

## 6. Whiteness, epistemology and Indigenous representation

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Anthropologists in their hunting and gathering for the authentic native construct identities and favoured 'informants'. [They distinguish] some of [their] informants as knowing more than others; because they know things others did not. But how do [they] know this? From [their comments] are we left to assume that anthropologists and historians have recorded all there is to know? How do they 'know' that some people know more than others? (Watson 2002:12–13)

Irene Watson's questions invite us to think about the limits of knowing and the epistemology of those who profess to know. Aborigines have often been represented as objects — as the 'known'. Rarely are they represented as subjects, as 'knowers'. As Watson acknowledges, it is academics who represent themselves as 'knowers' whose work and training is to 'know'. They have produced knowledge about Indigenous people but their way of knowing is never thought of by white people as being racialised despite whiteness being exercised epistemologically. Whiteness establishes the limits of what can be known about the other through itself, disappearing beyond or behind the limits of this knowledge it creates in the other's name. As Said (1978) has argued, the West interpreted and made sense of the Orient, producing knowledge and constructing representations as signifiers of its reality. This is because in the West, whiteness defines itself as the norm and 'is always glimpsed only negatively: it is what allows us to see the deficient and the abnormal without itself being seen' (Montag 1997:291). In this way whiteness is constitutive of the epistemology of the West; it is an invisible regime of power that secures hegemony through discourse and has material effects in everyday life.

In this essay I examine the relationship between knowledge, representation and whiteness. By analysing this relationship we can come to understand the silence, normativity and invisibility of whiteness and its power within the production of knowledge and representation. I begin by considering how whiteness assumed the status of an epistemological *a priori* in the development of knowledge in modernity by universalising humanness. Whiteness as an epistemological *a priori* provides for

a way of knowing and being that is predicated on superiority, which becomes normalised and forms part of one's taken-for-granted knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The existence of those who can be defined as truly human requires the presence of others who are considered less human. The development of a white person's identity requires that they be defined against other 'less than human' beings whose presence enables and reinforces their superiority. Making a direct connection between the *a priori* of whiteness and colonisation in Australia, I examine the work of white and Indigenous scholars in Aboriginal postcolonial studies.

### Universalising whiteness

Representations of the Indigenous 'other' have circulated in white Anglo discourse since the 1700s. The most infamous was that given by Cook, who stated that the Indigenous people of Australia had no form of land tenure because they were uncivilised, which meant the land belonged to no one and was available for possession under the doctrine of *terra nullius*. This representation of the Indigenous other as the nomad justified dispossession. Since then we have been represented in many ways, which include treacherous, lazy, drunken, childish, cunning, dirty, ignoble, noble, primitive, backward, unscrupulous, untrustworthy and savage.<sup>2</sup> These apparently uncomplicated representations mask not only the complexity of Indigeneity but also their role as a set of differences that work to assist the constitution of whiteness as an epistemological *a priori* that informs one's ontology. As a categorical object, race is deemed to belong to the other. This has resulted in many theories about race being blind to whiteness.

Since the Enlightenment, the dominant epistemological position within the Western world has been the white Cartesian male subject whose disembodied way of knowing has been positioned in opposition to white women's and Indigenous people's production of knowledge (Moreton-Robinson 2000). Feminists and Indigenous scholars argue that their way of knowing is connected to their positioning as subjects/knowers of inquiry who are socially situated and related to others in the actualities of their own living. They acknowledge that not all knowledge is chosen or actively acquired. Knowledge can be acquired outside experience but knowing is also connected to experience and understood in relation to situated acts of interpretation and representation. However, within whiteness's regime of power, all representations are not of equal value: some are deemed truthful while others are classified fictitious, some are contested while others form part of our

commonsense taken-for-granted knowledge of the world. Imbued with a power that normalises their existence, these latter representations are invisible, unnamed and unmarked. It is the apparent transparency of these normative representations that strategically enables differentiation and othering.

Foucault explains the definitive importance of difference in modernity's development of knowledge: 'all knowledge, of whatever kind, proceeded to the ordering of material by the establishment of differences and defined those differences by the establishment of an order' (1994:346). This has been particularly evident in the study of race in the human sciences where skin colour is the signifier of difference. Race continues to be a basic categorical object in the production of knowledge in modernity and an epistemological given in disciplines such as biology, natural history and anthropology (Goldberg 1993:149). However, race is reserved for the other and the assumption is that the raced body of the knower (in contrast to the gendered body that feminists privilege) is irrelevant to knowledge production.

A constitutive feature of modernity was the development of humanness as a universal, which was incommensurate with inhuman qualities (Montag 1997:284). The universalisation of humanity appears paradoxical, given the existence of racial difference. Sartre articulated this paradox by characterising the colonised experience as follows: 'your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart' (1978:8). However, this paradox was resolved through the racialised distinction between the animal and the human. The universalisation of humanity required this separation and was enabled by social and juridical morals. These morals operated to normalise whiteness as the measure of being human. Montag argues that:

the universal was one of the forms in which the white race historically appeared . . . in this way, the concept of whiteness is deprived of its purely racial character at the moment of its universalisation, no longer conceivable as a particularistic survival haunting the discourse of universality but, rather as the very form of human universality itself. (1997:285)

Thus, the universalisation and normalisation of whiteness as the representation of humanity worked to locate the racialised other in the liminal space between the human/animal distinction. This 'other' may have attributes of both but is never exclusively human or animal.<sup>3</sup> As an ontological and epistemological *a priori*, whiteness is defined by what

it is not (animal or liminal), thereby staking an exclusive claim to the truly human. In this way, racial superiority becomes a part of one's ontology, albeit unconsciously, and informs the white subject's knowledge production.

## **Transplanting whiteness**

Dyer highlights the salience of whiteness in modernity's development of knowledge:

Research into books, museums, the press, advertising, films, television, software repeatedly shows that in Western representation whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles, and above all are placed as the norm, the ordinary, the standard. Whites are everywhere in representation. Yet precisely because of this and their placing as norm they seem not to be represented to themselves as whites but as people who are variously gendered, classed, sexualised and able. At the level of racial representation, in other words, whites are not of a certain race, they're just the human race. (1997:3)

In the guise of the invisible human universal, whiteness secures hegemony through discourse by normalising itself as the cultural space of the West. Sustained by imperialism and global capitalism, whiteness travelled culturally and physically, impacting on the formation of nationhood, class and empire (Frankenberg 1997a:2). It would be a mistake, however, to assume that whiteness is only found in societies inhabited and dominated by white people or that it functions only where white bodies exist. Whiteness is not just about bodies and skin colour; instead, it is 'more about the discursive practices that, because of colonialism and neocolonialism, privilege and sustain global dominance of white imperial subjects' (Shome 1999:107).

The hegemony of Western whiteness continues to shape the future of the rest of the world. The USA, Britain and Australia's pre-emptive invasion of Iraq demonstrates that the East is now the new frontier for the white West. Despite the fact that there was no evidence to substantiate Iraq as a direct threat to Australia or Britain, Prime Ministers Tony Blair and John Howard were the first to join America and its 'war on terror'. Representing themselves as the holders of true humanity, these white Anglo nations positioned themselves as the liberators of Iraq bringing civilisation to an uncivilised people.

Australia as a former colony of Britain saw the transplanting of an English form of whiteness to its shores. English cultural, religious, polit-

ical and economic values shaped the new colony. While English Protestants dominated public life during the eighteenth century, by the end of the nineteenth century Irish and Scottish Catholics had gained social mobility (see Chapter 16). These groups may have been divided along ethnic, religious and class lines but they cemented themselves as a white race in the twentieth century through the shaping of Australia's constitution. The White Australia policy made Anglocentric whiteness the definitive marker of citizenship; and a form of property born of social status to which others were denied access including Indigenous people. Through political, economic and cultural means Anglocentric whiteness restricted and determined who could vote, who could own property, who could receive wages for work, who was free to travel, who was entitled to legal representation and who could enter Australia. These devices of exclusion did not articulate who or what is white but rather who or what is not white.

The discursive formation of Anglocentric whiteness is a relatively uncharted territory that has remained invisible, dominant and pervasive, even as it influences everyday life. 'Like any other complex of beliefs and practices whiteness is embedded in a highly articulated social structure and system of signification' (Winant 1997:48). The Anglocentric culture of Australia shares features consistent with other white Western societies and is a powerful producer of national identity, shaping ideologies of individualism, egalitarianism, mateship and citizenship. Inter-war representations of Australian mateship, figured through the face of the white digger, embodied racial exclusion as much as an abstract nationalist idea (Nicoll 2001a). Representations of whiteness continue to be enshrined and conveyed in curricula, television, films, newspapers, novels, museums, performing and visual arts, songs and other material culture. For example, when Australian egalitarianism and individualism are personified through sportspeople like Dawn Fraser, Pat Rafter and Ian Thorpe, they are not associated with a particular racial group. Consider why Cathy Freeman is positioned as running for reconciliation, yet Ian Thorpe swims for the nation.

## **Whiteness and Aboriginal postcolonial studies**

When the West is invoked in postcolonial studies it is countries like the United States, Canada, France, Britain, western Europe, Australia and New Zealand that are designated as having the imperial gaze (Ashcroft et al. 1995; Frankenberg 1997a). The West is not explicitly associated with whiteness in most postcolonial work because it functions as a

raceless category. Edward Said's seminal text *Orientalism* (1978) produced a theory of representation that has been used by many to analyse the postcolonial condition. Orientalism posits the idea of the West as an entity confined by its representations of the Orient. The Orient comes to be known through cultural discourses, systems of governance, and the production and dissemination of texts produced by the West. Glossed as 'the West', whiteness remains invisible, unnamed and unmarked; it is omnipresent and effects representation in multiple ways.

Postcolonial theory began to influence the work of scholars in Australia from the late 1980s. They were interested in examining the idea of a postcolonial Australia at a time when Australia's immigration and settlement policies were framed by multiculturalism and when Indigenous issues, 'particularly land rights and reconciliation, ranked in the forefront of politics' (Markus 2001:33). In the 1990s, in particular, scholars began to analyse representations of Indigenous people, developing an area of study identified as Aboriginal Postcolonial Studies. Some scholars were concerned with examining negative definitions and descriptions, while others concentrated on contextualising acts of knowledge about the Indigenous other (Attwood & Arnold 1992; Cowlshaw 1993).

One of the earliest collections of such work was published in a special edition of the *Journal of Australian Studies*, entitled 'Power, Knowledge and Aborigines' and edited by Bain Attwood and John Arnold. There are no Aboriginal contributors to this edition, with the exception of the cover design, a painting by Robert Campbell junior, Ngaku, from Kempsey which is entitled *Aboriginal History (facts) 1988*. The painting depicts a narrative of colonisation, in which the white male body is clearly visible. Campbell, like Fanon, is not uncomfortable in identifying the whiteness of his oppressors.<sup>4</sup> He positions himself as a subject of resistance, making the visible white body the object of that resistance. In this way Campbell's painting inverts the object-subject relationship, which is elaborated in the contents of the journal. However, the relationship of the cover to the contents reverses Campbell's inversion. Despite its best intentions of mitigating primitivist discourse, the journal restages it through representing 'the racialised primitive Other . . . as the ultimate embodiment of visual culture and the white intellectual as the ultimate embodiment of the superior power of words' (Lattas 1992:49). The primitive is the body, while the white intellectual is the mind. Here the body stands in relation to the mind as the cover stands in relation to the journal.

The writer-knower as subject is racially invisible, while the Aboriginal as object is visible. The discourse of primitivism deploys the Cartesian model to separate the racialised white body of the knower from the racialised discourse and knowledge produced by its mind. In this way the body, which is the marker of race, is erased leaving only the disembodied mind. Whiteness, as an ontological and epistemological *a priori*, is seductive in producing the assumption of a racially neutral mind and an invisible detached white body.

Some of the best scholars in Aboriginal postcolonial studies contributed to this edition and it is still one of the few texts that deals with Indigeneity and representation. In the introduction, Bain Attwood (1992) draws on Said's concept of Orientalism to argue that knowing the Aborigine is encapsulated within a mode of discourse he refers to as Aboriginalism. For Attwood this comprises three dimensions: the first being Aboriginal Studies, the teaching, research and scholarship produced by 'European scholars'; second, the ontological and epistemological distinctions between 'them' and 'us'; and third, the corporate institutions that govern and define Aborigines. He asserted that outside of Aboriginalism there are other forms of knowledge characterised by non-oppressive discursive practices that he identifies as post-Aboriginalist. The nature of post-Aboriginalist discursive practices entails collaborative relationships between Aborigines and anthropologists, linguists, historians and curators in museums, land councils and Aboriginal communities. Attwood further argues that there have been two theoretical developments in Aboriginal Studies, which challenge Aboriginalism:

First, Aborigines are viewed as socially constructed subjects with identities, which are relational and dynamic rather than oppositional (in the binary sense) and given. This challenge to essentialism and the teleological assumptions embedded in Aboriginalist scholarship involves historicising processes that have constructed Aborigines, thus revealing how Aboriginal identity has been fluid and shifting, and above all contingent on colonial power relations. This approach necessarily involves a new object of knowledge — Ourselves, European Australians rather than them, the Aborigines — and this entails a consideration of the nature of our colonising culture and the nature of our knowledge and power in relation to Aborigines. These new praxes and knowledges radically destabilise conventional ways of establishing identity or the existential conditions of being for both Aborigines and ourselves, but they also have the potential to offer new means for a mutual becoming. (1992:xv)

The point to note about Attwood's analysis is the way in which he identifies a homogenous group as 'ourselves' — European Australians — yet fails to racialise the same group as white, despite prevailing discourses which used the term 'European' to refer to British and northern Europeans. This resistance to naming whiteness works to deracialise the category Attwood designates as 'European Australians'. Race is implicit in the construct Aborigine but not identified as being implicit in the category European Australian. In contrast to whiteness, Aboriginality as a racial construct is identified with blackness and is named and attached to Aboriginalism and post-Aboriginalism because it is deemed a valid discursive practice. Techniques through which other racial categories are deconstructed, reconfigured, subverted and changed, elided and embedded, have not been applied to whiteness. This is because Aboriginalism and post-Aboriginalism are socially constructed by whiteness as representations of what it is not. The new theoretical challenges to Aboriginalism recognise that what is required is a new object of knowledge but whiteness as an epistemological *a priori* works to assign this object on the basis of European Australian ethnicity rather than race. This ensures that race continues to belong to the Indigenous other and whiteness remains hidden, which leads me to ask the question: how is post-Aboriginalism the new means of our mutual becoming when conventional ways of deploying race have not been radically destabilised?

Similarly, the article by Stephen Muecke (1992) on representation fails to recognise whiteness as a racial category. According to Muecke, when scholars seek to evaluate a stereotype against reality all we are doing is comparing one representation with another because both are interpretations. Thus, we should be concerned with post-representation, a mode of analysis that does not deal with 'real-world relations'; instead, it is interested in how images are produced through available discourses and whether it is possible to create others. Muecke is concerned that Aboriginalist discourse within society conflates culture with Aborigines:

This legacy forces contemporary Aboriginal subjects, in turn, into positions of essentialism (you are Aboriginal), or representativeness and knowledge (you would know about kinship systems of the Western desert), and consequently they are constantly called upon to display this essence, or this or that skill, as if culture were an endowment. This is an enormous burden, and it is the Western version of culture which gives them this, not the Aboriginal. This is not to say that the Aboriginal



version of culture is the thing to be achieved, the thing that will necessarily correct this idea, or complete one's being . . . This nexus of grandeur and limitations — the inability to be able to see oneself as specifically culturally focussed — has had the unfortunate effect of inhibiting the formation of a strong Aboriginal intellectual group in Australia. 'Culture' thus seems to me to be the prison of twentieth century Aborigines. (1992:40)

I agree with Muecke that Aboriginalist discourse works to circumscribe self-representation or different constructions of Indigenous people which could be deemed post-representational. However, to assume there is an absence of 'a strong Aboriginal intellectual group in Australia' due to the constitutive powers of Western discourse is to place us outside discursive regimes of power and knowledge. The logic of Muecke's argument is that the disciplinary regime that produces white Australian intellectuals is not also producing Indigenous Australian intellectuals. Is it possible that in the late twentieth century this is because the whiteness of post-structuralist theory is the prison of Stephen Muecke? Muecke effaces his own identity as an object of power and knowledge and acquires the power of subject by making Indigenous people the problematic objects of his theory. As a knowing subject he is able to simultaneously position Indigenous intellectuals inside disciplinary power as victims (or in the 'prison of culture') and therefore outside disciplinary power as non-intellectuals. This may be in part because as a central reference point for post-structuralist intellectuals, Foucault also overlooked the importance of naming whiteness in his work. Yet, as a universal that represents humanity, whiteness has affected the knowledge of things and their order. '[Whiteness] is the gaze of a universal that stumbles on what it has left out, on the remainder that it cannot acknowledge except by projecting it beyond the limits whose existence it is designed to mask' (Montag 1997:292). As we shall see, despite being prisoners of disciplinary power, representations of whiteness in the texts of Indigenous scholars reveal a knowledge of whiteness produced from being othered through a range of discursive and material practices.

Representations of the Indigenous other work within discourses to enable and sustain the universality of whiteness as humanness which defines itself as what it is not. Primitivism developed during modernity and is dependent upon established scientific fields such as anthropology and biology which through their formal character and apparent universality confer authority and legitimacy to it (Goldberg 1993:149).

Whiteness has been historically integral to the emergence of these authoritative fields while remaining invisible, unmarked and unnamed. It is in this context that 'the primitive' is operationalised to be either in opposition to or supportive of white identity.

Andrew Lattas analyses the way Aboriginal identity is influenced by discourses concerned with the constitution and future of the nation's identity. He argues that by representing Indigenous people in discourse as the bearers of primitivism, white people can claim to inhabit modernity and individualism: '[T]he racialised primitive Other is constructed as the ultimate embodiment of visual culture and the white intellectual as the ultimate embodiment of the superior power of words' (1992:49). Unlike Muecke and Attwood, Lattas does invoke the racial category 'white' in his analysis. However, its use is restricted to denoting particular subject positions: white intellectual, white man, white artists. In this way Lattas fails to distinguish between a racialised subject position and the power and knowledge effects of racialised discourse. Primitivism is not recognised as a discursive effect of whiteness which operates beyond identity at the level of knowledge production.

In analysing how representation is constitutive of violence, Barry Morris argues that the culture of terror exercised on the frontier was enabled through the indeterminacy of the native subject's shift between ambivalence and fixity. A mimesis occurred between the imputed treachery of the Aborigine and the savagery of the colonial project: 'The efficacy of such representations of Aboriginal "treachery" manifested itself in the deeper strain of fear and hatred which characterised the redemptive violence of the colonial frontier' (1992:85–6). Morris's analysis recognises that representations of the Aborigine both constituted and enabled violence, but the epistemological *a priori* of whiteness which also constitutes such representations remains unmarked and invisible. Whiteness as an epistemological and ontological *a priori* is seductive in that it underpins concepts like colonists or colonialism in Australia, but its invisibility means it makes these terms appear to be deracialised. This is one of the ways in which whiteness remains unmarked as a discursive formation that is tied to knowledge production and the exercise of power.

What we can extract from Morris's and Lattas's examinations of representations of the Indigenous other is that the system of beliefs, values and knowledge that created a racial hierarchy placed whiteness at the top. The post-Aboriginalist position of Attwood, and Muecke and others, can acknowledge the construction of Aboriginality as the

'Other' of the universal humanist subject of the West. However, they fail to imagine that Indigenous intellectual production might be inspired by a different understanding of the human subject because whiteness operates as an epistemological and ontological *a priori* in their work. As Fanon concluded in *The Wretched of the Earth*: 'For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity . . . we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new [human]' (1978:255). Fanon was not confused by the intimate connection between the violent face of humanism, on the one hand, and the white subject behind the mask who dispensed it, on the other.

### **Whiteness in Indigenous representations**

In academia it is rarely considered that Indigenous people are extremely knowledgeable about whites and whiteness. It is white scholars who have long been positioned as the leading investigators of the lives, values and abilities of Indigenous people. Indigenous scholars are usually cast as native informants who provide 'experience' as opposed to knowledge about being Indigenous or white. The knowledges we have developed are often dismissed as being implausible, subjective and lacking in epistemological integrity. This is despite the fact that colonial experiences have meant Indigenous people have been among the nation's most conscientious students of whiteness and racialisation. Participant observation was our method for acquiring knowledge of our total environment and it was deployed to gain knowledge about white people. Indigenous knowledge of whiteness is more than a denial of dominant assumptions regarding the reality of race and the superiority of whites; such knowledge is not simply a reaction to what whites do and say. Our curiosity, compassion and knowledge of what constitutes humanity inform our consideration of a variety of white behaviours, histories, cultural practices and texts.

Recognition of the epistemological *a priori* of whiteness is implicit within the work of Indigenous scholars. Fabienne Bayet-Charlton's (2003) analysis of the problems of a black and green alliance illustrates the racialised concept of 'wilderness' as it is used in conservation discourse. She argues that wilderness implies a human-free landscape: an implication which exists through dominant regimes of knowledge that work to separate humans (meaning white people) from their bodies and the earth while positioning Indigenous people within a time warp as noble savages, who along with the fauna and flora, constitute part of the landscape. Indigenous resistance to whiteness in Bayet-Charlton's

work is expressed through an argument that Indigenous people are subjects in relationship with the landscape and are capable of giving new evaluations and meanings to inherited cultural forms, which remain expressive of our living traditions and changed circumstances.

Tony Birch's (1992) analyses the dispute over renaming the Grampians to enhance cultural tourism in the area by acknowledging Indigenous pre-occupation. The refusal of the white community to endorse this semantic reclamation worked to reinforce the dispossession of the traditional owners. Birch highlights the connection between white domination and representation by arguing that English place-names colonised the landscape through words. The persistent presence of English names continues to convey a sense of Anglocentric whiteness's divine right and entitlement to Australia. Indigenous resistance to this is produced through the continued practice of naming the landscape, which in turn affirms Indigenous ownership.

Analysing Indigenous literature for constructions of authenticity, Kurtzer (1998) illustrates the degree to which Indigenous writers are caught between a rock and a hard place. Her argument suggests that whiteness requires Indigenous writers to conform to a genre of writing that manufactures acceptable representations of Indigenous authenticity for its white audience. Such representations may not reflect the same knowledges about authenticity that are created and deployed within and by Indigenous communities and as such they may not be acceptable. In this sense Indigenous writers' works are circumscribed by both audiences. Kurtzer suggests that this impasse should not be disabling; instead, Indigenous writers could critically engage with and deconstruct the white cultural representations of Indigeneity. Her work reveals the complex and contradictory constraints on Indigenous agency in relation to certain forms of resistance. What her work offers us to think about are the ways in which conformity to white regimes of knowledge can also enable resistance. Acceptable stories that work to reproduce dominant representations of the Indigenous other or allow white audiences to identify with the text need not necessarily be read as lacking authenticity. One can conform and resist simultaneously because conformity enables access to certain knowledges about whiteness which can be appropriated to use strategically in the act of writing itself.

Like Muecke, Martin Nakata (1995) argues that Indigenous people are captives of certain kinds of discourses. Indigenous people who create their own representations of identity are circumscribed by dom-

inant assumptions that pass for and circulate as 'knowledge' about the Indigenous other. This 'knowledge' holds that Indigenous people are always lacking. Nakata demonstrates how white textual representations become the measure of Indigenous authenticity and penetrate Indigenous education policy. Indigenous educational empowerment is reduced to the maintenance of a traditional identity because to be educated, according to the coloniser, means we can no longer maintain it. Buried within this assumption is the idea that we are incapable of change or developing strategies for survival that enable us to extend on the multiple subject positions we have created through kinship and community politics. Nakata advocates, in contrast to Muecke, that our resistance as Indigenous people should be tied to a political consciousness that facilitates being critically literate of textual and scientific representations.

## Conclusion

Australian cultural representations of mateship, egalitarianism, individualism and citizenship are reproduced through disciplinary knowledges that are presented and taught as though they do not have an epistemological connection to whiteness. Whiteness reduces the Indigenous other to being a function, and a means, of knowing and defining itself through representations. Anglocentric travel narratives, journals, diaries, archives, histories and narratives of exploration, crime and captivity provide an extensive formal record of historical representations of whiteness in Australia. The task today is to name and analyse whiteness in all texts to make it visible in order to disrupt its claims to normativity and universality. The power relations inherent in the relationship between representation, whiteness and knowledge production are embedded in our identities. They influence research, communication and our everyday lives. Whiteness as a regime of power that secures hegemony through discourse has material effects on the entire social structure and is an area of study worthy of investigation and critique.

The equation of whiteness with humanity secures a position of power from which whiteness reproduces itself and contributes to mainstream epistemologies' refusal of the specificity of the knowing subject. As a product of modernity and colonisation, Australian Anglocentric whiteness is predicated on racial difference and domination. As long as representations of Aboriginality remain the object of analysis and critique we are prohibited from scrutinising or recognising whiteness in everyday practices of representation that are not explicitly or

exclusively Aboriginalist or post-Aboriginalist. To recognise that whiteness has shaped knowledge production means academia would have to accept that the dominant regime of knowledge is culturally and racially biased, socially situated and partial. Such recognition would not only challenge the universal humanist claim to possess impartial knowledge of the Indigenous other, it would also facilitate recognition of the subjects of other humanisms to whom whiteness has never been invisible or unknown.