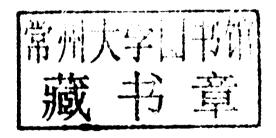# WHITENESS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

REMNANT COLONIALISMS AND WHITE CIVILITY IN AUSTRALIA AND CANADA
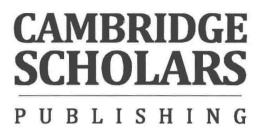
COLIN SALTER

Whiteness and Social Change:
Remnant Colonialisms and White Civility in Australia and Canada

By

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P U B L I S H I N G

Whiteness and Social Change

…we are under no illusion that we have all the answers. Instead we are encouraged by the fact that we are not alone asking the questions.
Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri (2011).

PREFACE

The research for this book was first inspired through becoming aware of the violent and ongoing colonial history in Australia, and my own strategic ignorance which had fostered-facilitated this unknowing. The spaces created by activism and the praxis of listening fostered an uncomfortableness with that which I had been taught in the school system, and more broadly. The reality of Australia's (ongoing) colonial history, expressed through living witnesses, sits in stark contrast to imperial notions which tell a story of benevolent settlement and civilisation of Australia's Aboriginal peoples told through education curricula. Cognitive dissonance drove me to reflect on how my own complicity in perpetuating colonial assumptions was undermining attempts at working towards respect and recognition. This defining movement was one of many. My appreciation goes out to those who (continue to) expose my well-meaning intentions, as well as those who have helped me on my (ongoing) journey of transcending whiteness for my own sake.

I am indebted to those I have met during the long and ongoing struggle to protect the Sandon Point area (and many more in other struggles). Their tireless efforts continue to inspire. I first met Dootch in the mid 1990s, finding his exposures of my own privilege quite confronting. He was one of a small number of visible (to a naive and in many was wilfully ignorant white person) Aboriginal people struggling for respect and recognition. My increasing exposure to implicit, explicit and subtle challenges to the denial of sovereignty and its broader implications was situated alongside a broadening awareness of human chauvinism (Routley 1979) and (structural, cultural) exploitation enmeshed in the political economy of global capital. An increasing focus of my everyday became a direct involvement in collaborative struggle (theory and praxis) and the seeking of a more fair and just relationship.

I must thank Jillian Smith for first introducing me to the dispute over the Red Hill Valley. My experiences of listening to accounts of those struggling to protect the valley, promoting respect and recognition of the Haudenosaunee, have exposed me to different contexts and approaches.

Meeting participants in the land reclamation at Caledonia afforded an awareness of approaches to struggle I previously had very little exposure to—and significant differences in the responses of white people to assertions of sovereignty. With regards to Wave Hill, Minoru Hokari's engaged and transformative research provided me with a depth of empirical detail to pursue my initial reflections that (dominant) white accounts of the walkout were far from an accurate interpretation. Minoru's struggle with cancer ended (in 2004) before I had the opportunity to gain more directly from his knowledge and experiences.

The unwavering support of Brian Martin and Susan Dodds, at the University of Wollongong, Walter Peace, at McMaster University, and a host of others continue to prove invaluable. Walt's willingness to assist me whilst in Canada, openly sharing his extensive knowledge of the Red Hill Valley, made my comparative research more than possible. The librarians and staff in the libraries at the McMaster and Wollongong universities, the Hamilton and Wollongong public libraries, and the Hamilton Spectator librarian Tammie Danciu also greatly assisted in my search for historical and other hard to find publications.

I have drawn inspiration from the challenging—and at times necessarily confronting—work of many including Sara Ahmed, Linda Alcoff, Ien Ang, Daniel Coleman, Andrew Feenberg, Thomas Gieryn, Jane Haggis, Stuart Hall, Frank Hardy, Minoru Hokari, bell hooks, Herbert Marcuse, Patricia Monture-Agnes, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Fiona Nicoll, Val Plumwood (Routley), Damien W. Riggs, Sue Stanton, James Tully and Langdon Winner. I am also indebted to the residents of "bunnytown", the many participants in the Red Hill Valley dispute I met, the staff at OPIRG McMaster and the Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University. There are many others who have provided me with companionship and immeasurable encouragement during this journey: my family, friends, colleagues and all those who I have met in struggles along the way. These include all those willing to listen when I have wanted to share thoughts and ideas, and those with whom I have conspired.

The (final) enunciations throughout this book owe significantly to the efforts of Robert Carr, Jason Hart and Angela Williams. They sifted through drafts, pointed out obscurities and ambiguities, challenged ideas and provided invaluable assistance enabling me to increase to the overall effectiveness (specifically and more generally) of my engagement with theory and praxis.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACLALS	Association for Commonwealth Languages and Literature Studies
ACRAWSA	Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association
ACTA	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AIA	Australian Investment Agency
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ARV	Anglican Retirement Villages
ATSIHP Act	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act (Australia)
AWU	Australian Workers Union
BC	British Columbia, Canada
BLF	Builders Labourers' Federation
CHOP	Clear Hamilton of Pollution
COI	Commission of Inquiry (NSW)
DCP	Development Control Plan
DEH	Department of Environment and Heritage (Australia)
DIPNR	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (NSW)
The Embassy	Aboriginal Tent Embassy (Canberra, ACT)

EP&A Act	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (NSW)
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
FCAATSI	Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Australia)
Friends	Friends of Red Hill Valley
HETF	Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force
HRCA	Hamilton Region Conservation Authority
ILALC	Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council
KEJ	Korewal Eloura Jerrugaraugh Corporation
LEP	Local Environment Plan
Navin Officer	Navin Officer Heritage Consultants
NAWU	North Australian Workers Union
NDP	New Democratic Party (Canada)
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NIRAG	Northern Illawarra Residents Action Group
NPW Act	National Parks and Wildlife Act (NSW)
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW)
NSW	New South Wales, Australia
NT	Northern Territory, Australia
Pastoral Award	Cattle Station Industry (Northern Territory) Award
Picket	Sandon Point Community Picket
QEW	Queen Elizabeth Way, Ontario
REP	Regional Environment Plan

SCESFC	Sydney Coastal Estuarine Swamp Forest Complex
SCLC	South Coast Labour Council
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policies (NSW)
SPATE	Sandon Point Aboriginal Tent Embassy
Stockland	Stockland Trust Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WA	Western Australia
WCC	Wollongong City Council
WWCAC	Wadi Wadi Coomaditchie Aboriginal Corporation

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

An email from Miangaal Elder Les Ridgeway (Snr) to Reconciliation Australia, reproduced in *Reconciliation News* in December 2010, asked "that the Reconciliation folk think carefully and please refrain from referring to us as 'Indigenous' we have never ever referred to our many Clan folk as such". Aborigine is identified as the appropriate term, with First Peoples also being a mouthful. In this book, Aborigine is used to refer to Aboriginal Australians. First Peoples is used when referring to both Aboriginal Peoples in Australia and First Nations in Canada. At times Iroquois, Iroquois People, Iroquois Confederacy, Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Haudenosaunee and Six Nations are used interchangeably, reflecting how the Haudenosaunee and the broader community use them. The term "native" is reproduced in direct quotes only, given racist connotations and associated legacies in Australian discourse.

The terms "white" and "White", and in parallel "whiteness" and "Whiteness", are afforded equivalence here with each referring to a politicoeconomic system as opposed to a (socially constructed) racial classification (Mills 1999: 106). Chapter two provides an overview of the distinction.

Drawing from feminist theory, the terms and/both are used together to emphasise the coexistence of contradiction and ambiguity, and to move away from the (routinely false) dualistic implications in constructions of either/or frameworks.

"Technology", as used here, draws on Science and Technology Studies (STS). The term refers to artefacts and associated social relations, where artefacts are constructed objects (what are considered technology in the normative sense). Collections, and intersections, of artefacts comprise a technological ensemble. The term technoscience as used here refers to the reciprocal production of science, technology and society on each other as practice and discourse. Specifically, such a definition evokes what Anderson describes as a critical engagement with the performativity of western (specifically postcolonial) technoscience, "revealing and complicating the durable dichotomies, produced under colonial regimes, which underpin many of its practices and hegemonic claims (2002: 644).

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

...reconciliation "to" implies a relationship of unequal power whereby a dominant agent can render another submissive, whilst reconciliation "with" does not necessarily imply such a relationship.
Fiona Nicoll (2002).

In the early hours of the Sunday 19 September 2004, two men were seen running away from McCauley's Beach towards the coastal village of Thirroul, located south of Sydney in the northern suburbs of the Illawarra region of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Moments later the nearby Sandon Point Aboriginal Tent Embassy (SPATE) burst into flames. The complete destruction of the embassy's structure and the life-threatening situation for the five people who were asleep inside marked a significant point in the long-running dispute over the future of the Sandon Point area. The assailants' actions provide a stark contrast to those of the broader community. Since its establishment in December 2000, the local community has supported SPATE and called for recognition of the area's cultural significance. This support had assisted in increasing the profile of SPATE, and broader awareness of a wealth of issues of concern to the local community regarding the future of the Sandon Point area.

The situation at Sandon Point is not uncommon. High profile public campaigns promoting respect and recognition of First Peoples cultures are visible in many western countries. For example, substantial criticism was levelled at the hosting of the 2010 winter Olympics on unceded lands in and around Vancouver, Canada. Across the country treaty rights continue to be an undercurrent of numerous conflicts between First Nations, the Federal and Provincial governments: a number of examples are referred to in this book, including the campaign against the Red Hill Creek Valley Parkway and the land reclamation at Caledonia, both located south-west of Toronto, Ontario. In Australia, alongside the ongoing dispute at Sandon Point, concerns have been raised about the impacts of proposed mining in the Pilbara region of Western Australia (WA). The extraction of gold at

Lake Cowal in Central NSW, against the wishes of the Wiradjuri people, locates another example of broad community support for an Aboriginal Tent Embassy.[1] The lack of respect and recognition shown in moving ahead with these contentious projects, and numerous other contemporary issues, are indicative of key issues that many western societies have yet to appropriately address. At the root of these controversies are what will be referred to throughout this book as remnant colonialisms. What is important to note here, is that remnant colonialisms permeate into the actions of those supporting First Peoples' calls for respect and recognition.

What are remnant colonialisms? To put it simply, these are assumptions and interpretations, rooted in colonial legacies that continue to shape the ways in which western societies view (and construct) *other* cultures. Susan Dodds (1998) has provided another way to think of this: how white people's perspectives are framed by persistent colonial assumptions. In order to clearly identify what is being brought into question here, we need to consider what is meant by the interlinked terms white and whiteness. At its simplest, whiteness refers to situated understandings from which those who are positioned as white view the world. Being situated as white shapes and determines what is marked as well as what is obscured, or unmarked individually and collectively.[2] There are double binds within and across whiteness, alongside being produced by whiteness on those positioned as *other* (see Ellsworth 1997).

Common in scholarship on whiteness, the terms "white" and "White", alongside "whiteness" and "Whiteness", are used interchangeably. In both instances, the former are more predominant, albeit without a marked distinction between the different typology. Charles Mills outlined a succinct and intentional distinction between the two ways of representing the terms: "the theory of the Racial Contract, by separating whiteness as a phenotype/racial classification from Whiteness as a politicoeconomic system committed to white supremacy, opens a theoretical space for white repudiation of the Contract. (One could then distinguish 'being white' from 'being White.')" (Mills 1999: 106). In drawing from, and making a distinction with, the Social Contract, Mills makes it clear that white people have a (difficult) choice.[3] Those positioned as White (to use Mills' nomenclature) can withdraw their consent from the Racial Contract, and in doing so they reject, challenge and expose their own concomitant complicity in the lived privileges of Whiteness gained at the expense of the racialised *other*. To not do so is to remain culpable. Such culpability and concomitant complicity emerge through distinction between the Social Contract and the Racial Contract. Mills introduces the Racial Contract as

not a contract between everyone in a society, rather being "between just the people who count, the people who really are people ('we the white people')" (*Ibid.*: 3). The Racial Contract is identified and labeled normatively (to generate judgments about social relations and injustice) and descriptively as a means to expose cultural and structural exploitation. By structural exploitation, I am referring to the foundational work in the field of Peace Studies expressed as structural violence by Johan Galtung (1969). Following Brian Martin, I use *exploitation* in place of *violence*: "The main problem with the expression 'structural violence' is that it adds an enormous burden onto the term violence. Most people think of violence as direct physical violence. For much communication, terms such as exploitation and oppression may be clearer than 'structural violence'" (Martin 1993: 43). Structural, or indirect exploitation is exploitation without a subject (person) acting out what Galtung identifies as violence. It is exploitation embedded in the very fabric of a society: where systems, institutions, policies or cultural beliefs can and do meet the needs and rights of some at the expense of others (see Schirch 2004). Similarly, cultural exploitation (nee violence) encompasses "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (Galtung 1990: 291).

Such notions are quite confronting to those positioned as white and/both otherwise situated to benefit from indirect exploitation (i.e. class, gender) at the expense of others. These can be confronting in part through reflecting on the shaping of perceptions, how one knows and sees the world, via the experiences of situatedness and situated knowledges. Drawing attention to concepts such as whiteness and the Racial Contract enables exposure of what are abstract notions to those positioned as white: which are quite often clearly visible and experienced in the everyday by those who are located as the racialised *other*.

In this book, whiteness (lowercase "w") is used to depict a less dualistic definition of what Mills labels as Whiteness. In doing so, there is a contrast with any notion of phenotype/racial classification—reflecting the socially constituted nature, and historical variability, of who has been and is considered white or *other*. What I am referring to here is the interpretive (historical) flexibility of what skin tones are considered as "white". It is here that we can locate key features of whiteness. As a starting point, those who are considered white are positioned as normative (i.e. "normal"), rather than raced. To be white is to be effectively non-