legal to drink alcohol, or to places where welfare conditions regarding school attendance might be fulfilled.

In any case, it would be a vast error to construe my opening remarks about a passage from multiculturalism to neo-assimilationism as, indeed, a temporal or political shift. It is not, to put it simply, a matter of moving from Labor to Liberal-National governments with opposing policies or approaches, even if the unfolding of certain implications and fine-tuning occurred over time. It would be a mistake to assume that either the current calamities around land rights and border policing can be explained as a peculiarity of the current Howard Liberal-National Government. For instance, the most emphatic of official declarations of multiculturalism under the Keating Labor Government occurred at the same time as its introduction of, most notably, the mandatory and non-reviewable internment of undocumented migrants. Moreover, the core condition of the initial raft of Native Title laws was the condition of legally verifying an unbroken association with the land - which is to say, where colonisation had not been thorough in its removal of people from the land. And so, leaving aside questions that are only really pertinent to an electoral contest, multiculturalism’s presently declared failure was always its very condition, contained in the specific structure of its promise, its accounting of success and failure, its normative ledgering of difference and identity.
Multiculturalism is a theory and policy of social order, of the restoration or institution of that order (and its boundaries) grounded in the recognition and management of differences-in-unity. In that policy, and in that process of managing the passage from the ostensibly particular differences of the otherly-complexioned to their integration into the apparently neutral terrain of social identity (citizenship), distinctions were always made between proper and improper forms of difference. As Mathew Hyland notes, this becomes the route by which an “open-ended obligation to the state and its proxies” is demanded.\(^7\)

What multiculturalism promised, then, was recognition (and rights) as the reward for appropriate expressions of difference - which is to say, both appropriate and appropriable: differences that can be appropriated as property; competition as the proper expression of difference (or conflict); relation conceived entirely in the register of exchange. Multiculturalism is, in other words, a particularly contractual version of the promise, not an assurance that the state or its institutions will recognise differences so much as a transaction over which differences will not disturb the social ordering (and valuations) of difference. And so, just as disturbance remains, so too does the need to racialise its features.

In one sense, then, race marks the persistent fracture of colonial narratives of development, evolution and progress, the accomplishments of self-possessed, autonomous subjectivity, construed as recalcitrance. The failure of this series of motifs - which is to say, and in one of its aspects: the failure of domestication and training as a specific and persistent form of relation between coloniser and colonised - is recollected as an attribute of the colonised. Wrested from the troubling complex of colonial relations and their perseverance in routine deliberations upon potential economic benefit and beneficience, ostensible problems become reified as belonging to what is not ‘us’, often in the language of biology, or culture, or psychology but also, at times, in the proposition of a seemingly ineffable, but nevertheless offensive alterity. Or, as Harry Chang put it some time ago, it is not the \textit{instrumentalisation} of physiognomic differences that is at issue, but rather “objectification, ie, relational poles conceived as the intrinsic quality of objects in relation”\(^8\) Chang went on to insist that while, therefore and for instance, enslavability could be regarded as an attribute of blackness, not everyone who is black is therefore destined to be enslaved.

Racialisation is, to stress the point, actuarial; it is coincident with the hazards and triumphs of meritocracy and its predicaments, the organisation of ruin, gain, winners and losers, and the incessant restlessness that these imply. Race is, then, not a question of fixed categories, even if fixity and determination is what it imputes in manoeuvring around the troublesome questions of contingency and destiny. It delineates the points of a process, a set of filters that sift between those who might be groomed for inclusion (and potential value) and those set aside for exclusion.
and superfluity (or determined to be without value). This is why the application of its categories acquires a mobility that can only be understood as situational and concrete, never abstract or ahistorical; at times turning around the dualities of black and white or, at other times, the spectra of complexion, migratory waves or physiognomic assortment.

This is also why the measures of the ‘national emergency’ in Australia proceed along the dual axes of punishment and protection, are both paramilitary and humanitarian at the same time, conducted by roving teams consisting of soldiers, police, doctors, social workers and nurses, afforded with the techniques of land seizures and mortgages, loans and welfare cuts. In the face of this, to ask whether race exists biologically, or might one day be discovered to do so, or whether, instead, it is a representational figment is to miss the ways in which biology (and medicine, etc) literally produces the biological existence and status of populations and their health as effects of certain medical practices or their withdrawal, as well as the sense in which the hypothesis of race as representation supposes a rather contractual, abstract understanding of will, decision and, it might be added, sovereignty. Against both the feigned materialism of biological concepts of race and a social constructionism reduced to such a degree of voluntarism (and such an impoverished understanding of representation) that it cannot but transform into the former at those moments when it encounters the limits of its own contractualism, there remains the encounter with a difference that cannot be represented in the region of the contract. Where the biological concepts of race adhere to certain understandings of causation (conceive, for instance, of higher rates of mortality among indigenous people as an effect of ‘biology’, sometimes rendered as ‘culture’; or understand higher rates of infection without recalling the denial of certain antibiotic treatments and health care that are routinely available elsewhere), the latter champions the tautologies of contractarianism while exteriorising a presumed excess. Abstraction seeks to render each party to the contract as more or less identical - which is to say: equivalent - even as everyone knows that there is no capital without ongoing asymmetries produced and assumed in the daily processes of contracting.

All of this is in no way to suggest that race is functional to capitalist formation - on the contrary, it to insist that the one cannot be thought without the other: race no more interrupts the logic of capital than capital can be accumulated without strategies and grammars of differential inclusion, exclusion, circumscription and embodiment. To paraphrase remarks made elsewhere, given that someone cannot profit at the expense of another through an agreement that is indeed symmetrical, as the wage contract is asserted to be, racism (and sexism, which is always bound to racism in the nexus of sexuality, family and reproduction) prepares us for, distributes and rationalises asymmetry. Race is both condition and effect, the predominant form of the social tie (or contract) and its undoing. It is the material debris of capital’s idealisation (the undeliverability of its promisory note and shadow of its atemporalised, despatialised universality or, more simply put: the disavowal of capital’s ‘birth’, and persistence, in blood, shit and violent geographies) and the prerequisite (as Rousseau understood\textsuperscript{10}) for the racialising formation of the virtuous and self-governing subjects who might enter into the contract. In other words, race exists insofar as capital - its conditions, relations and procedures - is spectralised, just as abstract equality exists to the extent that concrete differences are sifted, ordered, repudiated, costed and abjected. This circumstance is neither a result of will nor biology, even if it organises the
semantics and practices, both mundane and sensational, of will and of bios through which race becomes materialised.

Notes

1. Mitropoulos, A. "The Barbed End of Human Rights", in Borderlands, 2:1, 2003; and “Under the Beach, the Barbed Wire”, Mute, 2:2, 2006 [↩]
2. In some significant respects, the phrase ‘indigenous land rights’ is a misnomer - it does not refer to specific or additional rights that indigenous peoples may have or demand, but refers negatively to the extinction of the common law property rights that occurred under declarations of terra nullius. To be more precise, the very sense of declaring the land to be ‘empty’ implied, as in the texts of Blackstone and Locke which were relied upon for such determinations, that the land was not being used productively. Rights, according to such a view, flow from the exercise of labour upon the land. To enter the discourse of rights is to imply that capitalist work (and its appropriation) is the eternal condition of what is rightful (or deserved). [↩]
4. “Send Army to Aboriginal community: AMA NT”, ABC News, May 19, 2006; and “AMA defends doc over Indigenous health ‘dictatorship’ call”, ABC News, Aug 2, 2007 [↩]
6. Povinell, E.A. “Ordinary poverty and sores”, lecture given at The Indigenous Policy Reform In The NT: An Extraordinary Debate For Extraordinary Times (coloquia), Charles Darwin University, 20 July 2007 [↩]
10. For a further discussion on Rousseau, and as this essay’s counterpart, see “Under the Beach, the Barbed Wire”, Mute, 2:2, 2006 [↩]
Embodied Experience of Race and Gender in Precarious Work

Murat Kurnaz, born in Bremen but holder of a Turkish passport, is a well-known figure in Germany, due no doubt, at least in part, to his voluminous beard. A racializing interpretation would see it as a code for membership of an Islamist group. Following his unexpected release from the camp at Guantanamo, the riddle of his beard appeared to be of greater interest to the German public than the more than dubious manner of his abduction by US forces, and the even more dubious manoeuvres to hinder his release on the part of the German foreign ministry. The German authorities knew of his imprisonment at the hands of the USA by the beginning of January 2002, at the very latest. Although the German Guantanamo interrogators were convinced of his innocence and had determined that he had absolutely no connections with any terrorist circles, the BKA (Federal German Police Office) and the German Chancellor's Office both refused his release to Germany as proposed by the USA in the Autumn of 2002. Coupled with a vaguely worded security risk, the assertion that, on account of Murat’s Turkish passport, his case did not fall within the remit of Germany’s obligations within International Law testifies to the productivity of a form of anti-Islamic racism. Here, efforts to restrict the residency rights of post-national subjects, a historical result of the immigration process, are flanked by a practice of a blanket suspicion of terrorism. In the meantime, although Murat Kurnaz has been rehabilitated, he still retains his highly suspicious beard. Is it possible that Murat’s mysterious beard is more than the performance of subordinate mimicry? Murat does something with the materiality of racist suspicion - he embodies it.

I. Racism - an erratic archipelago

Throughout Europe, one can observe the contours of a racism directed against the rights of migrants and their descendents. Following Etienne Balibar, we can label racism directed against migrants as predominantly a manifestation of ‘neo-racism’. The history and dynamics of this racism differ among individual European states. In contrast to the monistic structure of 19th century biological racism, its manifestations and strategies have multiplied and been transformed: Novel frames have emerged. In Europe, racism appears as an erratic archipelago of differing and partially overlapping formations that range from openly racist violence to more subtle varieties of institutional racism, such as the headscarf ban, for example, legitimised on secularist principles.

Current racist strategies possess significantly more fluidity than traditional ones based on such naturalizing categories as ‘race’, and operating on segregation and exclusion. These current racisms fluctuate between biologistic and culturalistic markers that serve to structure superiority and inferiority. These racist practices are defined not only by binary differentiation and processes of exclusion but primarily through processes of limited inclusion. The history and dynamics of racism have always been a recodified answer to the struggles waged against it by racialized subjects and to the aleatory turbulences of fluid projects of migration. This emergence of new manifestations of racism raises the question as to what new theoretical concepts are appropriate for empirical analysis of racializing and ethnicizing processes.

Towards the dematerialization of critical racism analysis in Germany

In Germany, the critical debate on racism first began with the advent of Cultural Studies. In particular, the discussion of works by Stuart Hall, in the context of articles and publications of ‘Das Argument’ magazine and publishing house, were responsible for a theory transfer that occurred in direct response to the conceptualization efforts of ‘Cultural Studies’ in Britain. The ‘Project for a Theory of Ideology’ associated with the name of W.F. Haug emerged form a direct dialogue with the ‘culturalistic challenge’ of the work.
on ideology coming from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham. This culminated in a series of works that were later to generate important impulses in Germany, such as an antireductionist analysis of racism.\(^8\)

Paradoxically, Hall’s interview ‘On Postmodernism und Articulation’, compiled by his colleague and successor Lawrence Grossberg, anticipates one of the central blockages in the theory of difference within the current discussion on racism in Germany.\(^8\) Hall’s position in the debate around Postmodernism - which implies a criticism of Foucault’s power analytics - is as a prisoner between two unacceptable alternatives: Habermas’\(^10\) defensive positions in relation on the old enlightenment project, and Lyotard’s\(^11\) Eurocentric eulogies on the post modern breakdown. Hall wishes to salvage the concept of resistance in the ‘ideology versus discourse’ debate. He criticises Foucault’s resistance concept as flawed; instead, he advocates embedding power, within the analytic context of the constitution of hegemony, in ideology. According to Hall, an analysis of the different dispositifs of the truth - through which, according to Foucault, the practices of power work - should not stop with the statement of their actual plurality. On the contrary, it must be possible to define this plurality as a balance of forces within a concrete social formation. His reflections on a theory of articulation, however, where he orients himself around the post-Marxist works of Ernesto Laclau,\(^12\) serve to relativize the scope of application of the ideological. According to Hall, the theory of articulation asks how an ideology discovers its subjects, and not how subjects think their necessary and unavoidable thoughts. With this deconstruction of the ontological primacy of the ideological, understood as the fundamental irreducibility of ideological articulations to one single socio-economic position, he raises objections against two forms of theoretical reductionism: against a total discursivity on the one hand, and a blunt empiricism on the other.

At this point we would argue that Hall’s objection to this double reductionism marks the strengths, but also the limits of his approach. With these arguments, Hall cautiously anticipates the current ‘material turn’ in the new feminist, anthropological, and complexity theory debates.\(^13\) The question how a racist instance of interpellation discovers its subjects, while certainly important, does not, however, help to deconstruct the false alternatives of the racism debate - complete discursivity versus blunt empiricism.

Following Hall, the current debate within Germany on how to conceptualize diaspora subalternity as a symptom of discursive asymmetries in the racist dispositif reproduces these blockages; it reduces the analytic achievement of representation-political origin to a mere production of proof of the permanent presence of alterity within a historical continuum of power. Thus, what is in principle an always-the-same racism always structurally identifies the subjects of its interpellation in the same way. Representation in this sense signifies, according to our thesis, not only endless discursivity but, above all, the dematerialisation of empirical racism research. If the focus of this theoretical work falls mainly on the development of the discursive racist exclusion model, it is hardly surprising if forms of diaspora and/or migrant identity politics are generally considered under the concept of resistance which conform to this conceptualization, and not as the always newly to be worked out moments of specific historical struggles of migration against the equally specific, i.e. historicizeable formations of racism.

Kien Nghi Ha thinks this concept through to its extreme consequence. In his analysis of the colonial patterns of German labour market policy, he interprets the present racism in Germany as the continued existence of a ‘social-imperialistic logic’ in which the ‘colonial structure has retained its currency till the present day, partly as a state practice, partly as a public discourse’.\(^14\) If, at this point, one follows the logic of Nghi Ha and assumes from the outset the ascendance of racist discourse in Germany in order to construct discursively generated moments of migrant subalternity in Germany, the history of labour migration then appears as an episode in the unbroken continuum of racist-colonial structures.\(^15\) However, this backdating of the history of racism in Germany is based on the methods of post-colonial analytics. This endeavour corresponds closely with an attempt to procure historical illustrative material in order to accelerate the compatibility of local assimilation efforts of postcolonial theory with post-colonial criticism established in the Anglo-American space. The effects of ‘dematerialisation’ may be seen particularly clearly in this historically argued work.

**Biopolitical productivity and racialized subjectivity**

Against the background of these blockages, we undertake a renewed eclectic engagement with the work of Foucault, focussing on subjectivization processes and questions of dissidence, developed in his late work.\(^16\) We place this in the context of a ‘post-disciplinary’ reading of biopower and biopolicy which we
judge promising for an analysis of productive moments in the constitution of racialized subjectivity. In sharp demarcation from a sovereign, repressive power, Foucault introduces biopower as a modern register of power which aims at the micro-dimension of a disciplining of individual bodies as well as at the macro-dimension of the regulation of the population. Foucault interprets biopower as an ‘archipelago of different powers’ which operate decentrally and materialize in the formation, arrangement and utilization of individual bodies, and the optimisation and enhancement of the population body. With Foucault, but going beyond the disciplinary / technological dimension of his biopolicy/biopower conception, it is possible to determine new rationalities and technologies of power which not only produce subject bodies and individuals, but subjectivities themselves. These become established in a double movement of submission and becoming subject - as produced and at the same time as active subjects capable of self-guidance. Such subjectivitation processes go beyond an easy mirroring of relations. However, it would be a mistake to assume that such processes take place on a terrain free from violence and dominance. It is rather the case - as Foucault remarks - that in no way have violent processes retreated before the birth of productive biopower. Thus, from the perspective of an analysis of racism that draws on Foucault, new technologies of power have not led to the elimination of violence and compulsion.

Investigations of racism should not, however, stop at a description of the restrictive nature of migration regimes and their immanent contradictions and by determining the dominant ‘interpellation’. We cannot start from the assumption that subjects merely reflect the ‘relations’, that they are exclusively their ‘victims’. That would be to ignore that the processes establishing subjectivity are a social field of conflict in which micropolitics and the desire for other, better activity and life projects express themselves.

However, neither is the figure of the self-identical, coherent rational deciding subject an adequate alternative. The present transformation processes demand research perspectives which can simultaneously determine relations of power and dominance as well as the dynamic productiveness of subjectivization; where subjectivization is grasped as a permanent becoming-subject in the sense of a persistent new formation and production practice, as multiple positioning processes, and as a new invention of practices and modes of subjectivization. It is a question of appreciating that processes of subjectivization strive to move beyond the conditions of biopolitical power technologies. And at the same time it is a realisation that subjects are not previously extant entities, but rather become established in specific power-knowledge relations.

These self-relations articulate a distance towards subjectivization, understood as submission to regulatory coercions and, hence, they cannot be deciphered as mere effects of relations of repression. It is rather a question of practices that resist the efficacy of regulatory coercion through strategies of avoidance, negation or reformating. Hardt/Negri speak of ‘biopolitical productivity’ - in the sense of an oppositional desire. In the context of productive subject becoming, this invokes ‘re-working’ and invention of practices and forms of existence. Self-relationality also indicates that in this context subjectivization processes are to be examined as ‘circuits’ of a ‘becoming’ on a disputed terrain. This is marked, on the one hand, by established relations of power and interpellations via self-regulatory imperatives. On the other hand, the ‘circuits’ refer to productive subjectivization processes that evade normative structuralizations. It is a question of the vanishing points of a desire for existence that lies in the potential to use oneself economically, ‘nomadically’, affectively and culturally, of a praxis that prevents subjects from remaining the same and identical to themselves since they are constantly altering themselves and thus their field of experience.

II. Embodiment between affective strain, endurance and tricksterism

To pose the question of micropolitics and the lived experience of racialization processes implies a deconstruction of the usual victimological semantics whereby the ‘victim’ figure appears as the only intelligible subject position. Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari urge us to no longer regard racist practices in terms of binary differentiation and processes of exclusion, but rather as strategies of inclusion of varying depth. Hegemony functions in such a way that one concedes first alterity and then ranks difference according to ‘degree of divergence’ from normative whiteness. This norm structures social hierarchies and dominance relations and is inscribed in migration regimes, state regulation of the population and, in the practices of everyday life, they becomes incorporated experience. However, the practices of everyday life and embodied experience extend beyond and flee these structures as illustrated by the following interview passages.
Crossing borders

Zeyneb, a 29 year-old journalist who was born in Germany and whose parents immigrated from Turkey, talks about her everyday (working) life in Germany and the ‘dangers’ to be taken into account that can limit her freedom of movement. The internalisation of invisible borders becomes physically materialised in certain spaces and situations as immediate ‘fear’ and ‘strain’ resulting from it. In her description of her occupational life in different German cities, these anticipated borders express themselves as changes to her bodily and emotional state. Transgressing these borders means a physical presence is enough to risk being stigmatised as a ‘Turk’ or ‘foreigner’ and thus become a target of racially motivated attacks:

I found Chemnitz difficult, it was also a bit dangerous, you were always scared on the train, scared of physical violence in case some Nazis came along and beat you up. It’s still the same somehow, you think in 2006 the risk that something could happen is still there.

These borders are, on the one hand, imagined borders that relate to ‘danger zones’. On the other hand, they materialise themselves as an incorporated emotional coding, as an embodied experience of fear of physical violence. Zeyneb avoids these conditions, however, by a practice of exodus and emigration to a west-European country in which she feels less obtrusive, and less vulnerable and threatened in the protection of bigger communities. However, borders refer not only to the geographical space of so-called ‘no-go-areas’ in which racist motivated violence threatens. There is also a materialisation of racism in which more subtle forms of border delineations play a role.

The following is an excerpt from the interview with Saliah (29), whose family immigrated to Germany 26 years ago from Iran, and refers to a temporary paralysis of her capacity to act. It first expresses itself in a basic acceptance of the situation, ‘that’s just how it is’, which is nevertheless ‘paid for’ by expenditure of additional effort on her part. Saliah focuses on this by comparing her behaviour in claiming legal entitlements from state authorities with that of her majority-German student colleagues:

What has struck me, is that, for example, if I, well, if I feel that the guy or the woman behind the desk [at public authorities and offices] isn’t doing their job properly or is unfriendly or has made a mistake, and this has certainly happened, then what happens is that I don’t put my foot down as perhaps my German friends would. I don’t say: “What kind of an [incomprehensible]” or “I have a right to it!” or anything like that, no, I just can’t say it because I well, eh, maybe I would now because I’m aware of it, but this happened to me two years ago, a civil-servant in the scholarship office had made an obvious mistake and this got me into financial difficulties and I did nothing, so a friend of mine said: “Yes, so hopefully you put your foot down and said what is this all about and that’s not on!” But I didn’t do anything, for example, not in other situations either because I didn’t feel that it was really my entitlement. So it was more like: “OK, I live here and benefit from the fact that there are scholarships, but as to demanding it like a German probably would, no, I didn’t feel: “I can make a fuss because I’m entitled to this and they should be more careful!” Or something to that effect. I just simply accepted the fact that they had made a mistake and that I would have to pay for it.

Although Saliah has both German as well as Iranian nationality and thus the same civil rights and legal entitlements as the majority, she has incorporated the ever-present experience of not really being a part of German society into her habitual structure and self-positioning. The idea that, as a descendant of migrants, she is not able to enjoy the same legal entitlements or claim her scholarship the same as a majority-German can be analysed as an unquestioned component of her habitual disposition. Following Pierre Bourdieu, one can interpret this as being the result of symbolic power. Bourdieu designates symbolic power as those forms of submission that may not be decoded directly but reveal themselves at most in affective coding; they have become, as it were, the habitus, since they have anchored themselves in the physical hexis and in supposedly natural and unquestioned cognitive orientations and practices. These are the forms of a submission whose ‘magic’ consists in the fact that they inscribe themselves in the ‘self-relations’ or ‘self-practices’, and in the bodies of individuals so that the arbitrariness of power and dominance is not recognized.

Nevertheless, a different reading of the interview segment might question how self-evident it is that migrants should assume the action options of the majority members. The statements that are at first assigned to a lack of assertiveness ‘not really putting your foot down’, ‘just couldn’t say it’ and ‘just
accepted it’ may also point towards a temporary refusal within racist relations: a non-compliant posture that refuses to acquiesce directly to the performance of violent representations in order to claim legal entitlements. Even if, in the next step, Saliah does get caught up in the structural, coded racist blockages and, in the end, creates some free space for herself (understood as the distance needed for the ability to act) through additional work so as to compensate for the other’s ‘mistake’ and to solve her problems. In the next interview passages, such a balancing act between mute perseverance and a ‘time shifted’ response as the situation demands becomes rather more a theme of partially empowering trajectories.

Invent distancing tactics

Zora came to Germany on a tourist visa at the age of 19 following the war in the former Yugoslavia and lived for many years as a ‘sans papier’. She forged an existence for herself through a wide variety of jobs, done partly in tandem, in household services, the catering trade and boutiques. Her legally insecure residency status as well as racializing, ethnicizing and genderizing differentiation processes position her in the extremely low paid household related sector as well as in other slightly better paid employment.

I took care of the grandmother and the two children, I cleaned the whole house, I cooked and ironed. You only find those kind of jobs or cleaning jobs when you don’t speak the language properly and you are illegal. And I was illegal.

After her arrival in Germany, Zora was faced not only with degrading positioning in the labour market and occupational hierarchy, but also by the denigration and disdain associated with the racist ‘Slav’ tag. In her everyday interactions with members of the majority society, a minoritorizing process takes place which is not only experienced as a signifying practice. It involves a configuration of subject positions that are articulated along an axis of hierarchy from ‘normal’ to ‘abnormal’ and in symbolic equivalence ‘of higher value’ and ‘inferior’:

When I arrived in Germany I felt quite normal and then I noticed that I wasn’t normal somehow. Here, I am something… bad. Then there were cleaning jobs where people felt superior and they thought Slavs were inferior and me a cleaning lady and then from a crisis area, I was just rubbish for them. And I sometimes felt very bad, like I was carrying a heavy stone on my back as I washed the floors. At that time nothing could touch me. So I bent down and cleaned and felt bad, but at that time I just couldn’t allow myself to think about it, like: “Have I been badly been treated or not?” Because I just mightn’t have had the strength to come back again. I only started thinking about it much later, when I could allow myself.

This case of differentiation and hierarchization takes place not as a unique act, but occurs as iteration, as a repeating performative production of positionings. Zora reports ‘verbal abuse’ to which she has often been subjected and a physical attack and insults at the hands of an old man in a bookstore after she had answered his question about her origins. This social disdain also materialises itself in Zora’s self-relations as physical, affective sensitivities in terms of indisposition and depression that she articulates by the metaphoric idiom of the ‘heavy stone on her back’. On a superficial level, when she speaks of ‘bending down and cleaning’ and ‘cleaning the floor’, she seems to accept her assigned subject position and so performs an image of supposed submission.

Nevertheless, her statements also reveal that her interpellation is not fully delivered; she turns away as it were ‘tactically’.32 ‘Getting through’, securing her existence, is the first priority: ‘At that time nothing could touch me’. She suspends dealing with racist positionings at work and in other everyday interactions so as to concentrate on improving her life. Following de Certeau33, we may designate this as a calculated tactics that does not emerge from a place, as it were, ‘of its own’. Tactics belong on the terrain of the others; there, she is a ‘poacher’ and causes some surprises.

Indeed, the racializing constructions of difference that operate through the ‘Slav’ signifier do impinge on Zora’s self-relations and self-perception. She accepts the position of difference assigned to her. However, she averts this attack by a reference to the role of the Germans in the First and the Second World Wars. So, she does not remain fixed within the racist discourse model and a naturalization of inferiority and superiority, but, with a resort to history, rejects the claim to dominance by adducing moral inferiority:

And I was, I have to say, very, very surprised because the Germans have no right to
consider us Slavs as something inferior since they started the Second World War, they started the First World War, and they murdered so many people in our country. And this was so ridiculous that they thought I was something bad.

Zora also breaks with the typical postures of resignation when she defends herself against the exploitation that she at first accepted in the café where she works. The repeated ironic remarks of her boss, ‘Oh, you poor thing, you got no tips again’, after he had deducted them himself while helping out due to lack of staff, elicited this response from Zora one day:

then I, well, one day I’d really just had enough, so I gave in my notice and said “there you go, now do it yourself, since you think you can do it all by yourself and its only me that can’t” because of the way I am, then help yourself, I am i-l-l-e-g-a-l, I don’t owe you anything, so you have no rights over me, go ahead, just do it yourself, I’m gone” and I really left him in the lurch one evening, he just went crazy [grins].

The weak point of her exploitation as an illegal worker emerges in the practical reinterpretation and rescinding of this subordinate position. At the very moment she becomes irreplaceable, she updates the interpellation of her ‘illegality’ by the tactic of converting it into her employer’s legal weakness (‘I am illegal, you have no rights over me’) and exits the place of her exploitation.

**Play the game, vary the rules**

Racism is - as further analyses of the interviews suggest - not a monolithic apparatus of hegemony and dominance. If, as Manuela Bojadzijev suggests, one focuses equally on migration regimes and racializing practices and on the dissident practices of migrants, one recognises that such practices should not simply be decoded as a reflex to ideological race constructions; they are rather to be seen as processes of contention where forms of racism, as much as those of escape, reform again and again. However, such dissidence does not come from a homogeneous collective subject, but is found in the myriad of scattered, indiscernible everyday practices of migrants, in their self-positioning and self-relations, in their embodied experiences that pass through, over and beyond these forms of socialization.

This can be illustrated by Zora’s history. Her story illustrates the connection between the occupational positions and the self-representations of those that fill them. With the concept of ‘sexual work’ Boudry/Lorenz/Kuster point to the fact that the representation of embodied, sexually differentiated individuals is also linked to work. Hence, specific workplaces require not only specific skills, but also particular embodiments of gender and sexuality viewed as hegemonic. Going beyond Boudry et. al., we can stress that together with these embodied practices, ethnicity and class are also being performed. Zora is - as becomes clear during many interviews - an ‘observer’. She acts, as it were, as an ethnographer, as an analyst of the present, who renders explicit these ‘unspoken contracts’ with which the symbolic orders of ethnicity, national affiliation and heteronormativity are reproduced and negotiated. Zora decodes these orders. Her body becomes a deployment and resource used tactically to produce an ‘inhabitable place’ on the field of labour - in this case in boutiques and bars. It is a question of a specific reservoir of explicit knowledge of the game rules of this order which is also an economic, heteronormative and ethnicizing/racist one.

Zora may be compared with one of the ironic narrative figures taken from Donna Haraway, a ‘trickster’, a devious and crafty person who adapts her form according to the specific context. She is a Cyborg figure, she proceeds in ostensible complicity with the informatics of dominance. She has deciphered their game rules. She knows the expectations of her respective potential employers and the unmarked inherent symbolic orders. She accepts the scheming challenge and joins in the game only to vary the rules. She strives to correctly decipher and address the arrangement that is expected in each context. She produces not only an embodiment of ‘being a woman’ in the heteronormative order, but also this ‘is well integrated’, ‘apolitical’, and this ‘being German’: expectations masterfully performed in order to decide the game for herself.

So when I’m looking for a job, then…well, I still do it this way, then I’m not really me, I can’t just say that I’ve worked illegally and that I’ve worked as a cleaning lady so if I, so to speak, offer myself somewhere, to get a job, well, except in [the social facility], I don’t have to there, there I can say quite honestly who I am, there was…. well it doesn’t matter, but in
other places I have... I don't know, five different applications, for example, where my different jobs are in different combinations for the people and .. I have to sell myself over and over again as well integrated, and so play down my political / like side. And then to act as if everything is great here and I have learnt German, “Are you happy with it?” And yes, I’m able to, so I also behave like a German. So in certain situations... I express myself succinctly, I talk quickly and I don’t talk too much and I don’t look anybody in the eye for too long and I don’t come too close to anyone, if I apply for a job and act as if I’m very competent so [laughs] now it’s all come out, hasn’t it? That’s how you apply for a job here. And don’t trouble anyone, don’t trouble anyone, I’m not too chatty, I’m nice, but I’m too n i c e and, and things like that [laughs] yeah.

In this context what is required is not only a knowledge of the unmarked regulating norms, it is also a matter of delivering a persuasive embodiment of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and national affiliation specific to each context. Thus the individual body becomes the incessant locus of address and positioning on the field of labour. This can be described as the embodied experience of a new biopolitical capitalistic regime - 'embodied capitalism' which allows individual bodies to become the venue for regimes of exploitation and conflict. They are involved in local and global capital logics as well as in a hegemonic nationalism, ethnicity and a heterosexual order.

At the same time embodiment and performativity do not simply follow the dumb compulsion of mirroring these logics, ‘really, I’m not really me when I apply’ - as Zora says. During these negotiations and re-writings the production of subjectivity takes place as sequential, productive subjectivization. To read her self-relationality as mere submission is too simple because there is a difference in comparison with subjectivization in and through the compulsions of national labour migration regimes and the orders of heteronormativity and ethnicization. The question here is why the interview partner fulfils the strictures of the neo-liberal order in virtually anticipatory ‘obedience’ and which compulsive apparatuses and regimes of domination she tries to avoid. Embodiment and performance become tactical elements that go beyond requirements and unreasonable demands - vanishing lines of a desire for existence. An intelligible existence which seeks to avoid being defined as the deprived ethnicized migrant worker and undermines this position. Using her abilities and qualities to redesign herself for continued adaptability to work - to redesign again and again and to perform expectations does, on the one hand, undoubtedly follow the neo-liberal paradigm of self-economisation. On the other hand, it may also be read as an ironic-reserved almost parodic queering and crossing of the orders, as a negotiation and re-working that evades the threat of enclosure in the fixed category of socially declassed migrant with no rights and all the devaluations that this entails.

Notes

2. Demirović, Alex/Bojadžijev, Manuela (Hg., 2002) Konjunkturen des Rassismus. Münster
3. Despite all the geopolitical particularities, however, it is still possible to determine three more or less clear discursive formations that form the basis for this racism and its inherent logics and practices: it is a matter of colonial, anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic discursive configurations.
40. Butler, Judith (1991) *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter*. Frankfurt am Main. p. 37 [↩]

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‘Passing Drama’: the materialization of race

Posted By angela melitopoulos on 23 Feb 2008 @ 2:46 am in 2-Race/Matter [Feb 08], Issues | No Comments

According to Henri Bergson, memory is an accumulation of time to introduce the possibility of an intentional selection. We can expand or compress certain fragments of input-time at will. By forming intervals memory brings the past into the present, letting ‘the dead’ appear in ‘the living’.

Video technology operates as time technology. Electronic image technologies do not double reality, but rather imitate a function of perception by forming intervals: a new system synthesizing duration and intensities. As a technical system the camera functions as a sensory-motoric (bodily) memory: it records movements (of light) and modulates them through contraction and expansion into electromagnetic currents or frequencies, which are time. The movement of the video image is directly determined by the wave motion of the material. The camera operates as a system of input and output time within the light waves. It is a technical system, however, because there are no opportunities for ‘intentional influence’; in other words, because contraction and expansion are repeated automatically. The montage functions as a system of contracting and expanding these flows of time, which can be intentionally influenced, because relations and durations of time are manipulated in the montage (ten seconds of material can be generated from one second of material). The camera and montage are thus the two essential types of memory that Henri Bergson defines in his ‘Matière et Mémoire’, and video (camera and montage) can be described as a technical system that simulates the neurological function of memory.

Video images have a pre-representative life: a molecular life of (tape) speed, (light) intensities, (camera) movements, and (video) streams of light, which are determined by the smallest forces of desire and affects. Electronic images, sounds and the smallest pixels are understood here as bodies, which affect other bodies, because every image is a body and every body is an image. Every camera shot has a kind of birthplace, an incision in the time/space continuum, the past and present of which remain invisible. A virtual time appends itself directly to the segment, future settings of possible events in the montage. This portion of the fictive is part of every actuated camera image. The video image is a ‘circuit center’, a visual memory, which functions as an agent and not as a replica. There is no objective/documentary image. Camera locations are event locations open to a multitude of streams (of consciousness). They contain virtual actuation potentials that can later be developed in the montage.

The video ‘Passing Drama’ reflects the acoustic image of my family history. It tells the refugee story of my Greek family that came to me across three generations as a fragmentary and fairy-tale-like image. Flight as the fundamental motif of the story became the videographic theme of narrative, history and memory.

‘Drama’ is the name of a small town in northern Greece, where many refugees (including my grandparents) from Asia Minor settled, who had survived the trauma of the so-called ‘Asia Minor catastrophe’. Between 1922 and 1925 the Greek minority (around 1.5 million people) living in various areas of Asia Minor, today Turkey, were deported and displaced. Many children of these refugees (including my father), who were born in northern Greece in formerly Turkish villages (the Muslim population, about 500,000 people, were evacuated from Greece in accordance with the Lausanne Agreement of 1923) or had experienced the exodus from Turkey as children, came to Austria and Germany in 1942 as forced laborers. This part of northern Greece had been occupied by the Bulgarian army, which was allied with Hitler. Poverty, racism, the concealment of historical facts, but most of all the inner necessity of forgetting the traumatic experiences of the deportation from Turkey and forced labor in World War II marked this acoustic image of a flight that was retold again and again from one generation to the next, from one place to the next.

The association of the title ‘Passing Drama’ with stage and film is intended to indicate the performative character of the narrative. The ‘now-time’ was a defining force for the narrator in the video. The performative act of recounting determined the content of what was conveyed. The refugees told me their story at an advanced age; they had lived their life, yet it seemed to be the first time that they were asked
about their history. Their stories indicate a structure of oral tradition marked by survival: the echo chamber of a mental fight for survival, which still determined the present. The text level of the video consists of interviews with this second generation, who had heard their parents’ story as children. These were sentences like stones. Sentences whose vocal melodies had been inscribed in collective and individual memory across three generations. Forgetting yesterday had become interwoven with forgetting the day before yesterday and mingled with forgetting today. Across the generations this narrative profiled from the theatrical talent of its narrators, who extended or abridged single moments and repeated inextinguishable fragments themselves, which became a kind of song about flight through repetition and transfer. Fissures and discontinuities gaped open in the transfer of memory, of knowledge, of habits of thinking and living. Yet the blocks and aphasia in the memories of these inhabitants that had become migrants contains a truth that does not only apply to them. For what happened to them has also happened to us: a radical change in living one’s memory and one’s time.

Forgetting or the notation of forgetting is expressed in ‘Passing Drama’ through the montage of various levels of the past. Each place represents a different level of time in the narrative: the farther back the location of the story was, in other words the farther back in the past that the events were that happened in this location, the more the image manipulation and montage was impelled in this place. From one image generation to the next, I constructed different levels and degrees of abstraction through the image manipulation, which were attributed to the ‘generation’ of the story accordingly. ‘Realtime’ represents the machine location (here and now - Germany). This image material was not influenced in post-production. These are images of industrial weaving machines that repeatedly come up between the sequences. They are not only sociological descriptions (many refugees worked in the textile industry), but also function as a paradigm of the narrative construction.

History appears in ‘Passing Drama’ as industrial machinery that devours minorities on behalf of an invisible majority. ‘Halfspeed’ describes a location of the documentary, the location of the narrative (2nd Generation: Greece/Germany). A single generative level of transfer influences the course of the narrative. Distortion becomes palpable, but the degree of fragmentation does not yet destroy the conventional image sequences. The material was manipulated once in the post-production process by decelerating or stretching it, so that my reading process was appended or added into the next generation of images once. My observation time flowed into the next generation of images, similar to the way memories are actuated in oral tradition and longer periods of time result from brief moments. The more dynamic picture sequences (two levels of transfer) represent the ‘generated’ image of a place that was passed on to the narrator (Asia Minor), which he never saw himself. The extension and compression of time was impelled to the most extreme in the material. The levels of information intrude, the text remains fragmentary, the intensity of sifting through the material is most massively inscribed in the original material. My own imagination distorted the material most.

The camera shots and the images and sounds processed in this way were digitized and constituted a time-mapping in the computer, a memory from images, intensities, speeds and movements from the various locations of the story of flight, which became different levels of time and past. This database was coupled in non-linear editing with a linear runtime system. The moments of tension emerged from the constant back and forth between the archive order and the resultant linear course. The ‘montage’ was defined from the ability to navigate within the archive-memory to reveal new links and montages. The possibility of layering material in a linear sequence resulted in different text/image/sound fields for image and sound, which determined the emphasis or deletion of information. The flows of image and sound were newly interwoven again and again based on motifs, in order to define a different mental and material space allowing for possibilities of a non-linear narrative, in which various modes of perception can be interlocked.

In its narration structure ‘Passing Drama’ is neither a documentation nor fiction. Instead it deals with the choice between polyvocality and unanimity, between shorter or longer vocal phrases, between open and closed logics of a story, which characterizes the refugee story in general. Trauma, dramatic escapes and survival strategies determine the levels of the perception of the stories as constitutive psychologies.

In ‘Passing Drama’ the viewer is compelled into other dimensions. (This both touches and disturbs the viewer at the same time, because the viewer’s own sensibility allows them to intuitively recognize the pre-individual, pre-representative life of their subjectivity.) We are transported to another dimension, which psychologists refer to with the lovely expression ‘a-modal perception’: as in the pre-verbal life of the newborn, here we still have the freedom of not fixing what touches us in categories of image, sound or the designation of the object, but rather of gliding from one emotion into the next. It is not a matter of
countering the representative image with its infinitesimal elements, but rather of moving from one into the other, for example from the molecular to the molar dimension, just as it is constantly practiced in life. The discovery of this dynamic in both directions leads us to the source of our own creativity. With the compression and extension of movement, with the weaving and interweaving of the flows of images and sounds, new experiences of perceptions and logics arise, which are for the viewer vectors of dehumanized subjectivity at the same time.

In ‘Passing Drama’ the infinitely small lines of flight (molecular becoming) indicate the minorities (migrants). The video image becomes the echo of the movement of the migrant proletariat (the great deterritorialized). In this work the images of the looms function paradigmatically. Here one might recall that Plato’s metaphor for politics was weaving. Yet flows of images cannot be represented. One can only conjoin and compose them. They cannot be dissected to be rearranged (hybridization). The impossibility of the political representation of minorities and the impossibility of their aesthetic representation are equally caused by the deterritorialization of the flows. Weaving as a method of non-linear montage is a narrative of the process of memory. The framework of meaning is constantly newly constructed. Every new element is integrated in the fabric like in a network of relationships. These relations are mutually ‘remembering’ or ‘forgetting’ (fiction, quotation, account). These two fundamental directions influence the flowing or blockage of information and the narrative logos. Linking different logics of the dramaturgy especially emphasizes the moments of transitions. Transitions become the hinges determining the contents. The way events become intense in memory finds a correspondence in the intensification of audio-visual transitions. These mental transitions and here the transitions of different narrative logics are moments that particularly occupy our attention. The monotony of a logic ends in the transition. Habits of seeing and hearing are opened up. Our attention navigates from node to node, from one link to the next, from one transition to the next. As soon as logics of a sequence settle into a longer duration, our attention dwindles (relaxation). It is activated again as soon as the dynamic of an emerging event is anticipated. We observe an event unfolding, a story growing, or a framework of meaning falling apart.

The ethics and politics of the image in ‘Passing Drama’ constitute an ecology of the intellect for machine subjectivities.

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Along the color line: racialization and resistance in cognitive capitalism

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There are black people who believe that they treat us that way because we are black. That is not to understand history at all. The persecution of subordinate minorities or weak majorities is a commonplace of history, and you have to understand that what is taking place is part of a universal historical development. Once you believe that is happening to you only because you are black - it is happening to us only because we are black - that is a mistake. - Cyril Lionel Robert James, Lectures on the Black Jacobins.

Javid Tariq, a forty-year-old New York cabdriver, is a political refugee from Bengal. He lives in New York City after a long period in Germany, where he worked as a bricklayer. Although he only succeeded in finding an unskilled job, he has a high level of education and political organizer skills, as well as experience as a photographer. Since he arrived in the USA, he has worked on a photography project about metropolitan violence, fighting at the same time for his day-to-day survival. Then, one day he was shocked by dreadful headlines: an increasing number of New York cabdrivers, who are mostly from India, are attacked and frequently killed in ambiguous circumstances. As a result he decided to go and search for a racist serial killer and started to drive a yellow cab, patching together a creative job, that is, photography, with a low-skill activity. At the same time, he has become a leader activist in the Taxi Worker Alliance - which is a New York workers centre focused on the cabdriver’s struggles. Since then Javid has shown his photographs in Manhattan, he has written papers and travelled around Europe for academic conferences, but to subsist he is still a cabdriver. So according to what happened in Javid’s labour and life experience we can highlight how the colour line, as the problem of the 20th century, is still a problem today.

Starting from this point, my argument focuses on the articulation of race, labour and capitalist production. Therefore, I talk about race and race relations to apply to a double process. On one side, there is race as a discursive operation affecting the labour market, the space of citizenship and, last but not least, cultural production concerning identity politics, sex and gender relationships or identities, and so on. On the other side, there is the economic and juridical context that produces - especially with regards to the labour market and the space of citizenship - racialized differences as social, political and economic segmentation. Thus, I refer to race both as a structuring discourse and as the unstable effect of the inter-relationship of different structuring processes and struggles over identity and politics. This is a double mutual process. Referring to Louis Althusser's analysis, this process implies a relationship of overdetermination which suggests moving beyond the traditional Marxist idea about the economic base as that which determines the social “superstructure”, by considering the relation as one of overdetermination: a way of thinking about the multiple, often opposed, forces active in race and in race relations, without falling into an overly-simple idea of these forces being simply “contradictory”. As Paul Gilroy brilliantly pointed out, race and class should be thought to both combine and contradict. Both race and class mutually entail an endless process of translation; a process which produces junctures among differences, and which bears a new commonality ‘precisely while difference is produced out of incommensurability’. Following this conceptual framework, ‘the concept of class cannot be entirely banished from inquiries into racial politics’, although its use must be carefully specified, as Gilroy suggested. And yet, while ‘the positions of dominant and subordinate groups are ascribed by “race”’, race and racism play ‘an active role, articulating political, cultural and economics element into a complex and contradictory unity’. This ensures that ‘race is the modality in which class is lived’.

Following these remarks, race and class appear strictly combined with each other, in contemporary as well as in former social relations. This means, as Stuart Hall suggested, redefining the Marxist determination from structure to superstructure as ‘a problem of articulation’. Thus, the articulation of the different social, economic, cultural or political elements change over time. It means that race (as well as racism) are not present in the same form or degree, in all capitalist formations. Nevertheless, in the
capitalist transition whether in the 17th and across the 19th and 20th centuries or in the present time, the process of primitive accumulation each time redraws the coordinates of workers' exploitation. Therefore, the problem of transition re-emerges in each historical moment when the conditions of translation (that is a way to produce junctures among differences) have to be established anew. As Sandro Mezzadra states, the

‘point is precisely that global capitalism is characterized by the fact that capital as translation is compelled to confront the problem of the establishment of the conditions of possibility of translation at the very level of its everyday operation’. 11

It is the production of the conditions of the subordination of living labour to abstract labour. This is a problem 'not only at the point of production but also more generally as a societal problem': 12

In order to clarify this understanding of race in the present time, while Chandra Mohanty points out that 'capitalism is a foundational principle of social organization' 13, she nevertheless explains that

this does not mean that capitalism functions as a “master frame” or that all forms of domination are reducible to capitalist hierarchies, or that the temporal and spatial effects of capital are the same around the globe. It does mean that at this particular stage of global capitalism, the particularities of its operations (unprecedented deterritorialization, abstraction and concentration of capital, transnationalization of production and mobility through technology, consolidation of supranational corporations that link capital flows globally, etc.) necessitate naming capitalist hegemony and culture as a foundational principle of social life. To do otherwise is to obfuscate the way power and hegemony function in the world. 14

With this account, I aim to develop an argument about the materiality of race in the 21st century. And will present an analysis of the coordinates of non-white labor exploitation both in the past and in the present time. My intention is to examine the process of racialization inside the labour market, as well as struggles and strategies of resistance grounded in anti-racist practices. Firstly, I examine race emerging at the beginning of capitalism, focusing on White exceptionalism as a historical matter. Secondly, I discuss non-white worker exploitation in the contemporary phase of capitalistic transition, stressing how processes of racialization and cognitivization of labour have become filters which regulate entrance into the labour market. Then the segmentation of labour will be observed, focusing on the history of the USA through the 20th century, especially with regard to the exploitation and submission of the Mexican workforce. Finally, I try to think about race as a political and conflictual production, that is, as a chance to generate political mobilization which opposes the increasing discrimination both on labour and inside society. Here, I focus especially on the Latino/a mobilization in the USA since the spring of 2006, trying to highlight how this struggle is challenging the modern idea of citizenship as well as the traditional forms of democratic representation. This article focuses mainly on the USA, although both the processes of labour hierarchisation and the resistance strategies along the colour line have a global scale.

Race formation at the beginning of capitalism

To develop the argument, we can begin with the story of the split between white and non-white workers in the capitalistic transition in the 17th century. It is a well known story which traces its roots in the labour system of the plantation, during the colonial era. Nonetheless, this background helps us to comprehend what dominance and resistance, as a matter of fact, mean. Primitive accumulation in the beginning of capitalism is not only a tale of labour segregation, but takes into account struggles, escapes and autonomous organizations. There is a good deal of evidence telling us that for a long time struggles exploded in the cross Atlantic slaves ships, as well as in the plantations and marronage communities, perturbing capitalism since its inception. 15 It ought to be considered that, initially, within the plantation system, white (mostly wanderers, sex workers, and the poor taken away from their native land) and black (slaves) people worked side by side, subserviently, in the same system of labour. On occasions, they fought communally against submission and exploitation. Yet, across the 17th and 18th centuries 'the “white race” was invented as the social control formation'. 16 It was necessary to break down the common struggles of these workers, stopping their insubordinations. Since then race - as racial differentiation - was related to 'a pattern of oppression (subordination, subjugation, exploitation) of one group of human beings by another'. 17 And a stark separation in the juridical organization of labour between the free white workers and the black enslaved ones was introduced.
From that time onwards, to have white skin became a legal device to legitimate social, political and labour discrimination. A white identity grew to be the linchpin for racial dominance, which was supported by the law. Nevertheless, ‘more than simply codifying race in the limited sense of merely giving a legal definition to pre-existing social categories’, laws ‘have served not only to fix the boundaries of race, but also to define the content of racial identities and to specify their relative privilege or disadvantage’, as Hanye López has argued. Thus, since the 17th century White exceptionalism has been the norm. Indeed, White dominance justified the non-white worker subordination to white profit all over the world. In this way racism became a sort of “additional internal charge” in the determination of the labour market during different times of capitalist transition. This has been explained by WEB Du Bois’ significant analysis of the 19th and 20th century USA labour market: white workers ‘while they received a low-wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they are white’. In other terms, despite the fact that they had in some instances the same wage, white and non-white workers received different treatments along the colour line or - citing David Roediger - ‘toward whiteness’.

Describing the labour composition in the USA at the beginning of the 20th century, Du Bois pointed out the contempt, exploitation and social exclusion, as well as the control of non-white workers. Thus, he highlighted the crucial role of such subordination, noting at the same time how it founded its function in capitalistic accumulation and wealth production. Therefore, the submission of non-white labour ‘made the basis of world power and universal domination and armed arrogance in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, New York and Rio de Janeiro’. The implications of Du Bois’ ideas are still at work today, as we can find similarities between the past and the present. It is not difficult to observe and recognize contemporary racialization processes, focusing on the submission of non-white labour to the advantage of capital, which is constitutionally white. While today the labour composition has undoubtedly changed, a system of labour exploitation still operates. It means that dispositives of control exercised by juridical and cultural apparatuses are obstructing the mobility of living labour, even though, at the same time social and labour struggles challenge the future of capitalism. On the one hand, there are racialization processes and the labour discrimination in wages; on the other hand, there is ‘race as political space’, that is, the possibility to build large mobilizations and struggles deploying race, in order to modify the social and political community as well as the labour market. Therefore it’s important to analyse class composition along the ‘colour line’ because it clarifies, as Mohanty highlights, how power and hegemony function in the world. However, in order to proceed, new forms of exploitation in a globalized world need to be interrogated.

**Contemporary spatial and temporal coordinates of exploitation**

The constitutive tension between capture and rupture, between the control and mobility of labour, helps us to understand the contemporary phase of capitalist transition. One of the most impressive features of contemporary capitalism is related to the fact that the more intimate human attitudes and abilities such as languages, affectivity, relations and knowledge have become means of production. Following this idea contemporary capitalism has been explained as postfordism in order to stress the displacement from an industrial focused production system to another. With regard to that, other scholars like, such as Carlo Vercellone, who has written extensively on Cognitive Capitalism, emphasize that while the fundamental coordinates of the capitalist system (profit, wage, capital gains) persist, new labour structures and new sources of capitalist production of value as well as new sources of property, are put to work. These are related to knowledge production. Hence, the contemporary capitalist transition and, correspondingly, globalization processes, increasing migration, the rise of knowledge work and so on, establish new spatial and temporal coordinates in which the composition of contemporary living labour is placed.

This emerging labour composition challenges the traditional image of the international division of labour created by the distinction between a first “developed” world and a third "underdeveloped" one; furthermore, since colonial apparatuses of domination and anti-colonial resistances are taking a new global form, the coordinates of exploitation in contemporary metropolises are being redrawn. Because of globalization and increasing migration flows, modern and traditional forms of labour, dependent and independent jobs, as well high-skill and low-skill activities are posed side by side so that different labour forms are articulated with each other in a process of translation. The New York cabdriver Javid Tariq’s experience demonstrates how the stereotypic image of non-white workers - who are usually assigned to low-skill jobs and supposedly have a low level of education - does not really match; rather this experience
The second matter is related to migrations during the 20th century. This issue explained well by Nicholas De Genova who speaks about the ‘revolving-door policy’ as a means to describe the USA/Mexico border whose crossing was allowed periodically -intermittently, according to the directions of the USA Department of Labour. Together with that, the ‘Bracero Program’ (between the 1942 and the 1964) was conceived, as a bilateral agreement between the USA and Mexico which institutionalised and intensified the supply of Mexican migrant labour for USA capitalism (principally for agriculture in the Southwest and for the railroads and the railway sector). This administrative agreement provided USA employers a federal guarantee of unlimited “cheap” labour. Both the annexation of the territories - since then called the “American South West” - and the strategy to regulate the infusion of the workforce are key moments for the racialization of Mexican workers: they are crucial instances in the history of subordination and submission of the Latino/a workforce as well as in the debate about citizenship rights in the USA.

The Guadalupe Hidalgo treaty of 1848 carried forward the Naturalization Act (1790) guideline which set the requirement that an applicant for naturalization as a USA citizen must be a “free white person”. Hence, the treaty made whiteness a fundamental requirement for naturalization, and almost 100,000 Mexicans living in the “American South West” lands were denied full citizenship. They became colonized people, many being deprived of both their land and their social and human rights. Since the beginning Mexican-Americans have lived the such conditions of racialization. As Bruno Cartosio underlined “colonial” capitalism made full use of the “colonized” mexicanos and, at the same time, it drew around them the imaginary “colour line” which would prevent them from progressing through the social ladder. At the end of the World War II, the ‘Bracero Program’ acted in that same direction. While it formally controlled the workforce movement from Mexico and Central America, in fact, it promoted a large deportation of undocumented workers, increasing their vulnerability. These deportations had a double direction: it proved useful to hinder the reproduction of the Latino workforce in the USA by avoiding the process of settling and by attracting an adult migrant workforce that was more convenient in the labour market; and the guest worker program aimed at decreasing the wages and labour guarantees for
Latinos and Latinas. By the time the 'Bracero Program' was enacted, the illegalization of workers from Mexico and South America rapidly increased. For each bracero employee four other undocumented Mexicans entered the USA, often encouraged by the employers, who could elude the USA and Mexico bilateral agreement, passing over the labour protections.

Therefore, racialised and illegalized Latinos, once trapped in that mechanism of exclusion from labour protections and from their social networks, found themselves relegated to the lowest position inside the labour market as well as in society. The mass deportations are both cause and effect of the images of Latinos as illegal aliens, consequently increasing their vulnerability at work and the blackmail against them. Nor was the situation modified in the successive decades of the 20th century: while the USA migration policy changed, the labour subordinations and the Latino and Latinas wage discrimination still persisted. As a result of the transformation of the capitalistic mode of production, as well as the achievements of the 1960s civil rights struggles, the USA invented new forms of labour subordination, especially with regard to the Latino/a workers. At that time, the maquiladora was created to shift the exploitation in the grey zone along the border; for the first time, in 1976, the Immigration Act established the quota for South and Central America migration inaugurating what has been described as ‘an active process of inclusion through illegalization’. Although in the middle of the 20th century Latino/a workers were attracted legally and illegally into the USA labour market, more recently, the expedient of the USA war on terrorism after 9/11, has distinctly marked a closure to, if not refusal of, migrants, especially Latinos.

Nevertheless since spring 2006, Latino/a workers in the USA rejected this attack against them and they have been organizing large demonstrations to contest the worst Immigration bill the USA government has ever produced. The bill, called the Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act (HR 4437), has as its first aim to countervail undocumented migrants who generally end up doing low-skill jobs. After the Latino/a mobilizations as well as the employers’ protests (who were afraid to lose the guarantee of a “cheap” labour supply), last summer the immigration bill was ditched by the Senate discussion. In the meantime, a strong, racist and patriotic campaign against Latino/a workers has spread and has been articulated around both the idea to protect and secure the border and plans to put the “Deportation by attrition” into action. In several local and state governments, particularly in the suburban areas, legislative measures against immigrants and especially undocumented workers (mostly Latinos) are multiplying. In the legislative vacuum for the missed approval of the immigration bill, local officers issued administrative measures to force undocumented workers to return to their countries of origin.

Moreover, HR 4437 was oriented to arrange a new guest-worker program which intends to have involved less braceros, railroaders and other low-skill jobs, and in addition it putting together a “new class” of guest workers, highly-trained and qualified, though subject to the flexibility of short term contracts. While this proposal along with the discussion of the bill in the Senate last summer failed, the stance the USA government in relation to foreign, especially temporary workers, remained unchanged. It seeks to provide for the high-tech industry asking for expanding the number of work visas for skilled professionals, yet it increases the control on migrant workers. Raids by the federal government are regularly occurring both in houses and workplaces all over the USA, creating a state of fear and distress among millions of men, women, and children through illegal deportations and separations of families.

At the same time, the political struggles around the new guest workers program explain to us how in contemporary capitalism the racialization and illegalization processes, together with the increasing flexibility and precariousness of labour, result in a new labour composition: new capacities and competencies are put to work such as creativity, knowledge and relational attitudes. Nonetheless, those who do high-skill jobs and are organized through independent jobs, similarly experience labour subordination and wage discrimination on the basis of the colour of their skin (such as demand for high-tech migrant workers by the big corporations have shown).

**Forging political mobilizations**

As the Latino/a struggles in the USA indicate, race does not only imply labor subordination or the erection of borders, whether they are social, political and cultural. Understanding race also means taking into account the political production of race, that is, the chance to build up political mobilization to oppose the increasing discrimination both in the labor market and society. Roediger stressed that ‘in the United States race has functioned as both category into which laws, employers, realtors, police, teachers,
streetcar conductors and others have placed people and as an identity through which USA residents have
embraced or contested such categorizations of themselves. In other words, race is perceived or is
experienced through forms of struggles and resistance but it can also be felt like an ‘acquiescent
acceptance’ of the power apparatuses which model the forms of non-white labour exploitation. It means
that to forge political mobilizations around race is a practice that develops as antagonism between
opposing forces. On one side there are the social and juridical devices operating in society, and on the
other, the processes of class formation around non-white work exploitation and domination.

Examples of these anti-racist struggles are the massive Latino demonstrations that were staged all over
the country, expressing the largest anti-racist mobilizations in USA since the Civil Rights movement.
The demonstrations culminated in a general boycott, on the 1st of May 2006 - El gran paro - which was
the first migrant labour strike in the USA. More then one million workers marched crying out “no work, no
school, no sell, no buy”; together with them Latino/a students who did not go to school and other
demonstrators stretched out in the streets and picketed shops and commercial centres. In Los Angeles,
the truck drivers’ strike resulted in the blockage of the seaport. At that moment the American economy
could not but recognize its dependence on Latino/a labour. New demonstrations were organized this year,
on May 1st even if not as large as the previous year. However the general mood in 2006 as well as in
2007 was expressed by the motto “Si, se puede”: they voiced their anger and claimed specific rights as
Latino/a workers, that is, the political dimension of race or, borrowing from Critical Race Theory, the
political race.

By valorising themselves through struggles and demonstrations, the Latinos overturned the condition
explained by Du Bois as in-between people: a peculiar sensation that allows the “non-white” to be in-
between with respect to how they are seen by white people and consequently how they see themselves.
In the words of Du Bois: ‘One ever feels his two-ness, - An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts,
two unreconciled strivings’. Therefore, this kind of ‘double consciousness’ triggered an opposition
against the privilege of whiteness. In a process of subjective self-determination, Latinos and Latinas
started to think about themselves in terms of their racialization, by making race the ground of resistance
and political mobilization. Such a manner experiencing race and racial discrimination highlights a
constitutive antagonism inside the capitalistic exploitation of non-white workers: the struggle of Latinos
and Latinas articulated as a fight against prejudice is a conflictual refusal of the racialized assignment in
the USA labour market.

**Conclusion**

Emerging social conflicts in the contemporary metropolises, such as Latino/a struggles, the Indian
cabdrivers’ struggles in New York and the banlieusards’ uprisings in France, as well as migrant workers’
resistance all over the world, point to the urgency of rethinking the modern idea of citizenship as well as
the traditional forms of democratic representation. Discussing citizenship, Saskia Sassen has recently
highlighted two emerging figures of citizens: the ‘unauthorized yet recognized’, such as the Latinos in
the USA, as well as the undocumented migrant workers who are recognized as workers but unauthorized
as citizens, and; the ‘authorized yet unrecognized’, such as the French banlieusards as well as the
children migrant workers who are formally host country citizens, though unrecognized with respect to
substantive citizenship rights. This discourse, evidently, focuses on the limit of the modern idea of
citizenship.

Furthermore the mobility of living labour engenders social and political experiences, whether they are of
Latino/a workers, Indian cabdrivers or banlieusards, which take form across the nation-state borders.
Boundaries become more and more porous through tight social networks between the native and the host
country, indicating that migrants can practice new forms of transnational citizenship. Thus, these social
and political experiences prove to be a vital and viable antithesis to either the assimilationist or the liberal
integrationist-multicultural perspectives on citizenship.

These struggles amplify the crisis of traditional forms of democratic representation: they clearly show the
impossibility of translating labour and social conflict articulated along the colour line through the unions’
and parties’ codes. Labour protests against racial discriminations which structure the labour market have
the ability to set off autonomous political process, which are distant from the traditional structure of unions
or parties; and these struggles assume social and transnational networks as the space in which to build
up political actions. Moreover the linguistic and relational attitudes, which shape contemporary living
labour, become a means of struggles and demonstrate how being low-skill workers doesn’t imply passivity or ignorance. The Latino/a struggles for example, produced and circulated knowledge mainly by the use of free radios that were significant to the recent mobilization in the USA.

However, the coordinates of the struggles articulated along the colour line are ambivalent, on one had there is the chance to forge political mobilizations, making race a ground of resistance; on the other hand, there is the danger of producing or legitimating an identitarian backlash - reproducing racialized divisions and reinforcing borders. And the concern here is the reproduction of the privileges of whiteness vis-à-vis the re-forging of labour racial hierarchies. Nevertheless, by examining struggles, we can begin to grasp the forms and practices for changing the present. While struggles which spring and grow on the grounds of racialized difference can be incompatible with the status quo, they nevertheless always mean that social change is ineluctable.

Notes

1. I met and interviewed Javid Tariq in the June 2006 in New York City. He is a founder of the Taxi Worker Alliance (www.nytw.org).
8. Ivi, 23.
10. Hall S., 1980, Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance in Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism, Unesco, 305-345. ‘What is ‘determined’ is not the inner form and appearance of each level, but the mode of combination and the placing of each instance in an articulated relation to the other elements’. Ivi, 326.
17. Ivi, 127.
29. As Sandro Mezzadra asserts ‘Translation is one of the fundamental modes of operation of global capital’ (Mezzadra 2007, 2).

31. As Xiang Biao explained, in a recent book titled “Global Body Shopping” (2007), Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford), the USA Information Technology Industry, between 2000 and 2001, have involved more than twenty thousand of Indian workers. In this industry body shops work as mediators between workers and companies, ensuring the low cost of a highly-skilled workforce as well as its flexibility. Low-wage and flexibility, indeed, are not easily associated to the White American high-tech workers. [↩]


34. Although since the middle of nineteenth century, a large number of Mexican have worked in USA, in the aftermath of the World War II, the USA federal government initiated what came be know as the Bracero Program, in order to face of renewed labour shortages caused by the war. The Bracero Program was a temporary contract labour program which attracted a very large number of Mexican workers in USA, although they received low-wage in a temporary labour contract. It was supported by the Mexican government. ‘The Mexican government’s complicity in the excessively exploitative arrangements of the Bracero Program was merely the most blatant and transparent occasion when mass migration to the United State was deemed an appropriate safety valve for the mitigation of potentially explosive social crisis within Mexico’ De Genova argued (2005 *Op. Cit.*., 225). [↩]

35. The *Naturalization Act* (1790) is one of the founding provisions of the USA Constitution. ‘Although the Constitution did not originally define the citizenry, it explicitly gave Congress the authority to establish the criteria for granting citizenship after birth’ Haney López, who have deeply analysed this matter, pointed out (2006 *Op. Cit.*, 30). Article I, indeed, grants Congress the power “To establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization”. Thus, “from the start, the Congress exercised this power in a manner that burdened naturalization laws with racial restriction that tracked those in the law of birthright citizenship. In 1790, only a few months after ratification of the Constitution, Congress limited naturalization to “any alien, being a free white person who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United State for a term of two years”’ (López 2006 *Op. Cit.*, 31). [↩]


40. However the Latinos resistance against *racialisation* and labor exploitation could be traced back up to the middle of the 90s. At that time strong and radical campaigns for the justice on labor started, fighting against both corporations and racial prejudice. The popular *Justice For Janitors* campaign from the SEIU and the Unite HERE’s struggles in hotels and restaurants prove this as an example. Furthermore to contrast national law such as the *Immigration Responsibility Act* (1996) and the *Proposition 187* oriented to erase the welfare structures for migrant people, community based political experiences was born. The “Centre for Immigrant Family” in Manhattan, New York City (www.c4if.org) proves this as an example. It is involved in reconstructing social networks among Latinos, Bangladeshi and African American women in a mainly migrant neighborhood. [↩]

41. The bill turns illegal migration into *felony* and criminalizes anyone who helps or supports *undocumented* people. Then, it creates detention centres and it establishes the enforcement of the border between USA and Mexico through the enlargement of the wall along the border line and the rise of border police. [↩]

42. The national television advertising “Where is the fence?” (available on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90SdkhwnEIo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90SdkhwnEIo)) provide it as an example. [↩]

43. These penalize landlords that rent to undocumented migrants, as well as businesses that hire them, and in addition establish English as the only official language against the practice of writing various notices - including building-code violations and the monthly newsletter - in both English and Spanish, Kotlowitz A., *Our Town* in “New York Times Magazine”, August 5, 2007. [↩]


45. Big high-tech companies as Microsoft and Google demand of a ‘larger numbers of well-educated, foreign-born professionals who, they say, can help them succeed in the global economy’ as the

46. The reproductive networks are strongly affected by these repressive actions. The Department of Homeland Security through the Social Security Administration act is issuing new regulations in order to shut down the illegal-immigration jobs market. Since last summer controls have started on social security numbers, sanctioning employers which hire undocumented migrant workers. This action is known as No-Match Letter. It is a letter issued by the Social Security Administration which notifies the employer that an employee’s name.


