UNSETTLING WHITENESS:

Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey.

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English

in conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

June, 2001

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0-612-63446-9

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Abstract

Recent representations make whiteness liminal. White male characters in fiction from former settler colonies like Australia, Canada and New Zealand embody the legacy of colonialism as well as the class and cultural privileges associated with whiteness. *Injured* whiteness implies a critique of outmoded stereotypes and suggests how contemporary whiteness can rupture the boundaries of its own privilege. Chapter One uses the mute and abused Simon in Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* to examine how colonial whiteness can be the object of critique in a postcolonial allegory. Chapter Two focuses on the burnt Hungarian "English" patient in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* to demonstrate how (and with what effect) colonial whiteness is constructed. Chapter Three considers the "black white" Gemmy in David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* to show how anomalous forms of whiteness hidden within the stereotype of the British colonist are exposed. Chapter Four focuses on Tristan in Peter Carey's *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* to argue that stereotypes of colonial whiteness converge with those of class and cultural privilege so that Tristan's deformity represents racial, cultural and economic

marginalisation. This project uses American and British whiteness theory alongside postcolonial theory to reveal both the persistently Manichean vocabulary of postcolonialism and the relevance of different vocabularies and categories of analysis. My dissertation examines the as yet unstudied influence of colonial discourse on constructions of postcolonial *whiteness* and shows that whiteness in former settler colonies is a product of the conjunction of contemporary privilege and colonial marginalisation.

Acknowledgments

My co-supervisors, Asha Varadharajan and Tracy Ware, were of immense help in the conceptual development and practical execution of this project. I am grateful for Dr. Varadharajan's perspicacious comments and moral support, particularly as the job search converged with the closing stages of preparing the dissertation. I am also indebted to Dr. Ware for his willingness to be involved in an enterprise so different from his own research preferences. His advice has been thorough, professional, and often extremely detailed. His encouragement, particularly during more embattled periods, has been indispensable. Mary Carpenter has also offered much advice and support during my time at Queen's. Sneja Gunew has been and continues to be an important influence. Her suggestions over tea, sushi or email have shaped my academic decisions more than she may know.

The challenges of the Ph.D. would have been insurmountable without support on a more personal level. Ella Ophir has seen me at my most elated and most despondent; I can only hope to reciprocate the generosity of her friendship. Andrew Loman has been an ally and

confidant; his unremitting good humor has turned many tired days into unexpected pleasures. The community of students with which I have been able to lunch (pretty much daily) over the last five years has also been invaluable. "The lunch bus" ensured routine, solace, and hilarity, particularly in the over-caffeinated and pun-filled days when Alice Petersen, Lori Pollock and Stephen Ross were regularly in attendance.

My parents have provided love and support throughout this and each of my previous endeavours. I am especially pleased that they will see this project come to fruition.

Ontario Graduate Scholarships and a doctoral award from The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada provided material support for this degree.

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Introduction

Whiteness Unsettled

In Australia, Canada and New Zealand, whiteness is already unsettled. Although it enjoys the lingering privileges of its colonial authority, its preeminence is disrupted by critiques and by its own guilty recognition of colonialism's wrongdoings. Two issues obtain in representations of whiteness from former settler colonies: the legacy of Manichean colonial discourse and the implications of contemporary whiteness (and of the "white" body in particular).[1] These two issues coincide in fictions from Australia, Canada and New Zealand which represent characters who are hyperbolically white (and so reiterate the vocabulary of colonial stereotypes) but whose injuries belie the privileges associated with whiteness. Ambivalent postcolonial representations give whiteness an uneasy liminal status that can be recidivist (covertly reaffirming white colonial preeminence), punitive (inflicting punishment on the white coloniser) or progressive (turning within "whiteness" to suggest its diversity and potential for evolution).[2]

This project uses contemporary whiteness theories (mainly American) in the reading of contemporary fiction from Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Bringing whiteness theory to bear upon postcolonial settler fiction allows me to demonstrate that whiteness is not simply postcolonial; somatically, it is richly suggestive of colonial history, but it also connotes disparate histories, classes and kinds of whiteness. This project suggests that "colonial whiteness" is strategically used in postcolonial allegory; that there is a surprisingly consistent understanding of what "English" colonial whiteness, in particular, connoted; that whiteness adapts and reveals itself as fraught with class and regional fissures to become unsettled settler whiteness; and that neo-colonial "whiteness," though a product of cultural and economic distinctions, can return us to an eerily familiar discourse of racialised difference.

Critical theory has recently taken contemporary whiteness as its *bête blanche,* insisting on the need to interrogate white privilege. For instance, Homi Bhabha writes that

> [t]he subversive move is to reveal *within* the very integuments of "whiteness" the agonistic elements that make it the unsettled, disturbed form of

> authority that it is—the incommensurable "differences" that it must surmount; the histories of trauma and terror that it must perpetuate and from which it must protect itself; the amnesia it imposes on itself; the violence it inflicts in the process of becoming a transparent and transcendent force of authority. ("The White Stuff" 21)

Bhabha suggests that the critical move of the moment is to investigate what lies under the skin of whiteness. One may expect to discover colonial histories of "trauma and terror" as well as covert efforts to maintain whiteness's privilege and authority. Whiteness's ambivalence persists in the disjunction between its relinquishing of its superiority and its continued enjoyment of a "transcendent force of authority." Bhabha's comment usefully introduces my dissertation's four key questions: Can postcolonial whiteness surmount its "histories of trauma and terror"? What are whiteness's "integuments"? How does postcolonial fiction eviscerate whiteness to reveal its "agonistic elements"? What, in addition to skin colour, has enabled whiteness's transparency and transcendency?

Contemporary whiteness's authority has been transcendent because unchallenged. Whiteness has been so

normative that it has not been acknowledged as a racial category and so has been perceived as "transparent." However, colonial whiteness's power resided in its construction of its own "whiteness." While colonists stereotyped indigenous populations in excruciating detail, reducing them to lists of physical and moral failings, they were notoriously vague in explicating precisely what they thought constituted their own whiteness.[3] For instance, Keith Sinclair writes of nineteenth-century New Zealand, "[i]n the discussions about the national type, on one topic there was unanimity: it was to be white" (90). And yet what was whiteness? It was more than skin. It was all that allowed New Zealander Alan Mulgan to write of England's "shining heroes" with their "imperfectly understood but fascinating ritual," "romance" and "world-embracing authority and prestige" (*Home* qtd. in Arnold 356).[4] I contend that there was and is a stereotyped understanding of British colonial whiteness (and that descriptions of it are often like Mulgan's); this stereotype emerges as an object of critique in postcolonial fiction.

Bhabha writes that "the stereotype must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed" ("The Other Question" 66).[5] British colonial discourse celebrated the white side of a Manichean binary

that, "in excess" of evidence, positioned white colonists as morally and intellectually superior to the populations they colonised. Intangible values were assumed manifest in the physical "evidence" provided by white skin (and blond hair and blue eyes). If British colonial whiteness persists in postcolonial critiques, this tacit acknowledgment of British colonialism's stereotyping of superiority, privilege and authority as white, blond and blue-eyed persists as well. Postcolonial fiction which presents whiteness as bruised, burnt or deformed begins to excoriate the impermeable body of the stereotype itself, revealing the fallacy of the connection between white skin and the qualities or privileges that produce so-called "whiteness." Postcolonial representations of whiteness negotiate both an outmoded stereotype and constructions of new whitenesses which are putatively invisible or transparent. Settler fiction that depicts hyperbolically white men draws attention to both old and new constructions.

The typical nineteenth-century British settler in Australia, Canada or New Zealand resided on the outskirts of British civilisation. The remove from Britain ensured that, although settlers were "white," and although they struggled to assert their adherence to the British colonial stereotype, they were white others.[6] Bill

Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write that "the idea of cultural inferiority exceeded that of mere provincial gaucherie as race permeated even the construction of 'white' settlers" (*Key Concepts* 47). Thus the "temporary illusion of a filiative relationship" with Britain is replaced by contradictions: the settlers are British colonists, but also other, as if they had been colonised themselves (*Empire Writes Back* 26). The settler could claim to be white, but was also marginalised and "darkened" by his remove from Britain. In contemporary fiction from settler colonies which concerns itself with the colonial encounter, the problem of whiteness "unsettled" by its remove from Britain manifests itself as injury, even abjection. The novels I treat show a reconfiguration of the British colonial stereotype in blond and blue-eyed characters who are also distorted, diseased and scarred or blackened. Their physical ambiguity confounds colonialist racist categories so that they are "white" and yet also other. They seem to become, at first glance at least, "black white" men (Malouf 10). As George Mosse notes, "[r]acism's attraction was its certainty, decisiveness and abhorrence of ambiguity" (169). Peculiar, ambiguous whiteness confounds Manichean definitions of whiteness; it produces uncertainty.

In Canada, Australia and New Zealand, injured, ambiguous whiteness also reflects contemporary race politics and, in particular, the conjunction of whiteness and class, cultural and political privilege (a conjunction most extensively studied in the context of the United States). Recent studies of whiteness from North America (and, to a lesser extent, Britain) have emphasized the following: the misleading appearance of whiteness as blank or transparent; the flexibility of definitions of whiteness; the alignment of whiteness with masculinity; the symbolic importance of white as a colour; and the association of whiteness with class privilege. In addition, some critics suggest that whiteness has been destabilised and marginalised, while others argue that any appearance of marginalisation is strategic and will facilitate the maintenance of white privilege. What Bhabha calls "the subversive move" of the moment reveals how the authority associated with the type of the white colonist has evolved into a plurality of whitenesses ("The White Stuff" 21). I will briefly introduce these themes before showing how this theoretical background facilitates my readings of postcolonial representations of liminal, ambiguous whitenesses.

First, whiteness is frequently taken to be "normal" or is perceived as un-raced. Ross Chambers writes that in America

> [t]here are plenty of unmarked categories (maleness, heterosexuality and middleclassness being obvious ones), but whiteness is perhaps the primary unmarked and so unexamined—let's say 'blank'—category. Like other unmarked categories, it has a touchstone quality of the normal, against which the members of marked categories are measured and, of course, found deviant, that is, wanting. (189)

Richard Dyer similarly notes that in the Western World, "[t]his assumption that white people are just people [. . .] is not far off saying that whites are people whereas other colours are something else" (2). Like Chambers, Dyer observes that the normativity of whiteness implies that non-whiteness is "found wanting." The transparency or blankness of whiteness is founded on the assumption of its superiority and pervasiveness. To be other than white is to be conspicuously different, even inadequate, because visibly non-white. The apparent blankness of whiteness is misleading because it conceals whiteness's cultural and social power and privilege. Hence

Chambers's interest in examining what he calls "The Unexamined" and Dyer's assertion that the purpose of his *White* is "[to make] whiteness strange" (4).

Second, whiteness's boundaries are surprisingly elastic. While epidermal whiteness often connotes power and privilege, power and privilege can also ensure that an individual is perceived as white. Thus Japanese businessmen, for instance, were considered "white" in apartheid South Africa (Dyer 51; Chambers 191), and only since the nineteenth century has Britain considered the Irish white (Dyer 53-55). In both cases, elevation in economic status is instrumental to the perception of these nations' "whiteness." Sander Gilman writes that class status can be marked on skin to ensure its perception as "white." He notes that in nineteenth-century Germany, Jewish duelists intentionally inflicted scars on each others' faces. A scar would prove that someone had "been seen as an honorable equal and thus had been challenged to a duel. Marked onto the duelist's face was his integration into German culture" (122-123). In sum, a certain mark on skin connoted an activity associated with Gentile German culture; the duelist's "whiteness" was thus marked on his face with a scar.

Whiteness is paradoxically constructed as both rigid and flexible. Dyer argues that "[t]here is a specificity

to white representation, but it does not reside in a set of stereotypes so much as in narrative structural positions, rhetorical tropes and habits of perception" (12). Dyer suggests that whiteness is only specific because of the turns of phrase used to describe it by those who choose to see it as white. He aptly implies that whiteness is in the eye (and descriptions) of the beholder. He suggests that there is no white stereotype (that, for instance, the association of "whiteness" with white skin, blond hair and blue eyes is not typical and that more flexible notions of "whiteness" prevail). For Dyer, "whiteness" is instead associated with the power to be the "eye" describing events. He suggests that whiteness resides in certain words or phrases ("mankind" suggesting white men, for instance) and habitual perceptions (if whiteness is a norm, we see things as if we were white and describe things so as to reinscribe whiteness's normativity).

Dyer writes about contemporary Western whiteness and does not evoke the legacy of colonialism. However, postcolonial representations of (British) colonial whiteness in fiction from Australia, Canada and New Zealand *are* influenced by the "rigidity" and "unchanging order" of stereotypes (Bhabha "The Other Question" 66). Settler-colony notions of stereotypes, particularly

racial stereotypes, lurk behind how individuals are described and perceived. Descriptions of individuals are subtended by a knowledge of, and response to, familiar stereotypes; even if the speaker/viewer does not explicitly acknowledge it, his/her language and perceptions are either tacitly complicit with, or critical of, stereotypes. In postcolonial settler colonies, the stereotype of the British colonist still influences what Dyer calls "rhetorical tropes and habits of perception" (12).

Third, studies of whiteness often also focus on the conjunction of whiteness and masculinity, especially as a legacy of colonial and settler stereotyping.[7] Ruth Frankenberg defines the turn-of-the-century stereotype of the American "White Man" as "strong, dominant, arbiter of truth and self-designated protector of white womankind, defender of nation/territory" (11). She suggests that "White Man" is defined in opposition to the "Man of Color" (11). To be "White" and "Man" in this definition of terms is to be the apotheosis of both. Contemporary critiques of this doubly privileged combination often focus on the "white masculization" of political, social and cultural power. Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne catalogue contemporary feminist critiques of the "implicit masculization of power" (20). Power is

stereotypically associated with white masculinity and vice versa. For Cornwall and Lindisfarne, both are racist. Even in contemporary British sports, for instance, they suggest that "the link between elite masculinity and racism may be explicit: in the clubhouse [a] rugby player may be chided to be fair or generous with the phrase, 'Play the white man'" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 21).

Mosse suggests that recognising the conjunction of white masculinity and power, particularly aggressive national power, has resulted in the relatively recent ideals of a more sensitive and self-effacing manliness (109). However, his emphasis on sculptural ideals of masculine beauty implies that "the masculization of power," though disavowed, surfaces again in ideals of masculine beauty and sensitivity which are based on statues of powerful mythological figures. Reiterating the link between idealised whiteness and masculinity, Mosse writes that "[t]he ideal of masculine beauty took its inspiration from Greece" and "the beauty of Greek sculpture" (28). He argues that "the detailed structure of the male body and face, vital for the construction of the stereotype of male beauty, sprang alive solely through sculptural representation"(29). The beauty of the sculptural model does not weaken the power associated

with white masculinity.[8] Mosse does not emphasise that these influential sculptures of men are executed in white marble. The ideal of masculinity is thus also smooth, unblemished and white or "transparent" (Mosse 172). Unnaturally blemished postcolonial white masculinity challenges what Mosse calls "the stereotype of male beauty" (29). White masculinity is re-envisioned as distorted and diseased—it becomes precisely the opposite of what the Greek sculptures try to convey; these fictional representations depict what has been left out in the sculptural figuring of "ideal [. . .] masculine beauty" (Mosse 28).

Fourth, hue and skin colour are often symbolically joined. Bhabha writes that "[w]hiteness is, after all, only a paler shade of gray, or blackness hit by the glare of light" ("The White Stuff" 22). He uses a discussion of paint colours to discuss race; the colour white symbolizes racial whiteness. By noting that the colour white is not absolute, Bhabha suggests that the racial designation is similarly also only "a paler shade of gray." He adds that "at the same time [whiteness] resembles what house painters call a primer, a base colour that regulates all others, a norm that spectacularly or stealthily underlies powerful social values" ("The White Stuff" 24). Dyer also considers white

as a symbolic hue in racial discourse. He notes the perception of "whiteness as neutrality" and the assumption that "white is no colour because it is all colours" (47). Dyer adds that whiteness, like the colour white, is presumed to include all races or colours so that the foundation of its normality is misleading inclusiveness. He implies the unlikeliness of his own assertion, for while white may technically include all other colours, in practice, white paint does not stay white if other colours are mixed in; Dyer implies that racial whiteness is similarly reliant on the exclusion of other colours. Bhabha and Dyer both suggest that white (like the whiteness it symbolizes) can be an invisible norm; in Bhabha's terms it is "stealthy," whereas in Dyer's it is "neutral." The "stealth" Bhabha observes is implicitly the result of the careful maintenance of the *illusion* of normativity. However, Bhabha also suggests that whiteness can be "spectacular" in its preservation of its own status. It can be remarkable, hyperbolic and deliberately accentuated. Bhabha's observation is consonant with the argument I make: colonial whiteness relied on its visibility for its authority, and this visibility persists even alongside the more stealthy transparency of contemporary whiteness. The liminal white characters I examine are thus "spectacular[ly]" white

because their whitenesses allude to colonial stereotypes. But their whitenesses are also depicted as excessive, even hyperbolic; they are no longer normative, but are instead disturbed and disturbing. Anomalous white characters oblige us to question the constitution of whiteness itself and the validity of assumptions that have been made about it.

Writings about the colour "white" reveal other ways in which it can be spectacular. The curator's notes for an exhibit entitled "Whiteness and Wounds" (Power Plant, Toronto 1993) suggest symbolic possibilities which are linked with injury. Richard Rhodes writes about the way "meaning gathers round" the use of colour (1). He suggests that "whiteness—in materials like rubber, stainless steel, paint and paper—can signal delicacy, sickness and recovery" (1). He adds, in reference to an installation at the gallery featuring enameled strips and ax-handles propped against a white wall in an area with a white-tiled floor, that

> [t]he white enamel strips seemed like bandages, bindings for wounded, amputated tools. They leaned like invalids against the wall, raising thoughts about disabledness, care and recuperation. With their remote implication of destruction, the added

> whiteness read as prescription, a sedative. It was a call for rest and re-invention. (1)

Through work like Rhodes', one can issue a call for the "reinvention" of whiteness studies—one that takes into account other cultural colour codings. Whiteness is thus also a hospital colour, the colour of bandages, bed linen and scarred skin. It conjures images of wartime amputation and destruction, or consumptive pallor. It suggests the possibility of "recovery." However, the associations which seem to lead away from whiteness's colonial history also lead back to it. Rhodes' comments on the nature of whiteness return us to Bhabha's observation that whiteness's integuments conceal "histories of trauma and terror" and "the violence it inflicts in the process of becoming a transparent and transcendent voice of authority" (Bhabha "The White Stuff" 21). The bandages and disabledness in Rhodes' analysis are whiteness's own history of violence turned on itself, so that whiteness is injured, even punished at its own hands.

The above four categories of analysis (the misleading appearance of whiteness as blank, the flexibility of whiteness, white masculinity and the symbolic implications of the colour white) focus on the

power of whiteness, but each category also implies that whiteness is no longer what it was. It has lost the power to make itself invisible, elastic, masculine or all-encompassing; it is no longer simply central or normative. But, and this is the fifth point I raise, some critics also aptly point out that within whiteness's integuments are individuals who have never been privileged in the first place. Thus another element concealed by the stereotype of whiteness is disadvantage. P.C. Wander, J.N. Martin and T.K. Nakayama consider how white poverty fails to fit in and so is ignored:

> [t]he point is not that poor whites have it worse (or better) than poor minorities, or that many privileged whites are simply "lucky." At issue is the construction of "whiteness" as an elitist category. "Whiteness" as we have come to think about it, not only lets millions of nonwhites fall through the cracks, but also millions of whites—men, women, and children—as well [sic]. (21)

The point is not that poor whites are different from other poor people, but that they are different from what is expected of whiteness. Their difference means that what is understood as "whiteness" does not account for

them at all. Paradoxically, poor whiteness is as invisible as the normative, privileged kind. Annalee Newitz and Matthew Wray write that whiteness has already hidden its poor other within it: "'White trash' is, in many ways, the white Other" (Newitz and Wray 168). They suggest that "both liberal and conservative sociologists view poverty as a kind of sickness" (172). The othering of white trash within whiteness results in one kind of whiteness being treated as if it were a kind of blackness.[9] Thus one can compare Frantz Fanon's description of European colonists' vision of black behaviour ("[a]s for the Negroes, they have tremendous sexual powers [. . .] They copulate at all times" [157]) with the characteristics attributed to white trash ("stereotypes of white trash and 'hillbillies' are replete with references to dangerous and excessive sexuality" [Newitz and Wray 171]). Like the racial other of colonial stereotypes, the white other is marginalised and scapegoated.

The marginalising or scapegoating of whiteness becomes most problematic in efforts to *defend* whiteness because it is perceived as disadvantaged. George Yùdice observes that "the ultimate legitimizing move is the claim to oppression" (281).[10] He asserts that white men sometimes make claims about their oppression in order to

re-gain status. Dyer implies that the bid to claim white oppression is excessively defensive when he identifies "the notion of white men, specifically, as a new victim group" (10). He notes the perception that they are "oppressed by the gigantic strides taken by affirmative action policies, can't get jobs, can't keep women" (Dyer 10). However, Dyer also suggests a different problem in analyses of whiteness by white people: white guilt. He suggests that "[o]ne wants to acknowledge so much how awful white people have been that one may never get round to examining what exactly they have been, and in particular, how exactly their image has been constructed, its complexities and contradictions" (11). Debian Marty observes that "much white antiracist rhetoric ironically takes the form of an apologia, the speech of self-defense" (52). Sometimes, then, whiteness is not reaffirmed or recentralised; it is defended and apologised for.

What is implied by marginalised whiteness in postcolonial fiction? My dissertation will address four main points. First, whiteness is presented as marginal in an attempt to show the erosion of distinctions between erstwhile coloniser and colonised. Second, even when

marginal in appearance, the flexibility of what is defined as "whiteness," combined with the rigidity of what is understood as the British colonial stereotype, allows for the reconstruction of a white, stereotypically British and colonial, identity. Third, whiteness is presented as marginal in order to suggest not how it can become more indigenised or how it can be made to adhere to a stereotype, but rather how the British colonial stereotype already contains its other within it. Fourth, poor whiteness is presented as marginal or other within white society to show how the colonial rhetoric of racial difference has been imported into that of multinational capitalism. Each of these four points suggests that the characterisation of whiteness as extreme indicates a critique of colonial stereotyping. Fictional renderings of excessive whiteness imply responses to whiteness's erstwhile invisibility, flexibility, and privilege that are analogous to those explored in whiteness theory.

My project emphasizes the whiteness of characters who are also male, rather than the masculinity of white characters.[11] Whiteness and masculinity have, in the past, been conjoined as conditions of power (see Cornwall and Lindisfarne, above). I treat white masculinity in Australian, Canadian and New Zealand fiction in order to

suggest how that doubly privileged position seems to have been especially marginalised (or doubly disadvantaged).

Sally Robinson writes that in America

> [w]hite masculinity most fully represents itself as victimized by inhabiting a wounded body, and such a move draws not only on the persuasive force of corporeal pain but also on an identity politics of the dominant. The logic through which the bodily substitutes for the political, and the individual for the social and institutional, reveals that the "marking" of whiteness and masculinity has already been functioning as a strategy through which white men negotiate the widespread critique of their power and privilege [. . .] the persistent representation of white male wounds and of a white masculinity under siege offers ample evidence of what is felt to be the *real* condition of masculinity in post-liberationist culture. (6)

Robinson suggests (as does Yùdice) that the appearance of victimisation creates a misleadingly homogenous, disadvantaged "white masculinity" that uses its status as newly marginalised "visible minority" to drum up sympathy and reinforce the power that, arguably, it never really

lost in the first place. Robinson observes that the injured white male body symbolizes what are "felt to be" the results of white male power and privilege socially, institutionally and, I would add, politically. The characters I examine are wounded too. They are bruised, scarred, beaten, burnt and congenitally malformed. Where Robinson refers to "post-liberationist culture" (after the women's liberation movements of the 1960's and 1970s), I refer to postcolonial culture. Thus, where her focus is injured white masculinity, mine is injured colonial whiteness (which, as per the stereotype I delineate above, I am taking to be masculine). Injured white masculinity has slightly different connotations in a postcolonial context, for racial guilt takes precedence over gender guilt. Injuries are symbolic of the marginalisation and victimisation of white masculinity, but they are equally symbolic of the destruction of white masculine identity (and particularly the British colonial stereotype) in a settler colony. Thus "unsettled," injured white masculinity in fiction from Australia, Canada and New Zealand also represents injured, even abject, constructions of national identity. I will suggest the different extents to which wounds represent the destruction or abjection of certain kinds of whiteness.

The abject bears on both how individuals try to construct independent identities and how identities can be constructed from outside the self (the colonial other, for instance, could be described as the colonist's abject). "Abject" generally suggests that which has been cast off, rejected as inferior or vile, or degraded (*OED*). My use of "abject" also draws on Julia Kristeva's theoretical formulation. For the individual subject trying to construct his own identity, abjection is an experience.[12] It is the horror and fear produced by not being able to control one's identity. Kristeva writes "I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*" (3). Trying to establish "self" involves expelling and disavowing certain qualities or, as Kristeva vividly describes, taboo substances (vomit, excrement, urine, blood and mucus, for instance). To try to expel these things ensures abjection. All that the subject has tried to expel or remove does not actually leave the self; instead, undesired qualities or substances come to light violently, suddenly and uncontrollably. All that the subject has tried to imagine as other appears within the self. Kristeva writes that the abject "is experienced at the peak of its strength when [the] subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the

outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very *being*, that it *is* none other than abject" (5).

Kristevan abjection provides, among other things, a vivid illustration of the fallacy of colonial self/other constructions: all that the colonist tries to make other erupts from within the colonist himself. Here is another instance in which the injury of white men in a postcolonial context has different implications than the injuries of the American white men Robinson examines. White postcolonial men may bear wounds that signify the abjection of colonial constructions of whiteness; their injuries may suggest the return of qualities ascribed to the colonial other. David Spurr suggests that in colonial discourse

> the physical suffering of indigenous peoples can be associated with their moral and intellectual degradation: disease, famine, superstition, and barbarous custom all have their origin in the dark precolonial chaos. Colonial discourse requires the constant reproduction of these images—*a recurring nomination of the abject*—both as a justification for European intervention and as the necessary iteration

of a fundamental difference between colonizer and colonized. [my emphasis] (Spurr 77-78)

In order to bolster their superiority, colonists emphasised the difference between themselves and indigenous peoples, making indigenous peoples seem as abject as possible. Spurr refers to Kristeva's formulation of the abject in order to show how the rhetorical construction of the other is based on locating abject qualities outside the self. The "recurring nomination of the abject" preserves the illusion of the 'whole' colonising self, the self divested of "disease, famine, superstition and barbarous custom." White nominates black as abject in order to preserve the homogeneity and purity of whiteness. The abject escapes its boundaries and resurfaces in fractured and impure whiteness.

Kristeva and Spurr emphasise the physicality of the abject as something which exceeds boundaries, control and even language. Vomit, for instance, is abject because there is something indescribable about the process of vomiting. Kristeva writes of the abject as "[t]he *symptom*: a language that gives up, a structure within the body, a non-assimilable alien, a monster, a tumor, a cancer" (11). When confronting the abject, "language

gives up." The embodiment of the abject in fictional characters may be a way of expressing a national abjection which language is incapable of describing. Significantly, each of the injured white male characters on which I focus has trouble communicating. For these characters, injury and abjection (national or otherwise) represent experiences outside of language; their bodies are explanations where they are inarticulate.

I approach examples of unsettled whiteness bearing in mind the possibilities opened up by the notion of the abject in combination with colonial discourse (particularly the stereotype of the British colonist) and current whiteness studies. Diseased white men can embody a punitive national/racial abjection. They can represent the collapse of exclusionary binary categories of black and white, or whiteness that has collapsed in on itself, possibly after making itself ill with its own historical excesses. Destruction of the stereotype of the British colonist can be fictionalised as disability. Disability, in turn, can signal the anomalous, or that which does not fit our understanding of "normal" identity; it can indicate whiteness's failure to acknowledge the different things that constitute whiteness or even the fallacy of a notion of "whiteness" in the first place (what, after

all, is "whiteness" if skin appears bruised, burnt, bloody and wealed with livid scars?)

Thus representations of postcolonial "whiteness" abound with historical (colonial) significance as well as with contemporary tensions between what have been invisible norms and are now seen as problems. Whiteness also has symbolic value; it connotes violence (as Rhodes would suggest) and, strikingly often, it appears injured, even abject. It is presented as if victimised, and yet it still enjoys power. By combining recent whiteness studies from America or Britain with studies of colonial discourse or postcolonialism, the stubborn binary relations of black/white, or colonised/colonist can be surpassed. Investigating whiteness does not only mean interrogating how it constructs itself in relation to blackness; it means interrogating how it constructs itself in relation to *whiteness*. How do different versions of postcolonial settler whiteness construct themselves in response to obdurate stereotypes, invisible contemporary norms, symbolic associations, and damning critiques? How can we examine these whitenesses?

Emily Apter suggests the need to dismantle the binaries lurking within postcoloniality and to develop new, less stolid means of analysis. She expresses her frustration with "postcolonial theory's resistance to

injecting itself with contemporaneity" (213). She writes that her "objective has been to avoid some of the particularist mantras and truisms calcifying inside the rhetoric of 'difference' while at the same time taking seriously *different* categories of thinking colonial subjectivity" (4-5). She suggests that postcolonialism has focused on colonialism's other and does not consider what is evolving at the "white" European centres of former colonial empires. She calls for the recognition of negotiations of national identity and "difference" (like those often dealt with in postcolonial theory) *within* European nations in the twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries (1).

My project is similar to Apter's; I too am interested in using postcolonial theory to examine constellations of national, cultural and racial influences. I consider "*different* categories" of analysis by combining different theoretical approaches: this project uses postcolonial theory and whiteness theory together in order to suggest what can be added to colonial and postcolonial "categories." By combining these approaches, I too hope to avoid the "particularist mantras and truisms calcifying inside the rhetoric of 'difference'." Unlike Apter, who focuses primarily on contemporary constructions of alterity within France, I

argue that new categories of postcolonial analysis are required to expose whiteness—the(post)colonial "self" rather than its "other"-as fraught with contradictions in settler colonies.

In each chapter, I deal with a single literary text and a single protagonist. I focus on Simon in Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (New Zealand), the patient in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (Canada), Gemmy in David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (Australia), and Tristan in Peter Carey's *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* (Australia). All four characters reflect the authors' attempts to work out the implications of postcolonial whiteness. They are also all part of identity debates in which these four authors have engaged throughout their respective careers.

Hulme, for instance, has often considered the place of the Pakeha in what she envisions as a predominantly Maori world. In *The Silences Between (Moeraki Conversations)*, her poetry revises and embellishes Maori stories. She also writes of difference and integration, often striving to integrate her own part-whiteness into Maoriness:

> I'm the cripple in the company of runners;

to me, pale and bluegrey-eyed,
skin like a ghost, eyes like stones;
to me, always the manuhiri when away from home—
the weeping rings louder than the greeting.
("Silence . . . on another marae" 26)

Hulme is preoccupied with the fictional white child, Simon, and the violent and dissipated Pakeha history which she associates with him. His exaggerated whiteness and injury are the topics of the poem "He moemoea" and the short story "A Drift in Dream" (*Te Kaihau: The Windeater*). In "He moemoea," Simon's whiteness seems to be an extension of Hulme's own. In "A Drift in Dream" it has become excessive, injured and silenced. The beaten, bruised and preternaturally white Simon in the story is identical with the one in *The Bone People*. The story provides background about Simon (for instance, we find out about his drug-dealing parents). Hulme's use of Simon in the poem, novel and story suggests that the image of the beaten Pakeha child has implications which Hulme finds significant enough to continue exploring at different stages in her writing career. In *The Bone People,* Hulme presents her most sustained and elaborate portrait of the child and his whiteness as well as of the graphic and troubling violence to which he is subject.

The allegorical implications of whiteness in Maori New Zealand are also more evident in Hulme's novel than in her other writings.

Ondaatje has not used a character like the English patient elsewhere, although he observes that

> [t]here's a scene in *In The Skin of a Lion* where Ambrose dies, it's only about half a paragraph long, and perhaps that is really the germ for *The English Patient*'s plot in one half page. I just recently realized that each book is a re-writing of what you didn't quite get to in the previous book. (Dafoe 4)

The English Patient uses *In The Skin of a Lion*'s Caravaggio and Hana, but investigates their national identities in the shifting context of an international war set in Europe rather than in that of Canada and European immigration. The patient's love of jazz also reminds us of *Coming Through Slaughter*. However, in his English patient, Ondaatje addresses a specifically English and colonial legacy, one that is perhaps also personal (having himself been born in a former British colony and educated partly in Britain). *The English Patient* describes problems in how English or colonial identity is perceived by "outsiders"—these are problems

which Ondaatje "didn't quite get to" in his autobiographical *Running in the Family. The English Patient* offers Ondaatje's most sustained discussion of what "Englishness" might be, and how little it actually has to do with white skin.

M. D. Fletcher writes that Malouf and Carey

> continue to challenge traditional stereotypes of Australian cultural and political identity. Reworking old themes, such as the implications of the hostile Australian landscape and Australian race (and ethnic) relations, they raise questions about courage and community, fear and isolation. By adding overtly (formal and informal) political dimensions to their fictions, they comment specifically on the problems and possibilities for Australian political identity. (183)

Malouf's concern with the relationship between national identity (particularly for individuals exiled from "home") and language is the focus of *An Imaginary Life.* His effort to challenge stereotypes of white Australian identity manifests itself in *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* and his autobiographical *12 Edmonstone Street* as well as in collections of stories like *Antipodes*. Both

Malouf and Carey reinvent a (white) mythology for Australia. Malouf does so more explicitly in *Remembering Babylon* than elsewhere in his corpus. Gemmy becomes part of a foundation myth and of a reworking of the Eliza Fraser story. *Remembering Babylon* is also unusual among Malouf's writings for invoking Aboriginal Australia and the response of British settlers to an alien country which is not, as they might hope, *terra nullius*. *Remembering Babylon* invokes both the idea of exile and the question of what white Australianness can become.

Carey has considered white Australian identity in revisionist histories of British settlement in *Jack Maggs, Oscar and Lucinda* and, most recently, the *True History of the Kelly Gang*. He also examines white Australianness in relation to the "ethnic" questions to which Fletcher refers. For instance, Carey considers the history of Chinese immigration to Australia in his characterisation of Goon Tse Ying in *Illywhacker*. *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* deals with national identity and the place of whiteness in a speculative context. Questions of national identity that are common in his other works become paramount: in this novel, more than elsewhere in his writings, the issues Carey raises supersede a specifically Australian context and allow one

to ask not just "what is the place of whiteness in Australia?" but "what is the place of whiteness?".

Hulme's Simon, Ondaatje's English patient, Malouf's Gemmy and Carey's Tristan are white skinned (although Gemmy and the English patient are burnt dark, the former by sun, the latter by fire). Simon and Tristan have very blond hair—the patient's is sandy and Gemmy's is like straw. Tristan even has blond eyes (they are white striped by gold). Simon's eyes are "seabluegreen," Gemmy's are "milky," the patient's are grey. The whiteness of each is dwelt upon and emphasised, as are the factors which detract from it. Simon is beaten until covered with infected gashes and dark bruises. Eventually he has his head bashed in. The English patient's burns are severe enough that he is described as more like carbon than a human being. He has no face left to identify and his skin is covered by a protective tannic acid shell. He cannot move. Gemmy limps. He has an ill-defined malaise produced by living in the British colony. He is neither black nor white. Tristan is deformed. His mouth is ill-shaped and he drools. His legs are not functional (when he stands, he stands on the sides of his ankles). People are appalled by his appearance. Each of the four is heavily scarred, either by violence (Simon, Gemmy), accident (the patient), or

surgery (Tristan). Their physical disabilities make each seem less white; they become something other than white, or even one of whiteness's others. Three of the four (Simon, Gemmy, Tristan) are additionally marginalised by their inability to communicate effectively in English. The fact that the patient *can* speak English misleads other characters into thinking that he *is* English. In his case, language includes him when he might otherwise have been excluded; in the case of the other three, lack of facility with language excludes them when they might otherwise have been included. For each of the four, lack of facility with language means that, as I observe above, their injured bodies become even more important: their bodies communicate what their words cannot.

The first three chapters (on Simon, the English patient and Gemmy) respond to critics's tendency to avoid discussions of whiteness in these novels. I suggest that focusing on the unsettling whiteness of the protagonists alters readings of each text. Typical readings insist on the significance of alterity and the role these ambiguous characters play in the erosion of difference. Analyses of Simon, the patient and Gemmy have often been clouded by efforts to see them as indigenised, blank or "black." The three have been considered as figures for cultural reconciliation, the meaninglessness of nation and

appropriation respectively. I argue that their whiteness is not necessarily concerned with relations between these characters as (white) "selves" and other characters as (black) "others," but rather with the meaning of whiteness. My chapter on Carey does not respond as explicitly to critical debates (in part because there is less pertinent criticism available). Thus I treat Tristan less in the context of critical lacunae and more in that of theoretical ones; his whiteness unsettles the historical preoccupations of postcolonial studies by introducing the symptoms of neo-colonialism.

Obviously, this project relies on the assumption of certain paradigmatic similarities among Australian, Canadian and New Zealand fictions. My focus on whiteness and its peculiar reconstruction relies on these countries's similar settler histories. What will become clearer in each of my chapters is the significance of regional differences and contextual differences in the novels themselves. For instance, I discuss how Australia, New Zealand and Carey's fictional Voorstand each has foundation myths which either subtend or contradict constructions of whiteness. Ondaatje, however, presents characters who are pointedly divorced from national contexts and foundation myths, thus raising questions about the seemingly inexorable white British colonial

stereotype and how it takes on its own quasi-mythological significance.

My chapters are organised so as to present the most typically postcolonial considerations of whiteness first, followed by those that are more elusive and unexpected. By "typically postcolonial," I mean considerations of the lingering effects of a colonisation that has technically ended (as in *The Bone People*) or the lingering effects of colonial rhetoric (as in *The English Patient*). More nuanced, less "typically" postcolonial issues arise in the re-investigation of the place of white Australian settlers in colonial history (*Remembering Babylon*), and the creation of speculative empires which suggest neo-colonial constructions of privileged whiteness and its less privileged (though often still white) others (*The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*). Thus I start with Hulme's novel (set in New Zealand in the 1980s) and consider its focus on Maori-Pakeha (white) relations and Simon, a Pakeha boy in a Maori foster home. I follow with Ondaatje's novel (set in Italy in the 1940s, but drawing extensively on pre-World War II exploration of the desert near Cairo), its presentation of individuals displaced by the war and its reconstruction of the burnt man as a stereotypically "English" patient. My third chapter is on Malouf's novel

(set in Queensland in the mid-nineteenth century) and considers its revisiting of British settler life, focusing on Gemmy, a British orphan raised by aborigines. My fourth chapter considers Carey's novel as speculative fiction set partly in colonised Efica and partly in Voorstand, the imperial centre, its presentation of a colonial predicament which mimics neo-colonial influences in modern Australia and its focus on Tristan, a physically handicapped Efican.

All four of the texts I examine make whiteness peculiar, noticeable or spectacular in some way (and so develop in fiction the issues raised by Bhabha, Chambers and Dyer regarding the need to redress the assumption that "white" is normal, invisible or transparent). All four novels invoke colonial histories of what Bhabha refers to as "trauma and terror." In addition, in each case the symbolic value of "whiteness" is, as Dyer and Rhodes suggest, linked with perceptions of white skin; the bruising, rupturing, blackening, scarring, distorting, or even excessive whiteness of white skin implies that the symbolic qualities associated with it are also disrupted; the privileged position accorded even symbolic representations is unsettled. In each of the four texts, whiteness and masculinity are conjoined as Cornwall and Lindisfarne and Mosse suggest, but injury

and abjection also undermine the privileges enjoyed by white men in "the implicit masculization of power" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 20).

In Chapter One, "White Whipping Boy," I suggest that Simon's whiteness is both spectacular and peculiar, but that while, like Chambers and Dyer, Hulme does make whiteness visible, she does not do so to reveal its inner workings. Unlike Bhabha, she does not investigate the histories of trauma and terror associated with whiteness or unveil the mechanisms of its power. Instead she presents whiteness's history of trauma and terror in a postcolonial allegory. She invokes Pakeha violence (and, like Rhodes, suggests that whiteness is inherently violent), but does so in order to re-examine Maoriness. Hulme attempts to renew traditional Maori identity vis-a-vis Pakeha colonialism. She implies that this revivification requires that whiteness be punished. Simon's marginal whiteness is often taken to embody a reconciliation between Maori and Pakeha; I argue instead that Hulme's desire for what Apter would call a typically postcolonial "'real' emancipatory [subject], imbued with a sense of indigenous identity" precludes her reconsideration (or revaluation) of whiteness in favor of celebrating Maoriness (214). Simon becomes the whiteness

abjected from the renewed Maoriness of the New Zealand Hulme envisions.

In Chapter Two, "The 'English' Patient," I use Mosse's descriptions of white masculinity to suggest that the patient is idealised as white and male, or even as if he were a piece of sculpture. Despite manifestly blackened skin, the patient is perceived as white; whiteness is, as Chambers suggests, normative. As Gilman argues, certain attributes can make one seem white; as Dyer similarly suggests, rhetorical tropes and habits of perception shape our understanding of who is white. And yet the patient is both perceived as white and understood as stereotypically English. Even though he is marginal in appearance, the flexibility of what is defined as "whiteness" and the rigidity of what is understood as the British/English colonial stereotype allow for the reconstruction of the patient as if he were the stereotypical English colonist. Ondaatje suggests that the English colonial stereotype is transferable: it can include (and conceal) anomalous whiteness. The patient's injury does not signal abjection because, instead of being part of a process of exclusion, it shows how undesired qualities can be embraced and included in order to reshape them.

In Chapter Three, "Muddy Margins," I suggest that anomalous forms of whiteness hidden within the stereotype of the British colonist are exposed. Just as Bhabha suggests that looking within the integuments of whiteness will reveal its disparate elements, looking within Gemmy's whiteness reveals the disparate histories and distinctions concealed by the colonial stereotype. Gemmy is "the black white man," but his "blackness" indicates the other within whiteness rather than aboriginality. The settlers want to see him as other, and yet he is uncannily familiar. Gemmy is othered by his class as well as by his appearance. He is a poor white man, even poorer than the group of Queensland settlers in whose midst he finds himself in the mid-nineteenth century. He is the colonial equivalent of what Newitz and Wray refer to as "white trash": white and yet not acceptable as white. The white settlers try not to recognise themselves in Gemmy; they see him as abject, but Malouf implies that they themselves are abjected from the colonial stereotype they still try to celebrate.

In my fourth chapter, "Whiteness in Disguise," I suggest how the other within whiteness functions in neo-colonial rhetoric. This chapter brings us back to the rigid whiteness envisioned by Hulme, deployed by Ondaatje's patient and critiqued by Malouf. In *The*

Unusual Life of Tristan Smith, Tristan is clearly described as Voorstand's other, and as its national abject. As Efican, he embodies that which Voorstand has tried to expel. Carey shifts the familiar colonial rhetoric of self/other and coloniser/colonised into discourses of multi-national capitalism. Thus he describes a neo-colonialism which is based on cultural and economic exploitation and whose rhetoric marks its other as "white trash." "White trash," as described by Newitz and Wray or Nakayama and Martin, replaces "blackness" in a new kind of colonial rhetoric. In *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, class and culture become raced.

My intent in these chapters is to show how whiteness redefines itself in relation to stereotypes of whiteness; it becomes a parody of itself and yet it also tries to develop beyond its own boundaries and limits. My main argument is that injured white men in postcolonial fiction from former settler colonies represent efforts to deal with both the legacy of colonialism and whiteness's new implications. The extreme whiteness of characters and the wounds they suffer suggest the embodiment of whiteness (both colonial and contemporary) and its radical restructuring.

[1] In "The Economy of Manichean Allegory," Abdul JanMohamed writes of the polarities produced by colonial discourse: "the manichean allegory [is] a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object" (82).

In "settler colonies" like Australia, Canada and New Zealand, white settlers occupied an ambivalent position. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin emphasise "the problem of establishing their 'indigeneity' and distinguishing it from their continuing sense of their European inheritance" (*Empire Writes Back* 135).

[2] Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write "'[p]ost-colonialism/ postcolonialism' is now used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to

such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies" (*Key Concepts* 187).

[3] South African race laws are an obvious exception to this assertion, though it is beyond the scope of my project to examine them here.

[4] English/British colonialism, its racial discourse and its legacy in postcolonial settler fiction are my focus in this project. In the regions I consider, British colonial settlement was predominant (and the fiction I refer to bears this out). For instance, Price writes that "the ethnic composition of" nineteenth-century Australia, Canada and New Zealand "was much the same": largely British (16).

[5] Patrick Williams observes "that Said and those critics who have followed him, such as JanMohamed and Homi Bhabha, have located the stereotype as perhaps the principal mechanism in ideologies of discrimination and domination at work in colonialism" (481). Williams, Said, JanMohamed and Bhabha have tended to focus on colonial constructions of a stereotype of the colonised other. However, Bart Moore-Gilbert summarises Bhabha to suggest that the "stereotype requires the colonizer to identify himself in terms of what he is *not*" (117). In other words, the coloniser must define himself against

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the categorical and absolutist definitions he has imposed on his other. "Stereotype" ought not to imply only "black other"; if the coloniser creates a stereotype of the colonised, he identifies himself by creating an equally problematic stereotype of himself as coloniser. If he presents his other as black and ugly, he presents himself as white and beautiful. (Helen Kanitkar describes how white British colonial ideals were marketed to boys in *Boy's Own* annuals ["Real True Boys: Moulding the Cadets of Imperialism" in Cornwall and Lindisfarne].)

[6] Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin provide a useful definition of "the Other": "The Other—with the capital 'O'—has been called the *grande-autre* by Lacan, the great Other, in whose eyes the subject gains identity. The Symbolic Other is not a real interlocutor but can be embodied by other subjects [. . .] The Other can be compared to the imperial centre, imperial discourse, or the empire itself, in two ways: firstly, it provides the terms in which the colonized subject gains a sense of his or her identity as somehow 'other', dependent; secondly, it becomes the 'absolute pole of address', the ideological framework in which the colonized subject may come to understand the world" (*Key Concepts* 170). Peter Brooker writes that the Lacanian Other is a "symbolic

place" (156). I will use "other" rather than "Other" to suggest that white others, for instance, are "direct interlocutors"; though they have symbolic connotations, they are also more tangible than the symbolic "places" of Lacanian discourse.

[7] Consider, for example, the emphasis on masculinity in these three prominent studies of whiteness: Fred Pfeil's *White Guys* (as the title suggests, focuses on whiteness and masculinity), Ruth Frankenberg's *Displacing Whiteness* (essays on white men, or women of colour), and Mike Hill's *White* (21 essays: 9 explicitly on white masculinity).

[8] Gilman also acknowledges modern stereotypes of white masculinity and their debt to the symmetries and alabaster purity of Greek sculpture (144-156).

[9] Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write that "othering" is a term "coined by Gayatri Spivak for the process by which imperial discourse creates its 'others'" (*Key Concepts* 171).

[10] Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek make a similar claim in "Whiteness as a Strategic Rhetoric," as do Sarah Projansky and Kent Ono in "Strategic Whiteness as Cinematic Racial Politics" (both in Nakayama and Martin).

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[11] For studies of white masculinity which emphasise masculinity, see: Mosse; Cornwall and Lindisfarne; Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson eds., *Constructing Masculinity*; David Buchbinder *Masculinities and Identities*; Dana Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men*; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*; or Harry Stecopoulos and Mike Uebel eds., *Race and the Subject of the Masculinities.*

[12] To apply "abjection" to white men is, of course, taking liberties with a term typically used to describe an explicitly feminine experience. Brooker writes of how abjection can apply to the male body: "[t]he monstrous or abject is the expelled but powerful feminine, even when [. . .] this metaphorically invades the male body" (1). My use of the term suggests less that the abject is an invasion of the male body by a feminine experience than that there can be a masculine abjection.

Chapter One

The White Whipping Boy

In Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, Simon is a white-skinned, blond-haired, blue-eyed child who represents both the typical Pakeha colonist in a national, postcolonial allegory and, paradoxically, a Maori god. Hulme exaggerates the paleness of the child, unsettling his whiteness by making it hyperbolic. She uses Simon to invoke disempowered and disadvantaged colonial whiteness, but unsettles his whiteness still further by making it clear that he also represents Maui, the key figure in Maori creation mythology. The violence the child suffers suggests that whiteness must be punished in order that Maoriness can regain pride of place in New Zealand. There is, despite the novel's idealism, an unresolved tension between the representation of Simon as Pakeha, (and thus a whipping boy for European colonialism in New Zealand) and as Maui (and thus a figure for the postcolonial revivification of Maori mythology).

Hulme's novel is the most typically postcolonial of the four I study. She engages with both colonialism and her vision of what should happen in its wake. Critics

often emphasise Hulme's use of Maori language as a means of showing cultural resistance, suggesting that she uses Maori alongside English, and even within English, to undermine colonialist discourse. Maryanne Dever, for instance, writes that "language becomes a site of resistance and a way of decentring the narrative. The inclusion of the Maori subverts the conventionally unitary voice of command traditionally associated with the English language" (24). Thus, by "challenging the dominant Eurocentric vision of reality, the text offers an alternative voice, one that enfranchises multiplicity and undermines the authority of imperialism's homogenising linguistic imperative" (Dever 25). However, Simon During implies that Hulme's resistance may not "enfranchise multiplicity" so much as re-authenticate Maoriness and re-establish it as dominant in New Zealand: "*The bone people* [. . .] desires a postcolonial identity given to it in Maoriness. The heroine in rebuilding a marae, the hero, in guarding the remnants of the sacred ships of the tribe, heal their alienations by contact with a precolonial culture" (373). He suggests that the kind of postcolonial identity Hulme wants to depict is exclusively Maori, and is based on traditions that predate colonial intervention. Like During, I suggest that power is not thus decentred in Hulme's novel, but

rather recentred in Maori culture. Simon's injuries suggest that the disempowering and punishing of the Pakeha is necessary if a reconciliation between Pakeha and Maori is to be achieved. The severity of his injuries suggests that he embodies a continuing violent Manichean division between Maori and Pakeha rather than a reconciliation between the two.

Hulme addresses colonialism's legacy by presenting a postcolonial allegory in which Simon stands for all things Pakeha, Joe (his foster father) for all things Maori and Kerewin for something mid-way between the two.[1] Stephen Slemon writes that allegory

> becomes an historically produced field of representation upon which certain forms of post-colonial writing engage head-on with the interpellative and tropological strategies of colonialism's most visible figurative technology. Allegory becomes a site upon which post-colonial cultures seek to contest and subvert colonialist appropriation through the production of a literary, and specifically anti-imperialist, figurative opposition or textual *counter-discourse*. (11)

In other words, allegory becomes an important mode for writers who, like Hulme, want to respond to colonialism by challenging it, particularly in novels, "colonialism's most visible figurative technology." Such fictional allegories depict postcolonial individuals who are representative of cultures as a whole while concomitantly suggesting how those individuals/cultures ought to resist the ideological influence of colonialism. Graham Huggan emphasises Simon's figurative role in "the allegory [of] New Zealand's often painful attempt to come to terms with a history of colonial dependence and with continuing tensions between its 'indigenous' (Maori) and European (Pakeha) communities" (16). Similarly, John Bryson suggests that Simon "may in some sense stand for aspects . . . of the ruinous *pakeha* culture that has rolled over . . . Maori society" [Bryson's ellipses] (133). He suggests that the violence to which Simon is subjected is unsurprising: "there may be thoughts abroad [in New Zealand] that some parts of white society may well be in need of a thrashing" (133).[2] The abuse the child suffers is, in terms of a postcolonial allegory, retributively just. But Slemon suggests that in "allegorical texts such as [. . .] Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, indigenous or pre-contact allegorical traditions engage with, and finally overcome, the kinds of allegorical reading which

universalising European traditions would want to impose" (12). Thus Maori traditions and allegories challenge those of the colonists. Colonial allegories are replaced by postcolonial ones and those postcolonial ones evoke *pre*colonial traditions. In *The Bone People*, the connotations of Simon's stereotypical colonial whiteness could, as Slemon implies, thus be replaced by allusions to Maui. However, the violence done to Simon suggests that he is beaten because he is white and stays stereotypically Pakeha despite allusions to Maori mythology.[3]

Chris Prentice writes that a racialized body like Simon's malfunctions in postcolonial allegory (he casts this argument in terms of the body functioning as a *metaphor* in postcolonialist discourse) because of the contradictory need to make that specific body representative of a general populace (45).[4] Prentice suggests the danger that "through the commodification of discourses or symbols of identity and authenticity, these 'values' are lent to the project of post-colonizing cultural legitimation; they are emptied of specificity and circulated as signifiers in an exchange of indifference" (Prentice 55). He argues that once certain bodily characteristics are legitimised as signs of "identity" or "authenticity," those same characteristics

become empty of any meaning except that of authenticating cultural identity. They no longer mark individual difference, but rather a strategically constructed homogeneity. In short: physical characteristics are commodified as stereotypes and postcolonising discourses deploy stereotypes just as colonising ones did. Thus postcolonising allegorical fictions like Hulme's sometimes deploy familiar stereotypes (even if they go on to complicate them) in order to authenticate identity (here, Maori identity in particular). Fictions like this also perpetuate a self/other or white/black binary in their postcoloniality. For if the indigenous culture uses stereotypes of itself in self-defense and in order to reassert itself, the former colonist is also still stereotyped, but he becomes, as in Hulme's novel, an object of critique.

Simon is a figure for the white colonist in an allegory about the results of colonialism; colonialist stereotypes are central to Hulme's characterisation of him. Simon is also Pakeha in relation to the dominant Maoriness of Hulme's novel so that his stereotypical whiteness is consistently marked as different. One result is that his Pakeha appearance emphasises the Maoriness of Kerewin, Joe and the novel itself.[5] Another is that his white appearance emphasises how postcolonial whiteness is

constructed by its other, rather than from within whiteness. So, unlike Ondaatje's patient, Malouf's Gemmy and Carey's Tristan, Simon is white in relation to an erstwhile colonial other (the patient, Gemmy and Tristan are aberrantly white in relation to stereotypes of whiteness).

Simon's whiteness is unnatural and excessive; he seems to reveal the sinister within images of the white colonist. Homi Bhabha suggests that contemporary whiteness struggles with "the histories of trauma and terror that it must perpetuate and from which it must protect itself [. . .] the violence it inflicts in the process of becoming a transparent and transcendent force of authority" (Bhabha "The White Stuff" 21). For Bhabha, whiteness is irrevocably associated with colonial history; contemporary whiteness tries to conceal that history while maintaining the power associated with it. Whiteness is visible and yet it makes the mechanism of its authority invisible. Hulme similarly makes whiteness's colonial history visible while concomitantly suggesting that contemporary whiteness exploits lingering colonial privileges. Thus for Kerewin, whiteness makes Simon malevolent and irrevocably associates him with histories of "trauma and terror." She refers to Simon as "evil" and wonders if she is sheltering "a criminal" (21;

27). She makes him symbolise threat: "[t]here is something unnatural about it. It stands there unmoving, sullen and silent" (16). His brooding, "sullen" unnaturalness is ominous—he holds her wrist, "curiously intense" and her request that he let go meets with the almost-malevolence of his tightening hold (17).

As Bhabha suggests, contemporary whiteness sometimes tries to conceal its violent history by becoming invisible or strategically marginalised by injury. Hulme makes Simon's whiteness excessive and obviously marked; it is colonial whiteness scrutinised and revealed as violent. Thus Ross Chambers can refer to whiteness as "the primary unmarked and so unexamined—let's say blank—category" and suggest that it "has a touchstone quality of the normal," but the only sense in which Simon's whiteness is blank, invisible or transparent is literal; Simon drinks and "the dark grog is practically visible" through the pale skin of his throat (Chambers 189; Hulme 29). Hulme's fiction embraces a project similar to that of Chambers or Richard Dyer (making whiteness "strange"). Sally Robinson writes that "in order for white masculinity to negotiate its position within the field of identity politics, white men must claim a symbolic disenfranchisement, must compete with various others for cultural authority bestowed upon the authentically

disempowered, the visibly wounded" (12). She suggests that white masculinity deals with its "histories of trauma and terror" by presenting itself as if victimised, or by exploiting the appearance of marginalisation. Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey could recentralise the authority and privilege of whiteness by only seeming to abject it; whiteness could thus be reprivileged because it seems to have been violently, even unjustly, marginalised. This may be true, at least to some extent, of Ondaatje's patient, but Simon, Malouf's Gemmy and Carey's Tristan do not enjoy renewed privileges as a result of their apparently abjected positions. In part, this is because these three are both abject and child-like (Simon is actually a child, Gemmy and Tristan think of their adult experiences in terms of their childhoods). The violence done to Simon is so shocking because he is vicitimised for representing Pakeha history and yet his victimisation, youth and vulnerability do not protect him from further violence.

Both Joe and Kerewin emphasise Simon's Pakeha appearance. Joe describes Simon as "the pale child," and whiteness is at the root of Joe's self-confessed frustration with the boy: "I was ashamed of [Simon]. I wanted him as ordinarily complex and normally simple as one of Piri's rowdies. I resented his difference [. . .]

And I loved and hated him for the way he remained himself" (6; 381). Joe describes Simon as a child with "alien sea-coloured eyes" (6). He is neither one of Joe's own nor Maori. Kerewin emphasises Simon's "highboned and hollowcheeked" face with its "sharp sharp nose" under an "obscuration of silverblond hair" (16). The hair and skin colour align him with stereotypical images of the European colonist. His eyes are also "seabluegreen, a startling colour, like opals" (17). Kerewin and Joe construct Simon's whiteness as excessive or outlandish, but emphasise, above all, how his appearance makes him Pakeha. For instance, Kerewin imagines Simon's father as an expatriate implicitly preposterous for having assumed he has a place in New Zealand: "[a] loud and boisterous Viking type she'd bet, from the child's colouring. Yer rowdy Aryan barbarian, face like a broken crag, tall as a door and thick all the way through" (28).[6] Joe turns out to be Maori, someone Kerewin thinks she "shall be able to call friend" rather than mock (59). Nonetheless, Kerewin continues to be curious about Simon's Pakeha parents and her curiosity reinforces the differences between the child's whiteness and the Maori community.

Simon gives Kerewin an ornate rosary on which there is a signet ring depicting a phoenix emerging from its

flaming nest (a fitting image to attach to Simon who is portrayed as successfully and repeatedly re-emerging from the lethal conflagrations of Joe's anger). Holmes (like her Sherlock namesake) investigates and compiles details that underscore Simon's difference and link him to stereotypes of European colonists. The ring connects the boy with "decayed Irish nobility" (99).[7] It ultimately connects him with his estranged Irish heroin-addict father, a man who, like Simon, is blond, "gaunt and ill-looking, with deep hollows under his oblique eyes [. . .] Pointed chin and high cheekbones" (349). Father and son are too blond, too pale and too skinny. They are haunting figures. They are both remnants of "the decayed Irish nobility" that Kerewin scorns as foreign, elitist and defunct. Thus Kerewin first imagines Simon's father as barbaric Pakeha New Zealander, and then as impotent aristocrat. Simon is associated with negative images of Pakeha whiteness as they pertain both to colonial snobbery and contemporary vulgarity.

The signet ring on Simon's rosary also bears the inscription "M C de V" (210). Kerewin comments that it is "[p]idgin French" and that it presumably offers clues about Simon's mother (210). Simon becomes French as well as Irish; he recognises Kerewin's reference to him as the "pauvre petit en souffrant"(209). Kerewin emphasises

Simon's Frenchness by linking his blondness with Louis XIV, the Sun King whose reign was both impressively expansionist and tyrannically dictatorial. Simon muses on the connection Kerewin makes: "[a] drink fit for kings [. . .] The Sun King especially. And no, you can't have any. Youth needs juice neither for longevity nor aphrodisiac. Sun king maybe, sunchild no way . . . I'm the sunchild, because of my hair" [second set of ellipses are Hulme's](142). The similarities between Simon "sunchild" and his illustrious seventeenth-century Sun King ancestor are also clear in Hulme's use of biographical details. *The Encyclopedia Britannica* describes the young Louis XIV:

> At the age of four years and eight months, he was, according to the laws of the kingdom, not only the master but the owner of the bodies and property of 19 million subjects. Although he was saluted as "a visible divinity," he was, nonetheless, a neglected child given over to the care of servants. He once narrowly escaped drowning in a pond because no one was watching him. (500)

Both Louis XIV and Simon are neglected children who nearly drown and recover to become numinous figures.

Both are associated with ownership, and with preternatural influence and power despite their youth. Both are associated with colonialism (Louis XIV owned the colonies that helped comprise his nineteen million subjects, while Simon is associated with Pakeha colonisation of New Zealand). Both are ambiguous figures (powerful and yet also vulnerable, adored and yet also demonized).

Hulme's characterisation of Simon as part-French also has implications in terms of New Zealand's politics in the 1980s, and it is remarkable that critics have made little if anything of Hulme's emphasis on Simon's Frenchness despite tensions between France and New Zealand in recent decades. Greenpeace New Zealand operates a web page dedicated to the history of French nuclear testing in the South Pacific. They note that France began testing at Moruroa in 1966, and proceeded with 43 tests between 1966 and 1973. In 1973, the Kirk Labour Government was elected in New Zealand on an anti-nuclear platform. One of that Government's successes was taking France to the World Court and winning a ruling that they could no longer test above ground. France continued underground tests in the region until 1996 despite testing accidents and New Zealand's resistance. In 1979 an underground explosion in an elevator shaft at

Moruroa caused both a tidal wave and cracks on the atoll through which radioactive substances began to leak. In 1981, a cyclone hit Moruroa, "uncovering plutonium debris and sweeping nuclear waste [. . .] out to sea" (Greenpeace). As the Greenpeace documentation reservedly comments, the result of these misadventures was that "[p]ublic protest against French nuclear testing grew throughout the 1980s."

Hulme writes that her characters, completed in 1983, "took 12 years to reach this shape"(i). In the twelve years between 1971 and 1983, increasing amounts of radioactive fallout were measured in New Zealand, a Greenpeace New Zealand yacht was disabled in its efforts to protest at Moruroa, the Kirk Government was elected and, "[w]hile France claimed [. . .] the tests were safe, the missions and other independent scientists concurred that leaching of radioactive material through the atoll was likely to occur faster (within five to 100 years) than the 500-1000 years French scientists [had] claimed" (Greenpeace). To overlook Simon's French heritage is to overlook Hulme's reference to French neo-colonial exploitation of New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s. Rather than enable reconciliation, Simon's white *Frenchness* makes him embody renewed conflict between Pakeha and Maori. In terms of the allegory Hulme

presents, Simon is beaten precisely because he evokes both colonial prejudice and more recent conflicts like those over French nuclear testing.

Hulme describes the numerous times Simon is beaten by Joe, but Joe's violent responses are framed as part of the allegory Hulme fashions and this allegory provides some justification for his actions. Joe imagines that Simon usurps his own child and his wife Hana; Pakeha displaces Maori. Anne Zimmerman and Margery Fee characterise Simon as a cuckoo: he is a "foster child who does not know his 'real' parents" and "seems to invade like a cuckoo. (Cuckoos lay their eggs in those [sic] of other, usually smaller birds; the chick hatches, pushes the natural chicks out, and is fed by the coopted adoptive parents)" (Zimmerman 545; Fee 59). The cuckoo analogy translates well into Hulme's postcolonial allegory; Simon is a European who infiltrates a Maori "nest." Joe remembers Hana's death, and her last request that he "mind" their child: "Timote was already dead. She meant the other one [. . .] the pale child held his hand, and looked into his face with alien sea-coloured eyes" (6). The Pakeha boy is "the other" child, an intruder and an "alien." Simon is allegorised as the white colonist who has brought physical and social diseases. Joe tells Kerewin that Hana and Timote "died of

flu. Which has always struck me as unfair and stupid. Imagine, flu!"(88).[8] He loses his temper with Simon and accuses him: "[y]ou have just ruined everything, you shit" (308). In his accusation of the boy, Joe accuses the Pakeha for the destruction of Maori culture and of his own family. For Joe, everything Maori is ruined by Simon who represents everything Pakeha. Joe beats the boy and explains that he does it because "it's not like I am hitting you, my son" (171). It is more like he is hitting a symbol of colonial intervention.

However, Joe also beats Simon whenever Simon makes him feel disempowered, impotent or emasculated. The boy's long blond hair is particularly troubling. It makes Simon too white and too much like a girl. When it "reaches half-way down [Simon's] back," Joe worries that passers-by or relatives will think he covets Simon's girlishness because he himself is a pederast (240). Sexuality intersects with national identity and Joe feels defensive on both counts. He perceives Simon as a challenge to both his masculinity and his Maoriness. (In terms of postcolonial allegory, Hulme implies that European colonists similarly disempowered or emasculated the Maori.) Joe beats Simon for going to the pederast Binny Daniels' house—implicitly less because he fears for the child's safety than because he fears for his own

reputation (136). When Luce Mihi reminds Joe of his affair with an older man, Joe beats Simon again (175). Joe hits the child while thinking of himself. He punches Simon,

> [m]uttering "Fallen boy, fallen boy," and remembering the sadsweet months with Taki [. . .] And why did [Luce] have to *laugh* at it? His rage mounted. Laugh at me, will he? Laugh, eh? [. . .]
>
> —e this thing is no child of mine, levering the boy to his feet and pinning him against the wall, and punching him in the face and the body until he whitens horribly and faints a second time. (175)

Joe beats Simon in order to punish himself for the months he spent with Taki. He beats Simon because he cannot beat Luce and because Luce implies that Joe and Simon are homosexual. Thus the child is punished for looking Pakeha and effeminate. Most important, though, is that Simon reminds Joe too much of his own lack of power and self-respect.

Simon embodies that which Joe would have excluded entirely from his personality, but which inevitably comes back in a violent surge. He is Joe's abject. Simon's broken body is "no thing of [Joe's]," partly because it

is Joe's construction of the child as representative of all things Pakeha, effeminate and other to the Maori identity he would like for himself. Simon suffers a Maori retaliation against Pakeha. Maori (to use David Spurr's vocabulary) now nominates Pakeha as abject in "the necessary iteration of a fundamental distance between colonizer and colonized" (Spurr 78). Just as Kristeva's abjection is explicitly feminised, here Hulme presents Simon's abjection as the unwelcome *feminine* which resurfaces along with other undesired qualities. Simon is Joe's abject, but his whiteness and apparent effeminacy make Joe himself experience abjection.

Kristeva characterises the abject as "[t]he symptom: a language that gives up, a structure within the body, a non-assimilable alien, a monster, a tumor, a cancer" (11). The abject is that which is undeniably present as part of the self; it is evidenced by disease, distress, or an inability to communicate. Language and communication thus become additional means of marking difference. In colonial discourse, the abjection of the other entailed (mis)representing the other by speaking for them. Slemon writes that

> within the discourse of colonialism allegory has always functioned as an especially visible

> technology of appropriation; and if allegory literally means 'other speaking', it has historically meant a way of speaking *for* the subjugated Others of the European colonial enterprise—a way of subordinating the colonised, that is, through the politics of representation(8).

Colonial discourse has made its others mute. Simon, in addition to the injuries which suggest that he is retributively abused in an allegory about colonialism in New Zealand, is also mute. He can write and sing, but he cannot speak. The white male European colonist is transformed into a white, effete, abused, abjected and mute child. Gemmy and Tristan are also both mute and similarly illustrate this abjection of white, colonial, masculine power and authority. Gemmy has forgotten his language and is misrepresented in a narrative used to describe him. Tristan cannot speak because of a cleft palate and is misrepresented by the voice box which gives him a misleadingly Voorstandish accent. Where colonial discourse (and colonial allegory) spoke for its colonised others, Hulme, Malouf and Carey reverse the phenomenon so that in postcolonial allegories the formerly colonised others speak for the former colonists.

Susie O'Brien argues that mute figures like Simon have an essential place in postcolonial literature: "[t]he necessary abrogation of the received language creates, for the post-colonial writer, a crisis of authority, which finds textual representation in figures of silence" (79). Muteness, then, is the first step away from an English that is associated with repressive colonisation. It suggests the possibility of resistance. Ato Quayson, like O'Brien, suggests that Simon's silence represents "a struggle to transcend the nightmare of history" (66). He argues that Simon's muteness is a disability significant for how it reflects the injury imposed by that history. However, Simon is not a Maori figure opting for a silent resistance to Pakeha language; he is exaggeratedly Pakeha. His silence indicates the violent silencing of Pakeha colonialist discourse. His muteness suggests the repression of the Pakeha he embodies.

Hulme's characterisation of Simon is not so blunt as to suggest that the child is *only* a whipping boy for Pakeha history. He is peculiarly capable (for instance, he can write despite seeming too young to be able to do so). Kerewin's descriptions of him as inhuman or unearthly even make him seem godly. This is an impression enhanced by the violence he suffers. He

seems, at least at first, to be able to survive extreme violence because of allusions to his numinously Christian and, more pervasively, Maori attributes. Simon is both scapegoat and godling. René Girard writes that the creation of a mythologically sacred figure involves two stages: "[t]he first is the act of accusing a scapegoat [. . .] Then comes the second stage when he is made sacred by the community's reconciliation" (50). The scapegoat is treated as if guilty even though "[e]veryone understands that the victim almost certainly did not do what he was accused of but that everything about him marked him as an outlet for the annoyance and irritation of his fellow citizens" (29). Abusing the scapegoat is justified by his or her abusers on the grounds that the victim obviously has supernatural powers (55). In many ways, Simon fits this description. He is blamed for the history of colonial oppression in New Zealand even though he clearly was not personally involved. He is first a scapegoat, and second a sacred figure. Quayson suggests that Simon is a pale "quasi-religious" and "sacrificial figure" in Christian terms (63). He is a "weird saint" and like Christ as he is "haloed in hair, shrouded in the dying light" (Hulme 16, 17). Like Louis XIV he is a "visible divinity" (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 500). His wounds are stigmata with, as Quayson points out, hands

"marked by a network of pink scars" and feet covered in bandages over "what feel like holes" (Quayson 63; Hulme 387).[9]

Simon is also, punningly and contradictorily, "Simon pake" (stubborn Simon) in Maori (47). Clearly "Simon should be looked upon as a modern little Maui, the mischievous hero of Polynesian tradition who achieved great things for the benefit of mankind—like slowing down the sun, stealing fire from the guardian goddess Mahuika and fishing up the North Island of New Zealand" (Le Cam 75).[10] Simon's life is surprisingly similar to Maui's. Antony Alpers' compilation *Maori Myths and Tribal Legends* recounts many of the stories associated with Maui, including "How Maui was Born." [11] In this story Maui presents himself to his estranged mother Taranga:

> I did think I was yours, because I know I was born at the edge of the sea, and you cut off a tuft of hair and wrapped me in it and threw me in the waves. After that the seaweed took care of me and I drifted about in the sea, wrapped in long tangles of kelp, until a breeze blew me on shore again, and some jelly-fish rolled themselves around me to protect me on the sandy beach [. . .] then my great-ancestor Tama nui ki te rangi arrived [. . .] he came and

> pulled away the jelly-fish and there was I, a human being! Well, he picked me up and washed me and took me home, and hung me in the rafters in the warmth of the fire, and he saved my life. (Alpers 28-29)

Maui is cast off into the sea, as is Simon. Both are orphans who wash up on shore and find alternate homes. Just as Tama nui ki te rangi rescues Maui from the beach after his mother has cast him off, so Joe finds Simon after the shipwreck. Joe describes the discovery to Kerewin:

> I saw something at the water's edge. I thought, ahh Ngakau [heart], it's a weedtangle again, get going [. . .] Then I saw his hair . . . long then, even longer than it is now [Hulme's ellipses]. He was thrown mainly clear of the water, but a high wave from the receding tide would drag at him. He was front down, his face twisted towards me as I ran skidding over the sand and weed. There was sand half over him, in his mouth, in his ears, in his nose. I thought, I was quite sure, he was dead. (85)

Joe thinks that Simon is a tangle of seaweed like—although Joe himself does not make the connection—the

seaweed that wraps around Maui. He sees Simon's long hair, an image echoing Taranga's top-knot and the hair in which she wraps Maui. He thinks that Simon, again like Maui, must be dead. Both Simon and Maui, however, are unexpectedly alive (this makes them both seem divine and invincible). Simon is "guttersnipe," "goblin," "quickwitted, laughingeyed and bright all ways" (21; 39; 147). Similarly, Maui is "nukarau" (trickster), and "atamai" (quickwitted) and "Maui-the-knowing" (Alpers 50). Both are impish, and these descriptions imply that both are also savvy and capable of looking after themselves. In these descriptions, neither seems vulnerable.

Kerewin and Joe do not call attention to the similarity between Maui and Simon. Perhaps Hulme uses their failure to make this connection to emphasise that "the Maoritanga has got lost in the way [they] live" (62). Their lack of recognition also suggests that they fail to recognise what is Maori in Simon because of the whiteness which identifies him more clearly with Pakeha culture (62). Hulme places the onus on her reader to observe how Maori Simon is (significantly, the subtending Maori myths are not glossed, though less consequential snippets of Maori vocabulary are). In making these links we are also required to discriminate between the

significance of two obviously different yet simultaneous characterisations of Simon. On the one hand, he is a mute Pakeha child beaten into a bloody mess by his Maori father, on the other he is a mysteriously invincible "guttersnipe" and "goblin." He is part of a postcolonial allegory and a rewritten creation myth. A reader or critic must negotiate the following interpretive dilemma: if Simon embodies both Pakeha in a postcolonial allegory and Maui in a creation myth, is the optimistic resolution of the novel possible or is one then left with both Pakeha destruction *and* injured Maori culture? Hulme struggles to present a reconstructed, renewed Maoritanga; however, Simon's Pakeha whiteness is obdurate, and the violence done to him in the process of trying to achieve this renewal is inexorable. No matter how much like Maui he may seem, Simon is inevitably still Pakeha in a postcolonial allegory.

The injuries Simon sustains are destructive, not reconstructive; the descriptions of them emphasise habitual abuse with no obvious solution, and no obvious means of reparation. Joe beats "the boy until he grovels on the floor, gone beyond begging for it to stop" (136). He describes the child as "white and sick with pain" (136). Kerewin discovers the severity of this particular beating a few days later:

> by the look of the scars on him, it's all been going on for a long long time. Man, I wouldn't bash a dog in the fashion you've hurt your son.
>
> I'd shoot it, if the beast was incorrigible or a killer, but never lacerate it like *that*.
>
> Aue. Joe.
>
> From the nape of his neck to his thighs, and all over the calves of his legs, he is cut and wealed. There are places on his shoulder blades where the . . . whatever you used, you shit . . . has bitten through to the underlying bone. There are sort of blood blisters that reach round his ribs on to his chest.
>
> And an area nearly the size of my hand, that's a large part of the child's back damn it, that's infected. It's raw and swollen and leaking infected lymph. [Hulme's ellipses] (148)

Kerewin's descriptions make the "guttersnipe" or "goblin" child a specimen that can be compared to a beaten dog. He becomes all lymph and blood blisters rather than a Maui-esque godling.

The violence done to Simon's body both humanises and defamiliarises the boy. It divests the child of his

godlike resilience but also of his individuality. It makes him a Pakeha body. Kerewin observes that "[s]omehow, knowing about the crosshatch of open weals and scars that disfigure the child has made him back into a stranger" (151). Violence punctuates the novel; we are repeatedly encouraged to envision the child, as Kerewin does, as a tragically damaged Pakeha stranger. Simon's injuries draw our attention back to Hulme's allegory. The image of the injured white child suggests that the Pakeha are also already damaged. The damage they effect in Maori New Zealand is a product of their own weaknesses and injuries. In effect, Hulme implies that Maori culture is devasted by an even more bankrupt and broken Pakeha culture. Simon thus embodies the problems Hulme imagines within Pakeha culture as well as becoming a whipping boy for Maori frustrations.

The injuries Simon receives at Joe's hands suggest that his role as whipping boy ultimately takes precedence. Hulme describes, almost lyrically, the beating that leaves Simon deafened:

> The first punch hit his head.
> His head slammed back into the door frame.
> The punches keep coming.
> Again.

Again.

The lights and fires are going out.

He weeps for them.

The blood pours from everywhere.

He can feel it spilling from his mouth, his ears,

his eyes and his nose.

The drone of the flies gets louder.

The world has gone away.

The night has come. (309)

Hulme presents a vivid description of the Pakeha beaten out of the Maori world. The Pakeha "sunchild" is forced into darkness (142).

The violence Hulme presents at instances like these is so graphic that critics have often been tempted to suggest more figurative readings. Mary Anne Hughes' position is typical of criticism which retreats from violence to turn instead to the less horrific allegorical possibilities it presents: "[w]hile the assaults on Simon are deplored and regretted, they are also glorified as the transgression of the boundary between internal and external, spiritual and material, one human and another. This fluid movement of conventional functions and categories suggests a space into which Maori people can insert themselves"(57-58). While embracing the ideal of

spiritual transformation, Hughes shifts uncomfortably back and forth between actual "Maori people" and an imaginary spiritual "boundary [. . .] between one human and another." She pushes her analysis of the transgression of boundaries between people (skin might be a suitable example of such a "boundary") into the realm of the "spirit" in which convictions and mythology produce a "meshing of cultural and religious beliefs"(61). More insightfully than most, Hughes entertains the possibility of reading the novel "as [a] fantasy" which reproduces a tragedy in which catharsis is not achieved because of unresolved tension between fantasy and realism (64-65). However, she concludes over-optimistically that the result of these tensions is the rupture of "Occidental" generic constraints and the production of a more Maori narrative (65). Rather than acknowledge violent physical rupture she emphasises what she sees as Hulme's restoration of a Maori-style "oral structure" (65). Violence is lost in establishing the legitimacy of the narrative *style* rather than engaging with the literary quality of the violent *content*. Despite its lurid presence, we depart from Simon's white, bruised, beaten and bloody body, and return to the bland assertion that "*The Bone People* is an ethnic novel" (Hughes 67).

Other critics are similarly compelled to acknowledge the text's violence and yet are also finally reluctant to probe the difficulties it raises. For instance, Marianne Dever's "Violence as Lingua Franca" also returns us to the language of the narrative rather than its content, suggesting, like Hughes, that language itself is the site of violence: "Hulme's sensitivity to the crisis of post-colonialism and of biculturalism forces her to approach the English language as a site of conflict" (23). Dever argues (much like many of the critics working on Malouf's Gemmy) that "physical forms of communication [. . .] frequently emerge as the more significant" (30).[12] She uses as example Simon's frequent exchange of kisses with Joe, but asserts that "[t]o this can be added the biting, kicking and scratching which characterise their quarrels and fights" (30). It is clear that Dever avoids contemplating Simon's broken nose and jaw in favour of framing the novel's violence as more childish and innocuous "biting" or "scratching." She also follows a common critical path in her insistence that something positive must come from these "physical forms of communication": "underlying this outbreak of violence, there is a subtler, stronger, almost atavistic voice which speaks a healing language and which offers the chance to recover and redeem" (32). In Dever and Hughes

(and Wilentz, above) there is an insistence on the idea that physical violence somehow breaks through into spiritual restoration and recovery (an idea akin to the Greek tragic *catharsis* invoked by Hughes) (Hughes 65). Their arguments rely on the assumption that the participants in the violence are mythologically elevated and communicate violently to exorcise problems in Maori-Pakeha relations. Implicitly, the communication is also a larger cultural one in which "atavistic" resentments are resolved in a modern community.

The argument for Simon in particular as embodiment of reconciliation founders on the extremity of his whiteness. He is beaten because he is Pakeha. Even his injuries make him seem more white and more like the already-damaged Pakeha Hulme envisions (unlike the patient, Gemmy and Tristan whose injuries make them seem less white). Kerewin pairs Simon's paleness and blondness with images of vulnerability and injury. She sees Simon, even when he has *not* been hit on the face, as "the bruised-eyed child" (137). His face is pale enough that it has a "waxen depth that accentuates the bruise marks of tiredness"(31). His chin seems violently "split" rather than more gently cleft (30). Simon is both frightening and unsettlingly blanched, mute and defenseless. Kerewin "doesn't like looking at the child.

One of the maimed, the contaminating" (17). He seems abused even before there is corroborating evidence. Kerewin's descriptions compare Simon's whiteness with the bandages used to cover his wounds. He is as startling as "the startlingly white" bandage she puts on his foot (30).

Richard Rhodes writes "about the way in which whiteness—in materials like rubber, stainless steel, paint and paper—can signal delicacy, sickness and recovery. It is about the idea of hurt and hurt's repair" (1). His whiteness connotes convalescence. It conveys delicacy and the disturbing brutality inherent in images like those of "wounded, amputated tools"(1). Rhodes sees in whiteness a fallow time after injury, an opportunity to recover from violent assaults of colour and to cocoon in white bandages as if within a chrysalis. However, whiteness itself is also violent and violating, carrying with it the "remote implication of destruction" (1). The nuances of Simon's whiteness indicate the ambivalent qualities of delicacy and brutality observed by Rhodes. He too seems connected by his whiteness to notions of "hurt and hurt's repair," and even to the contradictions of signifying healing while still embodying the threat of obliteration, amputation or destruction. What Rhodes' observations add of particular interest is the notion

that damage, sickness, illness, amputation, recovery and obliteration are all part of whiteness itself, as well as something imposed on it. Thus the violence done to Simon is imposed on his body, but also inescapably embedded in it because white as a colour is itself perceived as inherently violent and violating. Simon is beaten, but he is eminently beatable because he is so white.

Even when the extremity of the violence Simon suffers bloodies and bruises him, Kerewin strives to resurrect his whiteness; at no point does he seem more Maori, not even when his skin is so bruised and scarred that his whiteness is invisible. Thus the whiteness of Simon's bandages covers his injuries, allowing Kerewin to reiterate the child's whiteness:

> remembering the child's face pains her. She has to strip away the vision of how it looked the last two times she saw it. The bloody swollen mask on the floor, broken nose and broken jaw. And the horrible indentation in the side of his skull where he had been smashed against the door frame. Or neatened, whitened, bandaged with care, but looking lifeless. (314)

The indentation in his skull makes it clear that the violence has finally penetrated Simon irreparably. Whiteness's integuments are ruptured to reveal bones and bloody flesh. The reference to Simon's face as a mask makes it seem as though the signs of violence are an additional covering over the "bruised-eyed," and already "maimed" Pakeha core of the boy. In this way, Kerewin also circles back to sanitised and defamiliarised whiteness which is more conceptual than real. The bandages make a mask over the mask of blood and swelling so that Simon is contained, concealed and made white again. The white mask preserves Simon as damaged/damaging Pakeha in a postcolonial allegory.

The contradiction between Simon as Pakeha victim and Simon as Maori god Maui is irresolvable. Simon is beaten because he is white; he is beaten for the role he plays in an allegory. However, the consequences of the beatings, rather than being allegorised as well, are translated part-way into a mythology in which Simon, because of his exaggerated whiteness, never fully participates. This is particularly clear when Simon is presented as contradictorily both Pakeha "sunchild" (with allusions to Louis XIV) and Maui (142). Hulme casts Simon in the story of Maui and his brothers beating up the sun in order to make the days longer. In the myth,

> out rushed Maui with his enchanted weapon, and beat the sun about the head, and beat his face most cruelly. The sun screamed out, and groaned and shrieked, and Maui struck him savage blows, until the sun was begging him for mercy [. . .] Then at last when Maui gave the signal they let him go [. . .] and the sun crept slowly and feebly on his course that day, and has done ever since. Hence the days are longer than they formerly were. (Alpers 48)

In Hulme's version, Simon—the "sunchild"—is beaten as if he were the sun itself. Kerewin describes him: "[h]is eyelids are swollen, buddha-like and purple. His lower lip is split, and blood has dried blackly in the corners of his mouth. Bruises across the high boned cheeks and already they're dark. He has been struck hard and repeatedly about the face" (115). Simon is Maui *and* the sun that gets beaten. Images of Maui and Pakeha "sunchild" or Sun King come together in this description of abuse to position Simon in a neo-creationist myth in which Maui retaliates against Pakeha (or French) colonisation in order to re-start the Maori day. Simon is both part of the new myth and the object of the violent retaliation it calls for. When Joe beats Simon

until he can only retreat by crawling while Joe watches the "tired sick way he moves, the mess of him, his cringing, the highpitched panting he makes," we are reminded of how Maui's sun "crept slowly and feebly on his course" (Hulme 175; Alpers 48). But Simon is like Maui, and yet not Maori enough. He is still too much the "sunchild," and so too French, or too much like the Sun King, Louis XIV.

In Simon, Hulme presents an obdurate Pakeha whiteness; in my next chapter I will argue that Ondaatje presents a similarly obdurate whiteness in his English patient. Hulme constructs Simon's whiteness in opposition to Maoriness in order to consider the interaction between the two. She investigates how postcolonial Maori identity has been inflected by Pakeha intrusions in New Zealand. Ondaatje, however, considers how whiteness is constructed, especially from the perspective of its "other." In a sense, he examines how something like Hulme's construction of Pakeha comes about. He investigates the process by which certain attributes become stereotypical and connote the European (in Ondaatje's novel, the specifically *English*) colonist.

Unlike the endings of *The English Patient, Remembering Babylon* and *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith, The Bone People* concludes with a utopian vision of

Maori families re-united despite the fissures caused by colonialism and its legacy in New Zealand. There is a new Maori day to replace the "world" that "goes away" and the "night" that comes for Simon after Joe beats him (309): "ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea" (445). Colonialism is replaced by a postcolonialism in which the coloniser is disempowered, punished and abjected while the colonised is restored to preeminence. Hulme's conclusion suggests that Maori and Pakeha remain definitively separate. They also remain Maori and Pakeha. In Kerewin and Joe, Hulme celebrates what Emily Apter calls typically postcolonial "'real' emancipatory [subjects], imbued with a sense of indigenous identity" (214). Hulme writes about revivifying a pre-colonial Maori indigeneity. She implies the need to reinscribe homogenous notions of Maori and Pakeha in order that Maori can resist the infiltrations and miscegenations of Pakeha history. Thus, though neither Kerewin nor Joe is pure Maori by blood, Hulme asserts a purely Maori "indigenous identity" that is made to seem more pure in contrast with the exaggerated and hyperbolic whiteness of Simon "pake." Hulme constructs whiteness as a foil for postcolonial Maoriness. (Contrastingly, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey choose to focus on whiteness in order to question it.)

Hulme thus concludes with a new beginning that is entirely Maori "TE MUTUNGA—RANEI TE TAKE" (445). At the family reunion, Simon's deafened head is pressed against Kerewin's guitar; the reconciliation takes place between Kerewin and Joe and it is literally over Simon's head. The mute child is now a deafened child as well; in the allegory Maori now speaks for Pakeha, and Pakeha cannot even properly hear what is being said. Simon is no longer discernibly like Maui. He is a pale and "crooked face" with "silvery moon hair" (443). The reconciliation is a Maori one that includes Pakeha only to a limited extent, and only on its own terms. The dawn is a metaphor for a new Maori day, not a new Maori/Pakeha day.

[1] I take Hulme's work to have been composed allegorically, but my reading of Simon's whiteness involves allegorical interpretation as well. *The Princeton Encyclopedia* suggests that allegory "denotes two complementary procedures: a way of composing lit. and a way of interpreting it. To compose allegorically is to construct a work so that its apparent sense refers to an 'other' sense. To interpret allegorically ('allegoresis') is to explain a work as if there were an 'other' sense to which it referred" (31).

[2] Hulme responds evasively that the book was not intended to be an "oblique revenge" or, as Bryson concludes, "at least not consciously so" (133). However, the interview between Hulme and Bryson suggests that Simon *does*, at least in part, "stand" for Pakeha culture and is thus the object of Maori frustrations. Simon *is* abused as though he deserves punishment because he is white.

[3] My reading could be said to impose another European allegorical reading. However, I investigate whiteness to suggest how it has been stereotyped, not Maoriness in order to perpetuate European stereotypes of otherness.

[4] Robinson similarly suggests that the injured male body clearly represents (and has represented) larger cultural

issues: "The logic through which the bodily substitutes for the political, and the individual for the social and institutional, reveals that the 'marking' of whiteness and masculinity has already been functioning as a strategy through which white men negotiate the widespread critique of their power and privilege" (6). The injured white man becomes "representative of a general populace" too, and thus also becomes, to some extent, homogenised or even stereotypical (Prentice 45).

[5] Hulme may even exaggerate Simon's whiteness in order to emphasise her own Maoriness, for it is clear that Keri Hulme identifies with Kerewin Holmes, the artist and wordsmith who is, like Hulme herself, 7/8 Pakeha. (Holmes asserts that she is "but an eighth Maori" though she claims she feels "all Maori"[62].) When *The Bone People* won the Pegasus Award for Maori literature in 1985, C. K. Stead wrote that Hulme used her 1/8 Maoriness to legitimate her narrative at a time when Pakeha culture was guiltily ceding some authority back to the Maoris: "[s]he claims to identify with the Maori part of her inheritance—not a disadvantageous identification at the present time" (103). Margery Fee suggests instead that Hulme uses her ambiguous status to "write herself into a

Maori" and so to "rewrite dominant [Pakeha] ideology from within"(19).

[6] Aside from the humor of this characterisation, Kerewin's comment also reveals how deeply she herself wants to feel "all Maori" (62).

[7] The discovery makes Kerewin aware that she is "a snob" (99). She revels in the knowledge of her "whakapapa and solid Lancashire and Hebridean ancestry"(99). Her research into Simon's heritage reaffirms that she considers herself "[a] New Zealander through and through" (99).

[8] *The Oxford History of New Zealand* writes that " disease [. . .] must have taken its toll" because of the introduction of 'new' diseases "such as dysentery, venereal disease, tuberculosis, influenza, whooping cough [and] measles" (49).

[9] In her interview with Bryson, Hulme does observe that "not everything the pakeha brought was unwelcome. Large sections of Maori society of the 1820s seized upon aspects of European culture, including the peacefulness of Christian religion, with alacrity" (133).

[10] See also Huggan or Mary Ann Hughes.

[11] Patricia Grace's *Potiki* also re-writes the Maui myth.

[12] See for instance Samar Attar or Kathleen Doty and Risto Hiltunen.

Chapter Two

The "English" Patient

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* describes a man who is not English. Lásló Almásy is Hungarian, his skin is burnt black and yet he fashions himself as an Englishman and is perceived as English by Hana, his nurse, and Kip, the Indian sapper. The patient uses "Englishness" as a disguise. Implicitly it has certain fixed qualities which he deploys and which Hana and Kip recognise. Hence the patient, though blackened and Hungarian, does not signify alterity or the black side of a Manichean binary; he is never the colonial other. Instead he becomes an example of how colonial Englishness is stereotyped, and how stereotypical qualities can be strategically invoked in order to afford an individual the privileges associated with being English. This kind of "Englishness" is confined neither to the English nor to those whose skin is purely white. In the patient, Ondaatje suggests how fictional identities, drawing on stereotypes like that of the English colonist, are constructed and received. His work begs one to ask how fictions of national and racial identity relate to

perceptions of epidermally defined nationality and race as well as to cultural, even colonial, nostalgia.

Ondaatje does not present a postcolonial allegory in the way that Hulme does. Neither does he present a postcolonialism which perpetuates a binary between (white) self and (black) other. Instead, he presents a group of characters divorced from their national contexts; each is distanced from his/her nation and home. However, "Englishness" becomes a lodestar for these characters—it is a construction to which they refer, and by which they orient themselves. Ondaatje suggests that "Englishness" is something that a Canadian, an Italian-Canadian, an Indian and a Hungarian all recognise. Despite different backgrounds, nations and races, they perceive "Englishness" in the same way. Where Simon is constructed as Pakeha by Kerewin and Joe, the patient is both constructed as white and English by Hana and Kip and self-fashioned as English. (Even the patient's self-fashioning produces an image of Englishness constructed from the outside perspective of a Hungarian.)

What, then, is the nature of Englishness if a man burnt black can fashion himself as the epitome of colonial whiteness? How and where do Englishness and whiteness intersect and what makes the patient English instead of "*almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha "Of

Mimicry and Man" 86)? Lorna Irvine notes that the "English patient is introduced to us as a 'black body' [3], an image that develops increasing resonance as the novel progresses. The adjectives 'English' and 'black' clash, emphasising the irony of the conjunction in [Paul] Gilroy's title: 'There ain't no black in the Union Jack'" (143). Englishness, particularly colonial Englishness, and blackness seem, as Irvine notes and Gilroy jokes, to be mutually exclusive. And yet Ondaatje presents us with a black English patient (who is neither black nor English). The patient's Englishness relies, in large part, on the assumption that under his blackness he is white. Thus one can read Ondaatje as an example of Richard Dyer's assertion that whiteness resides in "narrative structural positions [. . .] and habits of perception" (12). The patient is perceived as white because Ondaatje's narrative (and Hana and Kip's descriptions, in particular) present him as English. Likewise, the patient seems white and English because "habits of perception" link white Englishness with the language the patient speaks and the colonial knowledge he reveals. Ondaatje's characterisation suggests that Englishness/whiteness are rigid categories but that they can also be somewhat elastic depending on what one perceives. Ondaatje suggests that there is something

about the patient that marks him as white and specifically English despite the exaggerated blackness of his skin and whiteness of his Hungarian past.

The patient is "the man burned black," and in places burnt to the bone (85; 3). He becomes "a burned animal" (41), a

> man with no face. An ebony pool. All identification consumed in a fire. Parts of his burned body and face had been sprayed with tannic acid, that hardened into a protective shell over his raw skin. The area around his eyes was coated with a thick layer of gentian violet. There was nothing to recognize in him. (48)

The patient is vividly disfigured. He is black and purple with violet encircling his eyes. He is gruesome and yet his blackened skin, despite its vivid appearance, elides Almásy; it makes him unrecognisable, even invisible.

Don Randall and Eleanor Ty both suggest that the blackening of the patient's skin makes him represent the erosion of national and racial boundaries. Ty writes that he is "a postcolonial hybrid" (14); Randall that "one may discern a theme of 'indigenization,' which would figure the English patient as the symbolic victim of

extreme, identity-destroying cross-cultural experience" (142). However, the blackening of the patient's skin does *not* indicate racial transformation, or even hybridity. The patient becomes blank, not black. Despite distinctive patterns of tannin and gentian violet, he is "nameless, almost faceless" and "beyond recognition" (52; 165). The patient's skin is important for what it conceals of Almásy's Hungarian whiteness. His blackness thus becomes a blankness upon which his faux Englishness can be imposed. Lurid burns are overlooked in favor of emphasising how white identity is first obscured and second strategically reconstructed.[1] The patient thus never really becomes "black"; he is not figured as indigenously African. His blackness becomes another skin or carapace—a hard, tannic acid shell. The carapace is protective; Almásy is safely concealed within.

Ty writes that though the patient "is supposedly English [. . .] he is not depicted as the subject with power. He is helpless and dependent on others for his survival" (11). The extremity of the patient's burns does make him seem, at first, injured and powerless. He lies on his bed "mocking a deathlike posture" (62). He seems to be, but is not, a hybrid death-in-life and white self in "black" other. The patient is almost abject, for as Julia Kristeva writes, the "corpse [. . .] is the

utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject." (4). What makes the corpse abject, however, is not that it is dead, but rather that it reminds us of the "threat" of death that "beckons to us, and ends up engulfing us" (Kristeva 4). The corpse is abject because, though we would divorce ourselves from our own mortality, it reminds us that death can overcome us. Death is also abject because it "disturbs identity, system, order" where a lack of cleanliness or health sometimes do not (Kristeva 4). But the immobile, burnt patient does not disturb order or identity. The villa is organised around his almost (but not quite) death and apparently (but not racially) black skin. Far from powerlessness, the patient enjoys the power and privilege of his centrality. His presence imposes order where there might otherwise be none.

If the "abject is what the subject seeks to expel in order to achieve an independent identity," one can suggest that ultimately the patient does not struggle to expel anything (Brooker 1). The patient does not try to expel anything in his blackness. Rather than strive for an "independent identity," his efforts to contain both Hungarian and Englishman in his misleading blackened shell make his identity *contingent*, particularly upon how others interpret him. Hana and Kip make him English, but

also re-position their own identities vis-a-vis that Englishness. Thus, the patient is an agent of stability, even security, not explosive challenges to boundaries (either his own, or those of the individuals around him). He is a "desert European" who becomes English (135). His white identity is taken for granted despite his disfiguring injuries. He is not a commingling of white self and black other. Abjection implies a lack of containment and a rupturing of boundaries; it "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva 4). But the patient re-affirms borders and rules. In his "Englishness," he re-establishes an order with which Hana and Kip are familiar. In his blackness he indicates the impermeability and impenetrability of his disguise.

It is this impenetrability that has led so many critics to respond aptly to the patient's blackened skin as a blank screen but also, less profitably, to imply that the patient is an *absence* behind that screen. Stephen Scobie perspicaciously writes that "Almásy projects a fiction of identity onto the blank screen of his own burned body" (99). However, Jeanne Delbaere writes that "[n]ameless, faceless, his past erased, his body burned beyond recognition, the English patient is the epitome of selflessness" (47) and Rufus Cook that the "English patient is [. . .] the most thoroughly negated

or nullified character in the novel. He has been stripped of his memory, of his sense of personal identity, of his distinguishing physical features" (46). Delbaere's reference to the patient as "selfless" and Cook's claim that he is "nullified" are misleading. The patient's racial and national identity are concealed by tannins, but he has a "self," he has memory and he has a history.[2] Indeed, there would be no book if there were no "self," no character under the skin, or no "English" patient. The patient talks and thinks about himself (or about his writings in the margins of Herodotus' *Histories*) continually. He is continually trying to construct himself in a certain way. He is only misperceived as absent because of his blackened skin.

Critical misperception of the patient reveals a postcolonial bias. Generally, postcolonial criticism values the erosion of boundaries. For instance, Tom Penner asserts that the patient is "an unreadable enigma," but construes this ineffability as positive (78). Penner suggests that ineffability allows critics to envision a man unfettered by the constraints of history and memory. Similarly, Raymond Younis writes that "in the Patient's 'facelessness' and in the multiple identities that can be projected onto this *tabula rasa*, so to speak, Ondaatje provides a stark and vivid image of that freedom

from the constraints of 'nationhood'" (4). He adds that "the differences between the nations (Germany, Britain, Hungary) dissolve or de-construct in the Patient's expressionless and faceless countenance" (Younis 4). Rather than interpret the patient's blackness as an epidermal transformation rich in historical significance, or consider the efforts of other characters to make the patient white and English, critics insist on his blankness and assume his lack of affiliation with any nation. However, the patient does not embody nationlessness, but rather the allure of English colonial identity. His Englishness demonstrates the pervasiveness of colonial England's self-defining discourse. Boundaries between self and other (the very boundaries that Penner and Younis hope are superseded) are reiterated as the patient is constructed as the epitome of English whiteness.

Cook also suggests that Ondaatje's "present is actually only a replica or reenactment, and that genuine identity or meaning is always to be found elsewhere" (38). In turn, the patient's identity is not "genuine" but deferred. We can only understand him by reference to the memories and histories with which he is associated. His identity is not clear from his body; it is established with information from "elsewhere." Hana and

Kip interpret the patient by making assumptions about his race and nationality based on his use of cultural and rhetorical tropes. They recognise an Englishman in him. Scobie, Delbaere, Cook, Penner and Younis interpret the patient as one who has escaped nationality or "Erase[d] nations!" (139). That they suggest this escape is desirable and possible—even though it seems the patient himself concludes the opposite in choosing to make himself English—implies their investment in making him absent. For critics, to read the patient as white or "English" is to acknowledge that he is not nationless and that, rather than celebrating a nationless moment, Ondaatje is describing the persistent influence of English colonialism. Hana and Kip's efforts to identify the patient suggest that they want to see him as English; the patient is thus also subject to their desire to describe him in terms of an idealised and stereotypically constructed nationality.

The English patient is a construction of what a Hungarian, a Canadian and an Indian perceive as "typical Englishness." Hana allows the patient to have a kind of authority over her, like that of a parental nineteenth-century England over colonies that the empire portrayed as child-like. When Hana first meets the patient he is still under suspicion and is questioned by Allied

officers. They are unsure what to make of him, for "[h]e had rambled on, driving them mad, traitor or ally, leaving them never quite sure who he was" (96). Hana also tries to establish her patient's identity:

> Who are you?
>
> I don't know. You keep asking me.
>
> You said you were English. (5)

She finally asserts that he is English rather than question his indeterminacy. Hana thinks "[e]verything about him was very English except for the fact that his skin was tarred black, a bogman from history among the interrogating officers" (96). Her "[e]verything about him was very English" is largely unsubstantiated. The patient speaks English, and his writings in the margins of Herodotus are, apparently, in English (97). Hana overlooks evidence that the patient may be other than English and imagines him as both vulnerable and guardian. She makes him a strange combination of paternalistic English protector and her own father, who dies, she imagines, as scorched as the patient himself: "[s]o burned the buttons of his shirt were part of his skin, part of his dear chest" (295).

Hana reads to the patient from the villa's library, choosing books that are familiar to him, including English colonial narratives like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Kim*.[3] The patient is implicitly identified with the novels Hana reads; his ability to explain them makes him like the colonists within them. The patient coaches Hana in her reading of Kipling and his familiarity with the novel, perhaps more than anything, makes him English to Hana: "Read him slowly, dear girl, you must read Kipling slowly [. . .] Your eye is too quick and North American" (94). His knowledge of English literature (and how he marks the difference of Hana's "North American" eye) makes the patient seem English. He also explains the Zam-Zammah cannon. Hana writes the explanation on a flyleaf in *Kim* as though both patient and explanation had become part of Kipling's story: "*He says the gun—the Zam-Zammah cannon—is still there outside the museum in Lahore. There were* two *guns, made up of metal cups and bowls taken from every Hindu household in the city—as* jizya*, or tax. These were melted down and made into the guns*" (118). Irvine writes that Ondaatje "investigates 'the white man's burden' to demonstrate some of the connections between literature and the history of imperialism" (139). She suggests that Ondaatje and Edward Said (in his writings on *Kim*) "both look in various ways at the

structural and contextual effects of imperialism on literary genres" (139).[4] The patient becomes part of an imperial narrative within the postcolonial narrative Ondaatje creates. In addition, Almásy's diary in the margins of Herodotus' *Histories* makes him an imperialist historian like Herodotus who, though portraying "cul-de-sacs within the sweep of history," is still portraying, mapping and assuming control over those "cul-de-sacs" (119).

Like Hana, Kip looks to the patient to assume the role of guardian who is implicitly an English colonial "protector"; like Hana he wants the patient to replace a lost parent, someone who was "like a father" (271). He sits by the patient's bed in what seems to be "a reversal of *Kim*. The young student was now Indian, the wise old teacher was English" (111). The patient is perceived as "wise," as a teacher, and, most importantly, as English. The tableau of student/recumbent teacher is a metaphor for colonial politics. Ailing England lies in her bed, dispensing advice to her soon to be independent student, India. But this ailing Pater of the colonies also has a missionary and Christian imperative with which to justify his colonial intrusions. Thus the patient is also Isaiah, singing aptly into Kip's ear "[*b*]*ehold, the lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and He will*

surely cover thee. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country" (294). Kip is indeed "like a ball" thrown into a "large country" by the English. He is thrown into a war in which he fights for Englishmen whom he imagines are honorable, but finally decides are not. Like Hana and Caravaggio, he participates for the good of a country that is not his own.

Caravaggio suggests that "[t]he trouble with all of us is we are where we shouldn't be. What are we doing in Africa, in Italy? What is Kip doing dismantling bombs in orchards, for God's sake? What is he doing fighting English wars?" (122). What are any of them doing fighting English wars? They turn to the "English" patient for explanation. They need "Englishness" to justify the war itself. They hope that Englishness provides a centre to what is no longer an imperial world. Through the response of these "international bastards" to the war, Ondaatje suggests one effect of loss of empire: the colonised's nostalgia for what s/he wanted to believe of the coloniser. Thus Kip, on the one hand, resents what it takes to be *pukkah* but, on the other, still implicitly values what he believes England to be (283). Just as Salman Rushdie, writing from England, can describe "Indias of the mind," so Ondaatje presents us here with

four characters who create Englands "of the mind" and, more pertinently, Englishmen "of the mind" (10). For all four characters, postcolonial resentment of the English is imbricated with nostalgia for the image of Englishness disseminated by colonists.

Kip does not pay attention when the patient observes that his and Kip's predicaments are similar. The patient asserts: "Kip and I are both international bastards—born in one place, but choosing to live elsewhere. Fighting to get back to or to get away from our homelands all our lives. Though Kip doesn't recognize that yet. That's why we get on so well together" (176).[5] Kip does not recognise that he and the patient are similarly diasporic. Kip is so certain that the patient is an Englishman that he stubbornly ignores Caravaggio's insistence that the patient "isn't an Englishman"; he takes solace in his conviction of the patient's English identity and in the intelligence and morality he thinks Englishmen have (285). Kip is only convinced that he has misconstrued the patient after the bombing of Hiroshima; only then does he recognise that he has been convinced by a fallacious ideal. However, it is the "goodness" of the English ideal that he questions, not the Englishness of the patient:

I sat at the foot of this bed and listened to you, Uncle. These last months. When I was a kid I did that, the same thing [. . .] I grew up with traditions from my country, but later, more often, from *your* country. Your fragile white island that with customs and manners and books and prefects and reason somehow converted the rest of the world. You stood for precise behaviour. I knew if I lifted a teacup with the wrong finger I'd be banished. If I tied the wrong kind of knot in a tie I was out. Was it just ships that gave you such power? Was it, as my brother said, because you had histories and printing presses?

You and then the Americans converted us. With your missionary rules. And Indian soldiers wasted their lives as heroes so they could be *pukkah*. You had wars like cricket. How did you fool us into this? (283)

Kip describes the problem of believing colonial rhetoric. Reiterating a familiar critique of colonialism, Kip denounces the "customs and manners" from the "fragile white island" which take precedence over those on the Indian sub-continent. English schools, with prefects and English books, disseminate English ideology and, as Kip's

frustration here makes clear, take hold so that cricket games (or English wars) become more important than Indian lives. The "printing presses" allow for biased reproductions of history which celebrate the English in narratives as misleading as the Colonial Fairytale produced to explain Gemmy in *Remembering Babylon*. Kip feels he has been tricked into believing in something that is not true or real; he has been tricked into believing in colonial rhetoric. He has also been tricked into believing in the stereotype of the English colonist. And yet, despite his disillusionment, Kip does not question the Englishness of the patient. For Kip, the patient has been reassuringly English and morally "good"; he remains conveniently English when Kip needs someone to blame for the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima.

Critics like Irvine are surprised by Ondaatje's reference to the bombing of Hiroshima: "we had simply not been prepared for this openly political issue" (142).[6] More pertinently, we are not prepared to think about the patient as a threat. We are not prepared for the intrusion of racialised violence of which the patient seems to be both agent and victim. The patient's injuries are clearly like those sustained by victims of the atomic bomb. Eisei Ishikawa writes of atomic flash burns at Hiroshima and Nagasaki: burnt skin can leave a "reddish,

light black-brown shiny surface," while extremely intense thermal energy leads "to carbonization" (Ishikawa 120). Like a bomb victim, the patient's "black body" is so "destroyed" that he becomes a living "corpse" (3; 45). He is burnt to the bone and in places is "reddish-black" or "shiny" so that Hana describes him as "the colour of aubergine" (4; 48; 4). His flesh seems volcanic; he is "pure carbon" (109).[7] And yet he is not perceived as black or other because he fashions himself as English. Like Simon in *The Bone People*, the patient takes the blame for the things white colonists have done.

For Kip, the English patient, though he resembles a bomb victim, is irrevocably the aggressive English imperialist. Kip looks at the patient and envisions streets that are "full of fire. It rolls across cities like a burst map, the hurricane of heat withering bodies as it meets them, the shadow of humans suddenly in the air. This tremor of Western wisdom" (284). Even as he flees the villa, Kip cannot escape his vision of Hiroshima. However, the inescapable vision is explicitly linked with the patient; Kip "feels he carries the body of the Englishman with him [. . .] it sits on the petrol tank facing him, the black body in an embrace with his" (294). The two, bomb and Englishman, perplexingly, are

one, but the patient's "black body" inexorably also belongs to "a white nation" (286).

After the bombing of Hiroshima, Kip rethinks "Englishness" (which he now sees as corrupt and self-serving) and decides that its attitudes are not limited to the English. "Englishness" is cultivated in the colonial practices of other nations: "American. French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman. You had King Leopold of Belgium and now you have fucking Harry Truman of the USA. You all learned it from the English" (286). He argues that brutalities inflicted by one nation on another are "English" because they suggest that the aggressor is superior and has the right to exploit (as King Leopold II did the rubber workers in the Congo) or bomb (as the Americans do at Hiroshima). As David Williams observes, the "sapper from India who has spent the war in Kent and Sussex disposing of German bombs comes to see the Bomb itself as another instrument of Western hegemony, like the ships, the printing presses and written history" (30). The bomb is a colonial instrument and Kip insists that the Americans "would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation" (286). Thus for Kip "white" becomes synonymous with "English" colonialism and both are thus

synonymous with what Williams calls the racial inequality of Western hegemony.

The patient lets Kip blame him for the wrongs "white nation[s]" have committed. Kip accuses the patient: "In my country, when a father breaks justice in two, you kill the father" (285). The patient, unexpectedly, is willing to be both father and the Englishman Kip believes him to be. Kip points the rifle and the patient responds, as if actually guilty for colonial history and for the bombing of Hiroshima, "[d]o it" (285). The patient's willingness to accept responsibility suggests the extent to which he has re-fashioned himself. His admission of guilt is also his acceptance of English identity and of the culpability its privilege implies. It reveals the extent to which he believes his own self-refashioning. He too, it seems, has convinced himself that he is an Englishman. Almásy's self-fashioning takes place in three phases: first he tries (and fails) to make himself nationless; second, he tries (and fails) to efface himself; third, he tries (and largely succeeds) to fashion himself as typically English. The third phase is both strategic (he needs to disguise himself at the end of the war) and a cop-out. He demonstrates the influence of English colonial ideology and rhetoric by showing that, for a privileged "white"

man, it is easier to become stereotypically English than to become nationless.

At first, the patient is convinced that amidst the desert's shifting and un-mapped sands (sands that he himself, paradoxically, is in the process of mapping) he could become "his own invention" or "nationless " (246; 138). He uses the desert as a place in which to hide from the "deform[ity]" produced "by nation states" (138). He uses the desert to hide from "the deformity" of his whiteness, and yet he is still a colonist mapping the desert for the British Royal Geographical Society. He identifies with Pico della Mirandola ("[t]hat was my nickname as a kid. *Pico*") who argues that God leaves man the free will to fashion himself, to make or unmake himself: "[w]e have made you neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that you may, as the free and extraordinary shaper of yourself, fashion yourself in the form you will prefer" (Ondaatje 57; Mirandola 22). Like Mirandola, the patient believes that he can construct himself as he likes; he celebrates the idea that he could escape nationality altogether.

His efforts to escape nation prove impossible, so he tries to disown his identity. Almásy juxtaposes maps, colonisation and love to suggest that they are all fundamentally selfish assertions of ownership. He

recognises how maps record the ambitions of colonial explorers who discover long-inhabited places, but whose maps record and name "the first sight (by a white eye)" of something "that has been there forever" (141). The maps record those colonists' names. He moves from this rumination directly into his story of falling in love with Katherine, still, even in his love for her, rejecting "[o]wnership" (152).[8] He tries to make both maps and love by effacing himself, as if he could both create new boundaries and ensure they have no implications. He writes down all the arguments against him as Katherine's lover, "giving himself only the voice of the watcher, the listener, the 'he'" as if this third-person narrative exculpates him from first-person responsibility, but his love and his work in the desert trap him in the patterns of ownership he himself has created (172).[9] Both his effort to escape nation and to escape himself can be examined in light of the abject, especially in terms of how efforts to achieve independent identity are frustrated by the recurrence of undesirable elements that the individual thought s/he had managed to expel. The patient tries to expel nationality in order to become an autonomous individual. He tries to escape the ownership implied by love for the same reason. He fails on both counts. He becomes trapped by both nations

(as Hungarian, he is on the wrong side of a World War) and love (he is equally trapped by his need to help Katherine). The qualities he seeks to expel (nation, ownership), return so that here he becomes abject (where later, in his burnt skin, he is not).

In the midst of the World War that has moved into the desert, Katherine and Clifton crash, killing Clifton and leaving Katherine injured. In Uweinat, Almásy tries to get help for Katherine. He tells Caravaggio that amongst the English troops

> "No one listened."
>
> "Why?"
>
> "I didn't give them a right name."
>
> "Yours?"
>
> "I gave them mine." [. . .] I was yelling Katherine's name. Yelling the Gilf Kebir. Whereas the only name I should have yelled, dropped it like a calling card into their hands, was Clifton's.
>
> "They hauled me up into the truck again. I was just another possible second-rate spy. Just another international bastard." (250-251)

This is a turning point for Almásy, and the beginning of his self-construction explicitly in terms of nationality.

In Uweinat he gives his name and, despite his efforts to be nationless, individual and immune to boundaries, he finds himself on the wrong side of a national boundary. The desert is occupied by nations determined to draw clear boundaries in the shifting sands. Hungarian Almásy is "another possible second rate spy," and "another international bastard." His Hungarian whiteness becomes a trap, while English whiteness might afford privilege. Rather than disavow nation, Almásy now begins to play opposing nations against one another, first joining the Germans ("[i]n 1941 he became a guide for spies, taking them across the desert into Cairo") and then fashioning himself as English (163). He manipulates the stereotype of an Englishman so that it fits a burned Hungarian Nazi collaborator. By assuming authority, privilege and a certain mode of speaking, the patient makes himself English. He is no longer abject, for he is not troubled by ruptured boundaries, but instead remarkably successful at fashioning incongruous new ones. His burns, rather than making him more abject, make him less so, for they allow him to reinforce the boundaries of the identity he strives to create.

Almásy becomes English as he begins to use English language and rhetoric. So, while Simon is Pakeha, and thus associated with constructions of whiteness, and

while Gemmy is British, though not white enough to fit the British stereotype, Almásy is not distinguishable as physically "white" at all. The "English" patient knows he is exploiting language and cultural tropes. He teases his interrogators for their inability to see that this is what he is doing: "'[y]ou should be trying to trick me,' the burned pilot told his interrogators, 'make me speak German, which I can, by the way, ask me about Don Bradman. Ask me about Marmite, the great Gertrude Jekyll'" (95). Only Caravaggio recognises the patient's Englishness as a game. Hana takes assurance from the patient's knowledge of things like "all those flower beds in Gloucestershire," but Caravaggio recognises these as "a perfect background" (163). He thinks that the burnt man "can get away with sounding English" but that "the English garden is wearing thin" (165; 164).[10] Caravaggio wants to fix the man's identity as Axis spy, perhaps in order to disrupt the influence this "English" man has over Hana and Kip. Revealing the patient as fraud might break up Hana's "embarrassing marriage" with the man, and Kip's devotion to him (84). Hana insists that Caravaggio is "too obsessed," that "[i]t doesn't matter who he is. The war's over" (166). But Caravaggio persists in trying to make the patient other than English in order to upset the authority this burnt man has over them by virtue of

his supposed respectability, morality and colonial pre-eminence.

The desire to expose the patient manifests itself in another peculiar tendency in criticism: to see the patient's Hungarianness, not his black skin, as indicative of racial otherness. Marilyn Jones suggests that "Almásy's Hungarian ancestry is either consciously or unconsciously overlooked" because it implies a troubling and different kind of ethnicity (103).[11] Mark Simpson more stridently asserts "that racially or ethnically the English patient Almásy is by no means white, that beneath carbon lies dark, or at least swarthy skin" (236). And Steven Totosy de Zepetnek suggests that "Ondaatje's metaphor of *felhomaly* [semi-darkness in Hungarian] [. . .] provides us with yet another version of Almásy's otherness" (142).[12] Jones' cautious claim suggests how easy it is to construe the patient's difference as racial—but also how this racial difference is attached to his European identity. Simpson's assertion exaggerates this same tendency, ignoring the possibility that Hungarians are white, that Hungary was part of an archetypically white Hapsburg empire or even that Hungary is a centre for neo-Nazi activity today.[13] Zepetnek is sufficiently taken with the allure of Almásy as racial, semi-dark other that he ignores even the

evidence included in his article. His "Figure I" shows a photograph of "the real" Almásy—a pale-skinned man with what looks like the beginnings of a blond or brown beard (144). These efforts to other the patient by misreading his Hungarian identity are similar to the efforts by Cook, Delbaere, Penner and Younis to make the patient both blank and absent. Ultimately, both critical trends reflect a disinclination to see that the patient is that anathema in postcolonial fiction: a sympathetically portrayed protagonist who is also, inexorably, a privileged white man connected with fascism, exploitation of the North African desert, and English colonialism.

Ondaatje's Lásló Almásy is based upon a Hungarian desert explorer of the same name, but Ondaatje's interpretation of Almásy's life is liberal; his patient differs in numerous ways. Notable among the differences are the real Almásy's death by dysentery (rather than fire) and homosexuality (rather than heterosexuality) (Torok 1; Harrison 5). However, there is a basic similarity between the two. In terms of appearance, it does seem that Ondaatje modeled his man on the original. Pictures of the real Almásy from 1929 show a slim, fair-skinned and brown, or sandy-haired man (Torok 2). Ondaatje's Almásy has "straw hair," "grey eyes" and a "thin body" (153; 4; 169). Zsolt Torok also suggests that

the real Almásy worked quite happily with the German Afrika Corps (Torok 1). Ondaatje's Almásy describes helping Nazis Eppler and Rommel across the Libyan desert, even describing Rommel as "a brilliant man" (254). Beneath the patient's carbonised skin, then, may be the whiteness so prized by the Nazis. This concealed whiteness is unsettling for the racist politics it evokes. Creating the patient as other or blank skirts problematic associations. Even Ondaatje describes his uneasiness with his characterisation of the patient: "[w]hen I was writing *The English Patient*, what became really interesting was how the patient evolved. At first I didn't know if I liked him at all. I wasn't sure if he was a villain or what" (Dafoe 5). It seems likely that Ondaatje is uncertain because of the patient's connections with the Nazis.

However, Ondaatje also idealises the patient. He states that he "just wanted someone who was static, who had almost become that statue I write about of a dead knight in Ravenna. It's a very beautiful, liquid-looking piece of stone. That was the image I had of the patient, lying there" (Wachtel 255).[14] Ondaatje describes the patient explicitly in these terms: "[i]n the arboured bedroom the burned patient views great distances. The way that dead knight in Ravenna, whose marble body seems

alive, almost liquid, has his head raised upon a stone pillow, so that it can gaze beyond its feet into vista" (135). The similarity of these descriptions, and Ondaatje's emphasis on the "beautiful" white and marble yet "liquid-looking" knight reveal four key things about Ondaatje's characterisation.

First, Ondaatje clearly envisions the patient as white despite his blackened skin. Thus Ondaatje is himself complicit with the project of keeping Almásy white. References to Hiroshima victims and racial otherness are lost in this subtending desire to create a white marble knight. Second, by envisioning the patient as a knight, Ondaatje makes him a heroic figure for the kind of "romantic longing" that George Mosse writes is associated with Second World War fighter pilots (Mosse 117). Mosse observes that these pilots are taken to embody "the spirit of adventure" while also conjuring up "images of knightly combat, of a more civilized kind of warfare" (117). The patient is like the Ravenna knight, but is also the adventurer engaged in what Mosse (and implicitly Ondaatje) suggest is "knightly combat." Mosse adds that in Germany in particular, "[t]he heroes of the war in the sky were pictured as representatives of true manhood, its looks and virtues" (117). Third, then, Ondaatje's characterisation of the patient as Ravenna

knight and pilot returns us to a reading of the patient as Nazi sympathiser, for the Nazi ideals of white masculinity were often drawn from classical white marble statues which emphasised "the transparent whiteness of these figures, their tranquility" (Mosse 172). Ondaatje's Ravenna Knight-like patient is "beautiful;" whiteness is transparent in his description because he does not draw attention to it. It is "static" and calm as well. Consciously or not, Ondaatje evokes Nazi ideals. The fourth issue raised by Ondaatje's construction of the patient as marble knight is the contradiction between "static" and "liquid-looking." The patient is similarly static (he is "pure carbon" immobile on a bed) and yet presented as if liquid (he is an "ebony pool") (109; 48). This contradiction is amplified in the "static" construction of the patient as English and his misleadingly "liquid" identity. The Ravenna knight looks liquid, but is not. The same is true of the patient's identity: it seems "liquid" enough to engulf blackness and Japanese otherness as well as Hungarian and English whiteness. However, the effort to fashion the patient as white marble makes him "static" again. Whiteness recurs and is as obdurate as stone. The only flexibility in the patient's whiteness resides in the possibility that it

represents both a hyperbolically white Hungarian/Nazi identity and that of an English colonist.

Whiteness is both demonised and celebrated in the construction of an English patient whose blackness is disguise and punishment. The patient's Hungarianness is not restored and thus Hungarian whiteness (with its negative, Nazi associations) is hidden beneath blackness only to re-surface as an implicitly preferable English whiteness. The patient's injury can be read as retribution for both kinds of whiteness. He is punished for having helped the Nazis across the desert, and because he embodies an English paternalist who seems taken from the pages of Kipling, his injury can also be read as punishment for the wrongs of colonialism. [15] The patient's burns may suggest that fascist or colonial whiteness deserves to be punished such that it is destroyed and becomes its black other. However, the patient does not become "black." George Yúdice writes that "the ultimate legitimizing move is the claim to oppression"; one can argue that, because of his injuries, the patient can relegitimate himself as English despite his collaboration with the Nazis (281). Thus blackness is the result of injury, it implies punishment, and yet it also disguises an unchanged (even unrepentant) whiteness.

The patient's injuries result in his physical disability but also facilitate his self re-fashioning as English.

Scobie writes that the patient is not really English, and thus "Englishness is [. . .] written out of the novel; always, already, the centre is empty" (99). He aptly summarises the problem of the patient's duplicity: it creates an Englishman who is not English. However, the patient's Englishness is as legitimate as any colonial Englishness. There is absence at the centre, for the idealised stereotype is not "real," and thus the centre of both Empire and novel is always already empty. However, the stereotype itself, as Hana and Kip's convictions make clear, has power, influence and consequently a kind of presence. There may not be a "real" Englishman in this novel, his place taken instead by an image of Englishness constructed by England's colonies (Canada, India) and perhaps even her Axis enemies, but there is an image of white Englishness at its centre.

Ondaatje suggests that white Englishness has a stable meaning. Hulme similarly makes Pakeha whiteness stable in order to use it in her allegory. She envisions a postcolonial world that is still divided between self/other and Pakeha/Maori. She uses Simon's whiteness

as a foil in her investigation of Maoriness. Ondaatje's objective is different. Rather than executing this more typical postcolonial maneuver of focusing on the erstwhile other of colonialism, he chooses to focus on how the image of the colonist works. Thus while Hulme uses Pakeha whiteness to explore what it has excluded of Maori culture, Ondaatje considers English colonial whiteness from the perspectives of those marginalised by the English. Unlike the binary postcolonial world investigated by Hulme, Ondaatje presents a gathering of colonial subjects in an isolated location. He creates a situation in which two people from a settler colony (Hana, Caravaggio) can discuss what it means to be English with someone from an Asian colony (Kip). At the same time Ondaatje reveals Englishness as a construction and a disguise easily donned by someone from a nation that is one of England's enemies in Europe.

From the "outside" perspectives of self-identified Maoris Kerewin and Joe, Simon's whiteness has certain unchanging connotations. Like Hulme, Ondaatje implies that an outsider's understanding of colonial whiteness is surprisingly rigidly and stably defined—for Almásy, Hana, and Kip, Englishness may shift and apply to unexpected individuals, but it is not evolving. By contrast, Malouf demonstrates how whiteness can evolve, presenting Gemmy

as a new white Australian in relation to colonial understandings of whiteness. Carey similarly considers how marginalised whiteness changes and becomes othered in relation to dominant whitenesses. Thus the transition to my next chapter is a turning point in the dissertation. My first two chapters have considered whiteness as presented from "the outside" (from a Maori perspective, and from that of a Canadian, an Italian-Canadian, an Indian and a Hungarian). My next two chapters consider the fragmentation within constructions of whiteness from white settler perspectives.

Ondaatje suggests that Englishness has a particular meaning in the postcolonial imagination. Colonial constructions of the ideal Englishman persist, and characters like Hana, Kip and even Almásy by turns complicitly idealise them and critique them. Kip suggests how Englishness can be a quality that is not specific to England; he reveals that it connotes a colonial attitude as much as anything else (and thus America can be "English" in its dropping of the bomb). The patient's Englishness is predicated on the assumption of his whiteness, but Ondaatje reveals that it is a product of others perceiving certain kinds of knowledge, language and history as English.

[1] Here, as in Simon's case, the spectacle of injury is downplayed as if it were not shocking. The patient's burns are overlooked in order that he can be constructed as English. Simon's injuries are downplayed by some critics in favour of making Simon seem less injured, less violated and more of a reconciliatory figure.

[2] Irvine goes so far as to suggest that the "English patient is himself a condensation of western history, always carrying a copy of Herodotus with him. He is referred to at various times as a prehistoric bogman, as Odysseus, Icarus, John the Baptist, a knight, a Renaissance King, a survivor of Milton's heavenly war (Lucifer) and so on" (142).

[3] Randall observes that "Ondaatje's novel is thoroughly inhabited by, almost haunted by, its cultural predecessors—texts such as Kipling's *Kim*, the *Histories* of Herodotus, Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma*, Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* [and] DuMaurier's *Rebecca* (133).

[4] See Said's reading of *Kim* in *Culture and Imperialism* (159-196).

[5] Ondaatje comments that "in *The English Patient* everyone is fearful of going home. Hana's fearful, and the

patient hates the idea of home and nations, and Kirpal Singh has been befriended and enamoured of certain English things for a while. They don't want to go back to where they're from" (Wachtel 260). In addition they want some justification for where they are—they look to their idealised notion of the English patient for that justification.

[6] For similar arguments, see Morton A. Kaplan in the *Washington Times* monthly magazine (February 1993), or Hilary Mantel's review of *The English Patient* (*The New York Review of Books* 40.1/2: 22-23). Stephen Scobie and Josef Pesch both suggest that the introduction of the Hiroshima bombing is foreshadowed. Scobie indicates that Ondaatje has prepared for this moment "by the progression of the dates and by the pervasive imagery of fire"; Pesch observes that Ondaatje consistently "mourns the landscapes, buildings, bodies and minds ruined in this victory, even on the side of the victors" (Scobie 96; Pesch "Globalized Nationalisms" 105). Both read the dropping of the bomb as apocalyptic (Scobie 96; Pesch "Post-Apocalyptic War Histories" 118). In addition, Scobie observes that "[t]he picture of Hana's dead father with the buttons of his shirt burnt into his chest, is reminiscent of photographs of victims of Hiroshima" (96).

However, he and Pesch both de-emphasise the connections among Hana's father, the similarly burnt patient, and the victims of the bomb. Scobie, for instance, focuses on "the hanging fire of the nuclear apocalypse" instead of the patient as victim or embodiment of the bomb itself (96).

[7] Those who have seen the film version of *The English Patient* may not be aware of the extent of the patient's burns: "Even though Fiennes' burn makeup took six hours a day to apply, real burn victims are far more disfigured than anything Zaentz thought the audience could bear" (Dorminey 17). (Fiennes plays the patient, Zaentz is the producer.)

[8] Katherine also wants to categorise Almásy. She describes his aversion to names, ownership (and so also the "ownership" or belonging which Almásy thinks is implied by nation): "[y]ou slide past everything with your fear and hate of ownership, of owning, of being owned, of being named. You think this is a virtue. I think you are inhuman" (238).

[9] He is also literally the third person, for his affair is with Katherine, but involves Clifton, her husband.

[10] Perhaps Caravaggio recognises the patient's self-construction because he sees how all four people at the

villa have created images of themselves and now "here they were shedding skins. They could imitate nothing but what they were. There was no defence but to look for the truth in others" (117).

[11] She is commenting on Zepetnek's article when she makes this suggestion.

[12] Ondaatje writes: "[t]here are some European words you can never translate properly into another language. *Felhomaly*. The dusk of graves. With the connotation of intimacy there between the dead and the living" (170).

[13] In 1999, the Anti Defamation League writes that Hungary has the second largest neo-Nazi population in the world.

[14] See Bovini Giuseppe's *Ravenna Art and History* for pictures of the statue (Ravenna: Longo, 1980: 63, 123).

[15] Yet another reading suggests that the patient is punished for his inappropriate passion. Throughout, Almásy is eroticised. For instance, Hana transfers a ladybird to his burnt flesh: "[i]t leaves her, moving onto the dark skin. Avoiding the sea of white sheet, it begins to make the long trek [. . .] a bright redness against what seems to be volcanic flesh" (208). The romanticisation of the patient's flesh suggests that, like TB or cancer victims, burning fever, or, in this

case, burnt skin, is an "image of a 'diseased' love, of a passion that 'consumes'," a passion like that between Almásy and Katherine (Sontag 20).

Chapter Three

Muddy Margins

In David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon,* Gemmy is an English boy shipwrecked off the coast of Queensland in the mid-nineteenth century. Raised by Aborigines, his subsequent sojourn in a British colony is a colonial encounter, for Gemmy is presented as the colonists' other. However, in this encounter Gemmy also facilitates a re-examination of what the colonists assume to be other because he is British. He is white though perceived as black. He is not fully either but rather becomes a "muddy margin" dividing British colonial and white Australian identities (200). Gemmy asserts that he is a "B-b-british object," and in this statement his indeterminacy is most revealing (3). Rather than clarify or resolve tensions between Aboriginal "blackness" and colonial "whiteness," this "black white man" exposes fissures among different kinds of Britishness determined by region or class, and, in particular, between what it is to be a British subject in Britain and a British "object" in Australia (10).

Where Hulme investigates how Pakeha colonialism has altered Maori identity and Ondaatje how English

colonialism constructed a stable notion of "the Englishman," Malouf investigates how the white colonial "Englishman" evolves into a white Australian settler. My first chapter considers Hulme's use of colonial whiteness in a postcolonial allegory. My second considers how this kind of colonial whiteness is constructed. This chapter considers Malouf's efforts to show the fissures in white colonial identity. In *The English Patient*, Ondaatje demonstrates that English colonial discourse created a fictitious ideal Englishman. He shows the persistence and persuasiveness of this ideal when he describes Hana and Kip's misperceptions of the patient's "English" identity. Gemmy is not "English," he is "B-b-british." Even this seemingly minor distinction reveals Malouf's interest in fracturing constructions of colonial whiteness: Britishness comprises Englishness, Scottishness, Welshness and Irishness. To declare that one is "British" already suggests that regional difference has been elided. In addition, class differences are concealed in the term: white colonial "Britishness" implies a privileged ruling class. Gemmy is clearly not from a privileged class, and he never has been; he is abject in Australia, but has been so in Britain too. Gemmy's black-whiteness reveals how the British colonial stereotype already contains its other

within it. His difference from the kind of colonial whiteness the settlers would like to cultivate reveals "*within* the very integuments of 'whiteness' the agonistic elements that make it the unsettled, disturbed form of authority that it is—the incommensurable 'differences' that it must surmount" (Bhabha "The White Stuff" 21). Gemmy is a dark other within British colonialism's construction of its own Britishness. His claim to Britishness reveals both the fallacy of a British colonial stereotype and the disadvantaged, marginalised "Britishnesses" within it.

Malouf uses Gemmy to investigate the difference between the image that the colonists had of themselves as British and their predicament as settlers far from the imperial centre. He describes the settlers' fear of indigenisation using Gemmy as an example of what is feared. However, he also uses Gemmy to present the possibility of new Australianness. Gemmy is the abject that the settlers want to expel—that which they want, more than anything, to dissociate themselves from but which returns uninvited. Paradoxically, Gemmy is also an uncanny figure for the settlers. He appears to them as both a "black" native in the landscape, and as "a white man" like one of them; he surprises them with their own potential Australianness. Malouf re-writes Australian

settler foundation myths and captivity narratives in order to insert the strangely indigenised Australian Gemmy at their heart. Although both Malouf and Hulme adapt myths to try and reconcile a colonial past with a postcolonial present, Hulme uses Maori mythology to emphasise the need to revivify Maori culture, while Malouf uses Australian settler mythology to suggest the need for Australians to recognise that white Australianness is no longer Britishness, that colonial Britishness never really was what it represented itself to be, and that settler life need not refer continually to a British centre.

Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra suggest that the foundation myth continues to be influential because of the "Australian obsession with legitimacy" (24). The foundation myth invokes the notion of *terra nullius* (the belief that Australia was empty before the colonists got there) and the bravery of settlers coming to a vast and strange land. It omits both the slaughter of Aborigines and the colony's penal history. It strives to legitimate the presence of non-Aboriginal Australians in Australia. Hodge and Mishra suggest that guilt over the abuse of Aboriginal populations results in a continual retelling of the story of Australia's settlement in order to mitigate the severity of colonial abuses:[1]

> NonAboriginal [sic] Australians try to build their foundation myth around the sufferings and achievements of the pioneers and early settlers [. . .] White Australians have had a continuous need to generate new forms of the foundation myth, which exists to annul, defuse, displace and negate the intractable conditions of the foundation event. (26)

In some respects, Malouf generates another form of the myth. His version does not "annul, defuse, displace and negate the intractable conditions of the foundation event." It does not try to deny that the foundation event happened, to alter its details, or to justify it. Instead Malouf's version reveals a different perspective on the white settlers. He shows that they were not simply pioneers "suffering" or "achieving" in material terms. He suggests that they tried to make sense of their own decisions and that they needed to reconcile themselves with the British lives they had left behind. Above all, in Malouf's version, the settlers struggle to understand what their identities might be as white Australians.

Gemmy's story is also part captivity narrative. The most influential of this genre may be the Eliza Fraser story. In 1836, Fraser survived the shipwreck of the

Stirling Castle and was taken in by a group of Aborigines on what is now known as Fraser Island. She left the Aborigines with an escaped convict. He brought her to a British settlement and she returned from there to Britain.[2] The story is re-told in numerous places, including Patrick White's *A Fringe of Leaves*, [3] Ondaatje's *the man with seven toes* and Andre Brink's *An Instant in the Wind*, as well as in paintings by Fiona Foley (a Badtjala [Fraser Island] artist) and Sidney Nolan and in films like Gillian Cootes' *Island of Lies*.[4] Jim Davidson notes that contemporary treatments of the Fraser myth differ from those of the nineteenth century: "today other elements are of greater interest: it is less Mrs Fraser's rescue that is emphasized than her adaptation to the new land" (116). In keeping with this desire to see adaptive Australianness rather than stubborn Britishness, Malouf writes of "*a forerunner*" (132). Gemmy is a British man who has adapted to the new land; the land itself helps him survive, not the British colony. Like Fraser, Gemmy finds himself in Queensland after living with Aborigines; unlike Fraser, he prefers to return to the Aborigines than to stay with the colonists (or even to contemplate returning to Britain). The difference in the stories also makes a significant point about class and British privilege: comparatively privileged, Fraser returns to

where she is treated well (Britain); poor and underprivileged, Gemmy returns to where he is treated well (Aboriginal Australia). Malouf combines the foundation myth with a captivity narrative so that Gemmy, willingly held "captive" by Aborigines, is a white orphan who returns to white civilisation and then chooses to leave it again; he also seems to be one of the bona fide Australian inhabitants of the land who are so threatening to the fragile communities of settlers.

Lee Spinks suggests that Gemmy is made to answer for "two different settler needs" (169). His "presence, as a figure of cultural otherness, demands at once to be *reclaimed* by the discourse of social order *and* established as a fixed point *outside*" (169). He represents the possibility that Australian tanned skin can be made white again and that what is understood as white "civilisation" can be regained. However, he is also irredeemably other, thus reaffirming the colonists' understanding of themselves as different and superior. His multivalence stems from his distorted, transformed, abject and yet obdurate whiteness. His whiteness is so peculiar that for critics and characters alike it is easier to perceive him as black. Young Lachlan Beattie refers to Gemmy as "a black!" when he makes his first appearance (2). This assumption sets the tone for

subsequent descriptions of Gemmy by the colonists. Gemmy is associated with the otherness of "*visible* darkness" and "[a]bsolute dark" because he comes from the bush and has "the look of a black" (42, 3). He speaks "some whining blackfeller's lingo," and is perceived as "a poor savage," "mangy," and "half starved" (4, 13, 3). He stinks, the colonists think, like a black: "half-meat, half-mud" (41). Andy McKillop thinks Gemmy is one of the "[f]ucken myalls!" (98).[5] The other settlers are less vehement at first, but from the start many believe that Gemmy has become black: "the fact was, when you looked at him sometimes he was not white [. . .] The whole cast of his face gave him the look of one of Them" (40). These are observations made by colonists anxious about their own whiteness; some critics, however, have been equally willing to read Gemmy as indigenised, even as Aboriginal.

Gemmy's "blackness" started what became known as "the Malouf controversy" after *Remembering Babylon*'s release in Australia in 1993, the Year of Indigenous Peoples (Delrez and Michel-Michot 156). Germaine Greer's invective is at the heart of this debate. She assumes that Gemmy is an Aborigine thinly disguised as white man so that Malouf can avoid critique but still present a cultural and racial other: "[a]ware of the revulsion that would ensue if he were to use a real Aborigine as the

butt of his supremacist fantasy, Malouf invents a lay figure, the limping, speechless black white man, Gemmy Farley [sic] whom he need not shrink from calling a savage" (Greer 3). There are a number of problems with Greer's assertion, not least of which is the fact that *Andy's* desires are referred to as "savage" and it is individuals like Andy who describe Gemmy as "savage" (100; 7). Greer reads a "supremacist fantasy" where Malouf actually criticizes the white supremacists in the colony (individuals like Andy). She sees Gemmy as Aboriginal other, where Malouf reveals Gemmy as a catalyst for the colonists' anxiety that they will become blackened or other than British. Suvendrini Perera develops Greer's argument to suggest that Gemmy is an unsuccessfully redemptive figure: "instead of refiguring the opposition between 'savagism and civilisation', between settler and indigene, coloniser and colonised, Malouf's text reinscribes these oppositions even as it appears to develop a redemptive narrative of hybridity" (21). The problem with Gemmy is that he is neither black nor a black/white hybrid.[6] Perera's frustration with an incomplete cultural reconciliation reveals her assumption that Gemmy is, at least in part, Aboriginal. The "redemptive narrative of hybridity" that Perera seeks and cannot find is hidden precisely because barriers between

different kinds of whiteness are eroded instead of those between "settler and indigene, coloniser and colonised."[7]

The Aborigines who find Gemmy are also concerned that his appearance makes him alien. They note that his eyes are "of a milky colour; blank, maybe blind" (23). They see his "silvered skin" and think he is a ghost, a "spirit, a feeble one, come back from the dead and only half reborn" (23, 22). Gemmy himself observes that his assimilation into the group is incomplete because of his whiteness and his history. He notes that "[h]e was accepted by the tribe but guardedly; in the droll, half-apprehensive way that was proper to an in-between creature" (28). Gemmy is always different because his so-called Aboriginality is limited by his whiteness and his whiteness is limited by what the settlers perceive as its unacceptable difference. For the Aborigines, Gemmy's appearance makes him an "in-between creature"; for the settlers, it makes him less than white.

Gemmy's looks make him a hyphenated being. He is "straw-topped half-naked," "muddy-eyed" and "half-starved" (7;3). He is "ugly-lookin'" and "rough-headed" but has hair as "sun-bleached and pale-straw coloured" as the colonists' own (5; 3). Half one thing, and half another, he is more alarming for his physical contradictions than for any appearance of strength or

hostility. He is too "mangy" for a white, but evidently still "a white man" (3). These contradictory qualities show the barriers between the things that are paired, rather than, as it would first seem, the bonds. Thus they do not show that Gemmy is a reconciliatory figure embodying the dissolution of the Manichean binary. Instead, the hyphens suggest that Gemmy's whiteness is undeniable, and that the colonists continually pair it with otherness in order to separate themselves from the atypical, alarming spectacle Gemmy presents.

The colonists wonder how Gemmy, a white man, got to look this way, for as Julie Carr suggests, they think "no white man would *choose* to live as an Aborigine. Would he?" (71). They are convinced that Aborigines are less than human, even bestial. The colonists submit Gemmy to the contradictory desires observed by Spinks. They want him to be a white man, and so see his appearance as symptomatic of how the Aborigines have abused him. They also want him to be other, and thus think that his appearance shows that he has become Aboriginal, ugly, and evil. Consequently, perhaps even more than his sun-burnt skin, Gemmy's physical decrepitude helps the settlers construct him as other. Lachlan sees Gemmy approach on "stick-like legs, all knobbled at the joints" which make the man look like "a wounded waterbird" (2). Gemmy is

"pathetic" and "misshapen" (7). The colonists observe that "[h]e was a man who had suffered a good deal of damage. There were scorch marks on his chest and arms where he had rolled into a camp fire, and signs that he had, at one time or another, taken a fair bit of knocking about" (7). In addition "[h]is joints were swollen and one leg was shorter than the other and a little twisted" (8). The settlers think him too broken to be white, perhaps too broken even to be human. They think that Australia and its people have done this to him.

Also lurking in the colonists' descriptions is the possibility that they could become like Gemmy, hence their adamance: he must be black, for if he is white, then this is what could become of all of them. He makes them wonder whether you could "lose it? Not just language, but *it*. *It*" (40). For Gemmy "had started out white. No question [. . .] But had he remained white?" (40). They are horrified by the possibility of their own transformation. Thus the fear that they will be un-whitened is a fear of losing *it*. That *it* is, contradictorily, Gemmy too. On the one hand, *it* is the whiteness the colonists fear losing. On the other, *it* is also Gemmy, the embodiment of what they see as drastic alteration. Gemmy becomes a metonym for the colonists' fear of becoming other than themselves, or other than

British. The colonists say of him "here it is, not two yards away, solid and breathing," adding that "[i]t brought you slap up against a terror" (42). Gemmy embodies their fears: it is Gemmy that "brought you slap up against a terror" (42).

Gemmy represents the transition from what the colonists think they are to what they fear they will become. He is an example of what Christopher Miller calls "the locus where the light of the sun becomes darkness," where light and all that it connotes for nineteenth-century European colonialism (civilisation, enlightenment) shows that it can be scorched, burnt dark and transformed into blackness with, in turn, all that it connotes (primitivism, ignorance) (Miller 8). Gemmy's "leathery face" is "scorched black" (3). He shows that whiteness is vulnerable to injury, to change and to becoming like its other. Ross Chambers writes that blackness becomes a mythologised absolute in Miller's vision, and that this absolute implies an equally mythologised whiteness at the other end of the spectrum: whiteness is "normalized into familiarity and taken for granted rather than posing a challenge by virtue of its extreme otherness" (193). Chambers suggests that whiteness is unexamined and normative because, despite being at one end of the spectrum, it is not perceived as

extreme. Blackness is constructed in opposition to this spectacular and yet normalised and consequently unexamined whiteness. Blackness, not whiteness, is made to seem aberrant. However, Gemmy is associated with both "Absolute Dark" and the "white man" (3). His spectacular black-whiteness facilitates the re-examination of blackness *and whiteness;* he makes whiteness seem abnormal. The commingling of black and white in Gemmy suggests where atypical qualities may emerge from within the skin of the white colonial stereotype. As with the hyphenated descriptions of him, one can see that referring to Gemmy as "black white man" does not make him an in-between brown; he is instead an unexpected shade of white.

Gemmy is so troubling because his whiteness challenges the limits and boundaries of colonial, settler whiteness. This challenge is enacted literally: Gemmy crosses the boundary fence that divides white settler from black Aborigine. He comes from the Aborginal side, and looks like a black, but declares, unexpectedly, "*Do not shoot. I am a British object*" (33). A burnt, injured and scarred *whiteness* challenges the white community's boundaries both by crossing them and by suggesting that they are permeable: they do not keep Aborigines out and they do not keep whiteness in either.[8] Veronica Brady

writes that "[t]he disproportion between Gemmy's vulnerable humanity and the rhetoric of imperialism threatens [the settlers'] identity as he becomes the double they fear, the self not as victorious, but as abject" (96). For Brady, Gemmy is at once abject and a "double" self; he is both abject and uncanny. Gemmy's abject qualities include what the colony perceives as the "violent dark revolt" of being that "lies there, quite close, but cannot be assimilated" (Kristeva 2). They see him as threatening because unassimilable and yet part of their community. His very presence is a rebellion against their ideals and their faith in the white colonial stereotype. Like the Kristevan abject, Gemmy "calls into question borders and threatens identity" (Oliver 225).

However, Gemmy is also uncannily familiar. For instance, the children inside the fence are surprised by his hair which is blond like "their own" (3). Freud writes that the uncanny "is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220), "something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (241), with the resultant capacity to provoke "dread and horror," "repulsion and distress" (219). Gemmy reminds the settlers that they too have, in a sense, been

orphaned, abandoned in a hostile environment and left to manage as best they can. They are easily lost "in the immensities of the land, under a sky that opened too far in the direction of infinity" (110). They are affected by "the fearful loneliness of the place" and "the absence of ghosts," particularly those of their own British pasts (110). He reminds them of the frailty of their ideals, and of their vulnerability to their new environment and its inhabitants. He reminds them of their doubts and fears; they consequently respond to him by being repulsed and distressed.

That Gemmy is both uncanny and abject reveals the paradox of his position vis-à-vis the colony. He is both recognised as a white man and not even recognised as human. He is "the black white man" and "a scarecrow" (10; 3). Kristeva distinguishes between the abject and the uncanny: "[e]ssentially different from 'uncanniness,' more violent too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory" (5). Abjection and uncanniness—though dissimilar (the former involves lack of recognition, the latter requires it)—both cause fear because both make the individual question the safety of his/her identity. Both also entail the resurfacing of what has been hidden or repressed. In a liminal "black

white" human/inhuman figure like Gemmy, the concepts can combine. Gemmy confronts the colonists and they perceive him as a violent and unfamiliar Aborigine. He makes the colonists feel unsafe both because his arrival suggests their vulnerability to Aboriginal raids and because it suggests the possibility that they will become indigenised like him. He represents the return of what the colony has abjected as other (the Aborigines) and is also an uncanny reminder of what they fear in themselves (their own potential to become Australian).

George Abbott, the schoolmaster, suspects that "what they were dealing with, in Gemmy, might be closer to them, to *him*, than he knew" (179). Gemmy evokes "a terror you thought you had learned, years back, to treat as childish: The Bogey, the Coal man, Absolute night" (42). He is an uncanny reminder of the colonists' own unwelcome, atavistic qualities. By being like them and yet at odds with their conviction of their own "civilised" whiteness, Gemmy strains the colonists' cherished illusion that they are immune to their own uncivilised natures, or even to their own animal smell:

> the horror it carries to you is not just the smell, in your own sweat, of a half-forgotten swamp-world going back deep in both of you, but that for him, as

> you meet face to face here in the sun, you and all you stand for have not yet appeared over the horizon of the world, so that after a moment all the wealth of it goes dim in you, then is cancelled altogether, and you must meet at last in a terrifying equality that strips the last rags from your soul and leaves you so far out on the edge of yourself that your fear now is that you may never get back.
>
> It was the mixture of monstrous strangeness and unwelcome likeness that made Gemmy Fairley so disturbing. (43)

The colonists are alarmed because of the uncanniness of recognising themselves in Gemmy, this man they would prefer not to recognise at all. His existence suggests the irrelevance of their own British history to this unfamiliar landscape. Here British colonial civilisation is inconsequential. Gemmy's presence implies that now they too are simply white Australians. What they recognise in Gemmy also makes them question themselves. Jock McIvor, for example, is "disturbed, most of all, by the view this gave him of *himself*" (73). Even Gemmy is surprised by his uncanny similarities with the colonists. He remembers snippets of British life and wonders where the memories came from. He thinks there is another

creature living inside him. As he decides to cross the fence, he is surprised that he wants "to be recognised" (32). He is convinced that the inner creature needs a language he does not have, that "[i]t was the words that would recognise him" (32).

Gemmy thinks language is key to understanding the creature inside him who remembers life in Britain. Like Frankenstein's monster, he crouches outside a house, trying to hear the words spoken and understand them:

> [h]e put his shoulder to the rough slabs, believing that if he could only get near enough, the meaning of what was said would come clear to him, he would snatch the words clean out of the speakers' mouths. If he could get the words inside him, as he had the soaked mush, the creature or spirit or whatever it was, would come up to the surface of him and take them. It was the words he had to get hold of. (32)

Even Gemmy perceives himself as doubled. He identifies himself as other than British, but he thinks that there is a ghost of someone else that lives inside him and is British. His British history is unreal and spectral to him. It is uncanny—he startles himself by recognising British things, and English words in particular. Gemmy

believes that if he can retrieve the language, he can bring the British ghost inside him back to life. However, English words remain elusive. He remembers his English in pieces, and only to the limited extent that he had known the language in the first place. He remembers his stammer as well, and thinks that it is "[a] weakness that [is] inseparable, perhaps, from the tongue itself" (14). The self-deprecation and uncertainty implied by his stammer is linked with the British life in which Gemmy was depreciated and undermined. In Britain he was a servant, and so learned little vocabulary, no "more than the few hundred words that were immediately needful to him, to fill his belly or save his skin, having heard little in his life but commands, curses, coarse endearments" (26). He also connects his stammer with his poverty: "nothing he had dealt with had been his own. He had stammered over most of them, b-b-boots, j-j-jug; his hold was buttery" (27). Because of his class and his post as Willett's servant, Gemmy has little to say in English. The colonists think that Gemmy has lost "*it*" because of his lack of facility with English (40). However, "*it*" is a kind of national identity Gemmy never had. His hold on ideal Britishness (and so ideal whiteness) is as buttery as his hold on words. His stuttered "I am a B-b-british object" makes this clear

(3).

Gemmy's "buttery" hold on British identity thus has to do with his lack of facility with the language that produces both its colonial rhetoric and that rhetoric's ideals. Gemmy is not hale and hearty, does not have clean pink cheeks or well-smoothed blond hair; he does not announce proudly "I am a British Subject." However, no one else in the colony really fits the stereotype either.[9] This too comes out most clearly in language. Lachlan poses as archetypal settler controlling the land and its perceived others. He holds a stick up to Gemmy's back as if it were a gun and says, telling the man to shut up, "[j]ust steik yur mooth" (4). This is Scots, not simply "British," and it is poor, mining-town Scots at that. Ellen McIvor scolds Janet in a similarly Scottish accent: "O for heaven's sake lassie [. . .] dinnae you start" (7). The colonists are a specific kind of white and a specific kind of British (Scottish, poor). Gemmy's difference is an exaggeration of how they themselves depart from the stereotype of the ideal white colonist. The settlers Malouf describes "really are real pioneers, not just of another country, but pioneers of the human state. These people are not adventurers; they have gone there because they were poor and uneducated—because they have no power at home" (Malouf in

Papastergiadis 87). They are aware of the myths that construct them as white colonial figures, and also, it seems, of how they do not comply. This knowledge frequently manifests itself as defensiveness about their superiority to the Aborigines. Gemmy arrives, and they draw on captivity myths and stereotypes to explain him, becoming uncertain "how much of [the story] was real and how much they had themselves supplied from tales they already knew, since he was by no means the first white man to have turned up like this after a spell among the blacks" (16). The colonists try to explain Gemmy so as to explain themselves. Just as the foundation and Fraser myths are ways of legitimating white presence and reasserting white superiority over the Aborigines, so Gemmy's story becomes a way for the settlers to reassure themselves of their correctness and their right to the land.

The written narrative Frazer and Abbott concoct to explain Gemmy's life suggests that these two men, in particular, want to see themselves as ideal colonial figures, and to see Gemmy (as Spinks suggests) as both inexorably other and re-assimilable through their benevolence and generosity. The narrative makes them part of a myth of colonial superiority as much as it makes Gemmy part of a myth of repatriation (like the Eliza

Fraser myth) and otherness (like the foundation myths which describe settlers and their conflicts with Aborigines). There are two stages to the writing down of Gemmy's life, and both obscure Gemmy. The first is Fraser's effort to understand Gemmy's speech. The second is Abbott's mischievous tinkering with Frazer's interpretations of Gemmy's words. Both Frazer and Abbott have vested interests. Frazer sees Gemmy as a model "*forerunner*" but also feels sorry for him ("[o]ur *poor friend*") (132). He thinks Gemmy represents possibilities, but is afraid to contemplate what would happen if all of them became like him, or all turned away from the prescribed ideal British codes of behaviour and appearance. Abbott has no interest in understanding Gemmy, but wants to imagine himself as colonist shouldering what Kipling called "the White Man's Burden." At fifteen, Abbott had envisioned himself as a colonial hero. He wanted to strike out into Africa, "the Dark Continent" (49): "[h]e wanted a life which was arduous, which would call on his strength," which would, in short, require him to be the ideal white British explorer and colonist among the blacks (49). He comes instead to Australia and struggles thereafter with creating that heroic image in what he sees as a less fitting context, for here "[e]ven the natives were of a dingy greyness"

(51). As Abbott observes, "[i]t was in this light that he considered the yammering, yowling fellow whose story he had taken down"; he writes Gemmy's narrative in the context of his own disappointment and desire to be more like a colonial explorer (51).

Frazer and Abbott create a "Colonial fairytale," presenting Gemmy so as to convince themselves that they are who they want to be (19). Frazer means well, and likes to think well of himself, but his interventions are misguided. He tries to get Gemmy's story out of him:

> It was Mr. Frazer's belief that the sympathy he felt for the man, which was very strong, gave him an infallible insight into what he was trying to get out [. . .] they sat, at times, at a distance of just inches, hooting and shouting at one another; on Gemmy's side, odd bursts of sound, half-meanings at most; on the other whole phrases that, whether or not they were quite what the man intended, found their way into what George Abbott set down. (17)

Frazer introduces inaccuracies by supplying the history he thinks is Gemmy's. Although well-intentioned, Frazer's version of the story appropriates Gemmy by focusing on how Frazer himself has "infallible insight"

and great "sympathy." Abbott's transcription appropriates Frazer ("in his eyes such a fool"), Gemmy and the narrative itself (19). Where Frazer's inaccuracies suggest missionary zeal, Abbott's suggest his desire to make himself more exciting. He thinks Frazer is smug and ridiculous. Abbott wants to seem "sceptical" and superior to the occasion:

> Out of boredom, but also to set himself at a distance from the occasion and to register, if only in an obscure and indirect way, the contempt he felt for the minister's smugness, he had introduced into what he had just set down a phrase or two of his own.
>
> [. . .]
>
> The imp of invention gave a gleeful kick in him and what he added now was not a change of phrasing, but an alteration of fact—nothing blatant. The thought of this scrap of mistruth, deliberately introduced among so much that was mere guesswork on the minister's part, not to say sentimental fantasy, appealed to his sense of the absurd [. . .] In this way, he appropriated a little of the occasion for himself, stepped in and concealed himself, a sceptical shade, at this and that point of the

minister's Colonial fairytale. (19)

The "Colonial fairytale" is finally more about Abbott and Frazer than about Gemmy himself.[10] The two transmogrify Gemmy by translating him into the inadequate and inaccurate language of colonialism. They make him part of a colonial myth which does not actually describe his life and which brooks no anomalies. Frazer's sympathies and Abbott's intrusions create an Eliza Fraser-like story which eventually procures Gemmy an offer for an utterly inappropriate job as Customs Officer (175). Frazer and Abbott's narrative implies that Gemmy's return to orthodox colonial Britishness is possible. It does not communicate the possibility that Gemmy has no desire to be British, but wants to be Australian instead.[11] The narrative omits the parts of Gemmy's history which do not fit with conceptions of colonial Britishness; it elides the crises of identity suffered by the authors and omits the hardships Gemmy suffered (and continues to suffer) at British hands.

Gemmy's misunderstanding of the nature of the narrative reveals how serious its omissions are. He believes that "[m]agic [. . .] had been the essence" of the afternoon spent producing the seven handwritten sheets (20). Though he is unsure how much he has

mentioned of all that "over the long afternoon [. . .] he had glimpsed and recognised, glimpsed and shied away from, and intended and failed to tell," he is convinced his childhood is in the pages (21). He is convinced that "[h]e was known. Left alone with the sheets, to brood and sniff, the whole of what he was, *Gemmy*, might come back to him" (20). He thinks the sheets contain his protector/tormentor "Willett with his bristling red hair" as well as "the rats, and old Crouch" (21). He thinks that if the sheets write of his misery, destroying them will free him of it.[12] Gemmy's obsession with specific details of his former life, and the extent to which he is tormented by them, suggests that these are the stories which need to be told if he is to be helped. However, just as there are no English words for Australian plants and fruits, Gemmy, Frazer and Abbott cannot (or will not, in the case of the latter two) find English words to describe a whiteness which is Australian rather than British.

What is left out, then, is evidence that Britons have been crueler than any Aborigine in the settlers' captivity and foundation myths. Gemmy notes that "[h]is real tormentors [are] in his head" (119). They are *British*. The pinewood chest at Mrs. Hutchence's reminds him of working at a wood mill, sweeping under the teeth

of the saws and eating the machine grease on the floor (146). He remembers himself as one of "an army of little shitty creatures," and as an etiolated "maggot" (146). His self-descriptions emphasise his whiteness, but also the otherness which leaves him groping "in the darkness [. . .] for the others" like him (146). The "maggots" join Mosey, the Irish and Willett to become nightmarish figures. He dreams of the rats he had to tend for Willett and how they bit him, running up his pant legs if they could (151). He remembers the many bites that "turn to open sores" (151). He also dreams of Willett's moll who "frigs him" under his shirt when he is ten or eleven (151). He remembers that it was after one of these nights, and after "a beating no worse than others he has received" that he set fire to Willett's apartment in a revenge which he himself does not fully understand and cannot clearly articulate: "some darker nature [had] begun to emerge in him. He [had] resentments" (151).

The resentments Gemmy acknowledges at age ten or eleven are the results of the privations of poverty, but also of Willett's abuse and willingness to let his friends abuse the boy. He remembers Mosey and the Irish taunting him as they "bowled him back and forth between them" until

> they began to thrust about under his clothes, and the cries that broke from him as their fingers pinched and poked and teased and twisted were the cries of a child, but the pain now was that of a grown man, outraged and powerless, who had to stand by and see it done, and for all the fierce howls that came out of him could neither drive the devils off nor prevent what, in a moment now, unless he wakes, will be past all remedy . . . (120 [Malouf's ellipses])

The description is horrific. Gemmy is taunted, teased to the point of some outrage which lies beyond language and is expressed in ellipses instead. Malouf makes it clear that Gemmy also continues to suffer at the hands of British subjects, for Gemmy wakes out of this dream "[a]nd it is true. This time it is true. He is awake, and these others, all knuckled hands and shoulders and rough heads and breath, are cramped close under the lean-to with him, shoving, whispering instructions, at one point giggling" (121). In the dark, Gemmy is taken out of the lean-to so that a group of settlers can try to drown him. The dream of abuse becomes the waking experience of more abuse, and more threats to his safety. Malouf's shift from the British abuse in Britain to the British abuse in

Australia challenges the myth of colonial superiority. There is depravity in England as well as in Australia. Malouf's picture of whiteness shows qualities the colonists would prefer to attribute to the Aborigines. Whiteness is shown as excessively sexual (Willett's moll), lazy (Willett) and uncivil (Mosey and the Irish). In the worst of the colony, these kinds of failings are coupled with smugness. Andy McKillop, for instance, lies and drinks and yet is also convinced that he is better than any Aboriginal.[13]

As I observe in my introduction, whiteness is constructed "as an elitist category" (Nakayama and Martin 21). It conceals both race and class disadvantage. Gemmy is othered by his poverty as much as by his appearance. In Britain, he is the nineteenth-century equivalent of what Annalee Newitz and Matthew Wray refer to (in the context of twentieth-century America) as "white trash": he is poor, uneducated and is perceived as uncivilised (168). He is all this before he ever sets foot in Australia and before the settlers can insist that he is these things because he has become Aboriginal. Newitz and Wray also write that poverty is seen as "a kind of sickness" (168). Gemmy's poverty makes him ill, abject and other, though again the colonists prefer to see his condition as the result of Aboriginal influence. If

"white trash" is "the white Other," it could be described as the blackness within whiteness (Newitz and Wray 168). Thus, if Gemmy is "the black white man," he is the "black white" Other, or the blackness within colonial whiteness (10).

Alterity within whiteness itself is the focus of my next chapter. Carey uses Tristan to suggest how a colonial binary can work on the basis of distinctions that are not epidermal; he suggests that poverty, provincialism and abjection can mark a white individual as other despite his/her whiteness. Both Carey and Malouf indicate that whiteness evolves, and that within what we know as an intractable colonial whiteness—the kind of whiteness examined by Hulme and Ondaatje—are numerous other white identities. Malouf looks back to consider the creation of white Australian identity. Carey looks forward to consider neo-colonialist whiteness and its construction of its white others. Malouf comments that Gemmy "represents a kind of pioneer spirit of what that landscape and continent might do to you if you really and completely committed yourself to it" (Papastergiadis 85). Gemmy is a white-skinned "B-b-british object" who becomes a blackened, sun-burned Australian.

Malouf is like Richard Dyer and Chambers in his

interest in "making whiteness strange" (Dyer 4). He uses Gemmy, and Gemmy's effect on the settlers, to show both that no one fits the white colonial stereotype and that whiteness has hidden its others within it (so that the type conceals individuals like Gemmy). In addition to scrutinising whiteness, Malouf shows that it evolves. In this respect, Gemmy's muddied whiteness is theoretically provocative. Bhabha and others who critique whiteness have emphasised the multitudes of "agonistic elements" within it. In an effort to deal with whiteness as a concept, or as that which opposes blackness, there has not been as much attention paid to how these elements reveal whiteness' capacity to metamorphose, to be chameleonesque or to be nationally specific. Malouf shows that whiteness is not static, that its very integuments change and that Australian whiteness can evolve into something specific to its environment. Malouf's Gemmy answers a need for nuances. Emily Apter suggests that her postcolonial theory tries "to avoid some of the particularist mantras and truisms calcifying inside the rhetoric of 'difference' while at the same time taking seriously *different* categories of thinking colonial subjectivity" (5). Malouf achieves a similar effect by different means. He stretches the boundaries of "sameness" to make it seem different; he creates a

"different" shade of white and so presents whiteness itself as part of a spectrum of shades rather than as one of two.

Malouf exposes the irrelevance of the colonial stereotype to Australian settler society. He lets us sympathise with the colonists for the difficulty of becoming something else, as Gemmy has already done. Unlike Hulme, he is interested in showing how whiteness must reconcile with its own construction of itself. Unlike Ondaatje, he wants to show how whiteness evolves to confound understandings of what the British/English colonists are supposed to be like. Unlike Simon, Gemmy is not punitively abused for being too white, but rather for not being white enough, for being too liminal, or too much of a "muddy margin" between whiteness and Australianness. Unlike both Simon and the patient, Gemmy becomes something new. Malouf suggests that the white settlers are trapped by a stereotype in which they believe they should fit, but cannot; Gemmy, a "*forerunner*," forces them to question both how they are going to fit in where they are, and who they can be if they are not "B-b-british" objects (132).

Colonial stereotypes weaken and compromise both Gemmy and the settlers. Similarly, British histories celebrating these constructions compromise the truth of

the settlers' lives. Gemmy believes that the "Colonial fairytale" is powerful because it contains his life. Malouf shows that it is powerful because, like biased historical narratives thick with colonial rhetoric, it contains everything but. Gemmy wants to reclaim the narrative so that he can get rid of the miseries he believes it describes. He believes that "the black blood had so much power over his own," that "events, things, people too [. . .] sprang to life" in the narrative (176). He believes that people like Willett have been "[m]agicked into squiggles, like the ghosts of insects under bark, they had drawn the last of his spirit from him. They were drawing him to his death" (176). What he actually takes back is a handful of student exercises. His life is obviously not in these children's work. However, it is not in Abbott and Frazer's fairytale either. Symbolically, his action lets him take back what the settlers have omitted to acknowledge about him. He makes "the black blood" powerless over him because he escapes the inaccurate story. He walks out of their construction. He disappears from the fairytale as well as from Malouf's retelling of that tale.

Gemmy's disappearance frustrates our desire for either an Eliza Fraser-esque ending including his reintegration into the colony or for one that shows him

becoming Aboriginal. Malouf does not supply an "ending" at all. Nettlebeck writes: "[h]erein lies what could be called the post-colonial impulse of Malouf's work: colonial patriarchy's tradition of claiming space, and thereby conditions of knowledge, is made questionable by a perpetual evasion of resolution" (107). Ondaatje's and Carey's novels are similarly unresolved: the patient dies, but the story goes on without him; Tristan escapes to an undescribed new life. Only Hulme's postcolonial allegory tries to resolve its narrative, thereby engaging with "colonial patriarchy's tradition" in order to challenge it. Malouf does not fashion a Colonial fairytale of his own. Space, knowledge and personal history are slippery, evasive and muddily defined.

Malouf's last paragraph suggests that the goal of the book has been to reconsider Australia in light of what colonial rhetoric omitted, and white Australians in light of what colonial stereotypes left out. It suggests the muddiness of whiteness's own boundaries and how antipodean whiteness relates to the world:

> the moon plucks at our world and all the waters of the earth ache towards it, and the light, running in fast now, reaches the edge of the shore, just so far in its order, and all the muddy margin of the bay is

> alive, and in a line of running fire all the outline of the vast continent appears, in touch with its other life. (200)

Where the colonists' hyphenated descriptions of Gemmy emphasise separation, the repeated "and's" here emphasise connection, but also continuous flow and modification. Malouf suggests that Australia is an underside, or a dark side of the world to which the tides are drawn by the bright light of the moon (an antipodean light unlike that of the British empire's sun). He implies that there has been a postcolonial re-examination of the relation of Australia's shores to her "other" life. Britain is positioned as other; here she comes from her periphery to the implicitly central "vast continent." The tug of Britain's authority and ideals has been replaced by that of Australia's moon. The "muddy margin" is the outline of the bay, but also white Australian identity. It is what whiteness becomes; it is Gemmy with his muddy appearance and what he sees with "the muddiness of his eye" (179, 97, 7). Thus the "running fire" is the conflagration Gemmy leaves behind in Britain, symbolised by Willett's boots "running with flame" (153). However, "the world [. . .] burning behind him" becomes an Australian bushfire (153; 176). The demeaning limits

implied by Willett's boots are replaced by Australia's more expansive "charred" and "blackened earth" (181). The continent is "in touch now with its other life" which includes both its British ancestors and "forerunners" like Gemmy.[14]

[1] Their observation is similar to Dyer's that "[o]ne wants to acknowledge so much how awful white people have been" (11). However, apologias in settler myths are not overt, but rather are attempts to reframe the story, concealing rather than admitting guilt.

[2] Colin MacInnes summarises the story:

"Mrs Fraser was a Scottish lady who was shipwrecked on what is now Fraser Island, off the Queensland coast. She lived for 6 months among the aborigines, rapidly losing her clothes, until she was discovered by one Bracefell, a deserting convict who himself had hidden for 10 years among the primitive Australians. The lady asked the criminal to restore her to civilization, which he agreed to do if she would promise to intercede for his free pardon from the Governor. The bargain was sealed and the couple set off inland.

At first sight of European settlement, Mrs Fraser rounded on her benefactor and threatened to deliver him up to justice if he did not immediately decamp. Bracefell returned disillusioned to the hospitable bush, and Mrs. Fraser aroused such admiring interest that on her return to Europe she was able to exhibit herself at

6d a showing in Hyde Park" (quoted in Ondaatje *the man with seven toes* [pages not numbered]).

[3] In his interview with Ondaatje, Malouf comments on White's influence: he "offered a wonderful example in that he took the matter of Australia and revealed that you could make big works out of it, that could stand up in the world of fiction. Writing about Australian experience didn't mean that you were writing yourself out of the world" (57).

[4] J. McNiven, Lynette Russell and Kay Shaffer eds., *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck*, discusses the numerous adaptations of Fraser's story, and the development of the Fraser myth.

[5] The *OED* defines "myall": "An aboriginal of Australia who has not come under the influence of British civilization."

[6] By "hybrid," Perera means a postcolonial figure who embodies a midway point between colonial whiteness and colonialism's other. She wants Gemmy's black whiteness to show a melding of the two. To the extent that Gemmy is a hybrid, he is more like the hybrid Bhabha envisions: he occupies a space *between* whiteness and its other. He does not represent the melding or overlapping of the two, but instead is shaped by the disparate influences of the

Aboriginal and British communities (Bhabha *Location of Culture* 1-5).

[7] One can shore up the argument that Gemmy *is* somehow aboriginal by noting that Malouf makes him "natural," and connects him with the land. Delrez and Michel-Michot are convinced of Gemmy's "naked essential humanity" (162). Their conviction suggests that Gemmy is similar to the indigene envisioned by Terry Goldie: "[t]he indigene is often used to present the possibility of nature in a human form" (19). Malouf also shows how the colonists associate Gemmy with a primordial "swamp world" (43).

[8] Bill Ashcroft suggests that Gemmy represents an hybridity which makes the fence irrelevant (55).

[9] Malouf comments of his first trip to England: "One of the things I discovered was that Australia, for example, was *not* a reflection of southern England at all; it was a reflection of northern England and Scotland [. . .] All those things that I took for granted as being English were really provincial English" (Ondaatje "Conversation" 52). He develops the distinctions between what seems to be English, but is provincial, or marginal within England in the predominantly Scottish (and yet adamantly "British") settler colony in *Remembering Babylon*.

[10] Malouf notes that "the words Gemmy shouts on the fence in Chapter 1 (the seed of this fiction) were actually spoken at much the same time and place, but in different circumstances, by Gemmy Morril or Morrell, whose christian name I have also appropriated; otherwise the novel has no origin in fact" (202). To some extent Malouf has appropriated Gemmy Morril's history, just as Frazer and Abbott have appropriated the fictional Gemmy's.

[11] As does Frazer, though to a lesser degree, though he is unsure how best to go about it, and though he thinks orchards of indigenous fruits must be the solution (130).

[12] Malouf wrote a libretto for the opera of White's *Voss*. Possibly, he is influenced by White's novel here. See Dugald's explanation for Voss's letter-writing: "[t]hese papers contained the thoughts of which the whites wished to be rid [. . .] the sad thoughts, the bad, the thoughts that were too heavy, or in any way hurtful. These came out through the white man's writing stick, down upon paper and were sent away" (220).

[13] Contrary to suggestions by James Tulip or Perera, the Babylon Malouf remembers is evidently not frontier Australia, but rather Britain and the privation concealed

by her rhetoric of white superiority (Tulip 69; Perera 18).

[14] Malouf focuses on the relationship between the white Australian settler and Britain in his conclusion. The Aborigine is, as Greer might suggest, problematically omitted.

Chapter Four

Whiteness in Disguise

In Peter Carey's *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith,* Tristan is emphatically white, but also malformed. Ondaatje's English patient argues that "we are deformed by nation-states," but Tristan's physical disabilities express this deformation even more emphatically than the burned patient himself (Ondaatje 138). Tristan is Efican and Efica is a colony of Voorstand. I argue that his aberrant whiteness is a physical manifestation of the ideological distortions produced by Efica's history as a settler colony and Voorstand's neo-colonial cultural and economic influence. Tristan embodies the abject white other within Voorstandish race and class privilege. His deformity suggests what is awful and distorted deep within colonialism itself; he is the abhorrent and repulsive viscera that the white "body" of colonialism tries to deny exists beneath its carefully groomed integuments. Carey also uses Tristan to address the persistence of colonial Manichean binaries in what seems, at first, to be an economic rather than racial neo-colonialism. Carey reveals that whiteness's other is

still the underprivileged or the colonised; otherness is perceived as parochial and ugly. Here, however, Carey describes a *white* rather than black other. Tristan's abjection indicates whiteness expelled from whiteness, disadvantaged whiteness and even, in American terms, white trash.

Tristan's whiteness is far from the whiteness envisaged by Hulme. Hulme's Simon represents all things Pakeha in a postcolonial allegory. His whiteness allows Maoriness to redefine itself in relation to Pakeha; ultimately his whiteness facilitates Hulme's vision of a revivified and reunified Maori culture. Tristan's whiteness suggests that the colonised is an unwanted *part* of the coloniser. Tristan shows whiteness itself split into the two halves of the Manichean binary. Privileged whiteness creates its underprivileged white other and marks the distinction in language and attitudes familiar to us from the language and attitudes of colonialism. While Ondaatje's patient is "English" in ways that Hana, Kip, and Caravaggio recognise, Tristan is the colonial other in ways that a postcolonial reader recognises. Like Malouf's Gemmy, Tristan shows that whiteness is fissured. However, where Malouf uses Gemmy to underscore the otherness of the settlers and their evolution into Australians, Carey uses Tristan to suggest that cultural

and economic neo-colonialism could adopt the racial prejudices of colonialism even if both neo-coloniser and neo-colonised were white.

Carey's novel offers the least typical postcolonial context of the four I treat. It speculates about a science fictional world with nations and cultures that are analogous to, but not identical with, those of our own. It alludes to both erstwhile British colonial *and* Voorstandish neo-colonial stereotypes in a settler colony. Carey implies that settler colonies are particularly susceptible to neo-colonial cultural and economic influence because the discourses of old and new colonialism act together. Thus, for instance, racial stereotypes typical of the settler colonists subtend the cultural and economic stereotypes typical of the neo-colonists.

Tristan describes Eficans as "those laconic, belligerent, self-doubting inhabitants of the abandoned French and English colonies, descendants of convicts [. . .] grandchildren of displaced crofters and potato-blight Irish" (9). Efica is similar to Australia. The two share a history as penal and English settler colonies. As in Australia, Eficans settled a new land and colonised indigenous populations (Tristan refers to the "'lost' Indigenous Peoples (IPs) of Efica")(9). But, as Carrie

Dawson writes, "Carey does not assuage the appetite for allegory" for Efica also has a history of French influence (209). Carey suggests that Efica is like Australia, but also like any one of a number of other settler colonies. The argument he makes about colonial legacies and neo-colonial influence is thus not simply an exaggeration of Australia's cultural-historical politics. It is more general and consequently more widely applicable. Efica

> can be compared to any number of places: the small size of an island state whose citizens speak a patois of an indigenous language and languages spoken by settler-invaders suggests a history like that of Mauritius, but the twinned history of French and English invasion gestures towards an experience of colonialism particular to Canada or the New Hebrides. (Dawson 209)

Where Hulme creates a postcolonial allegory to explore Pakeha-Maori relations, Carey's scenario is intentionally *not* entirely allegorical and so not limited to British-Australian relations (or to those between America and Australia). He focuses on the interaction between colonialism and neo-colonialism, and on the effect of

such double colonial influence on individuals like Tristan.

Tristan describes the neo-colonial relationship in which Efica is subjugated to Voorstand and suffers its "*cultural imperialism*" and "*hegemony*" (170). A neo-colonised whiteness is derogated by a privileged neo-colonising whiteness. Efica's former English slave caves are threaded with miles of Voorstandish navigation cable.[1] The new colonial influence thus literally infiltrates the framework of the old. Carey invokes America's hotly contested military installation at Pine Gap in Australia, suggesting that American neo-colonial influence overlaps with the colonial influence of the British.[2] He suggests that most Voorstanders are ignorant about Efica. Tristan observes that Voorstanders confuse Efica with "Ithaca or Africa"; Efica is only significant in terms of military strategy and so Eficans "are important enough for you to bring down our government, but you have never heard of us" (5; 299). This too echoes American involvement in Australia, in particular alleged CIA involvement in the overthrow of the (anti-Pine Gap) Whitlam government in 1975.[3] America's CIA is translated into Voorstand's equally insidious VIA (Voorstand Intelligence Agency); Voorstand has political and military objectives in Efica, just as

American military "research" institutes allegedly did in Australia.

While Voorstand has the military clout to colonise Efica, its most effective colonial strategies are cultural: "[i]t was through your charm and your expertise that you conquered us, with your army, yes, and with the VIA, but you kept us conquered with jokes and dancers, death and beauty, holographs, lasers, vids, with perfectly engineered and orchestrated suspense" (294). The initial stages of Voorstandish colonialism may be military, but the cultural influence of Sirkus is where Voorstand exercises its most effective control. Under the domed roofs of Sirkus, Eficans are entertained by "a sophisticated presentation using laser characters, computer imagery, and human performers who are distinguished by their skill and high mortality rate" (422). The "sophisticated presentation" is especially sophisticated in its concealment of the ideological messages disseminated by Sirkus. Voorstand "markets" itself to Efica with its Sirkuses; it uses its entertainment industry to colonise. (Carey concomitantly implies that America uses its movies and Disneylands to influence Australia.) Bruder Mouse (Mickey) is the icon of the pseudo-religious narrative that underpins Sirkus. He is exported to the colonies as a toy. Like Disney's

well-known Mouse-eared hats, Bruder Mouse masks for children, complete with the mouse's chipped-tooth grin become immensely popular and reveal the mouse as a consummate "symbol for [Voorstand's] imperialist mercantile culture" (167).[4]

Carey states that Sirkus is based on Disney and that Saarlim, Voorstand's capital, is "really New York" (Willbanks 14). So, Efica is a bit like Australia and Voorstand is a bit like America but Sirkus—with its seductive combination of video, hologram and acting—is Disney writ larger than it already is in life. Voorstandish cultural imperialism is an often humorous exaggeration of Disney's cultural imperialism (Mickey Mouse literally takes over the world). Yet Carey quite seriously warns of the consequences of neo-colonialism in countries like Australia: the biases inherent in Voorstandish global capitalism combine with those of British or French imperialism; smaller, formerly settled colonies like Efica become ghettoised by Voorstand's exploitation of the global economy as well as by its othering of non-Voorstanders.

Susie O'Brien writes that "in the late twentieth century, even as the United States has been overtaken technologically, economically and even militarily by other nations, its *cultural* influence persists" ("New

World Disorder" 248). It is this persistence and its effects in the former Commonwealth that Carey speaks to, for, as O'Brien observes, the United States played "an instrumental *political* role in the negotiations by which many of the colonies gained independence" and "perhaps more significantly, the articulation of national aspirations *within* those former colonies has been indelibly informed by the *imaginary* structure of a post-colonial myth, called, simply, America" ("New World Disorder" 248). Like America, Voorstand is a land of milk and honey, a place of opportunity and opportunism: in Voorstand "you take the risk, you get the reward" (286). Carey's Voorstand is thus perhaps most similar to America in its mythological impact. The Australian Eliza Fraser and foundation myths, so pertinent to Malouf's novel, are here replaced with a myth of going to Voorstand to make a fortune and spend it. Settlers in the (Efican) colony celebrate the myth of a (American/ Voorstandish) economic centre to which they can make pilgrimages. Where the foundation and Fraser myths glorify the achievements of settlers in the colony, the America myths suggest that greater opportunities are available in America: "'America' is represented as a post-historical, emancipatory space [. . .] commensurate with both political and economic progress" (O'Brien "New

World Disorder" 249). Voorstand, analogously, is perceived by Eficans as an "emancipatory space."

Carey uses Tristan (and his bizarre appearance in particular) to suggest how neo-colonialism affects postcolonial countries. By making his fiction speculative, he can exaggerate Tristan's predicament, making it physical to show neo-colonial ideology resulting in quite literal contortions. He can also suggest the consequences of glorifying or mythologising global capital and culture for countries like Australia. Thus Carey can depict "the conditions for the *consolidation* of the new forms of domination represented by global capitalism" by focusing on a hyperbolic fictionalised set of "conditions" in which new forms of colonial domination operate (O'Brien "New World Disorder" 252). The navigation cable threaded through Efica's slave caves is, again, a useful image, for "new forms of global domination" *are* new and yet preserve ideals and rhetoric from old colonial discourse. Thus British colonial ideology and rhetoric privileged whiteness but also marginalised antipodean settlers. Voorstandish ideology adopts similar racial assumptions despite a capitalist focus. The wealthy Voorstander is perceived as white with pale "Hollandse Maagd" skin (9). The colonised individual from Efica or elsewhere is

perceived, despite what may well be pale skin, as a "nigger" or "swartzer" (320; 321). The new colonialism incorporates the racial assumptions of the old: it privileges whiteness.

Tristan's is not the supposedly handsome, wholesome whiteness of the British colonist or Voorstandish neo-colonist, but rather whiteness in excess. Like Simon, his whiteness is reiterated in frequent descriptions; also like Simon, Tristan is unsettling because of his whiteness. His skin is "so *white*"; his hair is white-blond and his eyes eerily unpigmented (160). His blond eyes, in particular, "[make] whiteness strange" and so make us aware that it is not an invisible norm (as Richard Dyer and Ross Chambers do in theoretical terms) (Dyer 4). Tristan is a "spooky, white-eyed baby" (36). He notes that at birth "his hair is fair, straight, queerly thick. His eyes are pale, a quartz bright white" (31-32). He describes himself as "a curious-looking child"; "my hair was dense and blond, and the irises of my eyes—although no longer white as they had been when I was born—were now milky, marbled, striated with hair-line spokes of gold" (31; 67). Juxtaposing hair and eyes makes both seem unnatural. This unnaturalness is supplemented by other images of emphatic, but disturbingly excessive, whiteness, such as those of

Tristan's piranha-like "small regular white teeth" (88). Malouf's Gemmy is, in part, unsettling because he is uncannily familiar to the British colonists. Tristan is abject rather than uncanny precisely because his whiteness is so unrecognisable, shocking and even repulsive.

Julia Kristeva describes the experience of abjection as "sickened" repulsion and "one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside" (1). It is something within that "beseeches a discharge, a convulsion" (2). The process of trying to establish individual identity requires the abjection of unwelcome attributes by such processes as "spasms" and "vomiting," "gagging," the shriveling of "all the organs" in the body and "tears and bile" (3;2;3). Kristeva writes that "[d]uring that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit" (3). The abject experience is one in which the border between self and what the self tries to expel (waste, death, bile, vomit) disappears, leaving one "raw," or exposed (4). Tristan is like an embodiment of the experience of abjection. He seems to have no skin or boundary between desired and undesired attributes. For instance, traveling to Voorstand he describes how he "felt like a

snail—de-shelled, slimy and naked" (245). His shell, or skin, is gone so that the slime and bile from inside are exposed and he is, in Kristeva's terms, "raw." Similarly, as a baby, he is revealed to his father onstage during a performance of *Macbeth*: he is "a gruesome little thing, slippery and sweating [. . .], so truly horrible to look at that the audience can see the Witches must struggle to control their feelings of revulsion" (31). He embodies a Kristevan "violent, dark revolt." He describes himself as a squalling child: "my face like a flapping crumpled rag, my pale eyes bulging, all my skin wet with snot and sour milk" (58). Similarly, when angry, Tristan describes his "eyes blazing, [his] nose running, [his] loose maw dribbling thick saliva" (236). He wears the bile and vomit that Kristeva describes as characteristic of the abject. He also says, transforming the substances that cover his face into the face itself, "[m]y real face was snot, tears, drool" (223). He becomes the waste, the bile, the vomit that the Kristevan "self" would expel. Tristan also sees himself as "a crow, a gull, something on a city dump" as if he were perched on the waste Kristeva imagines (237). At the Efican embassy in Voorstand, he experiences himself as entirely abject: "[m]y monstrosity was vivid, slippery with sweat. My whole sense of myself came crashing down on me until I

felt I could not breathe" (335). His innards are outside, his bodily fluids uncontained. His body frightens and horrifies him, it makes him ashamed and undermines his construction of his own identity just as the Kristevan abject undermines identity.

The descriptions of Tristan as eviscerated or as if he lacks "sufficient skin" suggest that Carey is trying to "get under the skin" of colonial ideology (32). If Tristan's white skin is peeled away, is he still white? It seems not; he becomes other because of his resemblance to viscera. Carey suggests the persistence of the colonial preoccupation with epidermal racial identification. Neo-colonial constructions of self and other, white and its white other, produce alterity by abjecting those qualities which are inimical to the neo-colonists' self-construction. David Spurr writes that in colonial discourse, indigenous peoples were associated with images of abject "degradation" (such as "disease, famine, superstition and barbarous custom") (78). By abjecting indigenous populations colonists both reassured themselves of their own superiority and legitimated colonial intervention. Spurr suggests that abjection became part of excluding the "black" side of the Manichean binary of colonial discourse from the white; abjection becomes characteristic of otherness. Tristan

seems as if he were, despite his excessive whiteness, so abject and other that he can only be considered as if "black" in the terms of colonial discourse. He escapes from a hospital by climbing down a pipe. A crowd gathers to watch, but what Tristan thinks is a heroic performance is obviously not perceived that way: "The faces were all wrong. They were not faces looking at an actor. Nor were they looking at something as simple as a boy on a pipe. The faces looked at something like snot, like slime, like something dripping down towards them" (156). Evidently, Tristan is abject and grotesque. He is perceived as a mutant but his mutancy becomes, through a significant allusion, racialised:

> A kind of shudder went through the crowd. It shifted its ground and emitted a little murmur of disgust.
> "It's a mutant, Maman," someone called [. . .]
> "Yuk, Maman. A mutant." (157)

Carey paraphrases Frantz Fanon's description of a child and mother seeing a "black" man. Fanon's child says "Look, a Negro! [. . .] Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened" (112). Two things happen in Carey's re-writing of Fanon: whiteness is positioned as if it were

blackness (Tristan is, effectively, "the Negro") and the abjection of Tristan the "mutant" becomes indicative of difference. Abjection produces the colonial other; here the marginalised "Negro" envisioned by Fanon is replaced by a marginalised, abject white child.

Carey makes Tristan other in terms of colonialist discourse, but he also makes Tristan an abject white other in terms of the new colonialist/capitalist ideology of Voorstand's Sirkus. He does this by making it clear that Tristan is "white trash," or the white other of economic privilege. This class "othering" also implies that, despite white skin, a marginalised white individual can be perceived as if racially other. Annalee Newitz and Matthew Wray write that

> [y]oking a classist epithet to a racist one, as white trash does, reminds us how often racism is in fact directly related to economic differences. As a stereotype, white trash calls our attention to the way that discourses of class and racial difference tend to bleed into one another, especially in the way they pathologize and lay waste to their "others." Indeed, "subordinate white" is such an oxymoron in the dominant culture that this social position is principally spoken about in our slang in

> terms like *white trash, redneck, cracker,* and *hillbilly.* (169)

Newitz and Wray suggest that class and race are combined in the notion of "white trash," so that white poverty (anomalous to the ideals of affluent white America) becomes a race issue rather than a class one. Note too that the term "cracker" is used by Carey as "kraker" to imply black otherness (287).

When Tristan becomes Mutant/"Negro" as he escapes the hospital, he also becomes "white trash." The little girl ("eight years old, Anglo features, brown coat, white gloves") who calls him "A Mutant" is with her "Maman" (157). Tristan is with Wally and his girlfriend Roxanna. Roxanna says to the girl

> "I beg your *pardon* . . ."
>
> "Something bothering you?" the mother said. She was so neat, so fucking Protestant—thin lips, straight white teeth.
>
> "Excuse me [. . .] but she shouldn't call that little boy a mutant."
>
> The woman looked Roxanna up and down, lingering for an insulting moment on her scuffed shoes and

laddered stockings. Then she smiled and turned away. (157)

The exchange shows a distinction between the moneyed (well cared-for teeth, neat clothes) and "white trash" (scuffed shoes, laddered stockings). Affluence gives the girl's mother the right to walk away without apology. Poverty makes Roxanna's protestations irrelevant. By association, it makes Tristan irrelevant too; both he and Roxanna are classed as other. Also implied in this conversation is that "white trash" is more tolerant, even ethically superior to middle class whiteness.

Tristan emphasises the links among class, appearance and the superiority of marginal whiteness when he talks of the actors in his mother's theatre: "men with tattooed fingers, women with tinted leg hair [. . .] By the time I was two I had become their emblem, their mascot and I shared with them a sense that we were an avant garde, not only artistically, but also morally" (66). Tristan implies that Efican "white trash" is culturally responsible and artistically superior; they are an avant-garde in a culture increasingly dominated by the wealth and insidious cultural influence of Voorstand's "mainstream" Sirkus. However, the actors seem already defeated in their efforts to be either a moral or

an Efican nationalist vanguard. Their tinted hairs and tattoos have neither the artistic nor the political impact the company hopes for. Felicity thinks that she is "inventing the culture of [Efica's] people" from this clutch of what sound, from Tristan's descriptions, like circus freak-show players working in a "small, dirty, uncomfortable theatre at the back of a warren of bachelor flats" (50; 6). The Feu Follet stages plays like Chekov's *Uncle Vanya* using circus antics so that, for instance, a climactic scene involves two actors making a "double wheel—the woman in the centre and the tall streak of Sparrowglass wrapped around her like a floppy retread" (110). Felicity tries to oppose Voorstandish Sirkus with a supposedly high-culture Efican theater that is actually a "white trash" circus for poor, marginalised and colonised Eficans.

Of course Sirkus is a circus too, but with amoral, and yet effective cultural hegemonic preeminence instead of the Feu Follet's failed insurgence and emphasis on moral rectitude. The Sirkus conceals its tawdriness and its ideological ambitions, but ultimately disseminates them more effectively than the Feu Follet. Sirkus is so effective because it is fun rather than educational; it is not concerned to teach people the right way to live, but rather the right way to enjoy (and so support)

Sirkuses.[5] The Sirkus is appealing because it seems to do what the Feu Follet does, only better. It delivers a compelling fantasy of glamour, money and power, and even of the survival of a mouse that seems to be (but is not) the "underdog." Tristan notes that

> [i]t was no good to say what Vincent said, that the modern Bruder Mouse had become nothing more than a logo-type [. . .] he had never been to the Sirkus in his own town. He did not know Bruder Mouse, he had never seen him *move*.
>
> The Mouse I met at the Sirkus was quick and cocky and as cruel as any animal who has to deal with survival on the farm. He had spark, guts, energy, can-do. We would have liked him, I thought, at the Feu Follet.(167)

Tristan likes the mouse for its "can-do." Disingenuously, the mouse suggests that opportunities are there for the taking by anyone who has the pluck to take them. Obviously, the opportunities for colonised Eficans are circumscribed by what Tristan recognises as Sirkus's "*hegemony*," but the mouse is likable nonetheless (170). This Bruder is a survivor, cruel, and yet charismatic; it is cute, furry, agile and utterly unlike Tristan, who

finds it, even at his first Sirkus, an ideal way to escape himself and his abjection.

Tristan dons a mouse Mask and it allows him to recreate himself as if he were cute, with the mouse's "spark, guts, energy, can-do": "He moved his arm. It was the mouse's arm. Snot dripped from his nose, but out of sight. His cheeks were awash with tears, but no one could see that" (163). Putting on the mask lets Tristan give himself a new skin; he redefines his boundaries, and contains his snot and tears. O'Brien observes that "Bruder Mouse represents the possibility of transcending the exigencies of biology" ("New World Disorder" 155). The Mouse is immortal, invincible and immune to the abject miseries of the human body. In addition, while a god, he is also a consumer who enjoys "the pleasures of a manifestly material world" (O'Brien "New World Disorder" 155). By inserting himself into the mouse's skin, Tristan seems to give himself these same qualities and pleasures. He hides his abject, marginal Efican whiteness and becomes the grey and furry "logo-type" of Voorstandish Sirkus and so also of (white) privilege (167).

Stranded and penniless in Voorstand, Tristan conceals himself in a full-body mouse suit to entertain on the streets and beg for money. Once ensconced in the mouse, Tristan revels in his transformation. His

abjection is concealed. Even his nurse Jacqui, familiar with the contortions of her charge's body, sees a Sirkus idol instead: "[s]he knew I was there, but it was like knowing that there is a colon, a lung, a brain beneath the human skin—you don't respond to the squishy viscera but to the externals" (316). Tristan suggests the importance of skin; as in colonial discourse, its appearance determines how one is received in society. He suggests that we only respond to "externals," and that abjection (the revelation of "squishy viscera") is something that we prefer not to see. Thus as (Efican) abject, he is ignored; as (Voorstandish) mouse with his abject qualities contained and concealed, he is worshipped. Where the crowd watching him escape from the hospital sees him as a grotesque mutant, the crowd that watches him perform Bruder Mouse celebrates him: "[t]hey were devotees, worshippers. They wanted to eat Bruder Mouse, to fuck him, smother him [. . .] The pathetic creature who had skulked inside the Feu Follet was now the object of these people's love" (317). The "pathetic creature" is no longer Efican and no longer marginal.

Even Tristan's Efican speaking voice is abject, as if it were some hidden, secret bodily function that escapes and is beyond Tristan's control. He slurs and speaks slowly, his "voice is high and scratchy" and he

makes "'going' sound like 'gung'" (237). Jacqui gives Tristan/Bruder Mouse a Sirkus voice patch so that, for the first time, he is intelligible despite his cleft palate. The patch, however, makes Tristan sound, as Wally observes, "like a fucking Voorstander" (391). In effect, Jacqui gives Tristan a Voorstandish voice to go with his Voorstandish costume. He recites one of Caliban's speeches for her: "*I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow* [. . .] *And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts* [. . .] *I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries*" (377-378). Most simply, Tristan is Caliban: an islander treated as if subhuman (a Mutant/ "Negro"). He is also a neo-colonial subject who suddenly transcends the literal and figurative limits of his colonised voice; his colonisers now both understand and pay attention to him. With his Voorstandish voice patch Tristan is "funny, ironic, mocking and so *clear*" (377).

Once he has the right language, like Caliban, he is no longer docile.[6] Tristan becomes politically important, and, with the help of his Mouse costume, even sexually appealing; he sleeps with Peggy Kram, one of the most powerful and wealthy women in Voorstand. Tristan's enjoyment of his Voorstandish voice and costume makes him so complicit with Voorstandish ideology and politics that he is the voice of a plan that would further marginalise

individuals like himself. He is the one who explains the elitist, racist, classist Ghostdorp expansion project to Kram's Voorstandish political advisors (407-408). This project would involve a legislated geographical separation of the wealthy and white from poor immigrant populations in Saarlim, effectively recreating South African apartheid.[7]

Dawson writes that Tristan's disguise challenges the "Platonic dichotomy between the model and the copy and, by implication, the oppositionality of the imperium/colony, self/other, centre/periphery that is an implicit part of colonial practices, fictive or otherwise" (204). She suggests that, because his disguise is effective, Tristan undermines the distinction between what is and is not real and also between what is on one side of a colonial binary and what is othered. Following Homi Bhabha's argument that mimicry can be subversive, Dawson gives Tristan an insurgent, disruptive agency that his entrapment by the costume and the ideologies associated with it actually seem to deny him.[8] Challenges to the "the oppositionality of imperium/colony, self/other, centre/periphery" generally affect *Tristan's* embodiment of national identity. Thus, Carey implies that the (neo)colonial subject's epidermis is reconfigured, not that colonial dichotomies are

disturbed. He describes a neo/post-colonialism influenced by lingering colonial binaries as well as new ones. Thus distinctions between imperium and colony persist, as do those between self and other. However, the black/white binary (implicitly invoked by Dawson) is supplemented with a white/white binary—some whitenesses are privileged as "self," and some abjected as other.

Even when Tristan is disguised as Voorstandish godling and so privileged and "white," he is not liberated from his disadvantaged, colonised, abject position. He is "imprisoned by the mouse" (390). He is also imprisoned in the boudoir of a woman who is "not well," and "*disturbed*" (400). He is imprisoned too by his desire to continue being the mouse and not to be himself. Tristan hides in Kram's apartment because Wendell Deveau (a VIA operative) is trying to assassinate him. He is still an other, an Efican in Voorstand in a Mouse suit; the boundary between self and other, imperium and colony, centre and periphery is in place. If Tristan's identity is momentarily misunderstood, it soon becomes clear that he is "not Bruder Mouse" but rather "a man [. . .] some kind of man, a dwarf" (407). The observation changes him from godling into a "dwarf," a deformed, dysfunctional and once again abject, marginalised individual.

Confronting the image of himself as Mouse in a mirror while standing over the dead body of Wally, Tristan is horrified at the extent to which he has been complicit with a loathsome colonial "centre." His Efican loyalties literally resurface in another experience of abjection:

> What a filthy frieze it was—that sweet old man and Bruder Mouse—a perverse Pietà. How I loathed the Bruder's grinning face, those floppy ears. My stomach clenched, and I knew I was going to be sick. [. . .]
>
> Now I was retching inside my suit. The contents of my stomach rose up inside the mask, were sucked down my nose.
>
> Suffocating, I tried to pull the Bruder's head off, but Peggy Kram got her little hands around my wrists.
>
> "No," she cried, "no please, I beg you." (410-411)

Once inside the suit, Tristan is stuck. The costume or "skin" that seemed to confer so many privileges becomes a threat as he chokes on his own vomit. His complicity with Voorstand, both in terms of his appearance (he wears the costume) and ideology (he becomes a voice for such

racist, classist policies as the Ghostdorp project) becomes a trap. The costume becomes a Voorstandish boundary which contains, but also confines, and against which Tristan's abjected Efican sympathies rebel in a violent upsurge of bodily fluids.

Tristan's predicament echoes the stories about Disney's treatment of its employees. Jane Kuenz records an anonymous individual's comments about being in a full-body Disney costume:

> You're never supposed to be seen in a costume without your head, *ever*. It was automatic dismissal. It's frightening because you can die in your own regurgitation when you can't keep out of it. I'll never forget Dumbo—it was coming out of the mouth during the parade. You have a little screen over the mouth. It was horrible. And I made $4.55 an hour. (Anonymous in Kuenz 136)

Obviously, this anecdote and Carey's similar version are rich in implications. In this instance, an overheated Disney employee throws up in costume and nearly chokes on his/her own vomit rather than take the costume's head off and risk being fired (even though the job is only worth $4.55 an hour). In both Tristan's and the Disney

employee's cases, adherence to illusion-making ideologies has advantages and disadvantages. The costumes create invulnerable cartoon animals which conceal the individuals beneath. Tristan can escape his distorted body and be celebrated; the Disney employee can escape his/her shyness and so be celebrated as well (Kuenz 136). Ultimately, the Disney employee and Tristan are trapped by their participation in the, albeit illusory, pleasure of Disney/Sirkus. Tristan *cannot* take the Bruder Mouse head off because Peggy Kram, an owner of five Sirkuses and believer in the Bruder as real, will not let him. The implications are compelling: Disney and Sirkus stifle their employees; they cause them to suffer—possibly to die—in the interest of presenting a lucrative show. The employees are victims of both the corporations' exploitative capitalism and their own willing participation in, and celebration of, the illusions of happiness and success those corporations create.

Carey's exaggeration of Disney entertainment ideology becomes more barbed when he links illusion, class and whiteness to show the biases of Disney's "wholesome" American capitalist ideology. Disney is an "America" theme park; Sirkus a Voorstandish one. Both disseminate national and racial values. Carey implies that Voorstand's government and colonialism *are* Sirkus

and vice versa. The Disney parks "bombard visitors with Disney ideals" in order that they leave with the impression of the wonder and "magic" of both Disney and the American dream (Bryman 102). Sirkus similarly bombards its visitors with Sirkus and so also Voorstandish ideals. Efican Sparrow Glashan comments after his first Sirkus, "[t]hey're a great people [. . .] that's what a show like this teaches you" (168). Sirkus, like Disney, convinces people that its ideals are correct. Among Disney's exhibits, there are no images of labour, strife or diversity. Among the visible employees, there are few African-Americans or other minorities. By preference, the corporation hires

> single white males and females in their early twenties, of healthy appearance, possibly radiating good testimony of a recent history of sports, without facial blemish, of above-average height (and below average weight), with conservative grooming standards. (Van Maanen and Kunda in Bryman 110)

The perception is that "[t]hey deliberately hire blondes" and that health and affluence are integral to the creation of Disney's illusory ideal world (Kuenz 138). Carey suggests that both Disney and Sirkus sell affluence

as an ideal which, like the British colonial stereotype, emphasises whiteness, blondness and health, but which adds the importance of *looking* middle class or wealthy to that type. Carey seems to draw on Jean Baudrillard's assertion that Disneyland "exists in order to hide the fact that it is the 'real' country, all of 'real' America" (12). Disney and Sirkus create a race/class ideal in what is explicitly a fictional context, "disguising," as Baudrillard suggests, the fact that their fiction is true of America/Voorstand; a blond, blue-eyed, healthy and wealthy appearance is idealised in both the theme parks and the real world.

Sirkus has its buxom and blond-sounding white-clad Heidi (in Efica, to charm the locals, Heidi is replaced by Irma)(167). Bill Millefleur, Tristan's Efican father, becomes, paradoxically, a Sirkus star because of his good looks. He is Felicity's Sirkus/"circus boy" with "bright blue eyes" (343; 309). Tristan describes his father's "handsome, sun-lamped face—mint smell, flossed teeth gleaming [. . .] he looked so soft, so beautiful [. . .] he was so big, had such good skin, such glossy hair" (343). Bill is much like the ideal Disney employee: healthy, tall, slim, athletic, blond and blue-eyed. In addition, he looks wealthy; he looks "like the embodiment of everything the Feu Follet had fought" in his

"snakeskin shoes with silver tips on the laces" (305). Despite his whiteness, Tristan is the antithesis of the Sirkus/Disney ideals: he is ugly, short, and has unhealthy, even slimy, skin. The unbesmirched faces of Disney and of Sirkus are achieved by promoting certain ideal whitenesses and hiding others so thoroughly that they require a process of abjection to bring what has been hidden to light. Voorstandish Sirkus creates an idealised image of whiteness that excludes its others; regardless of how these people look, they are Pow-pows, blacks, poor and "primitive [. . .] They don't know how to take a kak in a bathroom. They steal. They carry firearms. They have diseases" (322). The Pow-pows are seen as dangerous and contaminating. They are the abject of Voorstand/Sirkus's ideal whiteness, reappearing despite efforts to exclude them, and seeming like externalised symptoms of the abjection Kristeva describes, with its implication of inevitably resurfacing waste, danger and even contamination or disease. However, they are also like the "white trash" Newitz and Wray describe, for they are "white" but perceived as other because they do not enjoy Voorstandish economic power.

Abject whitenesses excluded from ideal whiteness and "white trash" excluded from ideal class are similar. Abjection and the creation of a distinction between white

and white other ("white trash") are similar processes; both entail distinguishing between desired and undesired attributes by suggesting that the latter are other. Both also entail recognising that what has been excluded is not other, but rather part of the self. Consider Newitz and Wray's description of "white trash":

> Unlike unmarked hegemonic forms of whiteness, the category of white trash is marked as white from the outset. But in addition to being racially marked, it is simultaneously marked as trash, as something that must be discarded, expelled, and disposed of in order for whiteness to achieve and maintain social dominance. Thus, white trash must be understood as both an external and an internal threat to whiteness. It is externalized by class difference but made the same through racial identification. White trash lies simultaneously inside and outside whiteness, becoming the difference within, the white Other that inhabits the core of whiteness. (169-170)

"White trash" is that which whiteness would like to discard, externalise or expel as "trash" in order to "achieve and maintain social dominance." "White trash" is whiteness's abject. Compare this with Kristeva: "I

expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*"(3). She characterises the abject as a confrontation with "the most sickening of wastes" and observes that it "is experienced at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very *being*, that it *is* none other than abject" (3;5). Her abject, like Newitz and Wray's "white trash," is "simultaneously inside and outside." Kristeva's abject is also that which "must be discarded, expelled" in order to define the self. White trash and the abject involve the expulsion of waste, of trash, of that which is unwanted and "sickening." As white trash is to whiteness, the abject is to the self; it is the inexorable, insubordinate "difference within."

Definitions of alterity exaggerate difference and efface similarity. Kristevan abjection and the construction of white difference as "white trash" both illustrate the creation of alterity out of similarity. The abject is that which the self would expel as other; "white trash" is that which affluent whiteness would expel as other. Neither abject nor "white trash," however, is entirely other. Spurr writes that the abject

is "the *lack* of difference toward which there is always a temptation to return, a temptation cut short by the laws of exclusion" (78). Tristan is perceived by Voorstanders as if "white trash" and abject because they would like him (and all POWs or Eficans) to be other. However, Tristan is not completely other: his mother is a Voorstander, his father becomes a Sirkus performer. He is, in some ways, a Voorstander. His grotesqueness is, at least in part, Voorstandish—that is why he is so alarming. To extrapolate from Carey's fiction, one can suggest that white Australians are frequently, like Tristan, descendants of the colonial centre and that Australians have been perceived as Britain's abject. However, Carey also implies that Australians have been perceived as America's abject. Obviously, as I suggest above, Carey is more nuanced than this: Efica is not simply an allegorised Australia, and Voorstand not simply an allegorised America. Using the indeterminacy of Efica and Voorstand to his advantage, Carey advances a strong argument against neo-colonialism in general. As Graeme Turner writes, Carey "is arguing the necessity of constructing stories to live by, stories which emerge from and are given value by the community itself, rather than from the importation of [. . .]dreams" (441).[9]

Being abjected as other, or considered "white trash," implies that the person/country/government doing the abjecting has authority over that person/thing which is abjected. But, to be abject or characterised as "white trash" can also imply complicity with the values of those that would abject and other you. Tristan is abject because he believes Voorstand's colonial rhetoric. He is abject in relation to Voorstand, Voorstanders and the Sirkus. One can illustrate how Tristan's abjection is a result of his relationship with Voorstandish politics and Sirkus ideals by returning to Kristeva. She writes of self-identification as a messy birth out of and amidst the abject: "[d]uring that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit" (3). A nation like Voorstand "becomes" by creating itself out of and amidst its abject. Voorstandish national identity (which comprises "white" race and class privilege) creates itself out of images of its other. Tristan is literally born out of Voorstand as its abject. Tristan's mother was "born in Voorstand. She was able to trace her family back to the 'Settler's Free" of the Great Song" (6). She is beautiful, tall, slim, and pale-skinned (17; 8; 9). She gives birth to Tristan who describes himself as "barely human. I was like some dream she might expect to stay forever hidden in the entrails

of her consciousness [. . .] She did not know what she felt. It was like the bomb blast in the theater when Suzi Jacques lost her leg—flesh, blood, screaming" (17). Felicity's child makes her experience abjection—her self-construction is challenged by the horrific corporeality of her son (which she associates with screaming, violent injury and blood). She is confronted with the abjection Voorstanders normally do not see, but which is integral to their self-construction. Tristan is the kind of other out of which the privileged create images of themselves.

Tristan is also born out of Jacqui's desires. She is a "Voorwacker," a fan of the Sirkus (295). She creates Tristan as a terrorist so that she can go to Saarlim under cover. She "creates" him as Mouse too. Both mean that she can recreate herself as spy, and as if a Voorstander. Tristan notes:

> She had found a timid wretch living in a dank, dark hole. He had skin like a baby and pearly inoffensive eyes, but while he slept she had transformed him into something potent—still ugly, yes, but venomous, a spider in the dark of the Voorstandish subconscious.
>
> She had not meant me harm. She had not meant me anything. She wanted something for herself. (288)

She finds the Mouse that becomes Tristan's suit, and he describes how she sat beside him with it "like a woman newly pregnant" (288). He becomes her baby, her abject and that which helps her define herself but also challenges that self-definition by escaping the boundaries she tries to create. While Jacqui watches, he is born out of his costume; Wally holds him in the air like a new-born and Tristan notes that his skin "is as slimy wet with blood as a newborn child" (330). He is Voorstand's abject other once again. Where Felicity is a Voorstander confronted with the abject other Voorstand creates, Jacqui is an Efican who wants to create herself as Voorstandish and is confronted with the abjection that this recreation of her nationality entails. Tristan is born a third time when he emerges from the Mouse suit after a week in Kram's apartment. Kram sees "blood, snot, some ill-defined horror like a piece of meat, wrapped in plastic, left too long inside the refrigerator" (411). Kram thus also experiences abjection when confronted with the "true nature" of the Mouse her own Sirkuses create (414).

Each time Tristan is born, he is abject; he reminds his "parents" that they are not quite what they want to be, and that he is what they have struggled to expel. He

reminds Felicity that she cannot, by force of will, make herself or her Feu Follet exactly how she wants it to be; he reminds her that her Voorstandishness, and its dark colonial side, is inescapable. When Tristan is born to Jacqui, he reminds her that she is a Voorwacker, not a Voorstander; she too is not who she wants to be. He also reminds her that Voorstandishness relies on the abjection of its others. When Tristan is born out of the mouse in Kram's apartment, his abjection suggests that even Bruder Mouse is not quite what he seems; he makes it clear that the boundaries of the ideal Sirkus/Voorstandish fantasy conceal its abject and that the abject can resurface. However, Tristan once again conceals himself in the Mouse costume in order to escape Voorstand.

At the end of the novel, Tristan flees Kram's apartment with Bill and Jacqui. The three travel North by car and then set sail for Norway:

> At the very hour Peggy Kram gave her deposition in the Bhurger-court, we sailed from Voorstand on the *Nordic Trader* bound for Bergen. Jacqui was dressed as a man. Bill carried me on board inside the Mouse suit, disguised as a souvenir. At that time, although I did not know it, my unusual life was really just beginning (414).

This ending can be read both pessimistically and optimistically. A bleak reading suggests, as Peter Pierce does, that "the novel abruptly breaks off" with Tristan leaving "in disarray" and traveling "into uncertainty" (149; 150). Tristan is in disguise again so that, while he escapes Voorstand, he fails to escape the costume and the pro-Voorstandish ideology it represents. Jacqui is once again Jacques, and Bill is an anonymous tourist, not a famous actor. Tristan is not even the real Bruder, he is "a souvenir," a momento, and a mass produced toy. Voorstand's ideology triumphs; Tristan remains the abject other concealed in the garb of the colonist.

A more optimistic reading suggests that concealing Tristan in the mouse at this stage is funny rather than recidivist. He has already challenged Voorstand's founding mythology by seeming to be the Hairy Man within the Mouse[10]; he has already revealed that the Mouse has the unexpected (its other) under its skin. The costume's Voorstandishness no longer has the power to influence him because it no longer affords him power (dressed in it he is now only a souvenir). His adoption of the disguise is part of a new, resistant mythology which challenges that of Voorstand. Turner writes:

> Clearly, for the cultural function of narrative, myth is of central importance. Peter Carey's work has been celebrated for its mythic quality, its facility for creating stories that have a fable-like significance. In such a story as "American Dreams", a myth is proposed: one of resistance to colonisation, to domination from outside the culture.(440)

Carey proposes a similarly resistant Efican myth at the end of *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith.* Tristan's concealment in the Mouse is only part of the story of his escape. It is part of what Tristan assumes to be a familiar tale for his readers. He assumes that they know of Jacqui stealing for the three of them en route: "[y]ou know, by now, exactly what she stole: the three blankets, the raisin buns, the whole round of cheese, the red woollen shirt"(413). He recounts the information as though the story had become as ritualised as the fables of Bruder Mouse and Duck. The new stories, however, take Voorstand's Mouse and use him in a new Efican mythology.

Unlike Malouf, who focuses on how Australian settler mythologies shape Australian whiteness, Carey refers to *Voorstand's* myths, and their influence on Efican

whiteness. He includes numerous references to Voorstand's *Bruder Duck's Travels*. These stories are taught to Efican children; they shape individuals like Tristan, teaching them to idealise Voorstand. Carey shows Voorstand's cultural influence by suggesting how its mythology subsumes that of Efica, and how its glorification of Voorstandish identity results in the derogation of Eficans as white other or white trash. Book One opens with an excerpt from Voorstand's *Bruder Duck's Travels* that shows how Sirkuses will convince anyone who opposes them: Bruder Duck says "I would change their minds [. . .] I would make them laugh" (3). This excerpt is paired with an Efican one from *Doggerel and Jetsam: unheard voices in the Voorstand Imperium* that shows how the Eficans were indeed seduced by laughter, losing themselves to the Voorstanders:

> Oh God we laughed till we cried
> We sighed and wiped our eyes
> We kissed the Dog, we cuddled the Mouse
> With the Duck right by our side. (4)

Carey shows the effect of Voorstand's cultural influence on Efica's own mythology; Voorstand entertains, and Eficans embrace the dog, the duck and the mouse in their

songs. Carey emphasises the need for Efican resistance. Thus the story of Tristan escaping from Voorstand is key to Carey's vision of a settler colony defining its own mythologies despite colonial and neo-colonial influences. Kram's concluding deposition characterises Tristan as "the Hairy Man"; he is a marginalised, racialised "little black thing" (414). But Carey leaves us with Tristan, disguised as Bruder Mouse, appropriating Voorstand's god and, rather than becoming a marginalised white other in disguise, becoming central to a new Efican mythology.

The implications are clear, particularly if Efica is read as similar to Australia. Carey suggests the need to take the "colonising" stories of the dominating culture and adapt them to make new stories that resist domination. Both Malouf and Carey suggest the need for Australian stories. Both suggest the need for Australian myths that acknowledge a specific kind of Australian "whiteness" as well. Hulme uses Maori mythology to re-establish Maori culture after Pakeha intrusions. Malouf and Carey develop entirely new mythologies to show that Australian and Efican whitenesses become something other than British whiteness and American neo-colonial whiteness respectively.

Tristan shows Efican whiteness as vulnerable to neo-colonial cultural influences that would marginalise it

even though it is not demonstrably different from Voorstandish whiteness. Like Malouf, Carey suggests that "whiteness" has both privilege and alterity already embedded within it. Whiteness's privileges are concealed within the misleadingly benign terms of "cultural" or "capital" influence. Carey reveals that class *includes* race. Whiteness is already hidden within the terms of capitalist cultural influence. To be a Voorstander is to be "white"; to be other than a Voorstander is to be a "swartzer"(422). To be a wealthy Voorstander is to be "white" again; to be poor is be a white trash "cracker" or "kraker" (Newitz and Wray 169; Carey 287). Neo-colonial otherness occurs at the conjunction of neo-colonial cultural indoctrination and economic exploitation.

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[1] Tristan refers to the former slave caves and a "history" of them (*The Caves of Democracy*) (5). He also writes "[w]e now know that 2,400 miles of insulated cable was threaded through our nation's belly" (Note 33).

[2] Although Voorstand is like America, its name and language suggest that it is also a bit like South Africa. In his acknowledgments, Carey refers to the Dutch and Afrikaans used in his creation of a Voorstandish dialect. Saarlim City (based on New York, as I suggest below) is an entertainment town not unlike South Africa's elitist casino-town Sun City.

[3] See "Coup D'etat in Australia: 20 years of Cover Up" and "The CIA in Australia."

[4] Although "Bruder Mouse" is the most influential of the Sirkus characters, Carey also includes references to other stock Disney characters (Donald becomes Bruder Duck, and there is a dog based on Pluto). He refers to the three together in folktales like "The Dog, The Duck and The Mouse," again giving the Disney figures mythic and religious significance. In an interview with Ray Willbanks, Carey comments on seeing Mickey and Minnie Mouse at Disneyworld, "wandering around larger than life, like royalty" and notes that these characters inspired

him to write "about a country where figures like this actually walked the streets, where they have some large and mythic significance, maybe even some moral history" (14).

[5] Bill Millefleur criticizes the Feu Follet's political efficacy: "You cheer up the lonely liberals, you annoy the fascists. It entertains. It educates," but "[n]othing changes" (93).

[6] Caliban learns to curse when given Prospero's language. There is a wealth of criticism on this, particularly on the extent to which Caliban is not simply subservient. For a useful analysis (and summary of the key arguments) see Donald Pease.

[7] When Tristan promotes the Ghostdorp project, he essentially encourages Kram and her advisors to turn Saarlim into a Voorstandish theme park, controlled and regulated for "safety" and for racial homogeneity, much like a Disney theme park. He encourages Kram to turn Saarlim City into a Sirkus that excludes POWs, ("Prisoners of War," a term which also encapsulates colonised populations and immigrants to Voorstand) and immigrants and hides the individuals who have been abused, distorted, misinformed, gulled and wrecked by neo-colonial Sirkus ideology—individuals like himself.

While Bill fits in with the image Sirkus tries to create, Tristan is an exaggeration of the subjugated populations Sirkus mocks in figures like the "clowns—hoards of them in cast-off uniforms of conquered nations" (165). The "clowns" or POWs are ridiculed. They are shown to be "frightened of the squirrels" and are "awed, teased and pestered by the moving holographic images of the dancing Bruder Mouse" (166). That Sirkus mocks its colonies emphasises that its entertainment is not benign, but rather insidiously political.

[8] See Bhabha's "Of Mimicry and Man." As colonial subject, Tristan cannot actually become Bruder Mouse; he will always be an "Ootlander," an outsider, and one of those people that the Ghostdorp project would exclude (407). He remains, as Bhabha might suggest, "a recognizable Other"; he is "*a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" ("Of Mimicry and Man" 86). Tristan is almost the Mouse, but not quite. However, Bhabha suggests that the mimic "deauthorizes" the legitimacy of colonial representations ("Of Mimicry and Man" 90). At this stage, Tristan does not do this—it seems as if he actually *reauthorises* colonial representations.

[9] Turner writes specifically of *Bliss* and "American Dreams," but in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, Carey

clearly continues to explore why countries like Australia need to resist cultural exploitation and how they might go about resisting.

[10] Kram's deposition states: "It came to me disguised as one of God's Creatures. Its true nature was monstrous, like the Hairy Man, the thing with scales that Bruder Duck saw in the woods" (414).

Conclusion

Postcolonial Whiteness

In settler colonies like Australia, Canada and New Zealand, whiteness is fraught with contradictions. British colonial stereotypes have a lingering influence, and yet it is clear that contemporary whiteness in these countries is by no means British. Whiteness still enjoys privileges, but concealed within these privileges are conflicts: How can whiteness make reparation for the violence of its colonial history? How can it explain itself and its own persistent influence? What others has it hidden within its stereotype? What happens to the colonial stereotype of whiteness in a postcolonial, even neo-colonial, world? These are the questions which I suggest Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey, respectively, address.

My dissertation presents postcolonial responses to whiteness chronologically. In her 1983 postcolonial allegory *The Bone People*, Hulme writes about whiteness from a Maori perspective; she makes it represent Pakeha history. Her fiction, though set in 1970s and 1980s New Zealand, alludes to the devastation wreaked on Maori

culture by colonialism. A white boy becomes the embodiment of all things Pakeha, and consequently a whipping boy as well. Hulme is critical of European influence in New Zealand, but is not concerned with revising her understanding of "Pakeha." Indeed, her effort to revivify Maori culture relies on a Pakeha referent. She exploits the Manicheanism of colonial discourse in order to celebrate the other (Maori) and castigate the erstwhile colonist. The colonial binary that preserves categories of self/other or Pakeha/Maori works well for her purposes; she inverts it so that Pakeha is abjected, othered and literally crushed by Maoriness.

Ondaatje's 1992 *The English Patient* suggests that the colonial binary relies on stereotypical constructions of whiteness, and of the white English colonist in particular. Where Hulme uses Simon to represent a fixed colonial whiteness, Ondaatje suggests that the fixity of this whiteness requires consensus: colonial/English whiteness becomes a stereotype because people agree on what it comprises. Ondaatje implies that the colonial stereotype is one that England's others were taught to understand as erudition, a certain kind of accent, a certain kind of personality and a predilection for country gardens. The patient becomes white because Hana,

Kip and Almàsy share an understanding of Englishness. Despite burned and blackened skin, the Hungarian patient can fashion himself as a white Englishman. Ondaatje suggests that stereotypes can be strategically employed by those who are not English in order that they can enjoy the privileges with which Englishness is associated, and "Englishness" is thus transferable. Where Hulme is concerned with re-framing Maoriness in relation to Pakeha, Ondaatje is concerned with revealing the artifice of the frame that is English colonial whiteness.

In his 1993 *Remembering Babylon*, Malouf explores the disjunctions in the stereotype of colonial whiteness, revealing that nineteenth-century white settlers in Australia were almost as far from the stereotypical British colonist as the Aborigines. Gemmy is a "black white man," but his blackness has less to do with the commingling of self and other than with the revelation of otherness, or blackness, at the heart of the white colonial stereotype. Malouf's novel is, in some ways, a counterpart to Ondaatje's: Ondaatje notices how Englishness is constructed by those who are not English; Malouf how Britishness is constructed by those nineteenth-century settlers who are only marginally British (the Scots and the impoverished far from the imperial centre). Both Malouf and Ondaatje draw

attention to the construction and maintenance of the white British colonial stereotype. Ondaatje does so in order to reveal how individuals can rely on the stereotype as a lodestar, or even, as in the case of the "English" patient, a disguise. Malouf does so in order to show what (and who) is omitted in the stereotype's construction.

Carey's 1994 *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* considers whiteness and colonial stereotypes in a speculative context. Like Ondaatje, Carey explores the possibility of disguise; Efican Tristan becomes a Voorstandish god. Unlike Ondaatje, Carey suggests the extent to which the disguise makes Tristan ill or, remarkably literally, like the Kristevan abject. Carey does not consider an explicitly British colonialism, although vestiges of it are evident. He suggests instead how neo-colonial cultural and economic influence create stereotypes in which certain kinds of whiteness are privileged over others. Carey implies that familiar Manichean binaries are at work, for in his novel self and other persist. However, he suggests that colonialism's racial differentiations are supplemented by neo-colonialism's predication of difference on class and culture.

The four stages of my "postcolonial" reading of whiteness (progressing from Hulme to Carey, and considering postcolonial reworkings of colonial stereotypes) are supplemented by my application of whiteness theory to these four texts. There is an increasing theoretical complexity (whether or not these authors were consciously engaging with theories of whiteness) alongside the evolving representations of whiteness in the works by Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey. Appropriately, Hulme's postcolonial allegory considers whiteness at its most symbolic. It is associated with violence (and this violence is an allusion to the violence of colonial history). Ondaatje complicates the symbolism of epidermal whiteness by making his patient black and yet framing him as if he is white. Malouf complicates things still further by indicating that certain kinds of whiteness can be perceived as if black or other. And Carey goes further still by suggesting the role of culture and economics in the perception of whiteness. In Hulme's case, whiteness is consistently defined in relation to Maoriness. The complexity of the other three novels arises as the colonial Manichean binary gives way to the kinds of constellations of difference examined in contemporary whiteness theory.

Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey develop fictional renderings of whiteness which make it as visible as Ross Chambers and Richard Dyer would like it to become in order that it loses the secure and insidious authority afforded by its putative normativity. In these fictional representations, whiteness becomes remarkable and peculiar; we begin to question it. Ondaatje and Malouf both suggest that whiteness has more to do with who defines it than with inherent qualities. In this respect their work echoes the ideas expressed in Sander Gilman's and Dyer's descriptions of the flexibility of whiteness. Malouf and Carey both write about what is left out of whiteness. Just as Annalee Newitz and Matthew Wray discuss "white trash" as the white other, so Malouf and Carey discuss how whiteness can create its own others within.

In each of these four novels, however, there is also a contradiction. Applying theoretical considerations of whiteness to these works by Hulme, Ondaatje, Carey and Malouf's work makes it seem like the four fictions are consistently critical of whiteness. It seems, in the combined postcolonial/whiteness theory reading that I have undertaken in my dissertation, that each author challenges whiteness because of its colonial past and seeks to present a modified postcolonial whiteness which

is self-consciously unsettled. However, in each novel, whiteness is also covertly reaffirmed in images drawn from Christian mythology. Simon, the English patient, Gemmy and Tristan are (to borrow from Bill Condon's 1998 film) both gods and monsters. Their physical appearances make them shocking. They are bruised, broken, burned, maimed and deformed. They are also explicitly Christ-like.

The introductory descriptions of Simon, the patient, Gemmy and Tristan are remarkably similar; each alludes to Christianity. Hulme describes Simon: "standing stiff and straight like some weird saint in a stained gold window, is a child. A thin, shockheaded person, haloed in hair, shrouded in the dying sunlight" (16). The boy is like a saint, "haloed" and "shrouded." The image is reminiscent of a stained-glass window depicting not just any saint, but Christ and his crucifixion (the juxtaposition of halo and death-shroud reinforce this). Similarly, Ondaatje's Hana washes the patient and observes that he has the "'[h]ipbones of Christ [. . .] He is her despairing saint" (3). She describes how "[s]he loves the hollow below the lowest rib, its cliff of skin" (4). He looks to her like the gaunt figure of Christ on the cross: injured and immobile. In *Remembering Babylon*, Gemmy appears to the children like a crucified Christ that has

climbed off the cross: "[i]t was a scarecrow that had somehow caught the spark of life, got down from its pole, and now, in a raggedy, rough-headed way, was stumbling over the blazing earth" (3). As Gemmy approaches, Lachlan describes his transformation back into a Christ-figure suspended by outstretched arms: Gemmy gave "a kind of squawk, and leaping up onto the top rail of the fence, hung there, [his] arms outflung as if preparing for flight" (3).[1] In *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, Carey reworks the Christian nativity. Tristan is revealed during a production of *Macbeth*. The three wise men are replaced by the three witches:

> The First Witch stood off upstage left, in what was, technically, a weak position. Somehow she used it to dominate the stage. The Third and Second Witches leaped and screeched, but the First Witch was immobile, wrapped in rubber [. . .] When the Third Witch went to say her line (*"Thou shalt get Kings, though thou be none"*), The First Witch stepped across and stole it from her.
>
> "Thou shalt get Kings," she said, and then revealed Tristan Smith in his hiding place, inside the cloak against her sweating breast. (31)

All four novels focus on a white, yet injured, abject or liminal protagonist who is also a Christ-figure.[2]

There are various ways to respond to the incongruous Christian numinosity of the four protagonists. One can insist that the allusions mitigate, or, at the very least, call into question, the disadvantage, liminality, injury and abjection these characters suffer. The Christian imagery frames the four as martyrs; it suggests that, despite the critiques of whiteness in each novel, there is a lingering conviction that whiteness is being punished unjustly, and that it should still be preeminent. The affirmation of whiteness contradicts its unsettling by Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey. Hidden in their critiques and re-constructions of whiteness are remarkably conservative images that preserve whiteness as divine, and reinscribe its authority. Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey produce marginalised white men whose concomitant characterisation as Christ-like reaffirms their centrality and restabilises them so that they are not really unsettled any longer. George Yùdice asserts that "the ultimate legitimating move is the claim to oppression" (281). Is the liminality of Simon, the patient, Gemmy and Tristan thus merely strategic? Is the "marking" of their white masculinity by wounds "a strategy through which [the authors of these characters]

negotiate the widespread critique of [white men's] power and privilege" (Robinson 6)? Both Yùdice and Sally Robinson suggest that visible wounds are a means of deflecting critiques of privileged white masculinity and so of re-establishing the centrality and dominance of white men.

But (and this approach allows for a second, less accusatory reading of the Christian imagery and its impact on representations of whiteness in these novels) Robinson concludes that "[t]he wounded white man, forced into visibility by others, is a figure that, paradoxically, testifies to the power of liberationist movements in reshaping American identity and discourse *and* threatens to erode the gains that those movements achieved" (191). She suggests that representations of wounded white masculinity show that whiteness's authority and preeminence have been successfully challenged but that, at the same time, strategically marginalised figures can represent a recentralisation and re-valuing of whiteness. This is true of Simon, the English patient, Gemmy and Tristan: they illustrate the successful unsettling of whiteness and yet they are also martyred figures who embody the re-centralisation of whiteness's authority. Their liminality is a useful step

towards destabilising whiteness's authority despite the recidivism of gnostic images that reprivilege them.

However, *place* comes to bear on these characters in a way that it does not on the cases examined by Yùdice and Robinson. A third reading, then, suggests that the apparent martyring of these characters should be read differently because of settler colony contexts and histories. Yùdice and Robinson examine white masculinity in America. Though America was a settler colony too, in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, whiteness has a slightly different legacy, principally because these countries have not been influenced by the slave trade in the same way as America. In Australia, Canada and New Zealand, British colonial, and later Commonwealth, influence has been pervasive. As I observe in my introduction, the typical nineteenth-century British settler arriving in Australia, Canada or New Zealand resided on what Britain considered the outskirts of its empire. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write: "the idea of cultural inferiority exceeded that of mere provincial gaucherie as race permeated even the construction of 'white' settlers" (*Key Concepts* 47). The white settlers were already marginalised by British perceptions of their "cultural inferiority" or "provincial gaucherie"; their whiteness was already

unsettled. To injure a whiteness that was already unsettled has different implications than injuring a whiteness that (as Yùdice and Robinson would suggest of American whiteness) has enjoyed privilege.

The injuring of characters like Simon, Gemmy and Tristan, in conjunction with Christian allusions, martyrs and ennobles contemporary whitenesses that are themselves responses to nineteenth-century constructions of the marginal British settler. The numinosity of Simon, Gemmy and Tristan is salvific; it suggests the evolution of whiteness into new self-consciously destabilised and yet also reaffirmed Australian, Canadian and New Zealand whitenesses. These "monsters" become different, new, specifically postcolonial, white "gods"; they are numinous precisely because they represent new kinds of whiteness and the possibility of whiteness's evolution beyond the British colonial circumscription that inevitably inflects even the (post)colonial.

The patient is notably different. His own "Englishness" is not settler-colony whiteness. He is instead an image of the British/English colonist. In him Ondaatje shows the fallacy of the ideal of whiteness which (settler) colonists strove to live up to and to recreate. The patient is the image of imperial Britain as perceived by two Canadians, an Indian and a Hungarian.

His numinosity *does* reinscribe the centrality and normativity of the British colonial type, but Ondaatje shows how Hana, Kip and Almàsy are complicit in recentralising, reauthorising and normalising their understanding of the British colonist.

One of the benefits of using American (or, as in the case of Dyer, British) whiteness/race theory with postcolonial theory is that I have been able to invoke the inevitably Manichean vocabulary of (post)colonialism while also suggesting new categories of analysis. I have been able to consider the persistence of colonial categorisations of self and other as well as to examine how whiteness is no longer transparent, how its boundaries have become elastic, how it is symbolically associated with violence and how it has begun to create its own others in, for instance, characterisations of the poor as white trash.

Emily Apter refers to "the particularist mantras and truisms calcifying inside the rhetoric of 'difference'" (5). She criticises postcolonialism for its focus on the colonial other and concomitant reinscription of a binary self/other discourse. Whiteness studies require that critics go beyond postcolonialism's "rhetoric of 'difference'," for contemporary whiteness is not

necessarily defined in relation to a racial other. Whiteness can define itself in relation to outmoded colonial stereotypes of *whiteness* as well as in relation to contemporary constructions of white privilege or white guilt. Whiteness studies can introduce a new contemporaneity to postcolonialism by suggesting, as this dissertation does, that older modes of analysis operate alongside newer ones. Postcolonial inquiry can thus acknowledge that contemporary representations of national identity often parody colonialism's racial and epidermal self/other constructions while concomitantly suggesting how the boundaries of these constructions are warped and broken by considerations of things like class and culture.

As my foray into religious imagery suggests, there are problems in the combined postcolonial/whiteness theory approach; one cannot simply assume that American whiteness theory will apply easily to a non-American context. While, on the one hand, one can use American whiteness theory to suggest that Simon, Gemmy and Tristan appear to be martyred in order that whiteness is recentralised and reaffirmed, on the other hand one must acknowledge that whiteness is not the same in Australia, Canada or New Zealand, and that the difference between

American or British whitenesses and whitenesses in these settler colonies can be substantial.

Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey have not been credited for revealing whiteness as the site of conflict between colonial and contemporary understandings of whiteness. Their works, however, illuminate the problems of white identity specific to former settler colonies in which whiteness is in the paradoxical position of being privileged and marginalised by critiques of that privilege. Hulme treats whiteness as a foil for Maoriness, but Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey each reveal that whiteness is riddled with contradictions. Their works address the instability of whiteness, the people that colonial constructions of whiteness omit but which are white nonetheless, and the contemporary class, cultural and racial implications of different kinds of "white." The proliferation of postcolonial whiteness into whitenesses is the most significant evolution I chart in this project.

Apter predicts that postcolonialism will learn to think beyond its rigid categories only by exploiting the world wide web: "postcolonial theory and aesthetic practice will 'cyberize' themselves quite soon (if they haven't already), pushing the envelope of the politics of global subjectivity as they place the diaspora on-line"

(223). However, Apter's insistence on a critical and aesthetic shift to the cyber-world is unnecessarily extreme. To go beyond postcolonialism's current critical and theoretical limitations we can examine the erosion and evolution of categories that is already taking place in fiction like that by Hulme, Ondaatje, Malouf and Carey. The bruised, broken, burnt and deformed bodies of white men in contemporary settler fiction confound postcolonial reading stategies by literally exceeding predictable categories. They require us to consider the implications of ambiguity.

[1] David Moore's cover illustration for the 1994 Vintage edition of *Remembering Babylon* depicts this moment. Incongruously, Gemmy looks African, but his posture on the fence-rail is reminiscent of a crucifix.

[2] A number of critics deal with Christian allusions in Hulme, Ondaatje and Malouf's work. See Patrick Holland, Le Cam, David Roxborough, Bill Fledderus and James Tulip.

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