○ **VOLUME 6 NUMBER 3, 2007**

Culture Wars: Liberalism, hospitality and sovereignty

Elaine Kelly
Macquarie University

This paper offers an exploration of the interrelation of (neo)liberalism, hospitality and state sovereignty. This is done in the context of the 'cultural wars' which, I argue, is the site in and through which the Howard Liberal Coalition government promotes a teleological grand narrative underpinned by whiteness. In this paper I contend that whiteness is the overriding project concerned with the renewal of white social and economic privilege and power; racelessness is the mechanism of disavowing race as significant to, in this instance, liberalism. Liberalism is positioned as the end point and racelessness its outcome in politics and culture. Against this logic, this paper examines the constitutive racism of liberalism under the Howard government and the implications of the disavowal of this racism for practices of hospitality toward asylum seekers and migrants. By promoting liberalism as universal, innocent and unmarked by race relations, the Howard government has been able to reconfigure public debate, policy and law. Liberalism as unmarked veils over the perpetuation of racial hierarchies and disguises the racial implications of policy and law attached to a (neo)liberal agenda. In this sense, we cannot narrate neo-liberalism as a radical aberration of liberalism thus positing liberalism as innocent or distinct from racial violences. I contend that contemporary forms of liberalism are concerned with reconsolidating the group rights of whites to the exclusion of Indigenous sovereignty.

Introduction

1. This paper argues that by relying on liberal individualism, as both a politico-philosophical theory and a contextually specific practice, the John Howard led Liberal Coalition government attempts to disguise the racial investments of its engagements in the 'culture wars'. Drawing on a whiteness framework, this paper explores the implications of Australia's 'culture wars' for understandings of hospitality and sovereignty. By whiteness I refer broadly to the study of the continuation of white power and privilege across a range of political, economic, social, legal and cultural institutions and sites. This exploration is achieved via a deconstruction of the theory of liberalism, and neo-liberalism, as individualist-based models of normative politics and ethics. Accordingly, I argue that underpinning the Howard Liberal Coalition governments engagement in the 'culture wars' (as a site of politico-cultural knowledge production) is the assumption that liberal philosophy assures neutrality and equality in politics. In doing this, the Howard governments have been able to suggest that the Enlightenment individual, or the individual of liberalism, is required as the bedrock of all political engagements in order to restore a perceived lack of balance in favour of minority or group rights. Within this logic, liberal individualism promotes an unbiased political stance. This position has significant implications, I argue, for conceptions and practices of hospitality toward asylum seekers and migrants, as well as assumptions of sovereignty in a national context.

2. Whilst this paper is not concerned with detailing the aporias of hospitality Derrida insists upon or the 'contradictions of welcoming' inherent to conceptions of hospitality (I have opened this up elsewhere; see Kelly, 2006), I do draw on some of Derrida's language such as 'structures of welcoming' to analyse the collision of Australia's immigration system with neo-liberalist and socially conservative agendas. Instead I look at the implications of welcoming that are provided under the Howard government's promotion of (neo)liberalism and the implications of the type of welcoming the Howard government promotes within a neo-liberalist paradigm. In order to secure its whiteness, liberalism must disavow the aporias of hospitality, the trace of the unknowable or unforeseeable that Derrida carefully traces.

3. In line with this, immigration as a site for 'hospitality', or an institutional 'structure of welcoming', is advertised as informed by liberal understandings of 'equality' for all who apply to come to Australia and, especially in neo-liberal rhetoric, 'choice'. Interrogating these assumptions, I argue that rather than viewing liberal individualism as outside of vested interests, it is absolutely implicated in the reproduction of white power and privilege; indeed, liberalism is interested in protecting the group rights of whites. I demonstrate how this operates in relation to the construction of sovereignty as commonsensical to the foundation of the Australian nation-state, and immigration as structured upon this notion of sovereignty.

4. A theoretical framework for the deconstruction of liberalism will be provided via Gayatri Chakravory Spivak's deconstruction of centre/margin politics, in conjunction with Aileen Moreton-Robinson's articulation of the *a priori* whiteness of the individual, and David Theo Goldberg's work on liberalism as a disguised modality of racial governance reconsolidating whiteness. What this paper aims to suggest is that the Australian'culture wars'are part of a larger'teleological narrative of modernisation and racial progress' (Goldberg, 2002: 203) fundamental to, and constitutive of, the Australian nation-state and national identity. This racialised'grand narrative'underpinned by liberalism will be discussed in section two, when I introduce what the'culture wars'are and how they affect and frame understandings, rhetoric and policy in relation to hospitality and sovereignty. Finally, the last section of this paper will critically analyse the continuities between liberalism and neo-liberalism by highlighting the violent effects specific immigration policy has on the lives of asylum seekers and refugees. Goldberg's notion of'racelessness'as the teleological end-point for liberalism's engagement with race discourse, structures this discussion.

Re-thinking the'centre': whiteness and the individual

5. In an article titled 'Explanation and Culture: Marginalia' (1979), Spivak examines the construction of a centre/margin logic and the political and ethical effects of its operation. In this analysis, Spivak demonstrates how explanations are culturally-bound and made from within'culture', they cannot be regarded as coming outside of context (historical, cultural, economic, social) and thus they cannot be seen as objective and scientific in nature. We can read this in relation to the formation of the modern subject, the liberal individual (discussed below) that we currently take for granted. There is no clear separation of the process and the object, messenger and message, or the structure and the content. Spivak explains:'for the structure or means of production of explanation is, of course, a very important part of the ideology of cultural explanations that cannot be clearly distinguished, in fact, from the explanations themselves' (1979: 32).

6. The implications of failing to acknowledge the dependent relationship between culture and explanation, structure and content, is the settling of a centre/margin logic that privileges and makes invisible the constructed nature of the'centre'. We can transfer this analytical approach to the construction of a dominant and naturalised mode of politics by the Howard government to the exclusion of the'margin'. Spivak's analysis provides a powerful political force building on an important point Derrida makes. Derrida, Spivak interprets for us,'reminds us [...] that all explanations, including his own, claim their centrality in terms of an excluded margin that makes possible the "can" of the "can be expressed" and allows the "is" to be quietly substituted for it' (1979: 34). Spivak then deconstructs the'language of centrality', or what Derrida calls logocentrism. This leads Spivak to assert that 'it is the centre that offers the official explanations; or, the centre is defined and produced by the explanations that it can express' (1979: 34). The implication of this is that if the centre relies on something outside of itself for its truth, then this truth is always already both insecure and culturally constructed.

7. As Spivak contends, any explanation of subjectivity has particular political and ethical consequences as explanations construct often dichotomous ways of being, seeing and telling the world. Spivak points out that binary oppositions are the'condition of possibility for centralisation' (1979: 41). Consequently, the privileged term in the relation is consolidated as the norm. The displacement of these oppositions and attention to marginality, or to the contamination of the dominant term by the subordinate term, highlights the'irreducibility of the margin in all explanations' (1979: 35). Further, this

strategy also calls into question the position of 'pure innocence' espoused by the centre and, significantly, declares the centre as marginal in and of itself (1979: 35). To say that the centre is marginal is not to deny its dominance and power and thus trivialise the material effects of its imposition. Rather, it is to highlight its investments in a particular politics. The centrality of whiteness and its relationship with the individual in politico-philosophical discourses of liberal individualism, will demonstrate the logic and effects of the argument Spivak outlines for us.

Liberal Individualism and Race

8. In his book, *The Racial State*, David Theo Goldberg provides a thorough examination of the historical and contemporary disjuncture and continuities between 'naturalist' and 'historicist' conceptions of race in Western culture and politics (2002). Briefly, naturalist accounts of race rely upon biological differentiation and the genetic superiority of whites, whilst historicist accounts reject the legitimacy of such science, instead talking in terms of historical development and under-development (2002: 11). This is the distinction between 'colonialism's vicious recourse to neo-scientific racism'and'liberalism's polite racism', Goldberg argues (2002: 58). Whilst there is a general recognition of the motivations of scientific racism, liberalism tends to be cast as innocent and as the solution to such practices and beliefs.

9. What this has the effect of doing is reducing racism to biological reasoning, whilst allowing liberalism, at least in principle, to be free of such prejudice. This logic suggests that if a Liberal State steers clear of biological reductionism, there is no reason why it cannot apply a universal and thus race neutral liberalism, something Goldberg contests. Indeed, according to Goldberg this condition of 'racelessness', is the 'teleological narrative of modernisation and racial progress', and the 'logical implication of racial

historicism' (2002: 203). In other words, the idea that we have transcended race, contained in modernity's narrative of progress, at the governmental and scientific level, is a compulsory component of ensuring the dominance of liberalism as disguised 'racial governance' (2002). This narrative of racelessness will be tied to the 'culture wars' later in this paper, and discussed in relation to neo-liberalism in the last section. To continue on the earlier point, as a result of institutional racelessness there is a disavowal of racism in circulation in modern liberal democracies and a relegation of such logics and practices to the realm of the private sphere. Referring back to Spivak, this separation of structure and content is highly questionable and implicated in the reassertion of particular relations of power or the privileging of 'official explanations' as emulating from an objective centre.

10. For instance, Judith Brett explicitly absolves the Howard government of racism, asserting that, '[i]n their own terms the Liberal's are not racist, and to insist that they are simply reinforces their sense of misunderstood self-righteousness' (2002: 199). On the specific subject of the accusations that Howard is racist, Brett suggests, 'His (Howard's) positions are not the result of his racism but of his liberal individualism' (2002: 194). Consequently, what occurs is the separation of the possibility that liberalism could be complicit in producing racial hierarchies. What is disavowed are the racial ramifications of liberal philosophy itself disproportionately felt by groups of non-white people. As Angela Davis tells us, liberal discourse is an 'encoded language' that results in a 'camouflaged racism' (1998: 61). The recent disappearance of Multicultural Affairs from the Immigration portfolio in February 2007 indicates the reaches of this logic of racelessness.

11. Because the liberal individual is presented as if completely unmarked and thus neutral and consequently the solution or equaliser required for Australian politics, it is important to look at its historical deployment. Briefly tracing historical inconsistencies places contemporary understandings in context and allows us to acknowledge the selective application of the category 'individual', within the framework of liberalism, and any implications for legal entitlements such as citizenship. Brett, for example, recognises that '[w]hat is understood by the term 'individual' in 1910 is not the same as is understood at the century's end, after the rise of identity based social movements' (2004: x). Such an acknowledgment of the contextual and un-fixed nature of meaning and the exclusive category of th e'individual' is located entirely in the past. By citing identity politics and attendant social movements, Brett is able to logically conclude that within the framework of liberalism, the individual is inclusive. What this has the effect of achieving is exactly the separation of principle and practice. There is also an appeal to a teleological narrative of progression.   So the logic prevails: in the past the individual meant the Anglo settler, but

now the individual can structurally encompass anyone in light of its universalistic foundations.

12. However, rather than simply assigning exclusivity to application alone, Aileen Moreton-Robinson has provided a thorough critique of the *a priori* whiteness of this individual of western modernity.   Moreton-Robinson examines the ways in which conceptions of the individual have historically privileged the disembodied (thus unmarked as such) white middle-class male and judged difference according to this norm. Whiteness, Moreton-Robinson contends, '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' (2004a: 75). But what does it mean to say that there is an a priori whiteness to the individual subject that 'informs one's ontology'? (2004a: 76). For Moreton-Robinson, cultural explanations have, and continue to be, actively invested in reproducing whiteness in an effort to ensure a 'way of knowing and being that is predicated on superiority' at the expense of, historically and in a contemporary setting, Indigenous peoples (2004a: 75/76).

13. To return to Spivak's argument, I would suggest that centralising the individual as unmarked ensures the privileging of whiteness, veiling over the processes of racial exclusion Moreton-Robinson highlights. It allows structurally permitted and ensured whiteness to be re-articulated contextually but to be validated via an appeal to universality or de-contextualised objectivity. The prominent political and philosophical doctrine of liberalism that arose in the period of the Enlightenment, in spite of its multiplicity of internal philosophical differences and modalities, is marked by an important common purpose.

Liberalism is committed to individualism for it takes as basic the moral, political, and legal claims of the individual over and against those of the collective. It seeks foundations in universal principles applicable to all human beings or agents in virtue of their humanity or rationality. (Goldberg, 1993: 6)

Fiona Nicoll has also teased out the implicit relationship between whiteness and individualism and has connected this relationship with justifications and reiterations of white sovereignty. Nicoll contends that there is a 'symbiotic relationship between whiteness and individualism' (2004: 21). Importantly, Nicoll addresses the possible link this has with the ways in which 'majority' rhetoric plays out in Australian politics. Nicoll relates this specifically to the issue of Indigenous sovereignty, proposing that: 'the racialised trope of perspective pushes Indigenous sovereignty claims towards the pole of "subjectivity" while granting the everyday imposition of white sovereignty an aura of "objective authority"' (2004: 20). That is, within the 'culture wars' white sovereignty gains a basis in fact, or according to a Spivakian analysis, 'pure innocence', even against the

basis in fact, or according to a Spivakian analysis, pure innocence, even against the knowledge that what we now call 'Australia' is the result of invasion, with no formal treaty relinquishing Indigenous claims to sovereignty over the land. Citing Ross Chambers' compelling point, Nicoll reinforces the reasoning behind this logic:

Whiteness itself is thus atomised into invisibility through the individualisation of white subjects. The in(di)visibility of whiteness ensures that white people doing what is in effect their own brand of *special-interests politics* looks like so many individual agents getting on with the business (Chambers cited in Nicoll, 2004: 21, my emphasis)

It is in this way that the interests of white people in the 'collective sovereignty' of the nation 'remain(s) invisible' (2004: 21). What is important here is the tension evident in the claim that liberalism is a philosophy motivated by the desire to promote individualism underpinned by neutrality and equality, and the possibility that the very same liberalism is implicated in protecting and ensuring the collective or group rights of whites and consolidating white sovereignty.

14. In the following sections I will endeavour to flesh out the theoretical framework offered here with textual analysis of various Howard government speeches, policy proposals and interventions in law and public culture. I will attempt to provide examples of the way that neo-liberalism as an 'official explanation' protects whiteness as a collectivity of interests invested in the renewal of white privilege and power. This will be done in the context of the 'culture wars' and its contributions to our understandings, enactments and denials of hospitality. Neo-liberalism is to be understood as another modality of racial governance. So whilst there are varying discourses of liberalism circulating at any given socio-political moment, we must keep in mind Goldberg's claim that fundamentally underpinning any formation of liberalism is a commitment to individualism, which is always already implicated in racial power structures.

Context and Narrative: The New Right, the 'Culture Wars' and racelessness

15. It is my contention that the political doctrine of liberal individualism invoked by the Right in the context of the 'culture wars' highlights the manner in which these 'wars' are constructed as the narrative and discourse in and through which Australia will eventually reach a state of racelessness. It is in this way that we can read the 'culture wars' as a site for the continuation of the role of modernity's 'grand narratives' or what Osuri and Banerjee (2004) call 'white teleologies of nationhood', or narratives of whiteness in Australian media and politics (2004). This sort of rhetoric is reflective of what Goldberg refers to as a teleological narrative of modernisation and racial progress (2002: 203), intricately linked to the discourse of liberalism. For those on the Right of these 'wars', racelessness will be achieved in part once 'reverse racism', as a symptom of a lack of balance against 'whites', is eradicated institutionally.

16. It is necessary to briefly outline the historical development of the New Right and the 'culture wars'. This should be done without reducing the racial thematics evident in the 'culture wars' to a specific period, but rather as intimately tied to colonialism. Some social commentators have argued convincingly that it is with the rise of the New Right in the 1980s that we began to witness the emergence of the 'culture wars' in Australian politics and media. Andrew Markus and David McKnight have, for example, suggested that New Right politics combines radical market liberalism with socially conservative values. Economic rationalism has however been coupled with an awareness by the New Right that in order to implement long-term change, 'a change in social values and political culture [is] required' (Markus, 2001: 53). In other words, economic restructuring has required a moral dimension. Holly Randell-Moon (2006) has articulated this relationship as 'Howardage', suggesting that rather than simply reflecting particular social and cultural values, Howard's language or rhetoric is 'used to legitimate different sorts of claims to power' (2006).

17. It is imperative that we recognise that the 'culture wars' contain a powerful discourse of 'majority versus minority interests' which explicitly introduces notions of individualism as, paradoxically, mainstream or situated with the 'majority'. Liberal individualism is promoted in this context as able to restore a loss of balance in favour of a perceived privileging of 'minority group rights' under the Keating Labor government (1992 - 1996). There is a significant literature detailing the strategies employed by Howard in the 1996 election campaign that highlight a play-off between so-called 'minority' and 'majority' interests (see Brett 1997, 2004, 2005; Perera & Pugliese 1997; Markus 2001; Moreton-Robinson 2004c). This division is rooted in the history of Australian politics, whereby the Australian Labor Party (ALP) are traditionally regarded as the party for the working class with a socialist philosophical basis, while the Liberals promise to represent the nation as a whole via a reliance on the individual and 'values' (Brett, 2004: 9). Writes Brett: 'They (Liberals) have consistently opposed Labor's language of class interest and class conflict by appealing instead to citizens 'commitment to the nation as a whole and to their interests as free, unaffiliated, non-unionised individuals' (2005: 10). In 1996, John Howard highlighted this political distinction between the ALP and the Liberals: 'The Liberal Party has never been a party of privilege or sectional interests or narrow prejudice,' he declared. 'Liberalism has focused on the national interests rather than sectional interests' (Howard cited in Brett, 2005: 5). The elevation of 'national interests' over so-called sectional interests was regarded by the Howard campaign as necessary in order to restore a perceived loss of balance in politics, public culture, law and government policy.

18. The significance of these 'wars' go beyond the debates themselves and have serious consequences for the discourses of 'hospitality' and 'sovereignty' in circulation and the institutional 'structures of welcoming' (Derrida, 2002: 361) available to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This is immediately evident in the populist strategies utilised by Howard in relation to 'foreigners', including the derogatory reference to a 'multicultural industry' and the xenophobic overtones of Australia's border protection policies, with the subsequent border protection bills and proliferation of deterrence measures used against asylum seekers. The reconsolidation of racialised modes of welcoming along'legal'lines, demarcating who can decide who is welcome and when, is intimately tied to conceptions of Australian sovereignty as natural, self-evident and subsequently neutral, voiced in the 'we will decide' speech back in 2001. This reinscribes a narrow relationship between sovereignty, hospitality and ownership; a relationship developed

rhetorically in the'culture wars'. For example, addressing the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 1998 John Howard said the following in response to the native title Wik judgment, a judgment which held that the rights of Indigenous people to lands could potentially precede and override the rights of pastoralists:

Both the Wik judgment and the unworkable provisions of the Native Title Act itself have vastly increased the amount of uncertainty and sovereign risk borne by mining and other industries in very large parts of Australia. That is not tolerable. ... My wish is that, second time around, the debate will be conducted with more civility and reason, and with more respect for the proper interests of all involved ... An understanding that the government is acting in the national interests, without unduly disadvantaging any lesser interests, would be a good start. (Howard, 1998)

Here Howard expresses his concern over the possibility that the rights of Australia's first peoples could take precedence over the rights of mining and other companies, or farmers. Responding to this possibility requires, for those advancing the New Right agenda, a radicalisation of such interests as producing unwanted 'uncertainty' at a national level, as well as a designation of these interests as 'lesser interests'. The perpetuation of a 'majority', conflated with national interests and even national security, threatened by interest groups, leads to the exclusion of certain peoples from an authoritative speaking platform and creates the conditions whereby certain groups are vulnerable to mechanisms of state and communal violence. This is underpinned by the assertion that first time around the 'debate' was unbalanced, irrational and skewed in favour of 'minority interests', which has led to judgments such as Wik; that the Liberal party will be able to restore the balance with 'even-handed' solutions predicated on 'civility and reason', like the 10-Point Plan. Such an 'even-handed' approach, couched in liberal appeals to free enterprise and property rights, fails to adequately take into consideration obvious historical conditions such as dispossession and colonisation, reinforcing Goldberg's critique of the limits of liberalism being its failure to recognise historical circumstances as inflecting the present. Betraying its own claims to neutrality, to a position outside of vested interests, the Liberal party is forced to name what is at stake. At stake here at the most visible level are the group rights of farmers and miners. At stake on a more fundamental level, however, is the 'collective sovereignty' (Nicoll, 2004: 21) of white people rendered 'invisib[le] through the individualisation of white subjects' (Chambers cited in Nicoll, 2004: 21). In other words, what this example brings to light is the work of maintaining sovereignty, or what Moreton-Robinson has succinctly called 'the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty' (2004b) and its philosophical and institutional legitimacy via liberalism. What this case highlights is the manner in which liberalism attends to the group rights of whites and a broader economic rationalist agenda.

19. Ownership, sovereignty and hospitality are integral to one another and it is their expression within the normative framework of liberalism (and subsequently neo-liberalism) that produces a commonsensical relationship between the three, disguising racialised agendas and interests. This strategic conflation results in a situation in which the Master of the House is vested with uncompromising authority. Drawing on Derrida, Maria Giannacopolous (2007) contends that sovereignty is only legitimated in violent acts of repetition; there is nothing natural or commonsensical about it, its foundations are exposed as without proper grounding and requiring constant re-affirmations. Giannacopolous carefully traces the interconnections between the High Court cases of Mabo (1992) and Tampa (2001), articulating the racial dimensions intrinsic to sovereignty and law's expression of it: 'The High Court, by actively 'finding' that the question of its sovereignty is non-justiciable, re-produces itself as the only legitimate sovereignty' (2007: 49).

20. Of course, sovereignty and hospitality are not uncontested terms but their strategically assured relationship has been central to the 'culture wars'. The Federal government's contention that it is attempting to restore the balance via a return to Enlightenment values and principles, disguises the investments of liberal individualism and its constitutive whiteness. These 'wars' are significant precisely because they have re-inscribed and re-articulated the limitations and possibilities for hospitality and sovereignty. It is the effects of 'racelessness' in immigration policy and law in the context of Australia's 'culture wars' and neo-liberalism that the last section will address.

White hospitality, racelessness and neo-liberalism

21. What marks this period - neo-liberalism - from the last? What is 'new' or 'beyond' in relation to liberalism signified by the'neo'? What does the disjuncture look like, and how

do we mark it? Is it something radically different from liberalism and what is its connection to this theoretical and institutional heritage? This framework, its historical contingencies and structural racisms, informs contemporary limitations and possibilities for hospitality. How does it reiterate and transform the relationship between sovereignty and hospitality? In this section I continue to build on the deconstruction of liberalism and the textual analysis of the culture wars offered in the previous sections. I argue that neo-liberalism legislatively and politically permits and ensures the privatisation of modes of racial governance, and that this process is morally charged - there is an important relationship between neo-liberalism and modern conservatism articulated by the Prime Minister, John Howard, which has racial agendas. I suggest that these modes are structurally produced and renew the privileges, cultural, economic and institutional, of the dominant white group, precisely via a discourse of individualism and liberalism's teleological narrative of progress bound up with modern capitalism. To do this, I will outline the political conditions under the Liberal Howard government and its policy proposals, as well as their implementation in the realm of immigration and settlement. I title my analysis *Enter: 'people: our business'* in order to demonstrate that whilst the equation of neo-liberalism with economic prosperity in a liberal democracy offering equal opportunity, this disavows what others like Ghassan Hage (2003) has referred to as 'social death', activated in late capitalist liberal democracies, such as Australia.

Enter: 'people: our business'

22. The seemingly contradictory contention that Australia's immigration system is implicated in modes of racial governance in spite of the ethnically diverse make-up of its migration intake, can be appreciated in light of the previous deconstruction of liberalism as concerned with protecting the group rights of whites. Katharine Betts has discussed the rise in immigration numbers since 1996, alerting us to the shift to skilled migration as the primary category, realising an increase in the number of migrants coming to Australia annually (2003: 178). In a similar fashion, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) website contends that Australia has non-discriminatory immigration policy for anyone who applies to come to Australia with the program attempting to'enrich Australia through the well-managed entry and settlement of people'. The rise in numbers is indicative, for Betts and others, of the successes of a non-discriminatory (read raceless) and liberal immigration framework, but can be interpreted, as Suvendrini Perera (2006) tells us in another context, as a'quasi-social scientific discourse of enumeration. Here numerical representation acts as a surrogate for explicit racial referencing and classification' (2006). Understood in this light, the generation of statistics for public consumption operates to both validate a celebratory rhetoric of race-neutrality, national generosity and hospitality, as well as ensure the visible regulation of racial subjects crossing Australia's borders. Consequently, the attention paid to statistics promotes a normative approach and contributes, in terms of both language and policy proposals, to the racial status quo and the maintenance of white power. As Hage has argued, public debate and approval or disapproval of migration levels and'source'countries is reflective of what he terms 'governmental belonging'; a sort of nationalistic belonging discursively embodied primarily by white Australians (1998). Limiting analysis to statistical comparisons of different Federal government intakes creates and expands the terms of governmental belonging and restricts the possibilities for critique to debates concerning entry levels. Further, it brings into focus Meyda Yegenoglu's fear that discussions which are confined to the'granting of legal rights to non-normative citizens, the ethnically and racially "different"', will fail to critique the broader implications (2003: 1).

23. A celebration of Australia's immigration program as non-discriminatory erases the violence of the nation-state's asylum seeker policies and fails to take into account the particular ideology governing the current system as a whole. For instance, taking DIAC's summary of its own role, the language indicates that 'applications' are of vital importance for a 'well-managed system'. The process of applying for a visa is presented as equally available to all. The notion of management features, suggesting strict, but liberal, regulation. But we can read this language in light of Ross Chambers'compelling point that the special interest politics of whiteness and the individual are hidden by the apparently neutral description of business as usual; the idea of just getting on with things. This system of applications and management highlights the invitational basis of Australia's hospitality and draws our attention to its multitude of investments and exclusions. Hospitality is distributed, withheld, disavowed, managed and extended within a (neo)liberal political and ethical framework. Consequently, the proliferation of visa categories for economic migration, has developed alongside the withdrawal from international humanitarian practices in relation to asylum seekers, as well as significant cuts to family reunion and long term settlement of migrants (Perera & Pugliese, 1997). Further, the proliferation of visas has lead to the multiplication of bureaucratic and legalistic methods of violence and exclusion. In addition we witness cuts to welfare services and the increased privatisation of services when they are in operation.

24. Critical of the neo-liberal discourse of 'choice' and 'self-fulfilment', Hage argues that: '[t]oday, not only does the state not breathe in hope, it is becoming an active producer of social death, with social bodies rotting in spaces of chronic underemployment, poverty and neglect' (2003: 18). 'Social death' encapsulates the material conditions of poverty and discrimination combined with the lack of access to the means of symbolic recognition, or the recognition of one's humanity. Importantly, however, Hage notes that hope or ethics is not an'either/or'scenario, rather it is about unequal distribution (2003: 16). The unequal distribution of hope is a racialised process. Privatisation has occurred

10). The unequal distribution of hope is a racialised process. Privatisation has occurred in relation to a number of services asylum seekers, refugees and migrants encounter upon arrival and settlement in Australia. The neo-liberal imperative to privatise is coupled with a socially conservative approach to issues of race and discrimination, couched in liberalism's language of equality and equal opportunity. This will be demonstrated by looking at the policies of mandatory detention as well as the development of various visa categories for refugees and asylum seekers.

25. Mandatory detention of asylum seekers began in 1992, under a Federal Labor government. The privatisation of detention facilities was introduced by the Howard Liberal government in 1997. Mandatory detention, it is argued by the Australian government, is not a punitive measure, but a necessary stage in the administration of asylum seekers. Coined 'administrative detention' by the government, and advertised as the 'absence of punishment' and a 'value adding' concept by the private contractor Global Solutions Limited, mandatory detention of asylum seekers (and specific racialised visa overstayers), is indicative of the privatisation of hostility or the out-sourcing of hospitality by the Australian government. Contracted out, responsibility and accountability become secondary matters to the running of business as usual, code for the perpetuation of whiteness. Indeed, the slogan DIAC utilises, 'people: our business' signifies on two levels. Firstly, the neutral language suggested by the word 'people', attempts to de-racialise the structural modes of welcoming and their implication in whiteness. Secondly, 'business' operates to both support this race neutrality but also infers other business-oriented terms: management, organisation, selection criteria, profitability. Business after all is the site of money-making. As an element of a state of racelessness, the privatisation of 'services' works to both increase corporate profits, thereby serving an economic rationalist agenda, and ensure that no 'preferential treatment' goes to certain groups, conforming to the sort of conservative and racialised discourse developed explicitly as part of the national agenda since 1996 in Australia. Indeed, these two agendas are inseparable, and the punishment of certain peoples is integral to the continued dominance of neo-liberalism and whiteness. It is this process of corporate expansion coupled with the role of the State in unequally distributing hope that Hage refers to as the production of 'social death'.

26. Racelessness as official government ideology, administered via government and multinational companies, produces what Davis has identified as a relationship between 'confinement, punishment and race' (Davis cited in Perera, 2002). Joseph Pugliese has described the passage of the Migration Amendment Act 1992, which introduced mandatory detention, as the 'event-trauma ... foundational moments ... saturated with violence, both physical and symbolic, that are generative of on-going violence, even after their seeming recession over the horizon of history' (2007: 65). The racial aspect of this is disguised by the language of liberalism and the repeated mantra of the 'end'; racelessness, or what Pugliese identifies as the horizon of history.

27. This conditions of the detention centre assures the life of the subjects insofar as they are able to satisfy the corporation's stock market options, and illustrates in a frightening manner Achille Mbembe's (building on Foucault) contention concerning sovereignty, that its 'ultimate expression ... resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die' (2003: 11). Indeed, the economic drive to fill beds in detention centres following the eventual release of refugees arriving from Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran between 1999 and 2001 resulted in the rounding-up of migrants who had overstayed their visa, primarily people from South East Asian countries. In March 2005, for example, a Sydney school was raided by immigration officials and the children of a South Korean woman who had allegedly overstayed her bridging visa were taken from school and forcibly detained (Lateline(a), 2005).

28. Issues of accountability and responsibility in the context of privatised service providers for the settlement of refugees were also raised when Robert Niyonsaba, a two-and-a-half-year-old African boy, tragically died of sickle-cell anaemia shortly after arriving with his family in Australia as refugees in November 2005. Exhausted following their flight to Australia, the family were taken by an Australian Centre for Languages (ACL) caseworker to a flat in Fairfield, a suburb in western Sydney. Unfamiliar with taken-for-granted aspects of 'western' living, such as the operation of a telephone, and left ill-informed by the case worker, the father, Protais Ntiranyi, 'desperately roamed streets crying for help in his native tongue', when Robert began convulsing (SMH, 2005, 1 & 4).

29. Mbembe's articulation of 'death-worlds: new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead' is pertinent here (2003: 40) The normalisation of techniques of punishment, such as solitary confinement, strip searches and continual surveillance, used against those held in Australia's 'immigration camps', to draw on Suvendrini Perera's (2006) terminology, exposes the creation of deathly spaces. Mbembe's assertions once again resound: it is at the will of the sovereign that life and death is permitted and the conditions under which they shall be carried out: 'To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power' (2003: 12). The death of a young African refugee under the 'care' of a private company responsible for providing settlement support to all new refugees, highlights the value placed on certain lives over others. Whilst the numbers may not be objectively labeled 'vast' within an Australian context, and the conditions may not be 'new' but a continuation of colonial endeavors, the people contained within the spaces of the

detention centre exist without any degree of security for the future, without freedom of movement or association and without a gracious welcome (Derrida, 2000). They are conferred no rights of citizenship and are offered little recourse to the domestic law for protection.

30. In 2005 a new visa, the Return Pending Visa (RPV), was developed. What this Visa explicitly attempts to restrict is a refugee applicant's access to the law following critical determinations regarding his or her refugee status. These visas are designed to ensure that' failed' refugees are quickly and legally able to be deported without the government able to be held liable, as applicants contractually 'agree' to leave on a specified date. RPVs provide an 18 month interim period in which asylum seekers are advised to make arrangements to return home, or go elsewhere. This, it is argued by the government, displays more' compassion' and' pragmatism' (Lateline(b), 2005) as it alleviates the panic previously inscribed in law in which deportations could go ahead without delay or warning, or refugees on expired Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) had 28 days to make adequate plans to leave Australia before being subject to forcible removal by the authorities. The RPV structurally and legally invalidates the category of the' refugee' for asylum seekers currently in detention, and refugees on TPVs. It does this in and through its legal conditions: effectively asylum seekers and refugees must sign over their claim to be recognised as a refugee in need of protection, fleeing from persecution. RPVs are only given to those whom it is deemed Australia has no 'protection obligations'. In other words, RPVs are designed for the purpose of deterring further litigation and contestation of Australia' s immigration processes. As such, these visas cannot be considered as a departure from a system of immigration that promotes the mandatory detention of asylum seekers for indefinite periods of time, ensures' permanent temporariness' (Pugliese, 2005, 301) in the form of TPVs, and forcibly deports subjects who cannot conform to the legalistic conditions of asylum under the Migration Act 1958 and its subsequent amendments, one of which is the privileged status of the' invitation' to enter. What this visa inscribes into law and thus attempts to neutralise, is the always violent removal of refugees and asylum seekers from Australia.

31. RPVs, TPVs, and other subsets of such visas, disproportionately effect non-white subjects. Highlighting this goes beyond recognising the hypocrisy of neo-liberalism's values of 'choice'. Such visa categories and the management of bodies is part of a morally inflected neo-liberal immigration structure ideologically underpinned by liberalism and its end point: racelessness. If a deconstruction of liberalism reveals the epistemological whiteness of the individual and the structural privileging of the group rights of whites, the proliferation of visas as legalistic determination and programmatic response to uninvited asylum seekers, exposes the investments of the centre; it reveals its own role in projecting itself as occupying the position of 'pure innocence'.

32. Such failures of hospitality and their violent consequences are inherent to a model of neo-liberal immigration unwilling to respond with compassion to the (un)expected arrival of refugees. Our national practices of hospitality are tied to our conceptions and enforcements of sovereignty; biopolitically in relation to the fostering of some life over others; necropolitically in reference to the production of death or the structural negligence; and in terms of political notions of statehood which constantly refuse Indigenous claims to sovereignty. The investments of hospitality and sovereignty, and their simultaneous expression, have been opened up in this paper in relation to liberal individualism, (neo)liberalism, and the Howard government. The hope for ethical interventions into violent political landscapes rests with revealing the conceptual complexities of both hospitality and sovereignty in the face of the reduction of such concepts for various politico-economic agendas.

Elaine Kelly is writing her PhD at Macquarie University, in the Department of Critical and Cultural Studies. She is interested in understandings of hospitality and sovereignty, especially in an Australian context, and is currently writing on Derrida and Agamben's works on sovereignty and democracy.

Bibliography

Betts, K. (2003). ' Immigration Policy under the Howard Government' , *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 38(2), pp. 169-192.

Brett, J. (2005). ' Relaxed and Comfortable: The Liberal Party's Australia' in *Quarterly Essay*, Melbourne: Black Inc Publishing.

_____ (2004). *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Deakin to John Howard, Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

_____ (1997). ' John Howard, Pauline Hanson and the politics of grievance' . In *The Resurgence of Racism*, eds: G. Gray and C. Winter. Clayton, Victoria: Monash Publications in History.

Davis, A. Y. (1998). *The Angela Davis Reader*, ed. J.James. Oxford: Blackwell.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). Homepage. Accessed on January 25, 2007, at: http://www.immi.gov.au/about/index.htm.

Derrida, J. (2000). *Of Hospitality*, California: Stanford University Press.

_____ (2002). ' Hostipitality' in *Acts of Religion*. London: Routledge.

Giannacopolous, M. (2007). ' *Mabo* , *Tampa* and the non-Justiciability of Sovereignty'. In ed. S.Perera, *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2007*. Perth: Network Books.

Goldberg, D. (1993). *Racist culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Inc.

Goldberg, D. (2002). *The Racial State.* Massachusetts, USA: Blackwell Publishing Inc.

Hage, G. (1998). *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society .* Sydney: Pluto Press.

_____ (2003). *Against Paranoid Nationalism*, Annandale: Pluto Press.

Howard, J. (1998). ' The First Annual Federation Address: " The Government' s Goals for 1998 " . ' To the Australian Institute of Company Directors Luncheon. Accessed on January 19, 2006 at,   www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/1998/federatn.htm.

Kelly, E. (2006). ' White Hospitality: a critique of political responsibility in the context of Australia's anti-asylum seeker laws'. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 20(4).

Lateline(a). (2005). ' Immigration officials raid Sydney school'. Lateline ABC TV program transcript accessed on February 3 2007 at: http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2005/s1325167.htm.

Lateline(b). (2005). ' "Compassionate" Govt creates new visa'. Lateline ABC TV program transcript. Accessed on February 3 2007 at: http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2005/s1330452.htm.

Mansfield, N. (2000). ' Subjectivity and ethnicity: Otherness, policy, visibility, colonialism', from *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway.* St Leonards: Allen&Unwin.

Markus, A. (2001). *Race: John Howard and the remaking of Australia.* Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Mbembe, A. (2003). ' Necropolitics', trans. L. Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15(1).

McKnight, D. (2005). *Beyond Right and Left: New Politics and the Culture Wars*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2004a). ' Whiteness, epistemology and Indigenous representation'. In ed. Moreton-Robinson, A., *Whitening Race* (2004), Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

_____ (2004b)'The Possessive Logic of Patriarchal White Sovereignty: The High Court and the Yorta Yorta Decision' in *borderlands e-journal,* 3(2)

_____ (2004c). ' Indigenous History Wars and the Virtue of the White Nation, in *The Ideas Market: An alternative take on Australia' s intellectual life*, ed. D. Carter, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Nicoll, F. (2004). ' Reconciliation in and out of perspective: white knowing, seeing, curating and being at home in and against Indigenous sovereignty'. In ed, Moreton-Robinson, A, (2004) *Whitening Race*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Osuri, G. and Banerjee, S.B. (2004). ' White Diasporas: Media Representations of September 11 and the Unbearable Whiteness of Being in Australia' in *Social Semiotics*, 14(2).

Perera, S. & Pugliese, J. (1997). ' Racial Suicide: the re-licensing of racism in Australia' in *Race & Class* 39(2).

Perera, S. (2002). 'What is a Camp ... ?' *borderlands e-journal* 1(1).

_____ (2006). 'Race Terror, Sydney, December 2005' , *borderlands e-journal* 5(1).

Pugliese, J. (2004). 'The Incommensurability of Law to Justice: Refugees and Temporary Protection Visas' in *Law and Literature* 16(3).

_____ (2007). 'The Event-Trauma of the Carceral Post-Human' in *Social Semiotics* 17(1).

Randell-Moon, H. (2006). 'Creating Pope John Paul II: Religion, the' War on Terror' and the Politics of Discourses of Howardage ' , *borderlands e-journal* 5(3).

Spivak, G. (1979). 'Explanation and Culture: Marginalia' in *The Spivak Reader* (1996) eds. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean. London: Routledge.

The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH). (2005). 'Promise of a new life ends in tragedy'. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29/12/2005, pg 1 & 4.

Yegenoglu, M. (2003). ' Liberal Multiculturalism and the Ethics of Hospitality in the Age of Globalisation ', *Postmodern Culture* 13(2).

to top of page