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Encountering Cities of Whiteness

Many urban settlements around the world sit on the sites of prior occupations, of peoples variously relegated to archaeological imaginations. Before colonization and the arrival of the 'white fella', the Gadigal[1] people and others of the Eora Darug clans occupied the place where the city of Sydney, Australia, now stands (Kohen 2000). While few Gadigal have survived the years of battle against the waves of invasion initiated by the English military in 1788, other Aboriginal[2] peoples were not so thoroughly dispossessed of their homelands, or places known as 'Country' around the various landmasses now known as 'Australia'. Some of the descendants of these groups have gradually re-established an Aboriginal presence in Eora country, at the heart of Australia's first and largest city. A landmark site of these recent migrations is a small settlement in the inner-city neighbourhood of 'Redfern'[3] (Figure 1.1).

In a nation that considers itself egalitarian and non-segregated,[4] the Aboriginal settlement, known as The Block, sits in stark contradiction to these national ideals. In Redfern, the boundaries of racialized segregation – the apparent 'blackness' of The Block's Aboriginality and the 'whiteness' of the mostly non-Aboriginal surrounding neighbourhood – butt against each other (Figure 1.2). In the spaces around these borders, modalities of racialization continually evolve, and a recent expression can be found within contemporary urban transformations. In this book, I chart examples of racialization processes that have emerged with the production and consumption of two particular forms of residential transformation. One of these newly emerged housing forms is the reorientation of old housing areas into desirable 'heritage'. The other is the newest form of Sydney housing now offered with the city's recent 'Manhattanization'. This form of housing follows a somewhat globally
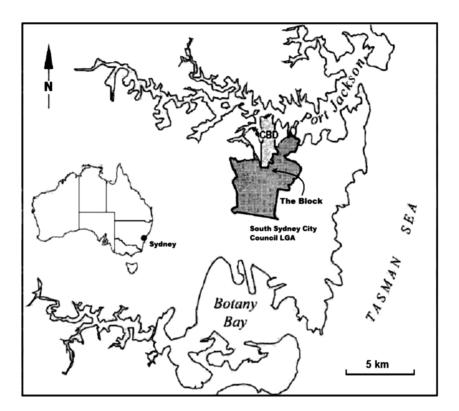
Figure 1.1   Map of Sydney's Inner City and The Block

recognisable trend, which is the conversion of old industrial and commercial areas into loft apartments/condominiums. With the production of these newly conceived, or re-envisioned housing forms, a range of cultural attributes that are now part of urban life has also emerged. These attributes are considered in detail within the pages of *Cities of Whiteness*.

This chapter introduces the city of Sydney, and some of the processes of whiteness that I have found to be operating within this city, which are specifically associated with these urban housing forms, and associated ways of living in the (post)modern city. As the title suggests, this book is concerned with the 'critical race study' of whiteness operating within cit*ies* – not just the one city. So the Sydney-based experiences discussed here serve to demonstrate the kinds of processes occurring in many other cities, globally. My hope is that this book will offer insights into the ways that distinct groups of people (and in the case of Sydney, non-Aboriginal people), unite and operationalize privilege and entitlement – consciously

and un- or sub-consciously – through *non*-identification, or elision of the 'other'. In *Cities of Whiteness*, I discuss the ways that such unifications operate. Whiteness can be a simple form of union, or engagement, or it can be complex. Whiteness can seem permanent, but at the same time, it can be momentary, even sporadic. In this book, I unpack a variety of such unifications as they have occurred through the negotiation of urban spaces. For the 'other(s)', who in this context are the Aboriginal people of The Block in Sydney, such negotiations have occurred with recent changes in urban settlement, and the reorientation of urban areas through gentrification and redevelopment, and have provided a distinct point of capture for unveiling processes of whiteness that have hitherto remained largely unrecognized. As this book seeks to illustrate, seemingly unrelated events can be part of a wider form of metropolitan whiteness, and I will demonstrate just how mutable, particular, and self-reinforcing whiteness can be. I hope to portray that whiteness is so much more that an ethnicity, to which it is so often reduced. Rather, whiteness can work as a strategy or strategies of (urban) empowerment.

One of the tasks of this chapter is provide a background – a scholarly trajectory that has led to *this* study of whiteness. To do this I combine some of the contributions from the sub-field of **whiteness studies** (or 'white studies'), and Geography's somewhat faltering engagement with the issue. Although informed by a breadth of interdisciplinary scholarship, the study of whiteness in Geography has been somewhat sporadic. And, regardless of its transdisciplinarity,[5] the validity of whiteness as a field of research remains contested. This is not surprising given the domination of the field of whiteness studies by the United States. Additionally, 'whiteness' is all too often associated with peoples from 'Anglo' backgrounds (with some notable exceptions[6]), and one of the functions of this book is to continue the project of questioning, interrogating and opening out this limited, essentialist and, in many ways, ethnocentric categorization.

Because one of my overall aims in this book is to push the notion of whiteness beyond its usual categorizations, this chapter will provide some preliminary tastes of this goal. For me, as an Australian, one of the glaring shortcomings of the study of whiteness overall, and specifically of whiteness studies, is a general omission of Indigeneity from the orbit of concern. To begin to address this oversight I combine the process of unpacking, de-essentializing and decolonizing (the study of whiteness, as it operates in the service of an ongoing (neo-)colonial project that further dispossesses Indigenous peoples. I do this within the context of located expressions of wider neo-colonial/neo-imperial relations of power that operate both within the city of Sydney, and in the wider Australian

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context. The political geographies of Sydney – like many other cities in the world – remain inseparable from the histories of colonialism, or indeed of British imperialism (cf Jacobs 1996). The Sydney-based stories presented here provide the addition of a distinctly postcolonial/imperial theoretical perspective to the study of urban whiteness.

Journeying to Inner Sydney

Contrary to popular belief, Indigenous Australians are highly urbanized.[7] This trend began, in part, with migrations to Redfern, concentrating in a tiny remnant of Gadigal country that now belongs to Aboriginal Australia. With its clutch of Victorian terraced (row) houses, The Block[8] was handed (back) to the Indigenous peoples of Australia, in the early 1970s (see Box 1.1). This was token recognition of the dispossession of Indigenous lands, and acknowledgement of a fledgling Aboriginal politics. At the time, Redfern[9] was a virtual no-go zone for the majority of Australians, but it now sits at the heart of regeneration and redevelopment as the city of Sydney transforms from a highly suburbanized state capital into a global city (see Box 1.2).

Box 1.1   A short history of The Block

Although not the subject of this book, it is necessary to furnish the reader with an account of the formation of the Indigenous settlement at the heart of Sydney, Australia, known simply as *The Block*. The Block straddles the suburbs of Darlington and Redfern (see Figure 1.2). It was formed in 1973 as a result of a complicated battle for Aboriginal rights. The 'Aboriginal Housing Committee' formed in the late 1960s to fight for Aboriginal housing in the context of widespread racial discrimination in the Sydney housing market and subsequent increases in Aboriginal homelessness (Anderson, 1993b, 324).

During a storm of non-Aboriginal protest the then federal Labor government, led by Gough Whitlam, granted money for the purchase of a site of 70 Victorian terrace houses for the inner city Aboriginal community. This did not occur in recognition of an Aboriginal sacred site as such, nor as a result of a land claim made under the provisions of the Native Title Act 1993, rather The Block emerged in response to a unique set of political machinations that occurred during the early 1970s

Box 1.1   (*Continued*)

(Anderson 1993a, b) when 'Redfern', a collective name for the area in which The Block sits (Darlington, Redfern and Chippendale), became the focal point of modern Aboriginal politics in Australia at that time.

The Block site consisted of mostly unoccupied or squatted terrace houses that were in a poor state of repair. A private developer bought the houses, one by one. As Anderson (1993a, 81) noted '[Aboriginal] Redfern became a sphere of Indigenous protest, an heroic site of resistance to European culture and colonialist control'. In a climate of political and trade union pressure, the owner of the site eventually sold it to the Aboriginal Housing Collective, which later became the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) in 1973, in order to receive the grant to purchase and administer The Block. The formation of The Block, the handing of land back to Aboriginal Australia, was a grand gesture by the new radical Labor government and it happened at the centre of Australia's 'big city' during an era of massive social upheaval. Since then, many Aboriginal services, such as the Aboriginal Medical and Legal Services, and Eora TAFE College located in the Redfern area.

Born out of struggle, The Block remains embattled. It has not been the success story of an urban village of Aboriginal self-determination that was originally envisaged. It remains a beacon for the formidable health and housing issues that exist for much of Aboriginal Australia. Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics report that Aboriginal mortality rates remain at 2.5 times that of other Australians. Asthma, Diabetes, heart problems, alcohol and other drug use are the main contributors to poor health. Life expectancy remains at 15–20 years less, with infant/prenatal mortality rates being three times the national rate, and death rates from circulatory diseases are 2.5 times greater than that of non-Aboriginal population. The 1996 census indicated that household income levels for Aboriginal people were $90 less per week than in all other households, and there was one more person in Indigenous households than the Australian average[a]. With the recent rush of renovation, restoration and redevelopment that has swept through the inner city of Sydney, the impoverished Aboriginal community is increasingly surrounded by affluence. Stigmatized by the presence of The Block, the gentrification of Darlington/Redfern and Chippendale did begin later than other inner city areas in Sydney but once other options were depleted, gentrification commenced in the mid-1990s.

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Box 1.1   (*Continued*)

By the late 1990s, a wave of apartment development had bourgeoned. After the 'riots', in 2004, the then New South Wales State Government opposition leader, John Brogden, called for The Block to be 'bull-dozed' ('Brogden's riot response: bulldoze The Block', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 February 2004). In the aftermath, the New South Wales Government established the Redfern–Waterloo Authority, on 26October 2004[b*]. This authority was founded on the passing of a Bill and subsequent 'Redfern–Waterloo Authority Act 2004' and is like a government department, with its own parliamentary representative (Minister). The unveiling of its 'masterplan' for Sydney's inner city included the full redevelopment of public housing estates, and The Block. Its future is, as always, uncertain.

[a] Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population Special Article: statistics on Indigenous people of Australia, 1994 Year Book; Australia Now – A Statistical Profile, Population Special Article – A Profile of Australia's Indigenous people, Year Book 1996, Auhttp://www.abs.gov.au.
[b] 'Premier Carr Announces 10-year Redfern-Waterloo Plan', News Release, Premier of New South Wales, Australia, NSW Government, Tuesday 26 October 2004.

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Since its formation in 1973, the 'black capital of Australia' – as The Block was originally conceived – has coexisted uncomfortably within a predominantly non-Aboriginal urban context. As the surrounding neighbourhoods of Darlington, Redfern and Chippendale change with gentrification and redevelopment, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal spaces are negotiated anew. This context has provided a window for studying the ways that the new occupants, who busily renovate or restore heritage housing and engage in a politics of heritage and enclave protection, variously encounter the Aboriginal presence. This book contains a group of select stories, of specific moments garnered from the past, or documented as they happened. Although such moments can stand alone, as examples of the ways of whiteness in this city, they can also be drawn together to provide a much larger picture of neo-colonial/imperial power relations. To provide a broader disciplinary context for the stories of whiteness that follow, it is to the study of gentrification and urban cultures that I now turn.
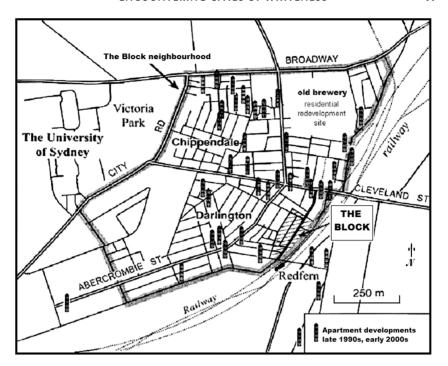
Figure 1.2   Map to show The Block and its Local Area

Box 1.2   Sydney settlement in the twentieth century

The majority of Australians live in suburbs. Mass migration to tracts of land that became 'suburbia' occurred during the housing shortages after World War II, which loosely resembled the North American phenomenon of 'white flight'. Inner-city slum clearance, government and developer initiatives, improved transport links and the re-domestication of women – after war duties had taken them out of their homes – were all part of the building of Sydney's suburbs (Murphy and Watson 1997). Historian, Shirley Fitzgerald (1987, 42), observed that 'literature advertising the garden suburbs appealed directly to class snobbery, [and] depreciat[ed] the older [inner-city] suburbs'. As Sydney expanded west in the 1950s and 1960s, ownership of a house on a plot of land away from the tenements of the industrial, dirty, inner city, dramatically changed the face of Australian domesticity (Murphy and Watson, 1997).

(*Continued*)

Box 1.2 (*Continued*)

After World War II, another settlement event occurred. The first generation of post-war migrants were quietly moving into pockets of the otherwise largely undesirable parts of Australian cities. These inner-city pockets were referred to as 'ethnic ghettos' (Burnley and Murphy, 1994) and government policy makers assumed that concentrations of ethnic groups signalled a bourgeoning underclass. As tenancy rates soared in the inner cities, reaching 90 per cent (prior to gentrification) in a nation with an increasingly suburbanized home-ownership ideal, the suburbs represented affordable respectability for the majority of Australians (Fitzgerald 1987). Thanks to the White Australia Policy of 1901, Australians at that time were overwhelmingly of British ancestry.[a] Consecutive post-war governments provided home ownership initiatives that assisted suburbanization, and for those leaving the inner city behind, home ownership in the suburbs promised upward mobility. Many became the new 'middle classes', and in the 1960s and 1970s these groups began to migrate (back) to inner Sydney, with its romanticized Victorian landscapes of heritage houses.

[a] Castles, Kalantzis, Cope and Morrissey (1988, 19) reported that by 1947 'Australia had the lowest proportion of overseas born ever recorded for the non-Aboriginal population'. At the time, Aboriginal people were mostly relegated to non-urban areas.

Cities as Cultural Constructions ∼ Gentrification and Urbanism

Geographers have a long history of interest in processes of urban transformation. Previously studied within the domain of 'urban geography', processes of urban change such as gentrification have become part of the wider concerns of a more recent cultural politics of 'the city'. As with suburbanization, the subsequent 'return' to many inner cities with gentrification has generated dialogue, and quite heated debates. Gentrification is a term that I use with deference to the corpus of work devoted to the concept. I remain, however, somewhat ambivalent about its conceptualization and believe, as with the term whiteness, it needs to be used with care. 'Gentrification' is due for a conceptual overhaul but to do this properly would require writing a different book.

A few words on 'gentrification'

Rather than rehearse the well-documented history of gentrification scholarship (see instead Lees 2000, Atkinson and Bridge 2005), I will move beyond a theoretical impasse that occurred in the 1980s, when gentrification debates became polarized between economic and cultural imperatives. By the 1990s, the cultural politics of gentrification, or as Loretta Lees (1999, 127) put it, the usefulness of the 'tensions between different theoretical positions', had gained recognition.

In my view, the great theoretical leap forward in gentrification thinking occurred with the inclusion of localized cultural politics (Lees 1994, Jackson 1995, Jacobs 1996, Redfern 1997), particularly when considered within the context of broader, more global, political economies (Smith 1996). Critiques of the larger economics of gentrification led to the understanding that gentrification was not a homogeneous process; events were not necessarily replicable from city to city, or from country to country (cf Engels 1999). For example, it was realized that displacement of the 'working classes' was not a *necessary* outcome of gentrification, regardless of the implication of the term. Additionally, a predominantly 'cultural' theoretical perspective that did not restrict its understandings of gentrification to analyses of power relations along class, economic or other lines, provided some other useful insights. David Ley (1974, 1980, 2004) and Caroline Mills (1988, 1993) provided careful analyses of consumption in gentrifying Canadian cityscapes that helped to challenge existing class-based assumptions about urban transformation. With hindsight, they also demonstrated another very useful point. Their studies demonstrated the problem of privileging one explanation for gentrification, and in these studies, a cultural analysis held singular priority. Mills' studies of 'packaged' cultural identities, as marketed by property developers in Vancouver, provided detailed accounts of the development and marketing of an inner city. A social process was identified, but was limited to drawing out a relationship between developer (producer) and purchaser (consumer) of culturally packaged real estate. Although a groundbreaking analysis of the motivations of developers and (to an extent) buyers, the impacts of such negotiations on other groups of people, or services, were not included in the analyses, whether they existed or not.

Lees (1994) suggested that analyses of capital and culture do need to be complementary in order to venture beyond the culture/class divide, and more inclusively account for gentrification processes. Jackson

(1995) noticed that culture (in a broader than conventional definition, which tends to refer to 'high culture', to theatre and art galleries) was inseparable from economy. Using two American urban examples as case studies, he identified the 'cultural encoding' within the economics of investment in the built environment. Elsewhere, Engels (1999) identified the need for more cross-cultural research to appreciate the complexity of gentrification, adding that gentrification needed to be observed, over time. 'Gentrification' is not a unified term. It may refer to very specific localized processes or to broader urban changes. More recently, considerations of globalizing urban cultures (Eade 1997) have tied global economics to consumer tastes (Bourdieu 1984, Collins 1995), and the production of place-specific identity traits have also been increasingly linked to processes of capital. As cities, and city life, are various reshaped by corporate capital, developer-driven urban transformations have become part of the broader study of the city (see Thrift and Walling, 2000, for a review).

So in this book I consider 'gentrification' in a very broad sense, as an outcome and indicator of economic shifts that have occurred at the level of the local, the city and beyond (see Box 1.3). But equally, gentrification is a process that is culturally encoded *by*, and part of the process *of* (re-)shaping the residential city. *Cities of Whiteness* details the (re)population of the older inner city by former suburban dwellers, and by newcomers, who 'revitalize' housing stock. Processes of urban renewal that have created new residential landscapes are also part of the overall gentrification of inner Sydney.

To conclude this short section on gentrification, I must stress that in the world outside the academy, the term is now well entrenched in the

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Box 1.3   New locality studies

A reinvented case study approach has accompanied the cultural turn in Human Geography, where the use of a case study is not restricted to the location. This approach assumes that it is the processes in a case study area that are significant, rather than the area as a case study, in itself. This kind of locality-specific case study has numerous origins in recent geographic thought. The positivist era had relegated studies of location to structuralist studies of, for example, capitalist production (Jackson 1991a). The 'new locality study' approach promised a better understanding of processes, such as global capitalism, through the observation of variety in globalization's localized consequences (Duncan 1980, Massey and Allen 1984). Because localities differ in the way they respond to, resist, and constitute

Box 1.3   (*Continued*)

economic restructuring, 'new locality studies' in geography enabled new understandings of social relationships and structures.

To find ways that local cultures and (to continue the thread) global economics might interact or constitute each other, geographers also looked beyond their discipline. As a social science that had spent a long time considering the materialities of economics, new cultural geographies needed to grapple with the cultural particularities of place and to 'identify the qualities that structure that experience [of place]' (Jackson 1991a, 222).

The embrace of the cultural turn in geography has also re-invigorated qualitative methodologies in its search for cultural data. The contribution of Clifford Geertz's 'thick descriptions', the use of local knowledge to deepen and ground narratives of interpretation, and experimental methods of ethnographic description, used to address issues of 'representation', are well recognized in the social sciences (Jackson 1991b). According to Peter Jackson (1991a, 215, 219), the new phase in locality studies in geography combined:

> Alternative theorizations of 'local culture' [which] draw . . . on concepts of cultural politics (from Stuart Hall), structures of feeling (Ramond Williams), cultural capital (Pierre Bourdieu) and local knowledge (Clifford Geertz) . . . where 'cultural politics' [is] defined as the domain in which meanings are constructed and negotiated . . . the cultural is always . . . political.

The new locality studies have not only remained alert to a range of political issues that were brought to the geographical research agenda through structuralism, they have drawn on the contributions of poststructuralism and postmodernism in human geography and other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, postcolonial and cultural studies.

When Andrew Sayer (1989, 256) noted the swing back to the use of 'case studies' in human geography, he identified it as part of a more general 'empirical turn' and, more importantly, a growing concern for what 'real people', as opposed to 'the ciphers of social theory', were doing and thinking. Building upon anthropological case study approaches – which tended to search for generalities (Mitchell 1983) – the more recent geographical studies had became far more context specific. Such approaches were 'distinguished by . . . self-conscious engagement with social theory . . . [and drew] upon different, mainly

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Box 1.3 (*Continued*)

realist, rationales' (Sayer 1989, 253). According to Jane M. Jacobs (1993, 830), such realist perspectives provided the link between broader structures and local processes in local settings, and 'a commitment to a range of qualitative approaches'.

By 2005, this kind of approach had become common within Geography, and in that year Noel Castree called upon geographers to *really* think about this approach, and its plausibility. He reiterated one of Andrew Sayers concerns, about the divide between the idiographic (particular cases) and nomothetic (general laws). According to Sayer (1989, 255) the fundamental question remained 'how far, or at what depth, are social structures and processes context-dependent?'

For the divide between the idiographic, and nomothetic to be properly collapsed, Sayer suggested that regional geography/locality studies be theoretically informed *and* empirically based. According to Sayer (1989, 257), ethnography has 'pulled towards contextualizing explanations or interpretations', whereas political economy tended to use analytical explanations that are 'independent of context . . . [and therefore] law-like'. The *new* locality studies offered 'methodological challenge[s]' because they would attempt to 'hold the two [political economy and contextual explanations] in tension' (Sayer 1989, 257).

More general criticisms have come with critiques of the *cultural turn*, more generally. For instance, Blair Badcock (1996, 91), has expressed concerns about the ' '[l]ooking-glass' views of the city'. Sayer (1993) remarked that some researchers were 'more struck by the chasm between "the esoteria of postmodernism" [than] "what is happening outside" academia to ordinary people in our communities'; and Vera Chouinard was concerned that 'working class and other disadvantaged groups . . . [were] often curiously absent from the landscapes . . . of "consumption", "spectacle" or "power" . . . represented in postmodern cultural geographies of the city' (cited in Badcock 1996, 92). Badcock continued with a point about gentrification, arguing that the study of gentrification had become a 'fixation . . . at the expense of countless unexamined neighbourhoods where the impact of structural decline, disinvestment and the withdrawal of social services is equally profound' (Badcock 1996, 92). Furthermore, he warned that 'concern about the level at which the imagery and façadism registers in the consciousness of the imbibers . . . [means that] far too much can be . . . read into the meaning of

Box 1.3   (*Continued*)

postmodern landscapes given their potential for duplicity' (Badcock 1996, 94).

In *Cities of Whiteness,* I have attempted to demonstrate that (although the book is not about gentrification *per se*) this kind of research – on consumption of housing and lifestyle choices in the postmodern landscape of inner Sydney – does genuinely address issues of marginalization. I have tried to broaden the usual gentrification/urban transformation focus to show the very real links between such processes *and* their marginalizing effects. It must be said that the ongoing marginality of the Aboriginal community in inner Sydney is not external to the variety of cultural processes associated with gentrification. Quite the contrary, as I hope I have demonstrated, such processes are operationalized to the benefit of some, often at the expense of other(s). The Aboriginal 'others' are variously present and absent in the imaginaries of lifestyle choices as they are in the material effects of urban change. Understanding transformations of places, including gentrification processes in cities, is vital to understanding complex processes of racialization and consequent marginalization. The constructions of imagery, and façadism, as documented in this book have revealed both direct *and* duplicitous efforts that have variously built upon existing racialized power relations. I argue that through image-making of new urban lifestyles, for instance, new sites of consumption have emerged that serve to reinforce existing neo-colonial processes in the privileging of whiteness.

According to Ed Soja (1999, 65), the 'cultural turn' in turn 'culturalized' political economy. As such, there was not a sudden shift in ideology, nor a wholesale leap from modernism and structuralism to de-structured or 'flip' postmodernism (as Sayer predicted in 1993). Indeed, the use of the term *postmodernism* has tended to be overzealously embraced. Rather than continue a somewhat circular debate, Driver (1995, 129) has suggested that there is 'much more to be gained from serious engagements with the specific philosophies, politics and methods too often hastily subsumed under that heading [of postmodernism]'. In short, geographers are quite cognisant of the usefulness of methodologies that include the reading of meaning in the salvaging of old factory façades. Remaining vigilant to the possibilities of method, and being inclusive of the full range on offer, transdisciplinary approaches remain open to the inclusion of the specifics of local encounters *within* the context of broader politics.

marketing parlance of real-estate agents. As Goodwin (1993, 147) remarked, '[t]he selling of an urban lifestyle has become part and parcel of an increasingly sophisticated commodification of everyday life'. With the emergence of new urban lifestyles that are part of the cultural capital of gentrifying, or re-imaged and rebuilt areas (such as London's Docklands, Manhattan's Battery Park, Melbourne's Docklands and Sydney's Pyrmont), urban research, and its theorization, now includes the lifestyle concept of 'urbanism'. So, in the following, I contemplate this recent (re)turn to thinking about urbanism, or urban social life, particularly within Geography.

Urbanism and urban lifestyles

> Urbanism is about living in cities; it represents a way of life affecting the majority of people . . . (Forrest and Burnley 1985, 1)

The term **urbanism** has re-emerged in geographical (and other) considerations of the city. Largely relegated to the pre-positivist era, and locked away in the writings and musings of Simmel (1995 [1903]), Benjamin (1978 [1935]) and Wirth (1995 [1938]), urbanism – *as a way of life* – was largely overlooked during the era of positivism[10] in Human Geography (however, see Harvey 1972). As Mike Davis (1990, 2) observed, '[t]he ways people lived in cities merely reflected the social organisation of a particular economic order: capitalist urbanism was . . . fundamentally different to socialist urbanism'. With the rise of 'new' urban sociology (Milicevic 2001 for review), post-structuralist methodologies and the cultural turn of the 1980s and 1990s, geographers (and others) began to think about urbanism and urbanity afresh. The renewed interest in urbanism is also evident in the discourses of urban/town planning, and architecture, with the rise of New Urbanism. But this 'outcome-based view of planning based on a vision of a compact, hetero-geneous city' (Fainstein 2000, 451) is prescriptive, and quite distinct from geographers' considerations of urbanism(s) exemplified within the recent surge of geographical interest in formations of urban lifestyles.

The (re)turn to urbanism as a valid terrain for scholarly contempla-tions, is not without its critics. The incorporation of cultural factors into analyses of cities has raised suspicions about the political implica-tions of de-prioritizing economic (and class) factors. For example, when Michael Dear and Stephen Flusty's (1998) 'Postmodern Urbanism' was

published in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* a controversy in social theory was ignited. In response to the piece, Robert Lake (1999) warned against tying urbanism to postmodernism, and a heated debate began between self-professed postmodernists (Dear and Flusty) and others (who defy being labelled as 'modernists', as such). Beauregard (1999), Lake (1999), Sui (1999) and Jackson (1999a) launched separate, but equally blistering critiques of Dear and Flusty's complicated but not particularly postmodern version of 'Post-modern Urbanism', published in *Urban Geography.* Dear and Flusty (1998, 50) had claimed that a Los Angeles model of urbanism was 'distinguished by a centreless urban form, termed "keno capitalism" '. This reversal of the power of capital, where the 'hinterland organizes the centre', was the basis to claim that Los Angeles urbanism had provided a 'radical break' in understandings of the ways that cities develop (Dear and Flusty 1998, 50). This conceptual fracturing of what Dear and Flusty described as the Chicago School's 'classical modernist vision' of the industrial metropolis, created an intellectual tug-of-war with the retort that such claims contained theoretical 'dead ends' and 'ethnographic voids'. Urbanism became the object over which yet another postmodern-geographies versus other-human-geographies debate could rage. But a side benefit to the quarrels[11] was that they highlighted the need for geographers to re-engage with the notion of urbanism – 'postmodern' or otherwise. Far more dispassionately, Clark (2000, 17) provided this definition:

> Urbanism is the name which is most commonly used to describe the social and behavioural characteristics of urban living which are being extended across society as a whole as people adopt urban values, expectations and lifestyles.

In the same work (page 19) Clark urged that urbanism be considered along with the study of urban growth and urbanization. He noted that 'the spread of urbanism is linked to the emergence of a global society made possible by developments in telecommunications and mass media' (Clark 2000, 15), and that globalizing cultural indicators, such as commodity brandings, were having an increasing influence on urbanism.

> Social values and relationships have . . . become similar across the world. They have lost their connection with a specific place and are constructed and spread by the mass media . . . the spread of urbanism is linked . . . to the emergence of a global society (Clark 2000, 15, 21).

This highly generic version of urbanism – particularly given the variety of ways that city spaces are occupied and used – does highlight the issue of the mobilization of power within contemporary urbanism(s). Even the protagonist of 'postmodern urbanism', Michael Dear (2000, 1) commented that:

> The creation of different kinds of urbanism, characterized by edge cities, gated communities, and a global hierarchy of new 'world cities' . . . is a key to understanding the burgeoning geopolitical order.

Although not specifically defined, the (very un-postmodern) concept of a 'bourgeoning geopolitical order' ignited contemplation of urban lifestyles that rely on the concept of a 'global society'. Pushing this idea a little further, *Cities of Whiteness* considers how the consumption and protection of colonially-referenced architecture, embedded within Sydney's urban fabric, has influenced the formation of contemporary, globally-referenced, urban identities. In addition, New York style 'loft living' has added another dimension to the new kinds of urbanisms found in Sydney. In the chapters that follow, I unpack some of the specificities and consequences of what *appear* to be globalized (generic) expressions of urbanism in Sydney. In so doing, and in line with its title, *Cities of Whiteness* also interrogates Alastair Bonnett's (2000, 3) conception of global(izing) white identity formations.

> White identities are, if nothing else, global phenomena, with global impacts. Indeed, the nature and implications of their local manifestations only come into view when they are understood as local . . . [I am advocating] an attempt to engage the international and comparative diversity of whiteness.

Rather than analysing local expressions of a globalizing white urbanism, however, I engage instead with Bonnet's idea of 'comparative diversity', which has helped to unveil fantasies about *imagined* cosmopolitan urbanisms. Such fantasies have been conjured within local understandings in Sydney, about far-flung places such as Britain (through understandings of heritage) and New York (through New York style 'loft' development), past and present. The convergences between the spread of contemporary urbanisms to locations such as Sydney (the notion of 'spread' itself revealing another fantasy of a perpetual 'centre' and 'periphery' of some civilized world) and consequent identity formations that perform their own processes of consolidating whiteness, have become highly visible in juxtaposition to the existence of an impoverished

Indigenous community. Existing at the heart of inner Sydney, The Block has been excluded in many ways from the fantasies and realities of cosmopolitanism. Its ongoing struggle is to simply exist. This Australian context has provided a unique window for observing the production of *particular* versions of new (white) urbanism(s). To make sense of the concept that underscores every aspect of this book, and to give context to my overall aims of de-essentializing and de-ethnicizing it, I now move to the idea of whiteness – its history, and current theoretical trajectories.

The Birth of Whiteness Scholarship

For the purposes of this book, I have drawn on a history of the study of whiteness from both within and outside of the scholarly discipline of Geography. My first task in this tracing of whiteness thinking and research is to précis its emergence as a research field, and to consider the various ways in which it has been conceptualized.

Largely based in the US, critical studies of whiteness appeared in the late 1980s (Dyer 1988) in a range of disciplines such as literary criticism and cultural studies. By 2000, a bourgeoning quasi-discipline was dubbed *whiteness studies* (or 'white studies'), with a raft of undergraduate courseware and publications on issues associated with post-slavery segregation and racism, white supremacy, and Hispanic migration (Allen 1994, Dyer 1988, Frankenberg 1993, Ignatiev 1995). But, rather than simply mapping (racial/ethnic) difference,[12] more nuanced studies of racialization (and therefore whiteness) have explored the processes by which difference is constituted (cf Fincher and Jacobs 1998). Building on this idea, some studies of whiteness have identified the processes of empowerment that have enabled 'white' ethnicity to designate difference, that is, to allocate other ethnicities. However, understandings of the character of whiteness do tend to be based on an assumption about 'Anglo' ethnicity,[13] and this needs further examination. Where critiques of the Anglocentricity of whiteness have emerged – such as from within the discipline of Geography – they have remained largely on the periphery of the juggernaut of whiteness studies.[14]

'Critical race studies' and the rise of 'whiteness'

There is a strong tradition of interest in issues of racial segregation and racism within Geography (for a review see Anderson 1998). In North

America, early studies tended to concentrate on the formations of
'ghettos', with pioneers in the study of racial segregation including
DuBois (1899) and Weaver (1948). Much later, Ceri Peach (1993)
identified the three main approaches to segregation research as Morrill's
'positivist' project, Harvey's 'Marxist' project,[15] and Ley's 'humanist'
project.[16] These three studies were the hallmarks in Geography's 'critical
race studies'.

In Peter Jackson's *Progress in Human Geography* report (1985a), the
state of critical race scholarship was summarized within four categories.
'Racial and ethnic segregation' research (after DuBois and Weaver), was
concerned with the patterns of urban segregation and ethnic concentra-
tion. The second category was concerned with 'race and ideology' and
concentrated on 'structured inequalities of power . . . [such as] the rela-
tionship between 'blacks' and the police (Jackson 1985a, 101). The third
category of research, on 'riots and rebellion', consisted of responses to
moments of political upheaval associated with racialized groups (for
example, the 'Brixton Riots'). By the mid 1980s, critical race research
was increasingly concerned with the 'nature of ethnic politics' and inter-
rogation of, for instance, the notion of the 'ethnic problem' (Jackson
1985a). At that time, Jackson also observed a gap in research relating
to the analysis of 'white society'. Noting that 'white institutions . . .
generat[e] racial inequality' (Karn in Jackson 1985a, 100), Jackson called
for increased attention to be paid to the (white dominated) mass media
(Gabriel 1998) and flagged the need for geographical research to prob-
lematize whiteness.

Somewhat ironically, little published academic work existed on the
theme of whiteness in the mid-1980s yet, as bell hooks (1992) had
observed, in the US, whiteness has been under critical observation
since the times of North American slavery. According to hooks (1992,
338), 'details, facts, observations, psychoanalytic readings of the white
"Other" ' had been a survival strategy of African Americans since their
arrival on North American shores.

In another *Progress in Human Geography* report, Helga Leitner
(1992) reported that although there had been a shift from considerations
of 'race' to more nuanced geographies of racialization, she remained
'disheartened' by an ongoing disciplinary proclivity for reducing 'the
notoriously complex and elusive concept of cultural assimilation . . . to
a single variable [race]' (Leitner 1992, 106). Geography may have taken
a useful turn in theorization but in practice, simplistic racial categori-
zations prevailed. Leitner did note the emergence of a second body of
research that used qualitative analyses from case studies and broader

conceptions of culture that included considerations of class and gender (S.Smith 1989, 1990). Most significantly, these studies sought to contextualize racialization.

By 1998, Kay Anderson had identified a worrying trend in racialization research. She remarked on the persistence of 'an ordered (racialized) reality whose subject positionings [remained]...fixed and undifferentiated' (Anderson 1998, 206). Consequently, she argued, these 'neat stories of unilateral hegemony' (Anderson 1998, 210), were downplaying and homogenizing difference. Meanwhile, some geographers were attempting to encompass the concept of difference by reorientating scholarly attention to the project of identifying the *politics* of difference (Dunn 1993, Fincher and Jacobs 1998, Young 1990).

Difference, in Australia, focuses mainly on migrations. Since colonization in 1788, migrants have come in waves. First came the British, which may seem an obvious point but is often forgotten. After this colonizing wave – which became the point against which difference in Australia would thereafter be identified – 'others' began to arrive. Migrations from China began during the gold rushes of the 1800s. The next main wave of migration was from Southern Europe after World War II, and then from South-East Asia after the war in Vietnam/Viet Nam, in the 1970s. The most recent migrations have been from 'the Middle East'. With the English as the arbiters of difference, subsequent arrivals have provided pivotal moments for constructions of difference in Australia. Indigeneity, however, has remained glaringly absent from the discourses of difference and policies of multiculturalism for several reasons (Curthoys 2000, Stephenson 2003). The Aboriginal peoples of Australia are – quite rightly – perceived as different to and separate from the multicultural mosaic of identities in Australia, and are themselves particularly sensitive to being categorized as part of this mix. 'Multiculturalism' invariably refers to the cultural distinctiveness of 'migrants'. A consequence of this separation, however, is that studies of Indigeneity have too long remained on the fringes of Anthropology and Archaeology, as a somewhat cross-disciplinary form of 'Aboriginal Studies'.[17] One landmark study did shift some of the emphasis from studying outback Indigeneity and 'traditions', to urban settlement. Fay Gale's *Urban Aborigines* (1972) gave rise to studies about Redfern in Sydney (Anderson 1993, Shaw 2000) and Perth in Western Australia (Fielder 1991, Jacobs 1996, Jones 1997, Mickler 1998). More recent concerns about 'difference' have shifted along political (and therefore research funding) lines to encompass the (apparently) more pressing issues of 'border security' and the status of asylum-seekers.

As the embrace of 'difference' has expanded, one lens of research has moved towards the study of majority groups and the dominant forces that have prescribed the norms or benchmarks against which to identify difference. This has led to identification of 'whiteness'. In his ground-breaking explorations, Ghassan Hage (1993) has argued that both the policies of multiculturalism and the recent acknowledgment of Native Title rights[18] have officially legitimized and sanctioned the presence of minority groups, in Australia. This recognition, that minority groups have certain entitlements, has in turn incited a siege mentality within Australia's 'dominant white culture' (Hage 1993). Extrapolating from these observations it is not difficult to identify a similar sense of 'siege' around inner Sydney. This sense of siege is felt at the local through to the national and even international levels, and was exemplified well in reports of the 'Sickening ['race'] Riots' that 'Rocked Sydney' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 February 2004, 1). These so-called 'race riots' were a response to the death of a 17-year-old Aboriginal boy who was killed when his bicycle crashed into a fence while he fled from police.[19] Such events, and the exaggerated reportage that followed the 'Redfern Riots',[20] are not new to inner Sydney, or Sydney more broadly as the recent incursions (more 'race riots') in beach suburbs, attest.[21] In the case of Redfern, small outbreaks of rage and frustration do occur, and are often a response to the status of Indigeneity in Australia, magnified through overt poverty and associated social ills. It is from within this broader neo/post-colonial context that I have observed localized render-ings of racialized difference that are so intrinsic to my understandings of the workings of whiteness.

From whiteness studies to geographical studies of whiteness

As whiteness studies gained recognition and status in US, Alastair Bonnett had begun to carve out spaces for the study whiteness in Geography, over in the UK. Bonnett's evolving discourse on whiteness (from 1992 onward) provided a framework for making sense of the variety in racialization, and marginalization processes in Geography. Bonnett offered a way to pursue the interrogation of whiteness with his pioneering study of anti-racist strategies in school education (Bonnett 1992, 1993). By 1997, however, he detected a deeply rooted disciplinary stasis that he believed was not entirely accidental. Bonnett may have persistently steered geographers towards the idea of whiteness, but the

innovative scholarship on the construction of dominant categories and majority groups, remains largely outside of the discipline of Geography. As Bonnett (1997, 193) identified, in 1997, 'the racialised subjects of geographical enquiry have remained . . . the same, namely the activities and inclinations of marginalized ethnic groups, most especially non-Whites'. This 'effacement of the "white" subject', and the continued focus on constructions of the 'other' (see also Robinson 1994) has reflected more than a disciplinary unwillingness to engage. After all, geographers are well rehearsed in identifying political positionalities (Jackson 1991b). According to Pulido (2002, 46), Geography was still 'informed by experiences of whiteness',[22] in 2002.

To make sense of the breadth of studies of whiteness, and to position the potential for its study within Geography, Bonnett (2000) offered four broad categories. These were the studies of 'anti-racism in white areas', the literatures of 'white confession', the engagements with 'excluded whites' and the studies of the 'historical geographies of whiteness'. Within this last category, analyses of the social contingency of whiteness, and critiques of the category 'white', formed an emergent research 'school', with two broad approaches. One included the now famous works of Allen (1994), Ignatiev (1995) and Roediger (1991), who based their analyses of whiteness on class, and the second, and potentially most useful approach for Geography, 'stresse[d] the plural constitution and multiply lived experiences of whiteness' (Bonnett 2000, 121).

Regardless of its potential, however, research on whiteness has tended to suffer from guilt by discursive association with the bulk of whiteness/white studies. In a progress report on the state of 'anti-racist geographies', Catherine Nash (2003, 641) reiterated a common concern about the 'image of monolithic whiteness' and mentioned one 'useful' study of 'Not In My Back Yard' (NIMBY) conflicts (Wilton 2001). The authors of one paper, on an 'epistemology' of whiteness (Dwyer and Jones 2000), faced the accusation that they had simply reinforced the 'trans-historical, essential, asocial and universal character of unmarked whiteness' (Nash 2003, 640).

So regardless of Pulido's (2002, 45) observation that studying whiteness 'may be . . . a less problematic area of inquiry' than studying the 'other' within such an ethnically 'white' discipline as Geography, there is room for a more thorough geographical critique. I can only assume that the disciplinary preference *not* to study whiteness is due to the perpetuation of an understanding about the perceived nature of whiteness – particularly its ethnic rendering. In other words, I am suggesting that the awareness of the problems associated with much of the research

encompassed by whiteness studies has somewhat stigmatized the concept, and stymied engagement with its potentially rich fields, within geographical imaginations.

Problematic whiteness

A major concern about 'whiteness' remains its ongoing affiliation with a powerful hegemonic ethnicity. Robyn Wiegman (1999) observed that within research, the term 'whiteness' overwhelmingly referred to a racial or ethnic category. It is therefore prone to the production of meta-narratives about universal modalities of dominance. Another, almost contradictory worry was that explanations or illuminations of racial division and domination, might (inadvertently) reinforce whiteness. Pulido (2002), for instance, has reiterated a common concern that there is a risk of glorifying whiteness, and studying it at the expense of research on constructions of otherness (i.e. other than whiteness). Another question has been raised about the intersection of whiteness with other axes of difference, such as class and/or gender, in the production of social and economic inequality (summarized in Oliver 2002, 1272).

One of the main limitations of US-based studies of race and racialization, and therefore whiteness, has been identified as the reliance on a specific point in North American history, which has dominated understandings of segregation. According to James O. Horton, the invention of 'race' in the US has been intrinsically linked to the time of the Declaration of Independence, and Thomas Jefferson's 'Notes on the State of Virginia', which stated:

> I advance it, as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.[23]

Although a monumental point in US history, this preoccupation has detracted from more complex histories of colonialism(s) and imperialism(s) that have survived into the present. Such histories have created current patterns of segregation, and held neo-colonial formations in place.

Wiegman (1999, 19) also identified that a 'repeated appeal to the minoritized, injured "nature" of whiteness' (cf Brown 1995) appeared to be in step with the existence of the largely North American fields

of 'Ethnic [and Black] Studies', which are commonly associated with university departments. One 'school' of whiteness studies has focused on the 'marginal' status of those identified as 'white trash' (Wray and Newitz 1997). This 'school' has laudably included class analyses within studies of 'white' ethnicities (Winders 2003), and this is indeed a field in need of sympathetic inquiry. However, Wiegman (1999) has warned against any tendency to sympathise with the 'minoritarian positionings' of, for instance, 'white' racial supremacists. Obviously, the violences associated with this brand of 'difference' (Back 2002, Ezekiel 1995, Fredrickson 1981, Kimmel 2000) have themselves in-voked the exclusions experienced by the perpetrators. Of concern is the potential to appropriate the claim of marginality due to 'white' ethnicity. This is a disturbing converse politics to the study, and exposure, of the marginalizing, and at times overtly violent, powers of whiteness.

For me, remaining vigilant to the aforementioned problems with studying whiteness is part of its demand for attention, and therefore my engagement with its formation. I have found 'whiteness' to be an extremely useful heuristic tool, regardless of its discursive associations with an essentialized, hegemonic ethnicity or potentially monolithic 'power framework' (cf Winders 2003). As I seek to demonstrate in this book, when uncoupled from such associations (the study of) whiteness can provide the capacity to encapsulate sets of context-specific processes and performances of, at times, very subtle forms of racialization. From my research experiences, I have found whiteness to involve processes that privilege and/or dominate. In a city like Sydney, such processes often do benefit a group that is identified as 'Anglo' (whatever that may be), but not solely. As I will demonstrate, whiteness is mutable and flexible, and so are the boundaries of its memberships. The important point to remember is that the link between the ascribed ethnicity, and the processes of empowerment, constitute a handy marriage in the pursuit of the latter.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will use some of Toni Morrison's writings to explore the idea of subject positionings that both privilege *and* de-privilege the designation of ethnicity to 'whiteness'. I then trace some of my early encounters that raised questions about my own assumptions about 'white' ethnicity. Additionally, I will introduce some of the ways that Indigenous peoples, in Australia, have been subjected to the incursions, and power, of whiteness. But rather than 'studying' Indigenous peoples, I do this by following the path of studying whiteness, observing non-Indigenous educational structures, and uses of

space, with the addition of a 'postcolonial perspective'. This perspective has helped to provide an understanding of the post-/neo-colonial contexts within which Indigenous struggles occur. It has also provided an example of a strategy for moving the study of whiteness out of its usual domains.

Box 1.4   Through a postcolonial lens . . .

The field of postcolonial studies, in Australia (Jacobs 1996, Gelder and Jacobs 1998, Gandhi 1998), and elsewhere (Said 1978, Spivak 1985, 1987, 1990 and Bhabha 1990, 1994, 1998), has shaped the theoretical, and political, positioning of this book. Although critical race studies and postcolonialism have tended to remain somewhat separated in Geography (Jackson and Jacobs 1996), more recent studies have paid attention to the importance of colonial histories to racialization processes in the present (for example, Jacobs 1996). Jackson and Jacobs (1996, 3) identified that 'postcolonial studies have helped us attend to the complex ways that the past inheres in the present', and this marriage between postcolonial and racialisation research has enabled me to acknowledge the role and uniqueness of colonial histories and their influences on race relations in the present, in Australia.

   On the ground, in the neighbourhoods surrounding The Block in Sydney, a colonial past is inscribed in the present in very specific ways. Non-Aboriginal people continually encounter the Aboriginal presence that colonisation sought to dispossess and consequent urban settlement worked to displace. In subtle ways, such encounters invoke the colonial past, calling it into the present and requiring it, and its consequences, to be negotiated anew. Indigenous people were banished from the original settlement of Sydney (Reynolds 1996), and the formalised 'return' of the Aboriginal presence to the city, in the early 1970s, which took the form of a specifically designated Aboriginal place now known as The Block, was unlikely and un- expected for the (sub)urbanised non-Aboriginal majority of Austra- lians. Aboriginal people seemed to belong 'back then' or 'out there' in the 'outback' and, as such, were largely forgotten in the cities, at that time.

Beyond the visibility of whiteness

Toni Morrison has produced a corpus of scholarship on 'race' and racialization in the United States. In addition to her academic writings (for example, Morrison 1992), I have found informative disruptions to the hegemonic ethnicity of whiteness in her thought-provoking novels. One portrayal that I will never forget, was the opening sequence in the novel *Paradise* (Morrison 1998), which detailed the excruciatingly brutal murder of a group of unconventional women at the hands of the 'upstanding' men of a town. Regardless of the book's opening line 'They shoot the white girl first', *white* ethnicity (as it is understood in the wider US context and in my Australian understanding as well) was largely absent from this particular story. The story was set in one of the many African American towns pioneered in isolation during the long marches from slavery and as I read this opening account, a seemingly familiar scenario of oppression suddenly yielded something quite unexpected, and unfamiliar, to me. First, the perpetrators of the crime were not 'white', ethnically speaking, which was what I had expected (from reading stories about brutal oppression of minority groups). Second, and the real bombshell for me, was that the 'white girl' did not fit my understanding of the term 'white' – she was (I believe) an Indigenous ('Native') North American. My particular (mis)reading of Morrison's story had occurred because of my ignorance (gasp!). I was not aware of much of the historical setting for this story but I had assumed (albeit, with just a little prompting) the necessary presence of a particular form of 'white' ethnicity.[24] My positioned reading of *Paradise* – and I am fairly sure that I am not the only one who made such blundering assumptions – revealed to me that another kind of whiteness was in operation even in the *absence* of the (expected) ethnicity within the story. I had inadvertently naturalized, centralized and, in this case, incorrectly perceived a universal ethnicity. It was the process of my defaulting to such a categorization, as well as the assumption itself, that constituted a *processual* form of whiteness and alerted me to the need to critically interrogate the embedded, discursive and yet arbitrary ways of whiteness.

One of Morrison's earlier novels provided a conceptual link. In *The Bluest Eye* (Morrison 1970), an 'ugly' child carried a double burden of the historical geographies of oppression from without, and brutality from within the group to which she ostensibly belonged. The portrayal was of the child's descent into a pact to end the torture of her disposition

through the acquisition of an impossible (and probably imagined) pair of blue eyes. For this child, designations of ugliness included the darkness of her skin tone, hair and eyes, and her poverty. This text alluded to the particularities of oppression, the psychoses that resulted from the impacts of nightmare pathologies of bigotry where memberships and non-memberships were indicated through certain designations. *The Bluest Eye* is a story of status through designations of beauty, rather than 'race'.[25] Yet, at the same time, Morrison demonstrated that although formations of bigotry are not the sole domain of any particular group (ethnic/'racialized' or otherwise), an aspect commonly associated with (some) 'white' people – blue eyes – was *the* aspiration in this story.

Morrison's richly detailed accounts are often of worlds that are largely external or *other to* the worlds of ('Anglo') 'white' people (and I am categorized in this way). And yet these stories do acknowledge the realms of dominance within which they, in the US context, must exist. Of equal importance, Morrison's stories invalidate one of the more common tasks of whiteness studies, which is to make 'whiteness' visible, ethnically speaking. As Morrison has carefully demonstrated, centring (white) ethnicity, even in the study of whiteness, can be highly ethnocentric. As Bonnett (2000, 120) has remarked, [whiteness is already ' "the natural order of things" that has structured its representation[s]...thus the meaning and formation of whiteness are taken for granted.' So the general law, grand narrative or ethnicity of whiteness is not what needs to be exposed. Rather, it is the particularities of whiteness, within the full context of circumstances that have enabled a range of empowerment possibilities (Wiegman 1999). Problematizing its hegemonic ethnic status is one way to open out the concept of whiteness to new and more useful critiques.

To assist in moving the whiteness debate beyond its characteristic reductionism, I have adopted the usage of more overtly applied postcolonial/imperial perspectives. North American whiteness studies, as a sub-discipline has tended to neglect Indigeneity[26] because of its particular preoccupations with the more overt racialized binaries of post-slavery. Apart from the historical moment of segregation, mentioned earlier, I am aware, and Morrison demonstrates this well, that Indigenous/'native' North Americans are sometimes considered to be 'white' regardless of their variously racialized positionings (in Australia, Aboriginal people are usually associated with 'black'). However, in critical race studies (in Geography and elsewhere), postcolonial theorists and researchers have raised the need to consider the trajectories of

colonialism experienced by Indigenous peoples, *everywhere*, up to the present (King 1992, Peters 1998). The inclusion of post-colonial/imperial perspectives, in studies of whiteness, also holds the potential to liberate research from the trap of (mis)representation of the 'other'. To exemplify this positioning, the next section situates post-colonial/imperial perspectives (with an emphasis on the post-colonial) within a study of location-specific processes of whiteness.

Cities of Neo-colonial Whiteness

There is a widespread conception, that goes beyond Australia, that urbanization of Indigenous peoples is a bad idea. For some, it defies 'nature' – they belong outside urbanized modernity. For others, it is a dangerous final stage in a long process of assimilation. Urbanization does have its pros and cons, and in the increasingly urbanizing context of Canada, Bonita Lawrence (2004) has identified the loss of status and identity for 'native' peoples[27] through urbanization. Others have provided a somewhat different perspective. Indigenous peoples are 'as culturally creative and adaptable as anyone else' according to Jeffrey Sissons (2005, 63), who posited that urbanization does not necessarily strip cultural distinctiveness. Furthermore, he identified that the formation of networks, afforded in urban settings – particularly before the days of advanced telecommunications – have been pivotal in the rise of Indigenous politics. This was the case in the US, with the formation of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, and with the advent of *Indianismo* in Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador, which Sissons (2005, 75) has described as a 'coherent nationalist framework'. In Australia, the rise of Indigenous politics was largely an urban expression. The coalescence of a range of Indigenous peoples, from many cultural groups, occurred originally because of issues of dispossession, rather than political desire. Another element, the availability of otherwise unwanted urban areas to inhabit (a pull factor), combined with rural and 'outback' pressures – of shrinking 'Country' and increasing unemployment (push factors) resulted in urban Indigenous settlements. These new unifications, which may have placed kin-based identities in the background, certainly resulted in a critical mass that *then* mobilized. This resulted in the badges of 'Aboriginal Australia', such as the Aboriginal flag, that were foundational in the overall politicization of Indigenous Australians. Urban spaces that are largely undesirable to the majority have long

provided cheap lodgings for disadvantaged groups. And as Bonnett has identified (2002, 362–365) these settlements of the 'other' have:

> . . . been structured around and mapped on to a tradition of spatialized light/dark dualism that can be seen emerging in the 19th century. Although the notion of 'white cities' is no longer viable in such contexts, the symbolic role and function of confined, highly demarcated zones of 'non-whiteness' within metropolitan societies continue to be significant . . . the association of the urban, modernity and whiteness is a deep-rooted tradition[.]

The largely unexpected formalization of an urban Indigenous settlement in inner Sydney in 1973, certainly unsettled the predominantly non-Aboriginal nation (Anderson 1993a & b). It represented the authorized demarcation of a 'non-white' zone within a society that believed it was immune to the need for 'racial segregation' (within its cities, at least). Since then, and particularly with the onset of gentrification in the late 1990s, in what did become one of the most overtly segregated corners of urban Australia, 'black' (Indigenous and surrounded) and 'white' (non-Indigenous and surrounding) spaces butt up against each other in increasing juxtaposition. The mass media portray The Block as a 'failed human experiment', and as 'a ghetto' – as Harlem-like (Shaw 2000). In response to its existence, an array of strategies and projects aimed at consolidating and reinforcing 'white' space find expression. By opening these fields, using the kinds of analyses now commonplace in Human Geography,[28] the following vignettes demonstrate the allocation of ethnicity, consequent racialization, and the subtler performances of whiteness enabled in these localized settings. These examples reveal also that processes such as the racialization of particular spaces may be context specific, but these forms of whiteness also reverberate within the wider context of neo-colonial Australian politics.

Particular whiteness

As a long-term resident of inner Sydney, I have observed a range of machinations associated with the largely unwanted presence of Indigeneity, and an ongoing desire to destabilize the existence of The Block.

One of my earliest observations of whiteness occurred in 1995, when I participated in an initiative to 'hand over' the provision of community welfare training to local Aboriginal people. A new 'Community Welfare' course offered training for Aboriginal welfare workers at Eora[29]

College, which is within easy walking distance of The Block. During the final stages of completion of their qualifications, the first intake of students suddenly found that they were required to attend the main (and mainstream) campus in another part of the city. Funding had been cut from Eora because of the 'replication of existing provision' within the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college system.

As the only Aboriginal TAFE College specified by ethnicity in the State of New South Wales, Eora stands alone. The other colleges do not carry a tag of ethnicity, which reflects the societal values of the (apparently) non-ethnicized majority of citizens. Within the TAFE college system, the non-ethnicity of dominant norms has been institutionalized with Eora being the only 'ethnicized' exception. In the case of the Community Welfare initiative, the small group of students, many of whom had experienced adverse impacts of the ('white') welfare system in the past,[30] and who were dedicated to the Eora project, gradually discontinued their studies. They found it too wearing to continually justify their politics, their hardships and, at times, their existence in the mainstream (mostly non-Aboriginal) course.[31]

My next and most striking observation of whiteness complicated my earlier observations of ethnicized spaces. Even though distinctly racialized spaces operated in my neighbourhood, the range of 'ethnicities' present is always more complex than a simple rendering of 'black' and 'white'. The population that utilizes 'white' space includes individuals from a myriad of 'ethnic' backgrounds.

Redfern Railway Station on Lawson Street, Redfern, has a high flow of pedestrian traffic entering and leaving at peak times. On a daily basis I see the pedestrians streaming along one side of the street, while the other side (The Block side) remains virtually empty. Commuters heading to and from the nearby university deliberately avoid walking on The Block side of the street.[32] An invisible line has long determined the 'safe' side for the diverse group of commuters, and a 'no-go zone', which is for the others and the recent addition of barricades has enforced this zoning). Regardless of who inhabited the space, ethnically speaking, the non-Block side of the street becomes a *temporary* space of whiteness in juxtaposition with the other side. Moving away from the starkness of highly defined 'black' and 'white' spaces, where the space of whiteness absorbs all non-Aboriginal[33] ethnicities, whiteness (like blackness)[34] *appears* to fade, but the default ethnicity of 'whiteness' remains intact. These simple observations of the ascription of ethnicity to whiteness, have helped me to identify some of its covert operations.

Unearthing historical geographies of whiteness

The paradoxical presence of The Block has elicited a range of responses from the wider non-Aboriginal community. A sense of siege and defensiveness has built on a history of colonially-based class relations that were compounded by the invasion and seizure of Indigenous lands in 1788. Before The Block's formalization, impoverished residents of what was then the blighted part of the city (which had declined with industrialization) battled to save their suburb but lost half of it to university expansion. The second threat to existing residents occurred with the proposal to establish an Aboriginal settlement in this already besieged place.

Formalization of The Block occurred at a time of widespread ignorance of Aboriginal people. For most non-Aboriginal Australians, Indigenous people lived traditionally, somewhere in 'the outback'. Regarded with suspicion, a bourgeoning urban 'Black Politics' was associated with the Aboriginal settlement. Referenced with US politics, civil unrest seemed inevitable as this part of Sydney became a focal point for Indigenous activism, along with Aboriginal migration to the city. Aboriginal people became more 'visible', as a 'radical' part of the wave of social reform movements of the time (Mickler 1998). The 1967 referendum[35] had consolidated Aboriginal identity nationally, as did establishment of the Aboriginal 'Tent Embassy'[36] in 1972 (Attwood 1989), which indicated a new stage of Aboriginal politics in Australia. Meanwhile, inner Sydney residents had come face-to-face with a new, unknown and, for many non-Indigenous people, 'frightening' presence. Some of these Redfern residents, including those who were migrants from parts of Europe, embarked on another struggle to protect their embattled enclave from 'invasion'.

More than 30 years after formalization of The Block, urban Indigeneity remains unacceptable for many non-Aboriginal Australians. Many residents, who fought against the establishment of The Block, have succumbed to the forces of gentrification but the new incumbents often harbour familiar resentments. The image of danger that is continually percolating has elicited a frustration with the unwanted 'other' that is familiar in urban landscapes around the world (for example, Gregory 1993). In Australia, this has combined with a more widely felt, historically embedded, and romanticized ideal of egalitarianism. This notion of a 'fair go' for all, ironically in this instance, seemed to be intolerant of racial segregation. Although introduced in the 1970s (1966 in South Australia, see Bulbeck 1993), anti-discrimination

legislation has not addressed unspoken and unwritten segregation. At that time, the non-Aboriginal majority of Australians lived in suburbs that, although designated by class, were not associated with common understandings of segregation. The presence of a 'racially' segregated place, an Aboriginal-only place, incited widespread resentment,[37] which is 'an emotion . . . [and] a power with its own material and discursive logic' (Solomon, in McCarthy et al. 1997, 234), that continues to this day (Hage 1998, Mickler 1998).

The Block is widely perceived to be a privilege – just like the Aboriginal-specific Community Welfare course at Eora – created for Aboriginal people. In response, the mobilization and activation of urban settlement has had devastating effects on the Indigenous community. *Cities of Whiteness* teases out processes that reveal the elusiveness and multiplicity of whiteness as it encounters Indigeneity, in the local, at the level of the state and, on occasion, internationally.

Although dominated by the relatively new US-based sub discipline of whiteness studies, I have suggested that identification of the *geographies* of whiteness have the capacity to go beyond the current themes particularly the identification of 'whiteness' as an ethnicity. Rather than identifying whiteness as a (powerful) zone on a segregation map, or a description of (ethnic) difference, this book supports Bonnett's (1996, 97) assertion that whiteness is 'temporally and spatially contingent and fluid'.

This chapter has introduced some of the ways that I began a process of unravelling whiteness. I have sketched a trajectory, from my initial suspicions about whiteness – as observed in a very indirect, but nonetheless definite racialization event experienced by Aboriginal participants in a TAFE course – through to an ongoing research agenda that seeks to unveil the strengths, and slipperiness, of whiteness.

From around my home in inner Sydney, I have observed how whiteness performs and consolidates itself in this place through a range of pressures exerted directly and indirectly on an urban Aboriginal community. Socio-cultural shifts have reinforced an ongoing construction of an overt and racialized binary, which is continually re-imagined through processes of urban change. Its newest expressions, of select heritage sensibilities and new urbanities, have evolved to the deliberate detriment of the 'Black Capital of Australia' (as it was originally founded), which continues to shakily clutch its stake at the heart of Australia's first and most global city. Away from this immediacy, whiteness resumes its subtler capacities.

The presence of an impoverished urban Aboriginal community in inner Sydney has provided a catalyst for the observation of locally specific performances of whiteness to be captured, and documented. Such observations, of the specificities of this inner-city place, reveal the historical geographies of colonialism, and its cultures, that continually replicate and reinforce normative values of racialization, more generally. The local context provides specific processural details, such as the turf-protection that occurs with the designations and protection of heritages, that are historically embedded in colonial structures of privilege. In the city of Sydney, processes of gentrification and urban transformation more generally, which are driven by a range of external (including global) as well as local forces, are tethered to select pasts. As the next chapters will reveal, beliefs about heritage and entitlement to place replicate a colonial project of excluding the Indigenous other. Parallel to these selective identifications of heritage, Sydney's 'Manhattaniza-tion', which is detailed in Chapter IV speaks of another set of pasts, presents, and futures that are whitewashed in the neo-/post-colonial gentrifying city.

Notes

1 Also spelt Cadigal.
2 In Australia, the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' are often interchange-able. They are used in this way here. Indigenous refers to those who identify as such rather than any biological and/or cultural determinant (though it is acknowledged that some Indigenous peoples prefer these). Common attri-butes of Indigeneity/Aboriginality include (knowledge of) kinship ties, and familial histories of dispossession through (ongoing) colonisation. I capitalise 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal', and all associated versions of these terms in acknowledgment of Australian Aboriginal protocols.
3 Somewhat confusingly, The Block straddles Redfern and the tiny suburb of Darlington (Figure 1.2) but most Australians associate it with Redfern.
4 As Australian Bureau of Statistics social maps (www.abs.gov.au) demon-strate, Australia *is* highly segregated by class (income) and 'ethnicity', regardless of popular understandings of egalitarianism. However, urban segregation is not as overtly delineated as in the United States, for instance. There are few places that are designated as 'ghettos', or places that the majority fear to go.
5 'Trans' refers to 'across' in 'transdisciplinarity' and in this context means that the study of whiteness borrows from across the disciplines. 'Inter', as in 'interdisciplinary scholarship' refers to 'between', which means that the study of whiteness is not owned but shared among the disciplines.

6   African American writers, such as Toni Morrison, have challenged this assumption. I discuss examples from two Morrison novels later in this chapter.

7   According to the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates, 'the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples . . . liv[e] in major cities (30%) . . . 20% liv[e] in areas classified as inner regional, 23% in outer regional, 9% in remote and 18% in very remote areas'. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4713.0 Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 30 October 2003, updated 18 March 2005 (www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/).

8   The Block is also dubbed 'Redfern' or 'Eveleigh Street', but I will refer to it as it is most commonly known.

9   Referring to its general and widest sense (see Endnote 1 and Figure 1.2).

10 Positivism was a view that aligned geographical (and other) inquiry/ies with scientific 'proof' through quantification.

11 For example, Dear (2000, 1) reacted to the criticisms with the comment that postmodern urbanism 'risks being regarded as hopelessly faddish, already obsolete, or terminally indecisive. Such criticisms are usually the product of hostile or lazy minds'.

12 Such as the ethnic/racial categorizations depicted in social atlases (see Cynthia A. Brewer and Trudy A. Suchan, 2001, *Mapping the Census 2000: The Geography of U.S. Diversity*, ESRI Press, Redlands California). Maps of US Census data includes sets titled 'White', 'Black or African American', 'American Indian and Alaska Native', 'Asian', 'Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander', 'Two or More Races', 'Hispanic or Latino Origin', and the intriguing 'non-race' or 'ethnic' category of 'White, Not Hispanic or Latino Origin'.

13 As used by Hage (1998). There is a popular assumption is that 'Aussies' are generally 'Anglo', with a few 'migrant' and Aboriginal exceptions. Levels of migrancy, with the highest intake from Britain and/or New Zealand (which, of course, includes non-'Anglos' but the majority have long been migrants of 'Anglo' heritage), disrupt this assumption.

14 Geographers include Alastair Bonnet, who championed the critique of whiteness from within Geography. Other critiques include publications by Dwyer and Jones (2000), who attempted to unsettled the 'socio-spatial epistemology' of whiteness, and Winders (2003) who identified the 'power framework' of whiteness.

15 'Revolutionary and counter-revolutionary theory in Geography and the problem of ghetto formation', from *Social Justice and The City*, 1973.

16 In Harvey 1973.

17 A new, cross-disciplinary form of whiteness research has recently emerged (with a new journal and association, both titled *Australian Critical Race And Whiteness Association* (http://www.acrawsa.org.au/index.php/item/244) that focuses specifically of questions of Indigeneity (see Anderson 2002, and McKay 1999).

44   ENCOUNTERING CITIES OF WHITENESS

18   'Native title' is the name given by the High Court to Indigenous property rights recognized by the court in the *Mabo* judgment (3 June 1992). The Mabo judgment overthrew the legal fiction of *terra nullius* – that the lands of Australia had belonged to no one when the British arrived in 1788 (http://www.atsic.gov.au/issues/land/native_title/Default.asp).

19   Although the police involved were exonerated after the Abernethy Inquest, the result was controversial and the Aboriginal community (and others) were outraged. At a public meeting, held on 8 October 2005, the new Premier of New South Wales, Morris Iemma, was called to re-open the case. As yet, this has not occurred.

20   This 'riot' was picked up by the international media, and reported in Al Jazeera, Onenews New Zealand and IOL South Africa on 16 February 2004, BBC News and New York Times on 17 February 2004. In the UK, The Guardian also ran a series of articles and commentaries over several days. Commentaries and debates were ongoing in Australian newspapers, such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Australian,* the *Age*, and television coverage was widespread.

21   In December 2005, a widely reported series of 'race riots' started on Sydney's Cronulla Beach, when 'Anglo' youth allegedly decided to reclaim the beach from other ethnicities (particularly 'Lebanese' people).

22   Pulido (2002, 45) has estimated that the discipline of Geography is 'overwhelmingly ethnically white' (over 90%).

23   Interviews with Horton on 'race' at http://www.media-diversity.org/articles_publications/Hue%20and%20Cry%20on%20'Whiteness%20Studies'.htm and on 'whiteness' at http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-02-04.htm.

24   See Bonnett (2000) for discussion of non-Anglo identifications of whiteness, throughout history.

25   It is noted however that part of the designation of beauty was racialised (darkness of skin tone).

26   And, as I am very aware, and Morrison has demonstrated, Indigenous North Americans are sometimes 'white' regardless of their variously racialised positionings.

27   In 1901, only 5.1% of Canada's Aboriginal people lived in cities, and by 1951 only 6.7% had urbanised, but by 2001, almost half of Canada's Aboriginal people lived in urban areas (Peters 2005). According to Evelyn Peters (2005, 346), there is also a characteristic that complicates the urbanisation of First Nations peoples – they tend to 'churn', that is they move between cities and homelands, and back again. This is also common in Australia.

28   The research documented here used a multiple-methods approach that drew on qualitative, interpretative, and quantitative sources, to generate data and a writing-as-analysis approach to constructing the research narrative.

29   Named after the Eora peoples who, before colonization, inhabited the coastal area where the inner city of Sydney now stands (Kohen 2000).

Eora is the only Aboriginal campus of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Colleges in the state of New South Wales.

30 A high proportion had personal experiences of the welfare initiatives that resulted in the 'stolen generations' of Aboriginal children (see note 1 in Preface).

31 These accounts were reported to me personally.

32 The University of Sydney provides information on the safest route to walk to Redfern Railway Station (http://www.security.usyd.edu.au/basic/unis.html#map) and provides a free security bus service to and from Redfern Railway Station that runs at night. Walking across Lawson Street with a colleague, a group of students were overheard debating the topic of crossing the road and facing the dangers of walking on the other side. They did not cross over.

33 Many local Aboriginal people suffer the ills of chronic poverty. When they cross to the 'safe' side of Lawson Street, they are generally viewed as out-of-place, threatening and invasive.

34 Aboriginal people are far from a homogeneous group but on the 'black' side of Lawson Street, all become one feared and generally unacceptable group, regardless of who they are (such as welfare or health workers) and why they are there.

35 On 28 May 1967 a federal referendum gave the Commonwealth constitutional powers to legislate on Aboriginal matters by amending Section 51 (xxvi) of the Constitution which gave only the States such powers. The 1967 referendum authorized the deletion of Section 127 of the Australian Constitution so that Indigenous people could be counted in the census (Mickler 1998, p 121). Voting in Australia is compulsory.

36 The 'Aboriginal Embassy', set up on the lawns of Federal Parliament in Canberra, was widely demonised and eventually 'violently removed by police under a new law…introduced by the Liberal government' (Mickler op cit. p 139).

37 As do other 'enclaves' of 'ethnic' concentration such as the suburb of Cabramatta in Sydney's west (see Dunn 1998).

Author Queries

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