

**Democracy
in Difference**

**Debating key
terms of gender,
sexuality, race
and identity**



Carolyn D'Cruz

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Content Warning

The author rates this book with an office of literature and film classification of M (mature audiences), though PG (poststructuralist guidance) is probably more appropriate. There is occasional coarse language and content that deals with sex and violence; some material might disturb and cause discomfort; and a few of the theorists and artists cited and used are dodgy characters.

DEMOCRACY IN DIFFERENCE

DEBATING KEY TERMS OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, RACE AND IDENTITY

In his best seller *The righteous mind. Why good people are divided by politics and religion*, moral and social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt opens with the plea, ‘Can we all get along?’ He is quoting Rodney King, a Black man, whose brutal beating by officers from the Los Angeles Police Department in 1991 was captured on video by a bystander and subsequently broadcast by news worldwide. Haidt notes that six days of riots followed the acquittal of the officers the following year, where ‘fifty three people were killed and more than seven thousand buildings torched’. He says King made the appeal after a particularly ‘horrific act of violence against a white truck driver’ (2012, p. xi). The way Haidt articulates and converts the question of race relations to political relations in his second paragraph signals that his approach to narrating division and difference diverges from my own, even though I also want everybody to get along and share Haidt’s interest in working through why it is so hard to do so. The psychologist’s focus on analysing human nature and behaviour, methods of experimental psychology, and interpretation through evolutionary theory, frames his inquiry with an optics and vocabulary that make a conversation about *difference* in *democracy* harder to share with the fields of study and methodological tools of analysis that have informed this book. Sharing the drive to tackle hard questions about politics and morality (although I prefer to use the term ethics) and division in society does not make it easier to agree on terms of debate.

Haidt expresses his own difficulty with talking between fields of inquiry in his first chapter on the origins of morality: ‘When anthropologists wrote about morality, it was as though they spoke a different language from the psychologists’ (2012, p. 16). He eventually came across a researcher who helped him ‘translate between the two fields’—a psychological anthropologist, who allowed Haidt to add ethnography to his methodological tools. The aim of this book is to find a way of building a vocabulary, which connects to public debates with a kind of literacy that can speak to several fields and audiences at once.

Over forty years ago, the dislocated feeling of not speaking the same language when moving from one field to another prompted cultural theorist Raymond Williams to publish his academically acclaimed *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. He writes, ‘when we come to say “we just don’t speak the same language” ... we have different immediate values or different kinds of valuation, or that we are aware, often intangibly of different formations and distributions of energy and interest’ (1976, p. 9). As *Keywords* illustrates, the development of a shared vocabulary demands its own research and consideration as much as issues at the heart of debates in which such terms get used.

This book shares much of Williams’ methodological and theoretical approach to cultivate a shared vocabulary but is caught within the muddle of debates Haidt sees as dividing liberals and conservatives. Haidt notes his use of ‘liberal’ can be confusing outside the United States and informs readers that he means ‘progressive or left-wing politics’ (2012, p. xvii). The left/right distinction can often exacerbate confusion in debate, as there are so many distinctions that can be made within the dichotomy and people can hold left positions on one issue (like being anti-capitalist) while remaining conservative on others (like opposing sex-work). The dichotomy emerged from the French National Assembly of 1789, which Italian political theorist Bobbio Noberto describes as a ‘banal spatial metaphor’ (1996, p. 36): the nobility and clergy took seats to the right of the President, and members of the legislative assembly sat to the left. During the French revolution, the left side was associated with radical change and the right with conserving the tradition of the king, nobility and clergy.

Over two centuries later, the distinction remains to associate those on the left with more radical agendas for change and a progressive politics, while the right is associated with conservation of institutional structures that not only align with the interests of wealth, capital, and patriarchal models of religion and the family but guard particular norms of defining the ‘political’ itself—that which orders the ‘relationship between civil society, nation and state, and so on’ (Derrida, 2005, p. 127). Haidt approaches the political dichotomy of liberal and conservative as if he occupied an impartial moderate centre (though he often shares his personal history with liberal sympathies); Williams identifies as an historical materialist, which places his perspective on the side of a left that would distinguish itself from Haidt’s liberals.

A significant problem with entering debates that take left and right, or progressive and conservative, views as the poles from which to argue about democracy and difference is that they are entangled in the mess of historical struggles within which these terms have acquired their meaning. It is not straightforward, for instance, to place the ideals of communism and democracy on the spectrum of progressive and conservative when we chart what kinds of wars and policies have been enacted in each of their names. Neither is it easy on a local level to explain electoral failures,

attachments to traditions of marriage and the family, or the problems almost everybody seems to have with identity politics, in left and right terms. A lot of commentaries in the public sphere nutting out these issues look for psychological explanations, like Haidt does, to help move beyond the ruts of polarised debate. This book, does not focus on the problem of ‘tribalism’ or ‘righteousness’ as Haidt and others do, but aims to insinuate through key terms and concepts that debating something like identity politics and electoral failures does not take place on an even playing field; this shifts the very approach to taking a moderate view, or believing there is an even hand in finding a middle ground to look at things from both sides as many commentators are fond of saying.

A case in point concerns debates around identity politics, which intensified after Donald Trump was elected the President of the United States on 8 November 2016. Twelve days after the election, when people were doing their post-mortems on why Hillary Clinton had lost, Mark Lilla, professor of the humanities at Columbia University, wrote in the *New York Times* that ‘the age of identity liberalism must be brought to an end’. Arguing that the ‘rhetoric of diversity’, appealing to ‘African-American, Latino, L.G.B.T. and women voters at every stop’, had cost Clinton and the Democrats the election, Lilla positioned the identity politics of differences in opposition to the national politics of commonality.

Lilla’s piece went viral. Subsequently the *New York Times* opened its opinion pages, Room for Debate, for commentators to respond to the polarising question: ‘Is criticism of political correctness and identity politics a reaction that’s long overdue or just racist?’ People weighed in from around the world. Contributing editor to the *New Statesman*, Laurie Penny, noted how conservatives, liberals and even Trotskyists had united in their attack against students and identity politics. Down under, *The Australian* ran the headline, ‘Trump’s election: a rejection of identity politics’ over an article in which conservative commentator Paul Kelly situated identity politics as the ‘cultivation of victimhood and the creation of laws, rules and processes to allow victims to pursue and punish people who have offended them’.

In one way or another, identity politics seems to get on *everybody’s* nerves. To accuse somebody of subscribing to identity politics within conservative, liberal and left circles is to suggest that they are not working in the interests of democracy or in solidarity with what are supposedly the common interests of all. Laurie Penny (2016) refutes this, arguing that all politics are identity politics. In doing so, Penny subscribes to the logic of being ‘for’ identity politics against all those who attack them. This book discusses terms for a shared vocabulary in ways that suggest it is a mistake to argue for or against identity politics, even though we all cannot help but hover about them. You cannot study differences in democracy without also thinking about how identity and politics are related to one another. The case of identity politics is one of many public debates that make it hard to talk about democracy in difference. The premise of this book is that debates

will remain stuck and polarised if we do not clarify the terms we use, the histories we draw from and our tools of analysis. Instead of approaching the matter through the narrative structure of a logical sequence, this book follows the format of Raymond Williams’ *Keywords* to remind us to attend to the complexity and insecurity of concepts we presume when we argue.

Public debates are bad at dealing with moral uncertainty, complication in argument, and trying to ensure debaters are on the same conceptual page before they take their sides. By their very nature debates need two opposing sides, and arguments are built by demolishing the grounds and claims of the adversaries’ positions. When moral and political issues get caught in a public debate—especially in response to the 24/7 rhythm of tabloid sensationalism—positions get calcified and the drive to measure public opinion gets wedged into extremes. This happens constantly with issues that fall into the realm of identity politics. Opinion polls ask whether wearing the burqa in public should be banned; if immigration and refugee intake should be halted; if trans folk should be allowed to use bathrooms that don’t match the assignation of their original birth certificates; if bakeries should be required to make a wedding cake for same-sex couples; or if a settler-colonial nation like Australia still has a serious racism problem.

A book like *The Righteous Mind* would explain the fervour and problems arising from these debates through tribalism—the strong attachment and loyalty one has to one’s own tribe or social group—and a human proclivity to be morally right. The terms and fields examined in this book aim to show how such a psychological approach empties out the historical struggles that have produced the inequalities that have given us the terrain from which identity politics are debated today. For all the frustrations conservatives, liberals and those of the radical left might experience regarding the ways in which the language of identity politics has come to dominate discussions about elections, workplace practices and ways of organising social movements and nations, we would be remiss if we blame those on the margins for their own attachments to the social groupings that have set them apart from the mainstream. The difficulty arises when we either too quickly reduce a debate to only a person’s identity, or too insufficiently account for how the politics of identity is already operating through the way we argue.

Many debates related to identities in democracy take place through questions and terms that pay too little attention to how history, power and knowledge are entangled with one another. People assume they know what democracy is, and hold fixed views about what gender, race, sexuality, class and disability are. By focusing on how we think about the meaning of these terms, this book responds to the situation that, separately or combined, common sense and public reason are not sufficient for dealing with differences in the promise of the democratic ideal. By honing in on terms that are often not interrogated in the midst of public debate, and outlining some concepts that are useful for analysing how we make sense of difference and power, this book aims to deepen our optics and open our channels of audibil-

ity to see and hear what lies below this thing writers like Mark Lilla privilege as the national politics of commonality.

Just as Raymond Williams collected a series of words that clustered around a changing vernacular around culture and society, I have collected a series of terms and listed some non-traditional fields of study that cluster around the shifting vocabulary concerning democracy and difference. This task moves to a much slower rhythm than public and social debates connected to these terms. The book does not pretend to take an impartial view of democracy in difference; rather, it is written in the spirit of doing history from below. Its heritage is those minor studies that entered the academy in the 1970s as a rejoinder to biases in canonical knowledge. What has been accepted as authoritative in who we study, what we study, and how we study is not as value-neutral and as reasonable as the guardians of the institution have hitherto claimed. Each of the minor areas of study explored in this book emerged as a response to the narrowness of canonical knowledge embedded within universities and the cultural fabric of everyday life in nations calling themselves democracies.

Cultural studies, women's and gender studies, Indigenous studies, queer theory, gay and lesbian studies, and more recently trans studies and disability and crip studies, have all responded to the omissions, erasures and suppression of knowledge attached to the different conditions of existence one experiences depending on one's race, class, gender, sexuality and disability. Each field of inquiry brought new and alternative texts to read, and theories and methods from which to teach, learn and research. Feminism, Marxism, queer theory and decolonial methodologies entered the Western academy with the aim of narrating the excluded perspectives from the official history portrayed in school curriculums and public monuments; they also have been developing more complicated perspectives for grounding theoretical frames, methods and concepts of reason and objectivity.

In the 1980s and 1990s the blossoming of these fields of study and new methodologies attracted the same kind of backlash against political correctness and identity politics that we have witnessed in the 2010s. At the end of the last century, commentators in *The Australian* cast these area studies, alongside the entry of what was dubbed cultural Marxism, postmodernist and deconstructivist thinking, as damaging the rigor and scholarship of universities (Slattery, 1993). This book emerges from within such area studies and is informed by the theoretical approaches that have been ridiculed in the media and from within the academy. Unfortunately, on the advice from popular and critical commentators, there are many members of the reading public who dismiss minor area studies and what they take to be 'postmodern neo-marxists' (in the words of popular professor of psychology, Jordan Peterson) without feeling obliged to investigate these areas or theories for themselves.

Minor area studies with a critical theoretical lens are not given enough space or credit when discussing the terms in which democratic

nations might learn how to better live up to their ideals. In recent years, in both Australia and Europe, those engaged with critical (as opposed to liberal) thinking have reduced in number, while several gender and sexuality programs have either shrunk or been shut down. In Europe the far-right have targeted gender studies programs for threatening traditional values through their adherence to so-called gender ideology (Apperly, 2019). Sexuality Women's and Gender Studies appears healthier in the United States, although the backlash against political correctness is vociferous. Written from within the context where there have been constant contractions and threats to programs that deal with critical thinking, gender, sexuality and critical race, this open access book aims to engage *anyone* invested in the (cultivated) tensions between differences in identity and the national politics of professed commonality.

Whether engaging with the terms and fields of study in this book can have an impact on public debates remains to be seen. Following Williams' steps again, my hope as a contribution is also 'not resolution but perhaps ... [to open] just that edge of consciousness' (1976, p. 21). I believe doing the critical work of learning how national histories are narrated can do more for getting along with one another than most three hour workshops on diversity and inclusion. In this spirit, I hope this book can be of use to those that might not have encountered history from below in their own fields of expertise. I hope readers of this book include: lawyers and judges who deliberate about sex, sexuality and race based cases of discrimination among other things; activists, advocates and community workers who also desire a shared vocabulary; and journalists, broadcasters, and other communicators, who share the values of describing world events as accurately and as justly as they can. I hope these terms can deepen alliances between academic and non-academic work rather than create suspicion between them. For workplaces and organisations dealing with human resources and public relations, I hope this book can inform strategies for dealing with difference beyond tokenism. Above all, for anyone studying either formally or informally, I hope the particular choice of terms can serve as a tool for navigating between public life and academic knowledge, where several schools of thought and disciplines intersect.

The intersecting fields of inquiry that have entries in the book, as well as the conceptual choices and debates discussed, follow my own trajectory of study, research and teaching, and might seem like an odd collection of terms to those with a different disciplinary history. The best way of describing the entries chosen is to outline the twists and turns in my own path for wanting to write this. Like Haidt and Williams, I also encountered the problem of engaging with fields that seemed to be speaking different languages. My own experience involved the radically different approaches to theory applied in my study of sociology and economics in the 1980s as an undergraduate. In economics, I was trained to distinguish between normative (what ought to be) and positive (what is) thinking so that the former could be discarded from the discipline's field of objects for inquiry; Marxism was dismissed in

one sentence, and the value of ‘free market’ capitalism as the most progressive form of organising the production of goods and services for society was taken for granted by many. In sociology, I was taught by Marxists, who took for granted the questioning of norms and desire for social transformation; in this field I learned that the machinations of capitalism lay at the heart of producing inequality. The fact that two disciplines with a heritage in the social sciences could be looking at capitalism with such radically different methods and approaches to my search for ‘the truth’ did my head in.

At the same time, I was having trouble reconciling the liberationist spirit I was reading in Marx’s works with the attachment of his name to the totalitarian communist regimes of governance in the Soviet Union. This was during the Cold War between Russia and the United States, in which Soviet communism was presented in the West as the opposing ideology to democracy, where democracy was understood as attached to free market capitalism. The more I learned about democratic nations, however, the more I could see the gap between the actual and the ideal, and the problem of capitalism. Marxism’s critique of capitalism had given me a lens from which to explain the difference between the formal contention that everybody was free and equal before the state, to the substantive facts on the ground that not everybody was included in the prevailing concepts of freedom and equality.

The explanatory power of Marxism for exposing the power structure of class was so strong for me in the 1980s that I had decided the Marxism adopted by communist regimes was a simple distortion. However, my doctrinaire approach to Marx started to become undone by the entry of two new formations in the academy. One was feminist and racial critique of Marx, arguing not only that capital was gendered and racialised, but that oppression was not reducible to class alone. The other formation was the entry into the academy of thinkers that clustered around the terms, postmodernism, poststructuralism and deconstruction. I set out to prove that postmodernists were wrong in criticising Marx, and to argue for the centrality of class for all oppression. Once I had begun actually reading the thinkers that I wanted to denounce, my attachment to Marx took an unexpected turn. Poststructuralist and deconstructive strategies of reading and writing were not anti-Marxist or against liberation politics, but offered a more complicated understanding of how the ideals of such things as Marxism, communism, democracy, feminism, and so on, would run into a net trap when trying to disentangle the knots that had been tied between such oppositions as the ideal and the actual, abstract and concrete, private and public, and so on.

My engagement with feminism and anti-racist critique felt a little more fraught because of the role lived experience played in theorising. While I was attached to both politically, I had problems with the idea of an identity grounding a theory of knowledge. Back in the 1980s and 1990s, I was irritated with identity politics and was intent on finding a way of building social movements that did not get caught up in formulaic approaches over how

one’s identity related to the production of knowledge. I wrote my PhD on identity politics, which was later converted to a book. Having decided that the question of ‘what is to be done?’ had been unduly usurped by having to respond to the interrogation of ‘who the hell are you?’ I refused to disclose anything about my own identity markers in the course of writing. I didn’t then like, and still feel uncomfortable with, writing about my own lived experiences in relation to what I research. However, my attitude toward the place of lived experiences in theorising began to become more open after I had become qualified to land an academic job in the field of gender sexuality and diversity studies—a field I did not expect to sit comfortably with my critique of identity politics. Ironically, my research aiming to find a way out of reducing the political to markers of identity had given me the skills and knowledge to work in those areas of inquiry whose existence relied on them.

The terms collected here reflect my professional position and how I take responsibility for working in gender sexuality and diversity studies; they also carry the heritage of my journey through the humanities and social sciences in general. The more I learn, the more I realise just how deeply the bias of canonised knowledge has kept me and others from recalibrating the signposts for passing on the inheritance of the humanities and social sciences to new generations. There are obvious limits in my own work in that I read and write only in English and have taken too long to engage with decolonial methodologies to rethink the signposting of such things as modernity and the Enlightenment. My own political and intellectual history with Marxism and feminism for longer than queer theory and critical race means that entries associated with these terms tend to be more in depth; this asymmetry in knowledge is exacerbated in relation to something like disability studies. Entries that touch on recent public debates also tend to be longer. Learning is life long, so I offer this vocabulary in the spirit of continuing the project.

Moreover, writing cannot wait for that point of learning when we will be decolonial enough, for when all the letters of the LGBTIQ+ alphabet soup for naming sexually and gender diverse communities are settled, or for when we have unlearned our privileges with enough literacy to speak and do more to build solidarity and work for justice. We must act and learn as we go. We must always act from within the muck, from within impossible situations, and without certainty that we know precisely where we are going. There are also situations in which it is difficult to gauge what side of a battle line we are on. The impossibility of certainty does not negate the possibility of accounting for how knowledge is legitimated and how power functions. We must go on by learning the art of what becomes possible when faced with impossible situations.

I go on knowing that the institution from which I speak still operates through power structures such as Eurocentrism, which cannot be easily erased. This is not a matter of classifying this as a good or bad thing; it just is. The point is to learn to undo such dominance. An aim of this book is to

demonstrate the necessity of learning the language of what has become dominant in order to find ways for marginal voices—and the social movements, theoretical frames and methodologies attached to them—to get a better hearing from within that space and beyond. In settler states like Australia, it is only when we acknowledge how national commonality has been built through colonial violence and the exclusion of social groups who have been differentiated from the abstract individual citizen of democratic ideals that we will be better equipped to confront the prejudice woven into the cultural fabric of conservative, liberal *and* left thinking.

The art of cultivating a more just political future is not about choosing commonality over difference, or difference over commonality; rather it is about navigating between the two while reckoning with the historical and communicative muck that robs all terms used in critical thinking of settling into a pure and fixed definition. The instability of cultivating a shared vocabulary gives us reason to reflect on the terms and tools of analysis we use; the asymmetry of power relations is one of the reasons we cannot deliberate as if we are reasoning between two or more even sides.

The book therefore shuttles between the dominant and marginal, canonical and subjugated knowledge. Most entries address one situation or more in which the vocabulary and fields discussed acquire significance before tracking, if relevant, the term's etymological roots. The idea is not to provide a definitive description of the entry's meaning but rather to place the term on a map for navigating the ever-shifting coordinates for understanding democracy in difference.

Alongside description and exegesis of the concept's import, each entry is linked to a song; there are images, animations, stand-up comedy, fragments of poetry and even inserts of art exhibitions that illustrate the term's life between the politics of difference and commonality, and relations between the marginal and dominant. These multiple forms of approaching the terms align with the book's commitment to a spirit of the democratic promise to be open to dissent and free expression. It also illustrates how much faster the zones of art and culture perform decolonial, feminist, queer and other marginalised work than the traditional work of academic writing. Apart from this, the vehicles of art and literature illuminate the concept at issue in a more compact and entertaining way than conventional academic evaluation and my own limits in writing can.

The book can be read in any order, and even without this introduction, as the entries were written in an ad hoc sequence, following the logic on some days of proceeding from the easiest to the most difficult and on others tackling the thorny areas first. Initially, I had about 112 key terms, but this would not have been achievable in the time frame for meeting the writing deadline. The goal then became fifty, condensing some terms together and discarding others. Eventually, a few extras were added to the fifty either because the temperature of debate was rising in the public sphere, or it seemed remiss to not have a certain entry included. Lines in the sand must

be drawn, however, and so the end product became decided in terms of my time and expertise more than the fifty or so most important terms everybody needs to know to learn about and research democracy in difference. There are clusters of terms that would otherwise seem to go together, such as all entries on minor area studies, or all terms relating to the conceptual apparatus or tools of analysis that are formed within specific theoretical frames and methodologies (like Marxism and capitalism, or aporia, sign and deconstruction). The overlap between theories, methods and terms, however, would be too great to be able to achieve a suitable order. My own clusters would have been like ordering a record or book collection where only I could most readily find what I wanted. In the end, I followed Williams (1976, p. 23) again, and listed the entries in alphabetical order because this is the most simple and conventional arrangement.

As an open access book there is space for interaction from readers and for improving the entries through feedback. The aim is to adjust the concepts as the political landscape keeps changing and new research comes to light. Above all, addressing these terms of debate is written with the pledge to do rather than merely describe the work of justice.

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APORIA

When we reach a blocked path in our thoughts and actions, an impasse in which no rhyme or reason can show us what track to take in making a decision, we experience an aporia.

The experience of an aporia may face us on a personal level when, for instance, we cannot decide whether to forgive or not forgive someone who we believe has harmed us in an unforgivable way. In this case, the internal contradiction inhering in the decision is structured by the impossible choice of forgiving something that is unforgivable—for, as Jacques Derrida (2001) asks, if an act is forgivable in the first place, what would we be forgiving?

On a national scale, an aporia might face members of a social group with a choice or question about their status that may miss the measure or mark for their own concerns for justice. For instance, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia may find the prospect of voting for constitutional recognition a contradiction in terms, as sovereignty of their lands was never ceded. For many, voting for constitutional recognition without a treaty with reparations, or even voting *per se* without a treaty, would imbue the Australian nation-state with a legitimacy that undermines Indigenous sovereignty. At the same time, not voting may perpetuate an idea among some of the populace that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not worthy of recognition at all. Both options from which to address recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty seem bad, so the path for movement feels blocked.

Similarly, when Australia held a plebiscite asking if same-sex couples should be allowed to marry, many LGBTIQ folk experienced the aporia of confronting whether to vote or not. Voting in the plebiscite felt like accepting the institution of marriage, which many queers and feminists had been criticising as part of their liberation struggles. However, as the campaign became a battleground in which to debate the very status of LGBTIQ people, to not vote felt like a betrayal of standing up for the community.

These examples point to the limits of logic for dealing with interpersonal and political dilemmas lodged in the everyday muck of life and history. An aporia can emerge within abstract logical problems themselves (like something showing signs of being both A and not A at the same time), but our interest here is with the blocked paths presented by differences within democracy.

The Online Etymology Dictionary dates *aporia* to the late sixteenth century. In Latin, the term is used in rhetoric to denote ‘professed doubt as to where to begin’. The Greek word *aporia* expresses ‘difficulty, perplexity, want of means, poverty’. This sense is derived from the abstract noun, *aporos*, which can be broken into *a*—denoting ‘not, without’—and *poros* denoting ‘passage’. *Without passage* gives us the sense of the blocked path and impassable/impossible dilemma posed by a given situation or problem. By the late nineteenth century, aporia becomes associated with ‘equality of reasons for or against’.

French thinker Jacques Derrida, dubbed as the father of deconstruction, centres much of his work on the aporia, or the experience of the aporetic.



Adam Goodes at Recognise Campaign Presser, 2014.

For Derrida, politics and ethics acquire their responsibility by facing ‘the experience and experiment of the aporia’ (1994, p. 41). Like the examples at the beginning of this entry, the experiment of the aporia can take the form of a singular, personal experience, as well as a general, political one.

In *The other heading, reflections on today’s Europe*, Derrida considered the demarcation and direction of European alliances—at the time in which the European Union were engaged in drafting their treaties for governance—as a task that remains caught between the dual impulse for a cosmopolitan union on the one hand, while on the other hand maintaining national autonomy for individual countries.

Over twenty years later, this is the aporia that Brexit encapsulates: the difficulty of Britain extracting itself from the European Union without forsaking some of the benefits in trade, investment and cultural exchange that come with a common market and more free movement. Brexit illustrates the problem inhering in any identity’s battle to define and divorce itself from the differences upon which it depends to acquire its meaning. Whether the identity in question is Britain, Europe, woman, Indian, or gay, the paradoxical logic of demarcation is the same: there can be no articulation of any identity without an encounter of what is other to it. Identity acquires its meaning through a play of differences, which simultaneously defers the arrival of settling on ‘what (something) is’. The European project always will have been haunted by the contradictory impulses facing each nation that joins its union: to subsume one’s nation’s own difference and autonomy in the name of unity on one side, or to cling to one’s difference so hard that it encourages the flourishing of ‘petty little nationalisms’ on the other side. There is no rule or program that can resolve this dilemma, which can explain why Brexit turned into such a drama. The path definitely appears impassable, yet a passage must be found.

No doubt, confronting aporias is frustrating because no general rule or program can provide the means from which a just decision can be calculated, and there is no way of knowing if one is making the right decision before it is made. Justice, ethics, politics, or any human decision whatsoever, would not be a decision if it did not pass through the aporetic experience that brings the order of the calculable to that which cannot be calculated.

Yet, it is precisely this condition of impossibility—the impossibility of relying on a calculable program to make a decision—that supplies the condition of possibility for assigning agency and responsibility to the decision maker (whether at the level of the individual or the nation). At the same time, the person or people making the decision would have to calculate as far as possible with the information at hand—the legal frameworks, political, social and economic infrastructures that condition the context and situation in which a decision is made—before confronting that which cannot be calculated (Derrida, 1992).

With the aporias discussed here, the point of view or position one may take in relation to these situations has to move between what can be calculated and what cannot. Responsibility lies between calculation and making a fresh decision before that which cannot be calculated. It might be relevant to take into account the circumstances in which an unforgivable deed was done; but this cannot form the ground from which to make a hard and fast rule or calculation that, upon apology, the unforgivable should be necessarily pardoned. It would be relevant to learn one’s history and consider all the legal, political, social and economic implications that a referendum on constitutional recognition for Indigenous people might bring about; yet, determining whether justice will immediately follow recognition, or even a treaty, will remain in the order of the incalculable. This does not mean that apologies, recognition and treaties are not important: they are. The aporetic experience and experiment, however, reminds us that justice, like democracy and the promise for liberation, finds its work at the beginning of the impossible rather than at the end of a calculable program.

BINARY OPPOSITION

Supertramp *The Logical Song*

A pair of terms that are opposite in meaning to one another is known as a binary opposition. This concept is significant for thinking about identity, ethics, politics, and philosophical reasoning, among other things. Binary pairs that structure identities are man/woman, Black/White, queer/straight, disabled/able, cis/trans, and so on. Political binary pairs include progressive/conservative, left/right, cosmopolitan/provincial, national/international; ethics relies on distinguishing the self from an other and good from bad; philosophical reasoning largely depends on differentiating between the true and the false.

Is it possible to think or communicate without oppositional logic? Logical reasoning proceeds by distinguishing between something that is either *A* or not *A*. Boolean algebra works on the premise of using only the values of true and false. Early childhood learning materials teach words through opposites: up/down, big/small, tall/short, in/out, and so on. It seems that meaning for something cannot be acquired without also implicitly referring to that which it is not.

Focus on binary oppositions prompts us to reckon with the meaning of a category in relation to what it is different from. This idea comes from the structuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure ([1916] 1983), who said that the meaning of any sign does not exist in and of itself; it is only through the play of differences that an identity acquires its meaning. Characteristics of binary opposites are instructive for helping us to think about how language connects to relations of power. This helps to frame and question how differences in identity matter.

The two sides of the binary pair are supposed to form a whole, where the two sides of the opposition are presumed as mutually exclusive to one another. In the gender binary, for instance, the category of man acquires meaning through being opposite to woman. If labelled a man, binary logic maintains that one cannot be a woman, and vice versa. However, in life we know that there are people that cannot be classified as either man or woman (some intersex people) and there are those who do not identify as man or woman. Those who identify as genderqueer or non-binary are neither man nor woman. Others may identify with both sides of the binary. Notably, what does not fall neatly into either side of the binary unsettles presumed order and can acquire negative connotations for deviating from and not fitting directly into the expectations of a dominant culture.

The trouble that accompanies the disruption of a binary extends to other categories that affect social and political life. Between adult and child sits the adolescent; between queer and straight there are bisexuals. In relation to culture and ethnicity, colonial domination through Anglo and European empires became attached to racial signifiers of



The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913).



Non-binary Pride Flag.



Depiction of binary code, the two-symbol system made of 1 and 0.

whiteness and blackness in which the idea of mixing between the two was scandalous. Such scandal surrounding different ethnic groups having sex with one another, procreating and marrying one another, especially across the colour line, became manifest in miscegenation laws (where it was deemed illegal for people from different races to marry one another).

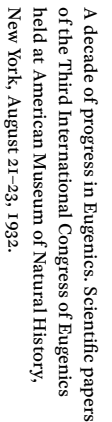
Binary oppositions are also characterised by privileging one side of the pair over the other: man over woman, White over Black, the abled over the disabled; purity over contamination. Oppositional thinking is so crucial to making a logical argument that it becomes difficult to reflect on the historical imposition of values onto the categories we use to make sense of things. Consider the traits associated with men and masculinity: strong, rational, risk-taker, aggressive. These traits pair together with their opposites to support favouring male over female. The hierarchy further entrenches male domination when a female displays the traits of the masculine side of the binary. Aggression in a female, however, is more often scorned than valued.

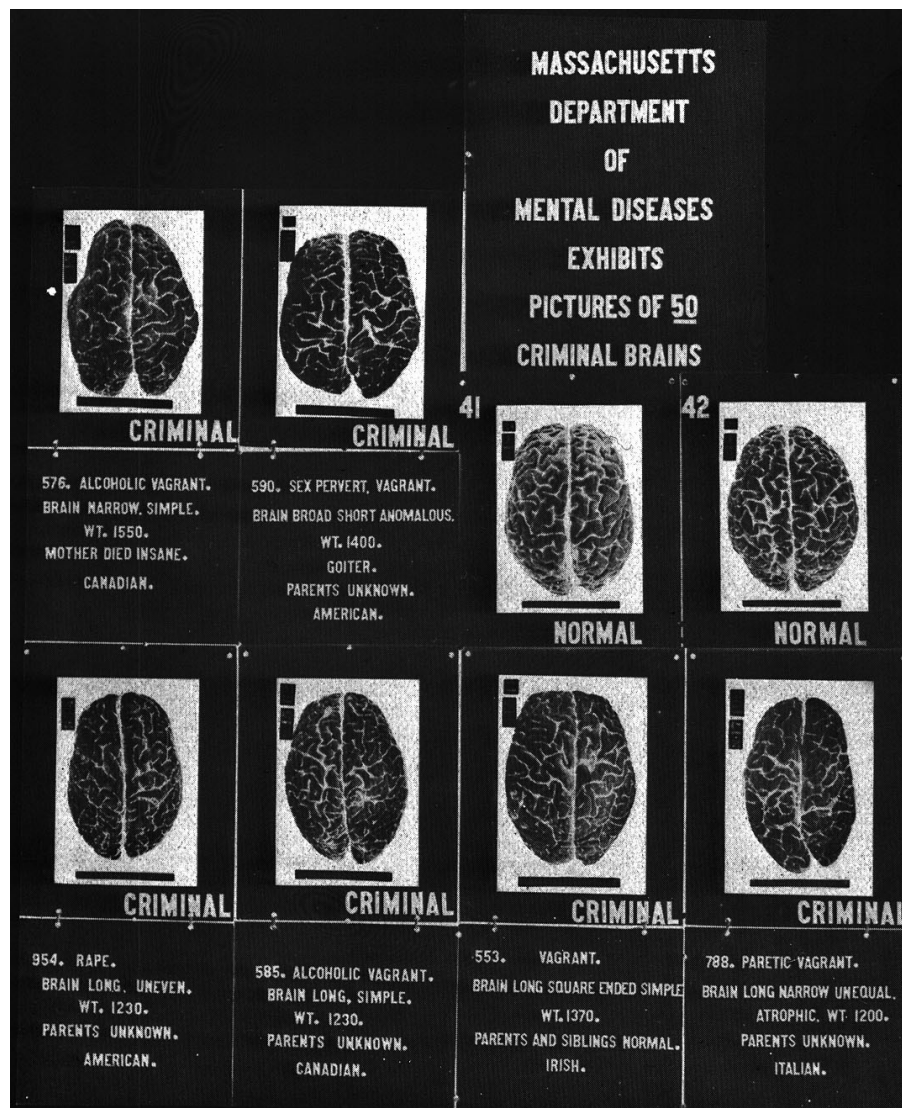
Those falling on the subordinated side of a binary often aim to revalue the oppositional pair through a strategy of reversal. In the case of man/woman this can involve privileging the traits of being delicate, emotional, and co-operative in place of the masculine traits named above. The problem with such strategies is that the reversal does not question the values attached to each side of the binary. Delicate and emotional approaches to personal, professional and public relations, for example, may not always be the best or most desired strategies for displacing masculine structures and modes of operation. To transform how the values of masculinity and femininity work in oppressive ways, it is necessary to not position each side of the male/female binary as congruent with their presumed natural roles.

As much as we can question the gender binary, this does not mean that we can get rid of each term; moving between, beyond and toward something other than the gender binary will still need a point of reference (gender) from which to start. Identifying as gender-queer, non-binary, trans*, or even as genderless, can occur only with reference to the gender binary. It is for this reason that many still use the term race, even though its scientific grounding has long been challenged. Having constructed the way in which people have been classified, we now have to deal with the consequences.

Weird AI Perform This Way

It is important to not confuse critique of biological determinism with a critique of biology. Maintaining productive dialogue between biology and fields like gender, sexuality and critical race studies is crucial for carrying





A 1920s image attempting to associate brain types to criminal behaviour.

forward connections between knowledge and justice. Because the views of scientists in general and biologists in particular influence social policy, it is important to engage with them.

Helena Cronin (2005), who identifies as a Darwinian philosopher, fits the description of a biological determinist. She claims male predominance in workplaces and in fields of study like engineering and mathematics are better explained through social evolution in sex differences than by sexism. Cronin refers to studies that reveal differences between men and women, on average, relating to spatial abilities as well as differences in dispositions, interests and values. She also notices that, on average, there are more variances between men regarding a variety of factors than there are between women. There are two noteworthy points in each of these observations that should give us pause in rushing to a biological explanation for gender inequality. First, Cronin accepts the gender binary as definitive and so would have no way of ascertaining to what extent variance within each gender category affects the findings of the research she cites. Second, Cronin acknowledges that the studies on sex differences refer to averages and that differences between individual men are significant.

As Paul Caplan and Joanna Caplan (2009) argue in their book on sex research in the sciences, when a sex difference is found on average, this cannot be extrapolated to the assumption that all males and all females represent that trend. From sexual segregation in sport to social policy regarding job opportunities, Cronin's interpretation of Darwin's evolutionary theory applied to sex differences can prevent individuals from pursuing their aspirations because the predetermined path laid out based on sex assignment becomes too narrow.

Cronin (2005) makes another dubious assumption by attributing the differences that are found between men and women to biology and social evolution. She claims the differences cannot be environmental, because she says that these studies show that male and female newborns show differences (on average again) in their behaviour and responses to particular cues. As Caplan and Caplan (2009) point out, the studies that tend to make the headlines are those that stress sex differences. Moreover, as Judith Lorber (1993) has observed, when researchers start with a hypothesis that looks for differences, they tend to find differences; when they look for similarities, they tend to find similarities.

The propensity to debate sex differences in terms of environment versus biology is another version of the nature/nurture debate. The impossibility of landing on either side of this opposition can be explained on both empirical (observable and experiential) and interpretive (theoretical and reasoned) grounds.

Anne Fausto-Sterling and Donna Haraway are feminist theorists who are also biologists, and Cordelia Fine (2010, 2017) is a feminist neuroscientist; they all demonstrate that even within the empirical terms of biological and neurological sciences, things are far more complex than presented

in popular culture. Fausto-Sterling (1993, 2000) claims two sexes are not enough to capture the diversity of biological differences relating to genitalia, hormones, chromosomes, and reproductive organs as the usual markers of sexual difference. Most people do not know the precise composition of their hormone levels or get their chromosomes tested. Intersex people are an estimated 1–2 per cent of the population (as common as red hair), and according to Caplan and Caplan, ‘biologists now know that genes can be changed by the chemical processes in genes near to them’ (2009, p.3). The empirical evidence that gender variance exists on a biological level warns against conducting biological research from the presumption of an immutable gender binary.

Apart from the empirical evidence that counters biological determinism, the very framing of a nature/nurture debate also neglects consideration of how the categories of gender, sex, race, and disability are made intelligible through sign systems and discourse. Thus, on theoretical and logical grounds, reducing identity to biology is questionable. The elevated status that scientists including biologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners have over gender theorists, critical race scholars and crip studies theorists can make it difficult to hear that how we think about gender, race and disability affects what those categorised as such are believed to be able to do. (It was once popularly thought that women should not compete in sport; people with disabilities were unable to compete in sport; and Black runners had a biological advantage in sport). As the categories through which sex, race, disability, and so on, change through time and space, so do understandings of nature and nurture. The question is not whether biology is immutable, but rather how does the biological figure in our understandings of identity? The critique of biological determinism is not to discount biology; we need to learn biology well and research with a critical eye for looking at how first assumptions can skew the questions we ask and answers we find.



Connected to the eugenicist idea that believed in improving the biological composition of populations, sterilization laws were passed in the nations like the US in the early twentieth century. In the 1960s and 1970s family planning programs forced consent on poor, minority and institutionalised women to be sterilized after childbirth. This poster by Rachel Romero publicises a rally against this practice.

BORDERS

The first two hits on my computer's Google search for border are the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. There is also a popular reality television series called *Border Control*. In the twenty-first century 'border control' dominates the language of discussing migration: flows of people between what have come to be understood and contested as the borders between nation-states. Border control is also used to talk about preventing the influx of refugees into a nation, even though international conventions obligate its signatories to protect those seeking refuge on their territory. Whether dealing with matters of migration or the plight of refugees, the logic of the border operates through its ability to demarcate those granted the right to belong, and those not.

Operation sovereign borders names the policy that has kept refugees in detention for decades in Australia; Donald Trump's campaign to extend and solidify a wall at the US Border with Mexico is motivated by stopping the flow of immigrants; and anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes have underpinned much of Britain's Brexit objectives. While each of these cases are very different, they all share the problem of constructing borders that can effectively distinguish between national and multi-national economic interests, the national identity of a people, and the delineation of territory. The legacies of colonialism, land grabs, wars, commerce, and the mixing of races and cultures continue to disturb the logic of the border, which is built into laws, policies and international agreements. While all cases occupy different configurations of the elements constituting national borders, each case shares the problem of disentangling commerce and governance, distinguishing between an us and them, and determining what is included and excluded in the marking of territory.

All the above cases cite national security as the reason for border protection. Coming to terms with contemporary obsessions with borders and border security requires a reckoning with the specificity of historical struggles from which nation states and the flow of capital and people have been cultivated, as well as interrogating the logic operating through the demarcation of any border.

The English use of the word border is related to the Old French word *bordeure*, from the early fourteenth century, for 'shield, edge of a seam, border'. From the late fourteenth century 'border' is associated with geographical boundaries that mark a region, city or country from another ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). Whether marking the edge of a garden, the frame of a picture, or one nation from another, the border is set to define an inside from an outside. In this way, it is useful to think of a border like a frame or what Jacques Derrida (1987), after Kant calls a *parergon*: the marking of an inside from an outside is not separate from that which is delimited; the frame actually interacts with and influences how we view what it tries to contain.

The marking of an inside from an outside with a geographical border today designates the boundaries of national belonging. The form of nation-



states covers the idea of territory and designates the constitution of a people with an official sharing of language, community relations and culture. The naming of Australia as a federation in 1901 not only delimited the marking of territory within international affairs, but attempted to extinguish the traditional custodians of the land, to expel Chinese and Pacific Islander labourers who had been working in goldfields and sugar

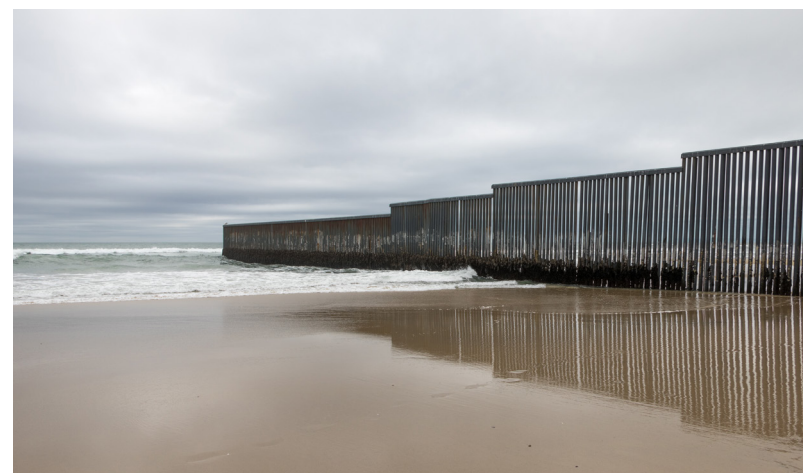
plantations, and to prevent non-white migrants from entering the nation. Australia's legacy of border control reveals that it cannot separate itself from those populations through which it has attempted to define itself as a white nation. The border can never be pure, as there cannot be an inside to belonging without an outside to define it.

The logic of geographical and political borders extends to borders that may be drawn symbolically to mark different types of people: migrants, LGBTIQA+ folk, those with different abilities, and so on. This does not mean that particular types of people are categorically denied the right to belong. As Yasmin Nair illustrates in cases of undocumented immigrants in the USA, the rhetoric of presenting themselves as 'exceptional immigrants, pointing to their academic achievements and exemplary citizenship' (2011, p. 135) has enabled some queers entry into citizenship, while upholding the idea that other 'illegal aliens' are undeserving. One therefore needs to be careful to not presume the logic of the border gives us clean cut cases when discussing different types of people. While borders separating different types of people from one another often prompt us to think about the porous and somewhat arbitrary nature of drawing borders, the governmental idea of border control constantly attempts to solidify who and what belongs and does not.

Increasingly, the tension between tight national border control and loose, yet concentrated, international flows of capital (tied to heavy investments in military-industrial and prison-industrial complexes) has produced displacements of people whose status threatens the purity and stability of the border. In addition to the threat that social categories of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability can pose to the presumed purity of national belonging, political dissidents are another type of identity relevant to the displacement and flow of people from their homelands. It pays to recall, that these types of people are the same groups who were exterminated in Nazi Germany. Border policies in Australia and the US today have constructed prison camps and detention centres for refugees who are not granted asylum, migrants without identity papers, and those whose temporary visas have expired. In this sense, contemporary comparisons between concentration camps, prison camps, detention centres are instructive to study.



Manus Island detention centre, Papua New Guinea, 2012.



Mexico-US border wall at Tijuana, Mexico, 2017.

Angela Mitropoulos (undated) has written a critical theory of the border, focusing on how borders arrive on continents through the historical tracks of empire and continue to this day through the operations that tie economies and finance to the detention industry. By following the actors and the flows of capital, Mitropoulos calls for ‘unthinking the border’ through disrupting supply chains, and divesting and boycotting those industries whose shared values are dependent on maintaining the displacement, expulsion and detention of people.

With profit making as its prime directive, military and prison industrial complexes are invested in keeping wars going and prisons occupied. Neither complex depends on consumer spending, providing capitalists with perpetual investment and in the case of prisons, cheap labour (Davis, 1999, 2003; Sudbury, 2005; Spade 2011). Kurdish-Iranian journalist, Behrouz Boochani (2018), writing while detained on Manus Island PNG through Australia’s notorious policies on refugees, makes explicit connections between the prison industry and the oppressive logic of border protection through his Manus Prison Theory and the term *kyriarchy*—an intersecting grid of power relations and oppression. The complicity between international capital, war and the border policies of nation states are so entangled with the displacement of people and production of refugees that the idea of sovereign borders are a hindrance rather than hospitable to the acquisition of human rights.

Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) challenges the discreteness of geographical and corporeal borders through poetry and prose written in dual language. Spanish poetry and phrases are interwoven with English, emphasising the historical mixing of language and culture that is expressed through Anzaldúa’s identification as a Chicana writer; she also uses her lesbian identity to challenge borders drawn along the lines of gender, sexuality and patriarchal religious and spiritual beliefs. Underscoring the connection between linguistic identity and ethnic identity, Anzaldúa speaks in ‘bastard’ tongues of an ancestry that connects to ‘ancient Indian ancestors’, dating back to 35000 B.C.E. (1987, p.4). In tracking the migration of the Cochise people to what is now Mexico and Central America, which connected with Aztec culture before the Spaniards had invaded the land, Anzaldúa gives readers an historical lesson that maps shifting geographical borders in which the new hybrid race—*mestizos*—emerged. The Anglo invasion of land in the 1800s, culminated in a war that forced Mexico to ‘give up almost half of her nation, what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and California’ (1987, p.7). The post war border fence established on February 2, 1848 reminds us that current discussions of a US-Mexico border wall is nothing new. It is also a reminder that the very notion of Mexicans as illegal immigrants can make sense only by forgetting the history of colonisation. Drawing inspiration from Anzaldúa among others, Walter Dignolo privileges the optics of coloniality and Foucault’s notion of subjugated knowledges over the concepts of the nation-state, modernity and the Enlightenment to develop a ‘border thinking’, a thinking that redresses

the tendency for social sciences to disregard ‘colonial difference and [...] the subalternization of knowledge built into it’ ([2000] 2012, p.4). This same kind of neglect and forgetting haunts the presumed sovereignty of all nations who occupy and settle on lands that have not been ceded by those already living there.

Anzaldúa explains that borders are in ‘a constant state of transition’ (p. 3); even when fences and walls are built to distinguish the us from a them, the porosity of the border suggests the division that is supposed to maintain purity is contaminated to start with. The idea of building a wall to separate one people from another, gives the impression of a continuous line in which the border can be illustrated neatly on a map. Architect, Eyal Weizman’s work on the wall Israel built shows that such claiming of borders is rather more discontinuous and instrumental in governing bodies and movement. *Weizman* speaks of the Israeli/Palestinian frontier as actually split into various ‘border devices’: fences around settlements, blockades around Palestinian cities, highways that operate as borders, sterile areas, checkpoints with narrow metal corridors and turnstiles, where all such border devices can ‘shrink and expand the terrain at will’ (Al Jazeera, 2014). From the ruins of the bombing and bulldozing, Weizman developed what he calls ‘forensic architecture’ that has been used in a variety of situations to present evidence in war crimes investigations.

Acts of resistance and survival are as important to understanding the border, as the instruments of violence. There are countless examples that could illustrate the point, but the following two indicate the depth to which border policies reach the privacy of the individual on the one hand and create new kinds of public spaces on the other hand. Regarding privacy, in *No Friend but the Mountains*, Boochani describes among many other examples how one’s style of pissing ‘is connected with defying the prison’s designation of space, forcing people to relieve themselves among difficulties and obstacles’ (2018, p. 161). In relation to the creation of new spaces, political sociologist *Sylvaine Bulle* has studied how new Palestinian urban spaces have been created along the Israeli separation fence in the Shoafat and A-Ram refugee camps, making domestic location more central for services than inaccessible Jerusalem (Zandberg, 2008). Like other examples of border thinking, such work is restitutive; it tells history from below, from those affected most from where borders are made most rigid.



A Palestinian boy and Israeli soldier in front of the Israeli West Bank Barrier, 2004.

Michael Cook is an artist of Bidjara heritage. In *Segregation—The Tram* he juxtaposes the figure of a happily isolated Queen and corgi in a modern carriage, opposite Indigenous figures and a camp dog in an older, crowded carriage. These tableaux introduce an unease that disrupts our sense of who is othered in this narrative.

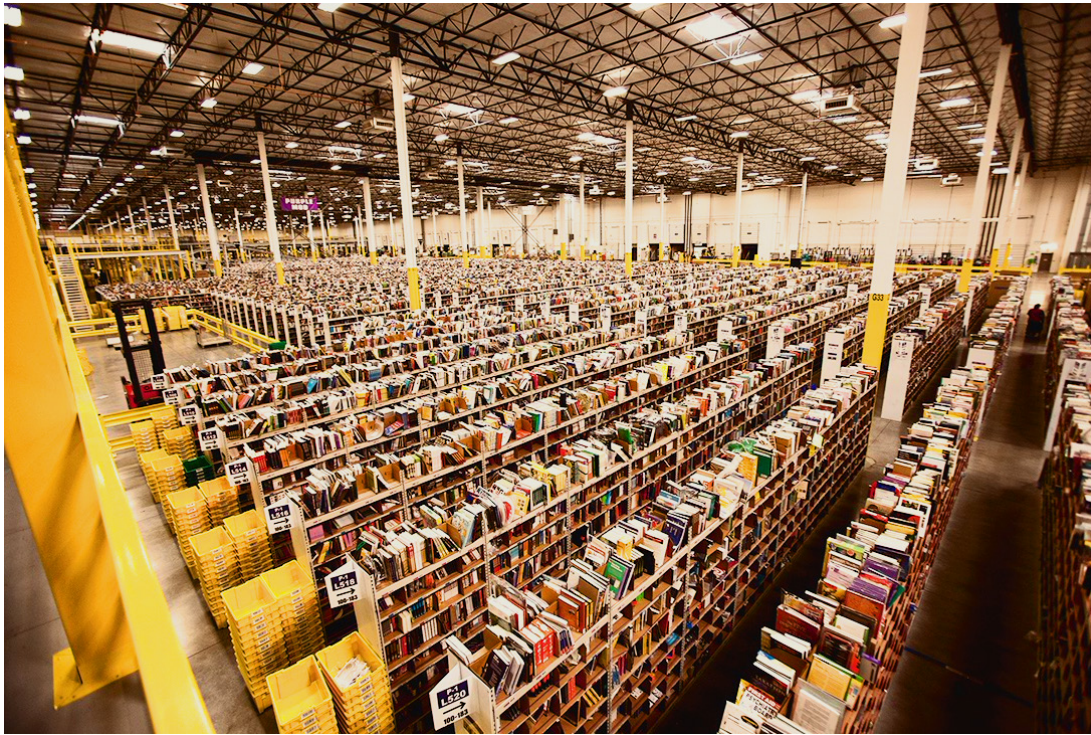


CAPITALISM

Karl Marx wrote three mighty volumes on capitalism, offering the most notorious critique of political economy to date. Marx [1879] (1977) describes capitalism as a mode of production—a political-economic system for how a society produces and reproduces itself. A mode of production can be divided into the forces and means of production, which foster specific social relations. The forces of production refer to techniques of labour used to create commodities. The means of production are the land, the machinery and raw materials used in the production process. Where a person is placed in the production process—between the opposites of owners of the means of production and workers who sell their labour to capitalists—forms the social relations of production. Marx makes the point more forcefully than other thinkers before him that it is only through labour power that new value is produced. Under capitalism, however, those who own the means of production—the machinery, the factories, the property, mines and so on—reap the value of what labourers produce, because labourers are sold on the market as commodities also (Hunt, 1979).

Capitalism gets its name through the specific way in which capital is owned by a minority of individuals who extract surplus value from labourers to gain profits in a market economy. It is the concentration of owning the means of production within a market system that distinguishes capitalism from mercantilism, whose main aim is to enlarge one's own balance of trade. Under mercantilism land, labour and machinery were not enclosed in the ways permitted under the growth of private property and private ownership of the means of production. Such a situation, according to Marx, increases the proportion of labourers who have nothing to sell but their own labour power. Workers can use land for their own subsistence; but the concentration and enclosure of private property and ownership of capital brings concentrated control of the production process from which profits are made. The enclosure of production sites, coupled with the expanding parameters of private property, enabled the specific form of commodity markets and labour markets that accompanied the Industrial Revolution in Europe (Hunt, 1979).

This Marxist version of how capitalism developed carries a bias that uncritically accepts the story of this arrangement of land, labour and capital relations as inevitable, the Industrial revolution as centrally located in Europe, and all this within a linear progressivist narrative of history. Furthermore, the methods of governing the flow and characteristics of labour power were both racialised (see Robinson, 1983) and gendered (see Federici, 2004). Later Marxists and theorists working from within Latin America and what some call peripheral zones of production situate the narrative in terms that suggest the development of forces and relations of production can always be otherwise. The so called industrialised European centre was cultivated through labour pools that depended on coloniality, slave labour and the demolition of peasant, artisanal and rural ways of living; there was nothing inevitable about the captivity of slaves and the mass killing of peasants. These facts get obscured in the Marxian narrative that situates commodity



labour as inexorably headed for universality. Drawing on such ideas as Andre Gunder Frank's (1967) centre-periphery relations in the global geo-political terrain, and Immanuel Wallerstein's (2004) theory of world systems, among other theorists, Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nisancioglu (2015) explain the geopolitical origins of capitalism through an international historical lens of uneven and combined development. Spanning a period of 600 years, and stretching 'geographically from Indonesia, along the Indian Ocean littoral, through the Middle East to Europe, West Africa, across the Atlantic to the Americas', Anievas and Nisancioglu (2015, p. xi) follow postcolonial critic Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2000) lead by aiming to provincialise Europe; they call for an 'international historical sociology' that does not reinforce the privileged locale of Western modernity.

The emphasis on historical specificity, geopolitical relations of power, and an international perspective of uneven and combined development of capitalism is more or less the antithesis of how mainstream micro and macro neo-classical economics situate the origins and characteristics of capitalism. In neo-classical economics, the market economy of capitalism is supposed to work through what Adam Smith ([1776], 1982, 2007) called 'the invisible hand'—the natural equilibrium between supply and demand of goods, which is reached by everyone pursuing their own interests in a market economy. It is assumed that everyone comes to the marketplace freely and with perfect knowledge of how other producers and consumers behave, because they are all rational. For liberal thinkers, positivist economists, and political realists, it does not matter that these first assumptions do not correspond to the messiness of the market they are describing. The abstracted model of the free-market economy is supposed to make good-enough predictions about how best to respond and live within forces that affect income levels, inflation, unemployment, the balance of imports and exports, how resources are allocated, the demand and supply of goods and services, and how profits are distributed.

Liberal frameworks of capitalism measure profits by subtracting the cost of materials, land and labour from revenue. Marx argues that profits are not made at the level of market, but from *within* the production process itself. Profits come from the difference between what the worker is paid as a commodity (the social average cost for producing and reproducing the worker as a product) and the surplus value of goods produced by the worker over and above what the labourer is worth (Marx, [1879] (1977).

When deciding on the level of state intervention regarding capital and labour, one must also think about how easy or difficult it is to separate politics from economy. Liberals and conservatives argue that you can—for Marxists the two are inextricably linked. For Marx, capitalism produces inequality; it sucks what's public, and should be common to the people, into the private means of capital. The government is supposed to regulate this.

The extent to which government regulation is intentionally enacted on behalf of capitalists is contentious. In a famous debate (Murphy, 2017)

Ralph Miliband and Nico Poulantzas argued over the degree to which the government itself is part of the ruling class and instrumental in controlling the means of production, or whether the very logic of capitalism compels government officials to manage the economy in the interests of capital. If we were to chart relations between government and managing economies, we would find a combination of both positions. In democratic and non-democratic nation-states there are government officials with close ties to oligarchic power structures, and the international market system of trade compels most governments to work to the logic of capital.

For Marx, communism (Marx and Engels, 1848) was the preferred form of state where things are communally owned. However, those countries that attempted to build communism had not undergone the industrial revolution that was deemed a prerequisite for entering the stage of democratic governance on the way to communal control of production. As has been the case in Soviet Russia and communist China, rather than cultivating decision-making in governance as power shared among the people, interpretations of a dictatorship of the proletariat (as supposedly representative of the common people) morphed into centralised political bureaucracies that became oppressive to the nation's people. This caused many a Marxist to reconsider the relationship between the state and capital, as well as the emancipatory promise of socialism and communism.

In international affairs, during the Cold War—where the two national superpowers of the United States and Soviet Russia were in geo-political tension from just after World War II until around 1991—communism became defined as anti-market capitalism. This came to be associated with democracy in such a way that it was taken for granted by many that the fall of the Berlin Wall in communist Germany and the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a triumph for free-market capitalism. By the end of the twentieth century the voices of activist groups and non-government organisations, who had been exposing how the so-called free market was not a fair market, spread and were amplified by global protests (such as Battle in Seattle and OCCUPY) challenging the non-democratic operations of the World Trade Organisation and International Monetary Fund (Fisher et al., 2015).

Such struggles continue where the complicity between nation-states and capitalism is exposed for fostering non-democratic forms of governance. As wealthy nation-states have increasingly privatised public services (such as health care, housing and road works) and showed their complicity with capital in bolstering the military industrial complex, prison-industrial complex, and border-industrial complex, it is more evident that free-market capitalism is not compatible or sustainable with a democratic future.

CITIZENSHIP

A citizen is someone who has the legal right to belong to a particular country and take on responsibilities of being a member of that country.

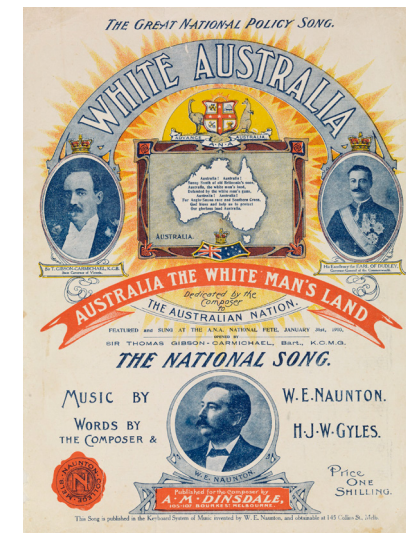
The English word *citizen* is related to the French word *citisein*, circulating in the fourteenth century to denote an inhabitant of a town or city. A citizen is supposed to obey the laws of the civil magistrate and so is also linked to the Latin *civilis*, 'relating to a society, pertaining to public life, relating to the civic order, befitting a citizen' (Online Etymology Dictionary). From this we can see how the word *civility* gets attached to particular form of politeness expected when engaging in public discourse. The extension of the word to civilisation, which served as an opposite to barbarity, goes some way to explaining the racist ideology which used rescuing cultures from their supposed savagery as a justification for colonisation.

Citizenship implies rights and duties (legal) not in relation to other people but in relation to a political community, which in present form is attached to a nation-state (country).

The identity papers that one gets from being a citizen of a country affect one's ability to legitimately 'pass' and belong to a nation. This accreditation also holds a key to understanding what it means to legitimately pass as human, which explains the disproportionate policing of non-normative bodies and why lobbying for the rights of animals and the protection of the environment remains difficult. While citizenship is supposed to be available to all in the ideal of democratic societies, patterns of who becomes eligible to be a citizen follow the patterns of historical struggle and access to national belonging, depending on which social categories of identity have been privileged or marginalised.

The pattern of being counted through citizenship can be articulated by charting the gradual inclusion of those barred from voting rights and political participation, but this should not be mistaken for thinking that substantive equality is achieved. John Dryzek (2002) outlines the formal attainment of citizenship rights in Australia by acknowledging that such inclusion does not guarantee freedom from oppression; citizenship does not guarantee there won't be continued exclusions from other parts of public life and political participation.

Australia's settler-colonial status inherited the European bourgeois entry into state politics, which was once the exclusive domain of monarchies and aristocracies. As working classes acquired property rights, which was once a required qualification for voting, opportunities arose to organise workers' interests through political parties. To this day it remains contentious as to whether participation in state politics co-opts working class interests that could otherwise organise for more radical transformations.



The Great National Policy Song.
Sheet Music, 1910.

Political participation based on earning a wage also precluded the inclusion of the unemployed, the disabled, the old, and single parents (Dryzek, 2002).

The difference between formal inclusion and substantial equality is well illustrated in the cases of women's suffrage and the ambivalent entry of Indigenous peoples into Australian citizenship. For women, the right to vote did not grant the right to political participation in state affairs. Inequalities related to the patriarchal structure of the family, the prevalence of domestic and gendered violence, equal pay, reproductive and health care rights, and double standards around sexual freedom, all show that citizenship alone falls short of addressing rights regarding gender.

From a decolonial perspective, citizenship is even more disenfranchising for Indigenous people. Acknowledging that sovereignty was never ceded can expose how entry into Australian citizenship can be a poisoned chalice for Indigenous people. In the 1967 referendum, the most significant question regarding Aboriginal people related to whether they ought to be counted in the Australian census: 90.77 percent of the voting population ticked the 'yes' box. Technically the referendum was not about citizenship, but it has become known as providing the means through which citizenship for Indigenous people could be attained. Academic and activist Gary Foley (2017), of Gumbajingir descent, argues the Federal Government failed to come good on any positive outcomes for Aboriginal people after the referendum. Over 25 years after the referendum, the gap between formal inclusion and substantive equality is reflected in indicators of health, life expectancy, completed education, employment levels, homelessness, wellbeing and social inclusion. To put this more concretely, Indigenous people make up 3 percent of the population, yet constitute 13 percent of prisoners. Suicide rates are high, with youth suicide at five times the rate compared to non-Indigenous children (Australian Bureau of Statistics) and Indigenous Deaths in Custody have worsened over the years (Allam, et al, 2019).

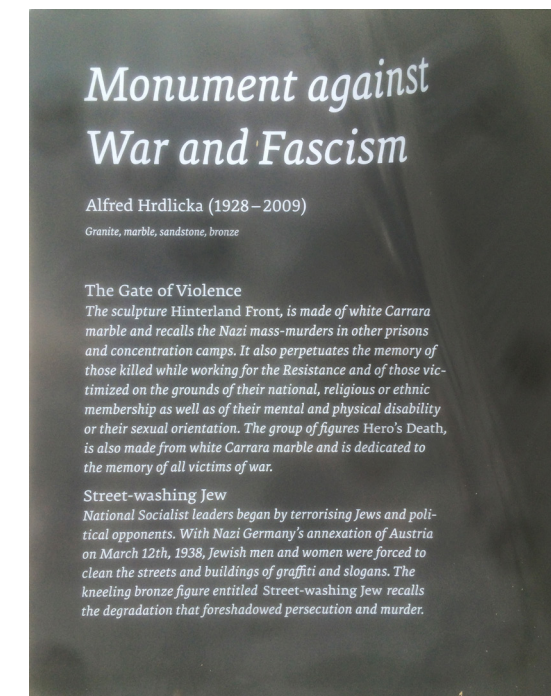
Immigrants are expected to become citizens of the country they move to and this is what is supposed to distinguish them from aliens, as they are called in the United States, and undocumented folk, who have increasingly been labelled as illegal. The question of legality has more recently become tied up with the status of refugees and asylum seekers. Under international law refugees are not illegal, yet the border policies in nation-states like Australia have been detaining them for decades in conditions that resemble incarceration, as if they are criminals.

For immigrants formal entry into citizenship now requires passing a test in Australia, America, Canada, the UK and other European countries. The idea of the test is to ensure that new citizens will integrate into the values, supposed way of life, and ability to speak the official language of the nation. In a climate where there is discernible anti-immigration sentiment, increases in racism, especially toward Muslims on an international scale have become frightening markers of boundaries around social belonging; the sentiment is so strong that conservative politicians have felt emboldened

to express fears of losing their place in the nation (Morsi, 2018). Together with austere policies around identity papers, permanent residency, and temporary visa stays, citizenship status reveals the extent to which one's human rights can become unprotected without the shield of national belonging.

The attachment to a single nation-state is further complicated by the contradictory attitude that allows the free flow of capital but not of people. As information, technology, and goods and services have become increasingly mobile through globalisation, the borders of nation-states and the qualifications for citizenship have become tighter. Undoubtedly identity attached to nationality and citizenship is becoming a fetter on other forms of identity, which are attached to transnational links between racial diasporas, and on international connections through social movements based on labour, gender, sexuality, disability and other marginalised groups.

Historically, citizenship has been defined in such a way that those deemed mentally ill, disabled, sexually deviant, gender non-conforming, politically dissident, ethnically intolerable, and criminal have been excluded from full participation in national affairs. This bears a frightening historical lesson, as it is these very same groups that have been perceived as a threat to national unity and in the case of Nazi Germany sent to extermination camps. The dark side of citizenship is inextricably connected to the dark fascistic side of nationalism.



CLASS

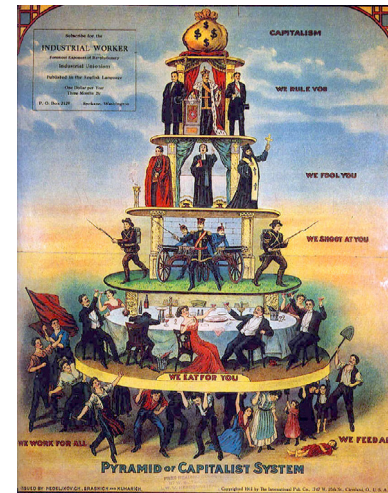
There is a simple way to read class—a socio-economic division between the haves and have-nots—and a more complex reading, which takes account of finer stratifications that distinguish people's rank, status, skills and profession.

The English meaning for *class*, which refers to social rank, stems from the Latin *classis* (Online Etymology Dictionary). This relates to how Roman people were divided for the purposes of taxation. Raymond Williams (1976, p. 51) notes that the Roman sense of class also referred to how people were ordered according to their education and how many degrees they held. This connection to education is expressed in the idea of *classics* and the *classical*.

The sense of class mostly used in fields like cultural studies, and gender sexuality and diversity studies, inherits its descriptions from Karl Marx and Max Weber. Both were writing about the emerging division of people into rank during the European marking of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels ([1848] 1977) describe class as sharply binarised into the proletariat (roughly translating to working class) and the bourgeoisie, or owners of the means of production. Weber (2013) offers a more stratified description that fits with contemporary senses of working class, lower class, lower middle class, middle class and upper class. Weber's sense of class also resonates more with the early Roman description that includes education and skill, as these acquisitions can increase one's social mobility and life chances.

In Marx's political writings, he emphasised the division of two classes, because the class who must sell their labour power as a commodity marks a definitive change in how profits are made under capitalism. Even though there are different types of labour (distinguishing between manual and intellectual labour, for example), Marx focuses on the owners of the means of production and the working classes as the most significant distinction. This is because, if labour remains a commodity that is sold to capitalists, revenue and profits are made for private and corporate benefit by extracting surplus values from workers, rather than for the public good. Marxists therefore aim to describe different types of workers as having similar conditions of existence, even though they might not perceive these similarities as producing a situation in which they have similar class interests.

The distinction between sharing a situation and becoming conscious of how that situation may become an historical force for changing inequalities between capitalists and workers is captured through the distinction between a class in itself and class for itself. Marx ([1851], 1972, pp. 515–516) explains: 'In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of other classes, and put them in hostile contrast to the latter,



A 1911 Industrial Worker (IWW newspaper) publication advocating industrial unionism that shows the critique of capitalism.

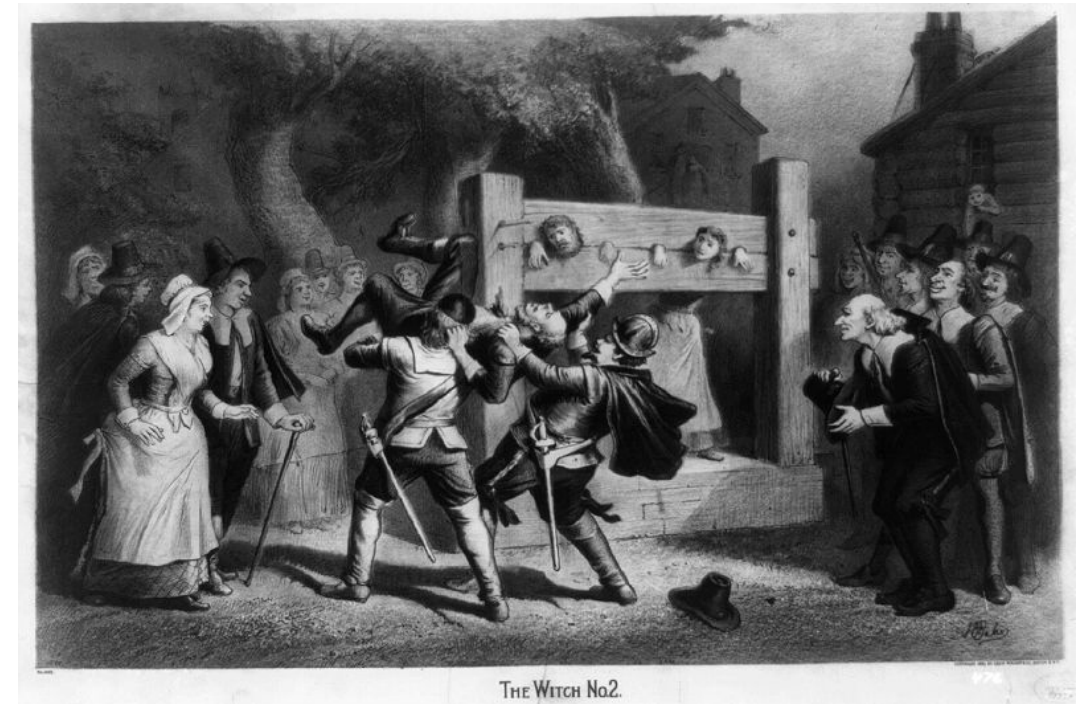
they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small peasants and the identity of their interests begets no unity, no national union and no political organisation, they do not form a class.'

Class is further complicated by its intersections with other material conditions of social existence, such as how people are marked in terms of gender, sexuality, disability and ethnicity.

Empires were built through extracting resources and labour from those lands that were colonised, thus racialising the working classes on a global scale. Racialisation of labour also stems from the historical remnants of slavery and indentured labour in settler colonies like the US and Australia. Of course, each nation has its own history regarding how Indigenous people's land was taken and what kinds of rules and regulations were imposed on sex and sexuality to shore up settler-colonial conquest.

Gender plays a significant role in the production and reproduction of the labour force insofar as the heterosexual nuclear family became a primary model for organising the economic unit of households. Women's domestic and reproductive labour are unpaid components of keeping the workforce and economy in motion. In *Caliban and the witch: women, the body and primitive accumulation*, Silvia Federici (2014) analyses the witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as crucial to tying to the oppression of women to the development of capitalism and class relations.

For a settler colony like Australia, which explicitly aimed to compose itself as a White nation, governments have regulated gender and race relations to serve such aims. Coupled with the interest in sustaining a healthy and productive workforce, the attributes of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability all become markers of what types of people become syphoned into particular types of jobs or are deemed unfit to work at all. Thus, socio-economic status alone is not enough to capture the complexity of how class is also inflected with other markers of identity.



Joseph E. Baker *The Witch No. 2*
circa 29 February 1892.



Melbourne eight-hour day march, outside
Parliament House in Spring Street, circa 1900.

COLONIALISM AND DECOLONIALISATION

Colonialism refers to the practice of one nation or empire taking political and legal control of another people's lands or nations. The Online Etymology Dictionary refers to the root word colony as coming from the Latin *colonia*. This refers to 'settled land, farm, landed estate'. Colony is also derivative from *colonus*, for 'husbandman, tenant farmer, settler in new land' and *colere* 'to cultivate; to till; to inhabit; to frequent, practice, respect; tend, guard'. In this variety of earlier meanings there is an absence of description on cultivating a new life by usurping other people's lands. This indicates the self-assuredness in which such practices occurred from imperial powers. The expansion of national interest by asserting one's sovereign power over other nations ties the terms imperialism and colonisation to one another. The etymological root of imperial relates to 'having a commanding quality'. In this sense there is a fine distinction between imperialism and colonialism, where the former emphasises the taking of command and the latter emphasises cultivating the land of others for the wealth of the colonising nation's country.

While ancient societies did colonise lands, the dominant forms of colonisation whose effects remain today are associated with the fifteenth century. European expansion of empires involved a mix of military force, economic exploitation and extraction, and ideological infiltration of cultural and institutional structures. As Europeans sent expeditions of travellers to acquire trade and engage in mercantilist forms of capitalism, they seized the opportunity to expand their own nations' wealth by colonising others. From the fifteenth century European nations colonised lands in Africa and Asia, and went on to establish settler colonies in what is now called Australia and what became known as the New World in the Americas (Wolfe, 2016).

Colonisation in African lands and what became known as India and South Africa relied on the exploitation of labour and extraction of natural resources. The development of infrastructure, communications and administrative systems in these lands mainly served the purpose of sending wealth back to the colonising nation. In settler colonies like Australia and the United States, the purpose was to usurp the original inhabitants of the lands, create a new nation with large-scale immigration from the colonising country (and people from other countries when numbers fell short), and use slavery and indentured labour to provide cheap ways of cultivating land and the economy (Wolfe, 1999).

Following sociologist, Anibal Quijano, cultural anthropologist and literature and romance studies professor, Walter Dignolo describes a 'colonial matrix of power' as being instituted through four interrelated spheres: 'control of the economy, of authority, of gender and sexuality, and of knowledge and subjectivity' (2011, p. 8). Dignolo elaborates this matrix



The Plumb-pudding in danger: or, State epicures taking un petit souper. The great Globe itself and all which it inherit [sic], is too small to satisfy such insatiable appetites.

as held together by the logic of coloniality, which has been positively presented by the West through the ‘rhetoric of modernity’ in cumulative stages. These are ‘salvation [as a Christian ‘civilising mission’], progress, development, modernization, and democracy’ (2011, p. 14). In the sphere of epistemology (how we know what we know), Mignolo identifies the foundations of coloniality initially in theology, which gets displaced onto Man and Reason when the West begins to identify as secular. Undoing the colonial matrix of power requires challenging and retelling the narrative of modernity while advocating a path of decoloniality.

Decoloniality is different from the formal political rhetoric of international affairs of decolonisation, which gets articulated as countries gaining independence from their colonisers, usually associated with the aftermath of World War II. Dismantling the political and explicitly administrative control of former colonies, however, does not mean that economic dependencies, or the power relations set up through previous concentrations of investment and movement of capital and labour, do not remain. Aiming for decolonisation on a global and transnational scale thus requires better understandings of capital, power relations, and how differently marked geographies and ideas of sovereign borders relate to marginally marked bodies of Indigenous people, migrants and those inhabiting the lives of non-normative bodies based on markings of race, gender, sexuality and disability. With this view in mind, the most appropriate way to think of decoloniality is to start from specific colonised people within a particular national imagined community (to borrow Benedict Anderson’s definition of a nation).

Three thinkers writing against the French colonial experience, who continue to influence projects for decolonisation, are Albert Memmi, born in Tunis, Aimé Césaire, born in Martinique, and Franz Fanon, also born in Martinique. All three had substantial French education and were engaged with the fight for independence from the French coloniser in various ways. Memmi, who supported the independence movement in Tunisia, and spent some time in the University of Algiers, Algeria wrote *The Colonizer and Colonized* and provided inspiration for the task of writing history from below. Memmi’s influence reached both Césaire and Fanon, where the former was the latter’s teacher; both scholars were engaged with the Algerian fight for independence from France in different ways. Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* also takes up the relationship of the coloniser and colonised, which preoccupies Fanon’s work on the colonised and the project of decolonisation. In *Black Skin/White Masks*, Fanon’s profession as a physician and psychiatrist placed him well to write a first person narrative about the impact colonisation has on one’s sense of self. In *Wretched of the Earth* he considered what mechanisms, including violent tactics, could provide pathways to decolonisation.



Portrait of Frantz Fanon
(1925–1961).



‘Decolonize This Place’ Protesters Disrupt Brooklyn Museum and condemn ‘Imperial Plunder’.



The project of decolonisation in settler-colonial states is not fought so much in terms of independence, but Indigenous sovereignty. Settler colonies did more than extract labour and set up administrative systems that made the Indigenous population subservient. They usurped land and set up the conditions for what Patrick Wolfe calls 'eliminating the native' (Wolfe, 2006). Decolonising settler-colonial nations, like Australia, is yet to be undone.

Decolonial imperatives take the settler, whether coloniser or migrant (see Byrd, 2001 and Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2014), and the colonised as the primary relationship that structures how all other social relations are entangled within the biopolitical machinations of the state. In their influential paper, 'Decolonization is not a metaphor,' Eve Tuck and Wayne K Yang articulate the decolonising project by first noting Aimé Césaire's description of what it is not: 'neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny' (2012, p. 21). They extend this articulation through other negations:

'It is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of 'helping' the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes. The broad umbrella of social justice may have room underneath for all of these efforts. By contrast, decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice.' (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 21)

For fields like cultural studies, gender, sexuality and diversity studies (GSDS) and other area studies, this means that privileging the promise of justice for the oppressed and marginal does not necessarily situate the work as decolonial. For such projects to qualify as decolonial they need to anchor these studies with the unsettling question of Aboriginal sovereignty. Tuck and Yang include transnationalist, abolitionist and critical pedagogy movements in the same list of non-exemption from the decolonial lens. In the same way that historian Patrick Wolfe (1999) reminds us that settler colonialism is a structure not an event, Tuck and Yang invite fields of minor studies to 'consider the permanent settler war as the theatre for all imperial wars' (2012, p. 29).

CULTURAL CAPITAL

Pierre Bordieu (1985) recalled the meaning of class related to education and other forms of rank with his notion of cultural capital. Cultural capital signifies how societies are stratified in terms of

values and skills attached to the hierarchies of social groups in society. As individuals become inscribed with certain habits, dispositions, and embodied practices that organise how they see and behave in the world—as they develop what he calls a *habitus* for engaging in the world—so they learn that certain values and ways of behaving are given more credibility than others.

Working class people, immigrants and even rural folk carry different cultural grids of seeing and behaving that relate to the stories they inherit, the food they cook and eat, the art and music they enjoy, and so on. What is assigned greater value in culture at large has been attached to the ruling classes; the closer one's tastes and habits are to the dominant culture, the more cultural capital one has.

Bourdieu divided cultural capital into three categories. The *objectified state* of cultural capital relates to the social objects and personal property or possessions one has inherited or acquired. These include artworks and books. It is not enough to acquire such possessions to display one's cultural capital, however. For possessions to confer status, the owner themselves must develop *habitus* in relation to those possessions.

Habitus is what defines *embodied* cultural capital. Property is one thing; but acquiring the disposition and ways of thinking that are attached to social distinction takes transmission through more than the inheritance or possession of property and objects. In other words, it is not enough to have canonised books on one's shelf; a person needs to have the language and knowledge to communicate and discuss the contents of the book. This includes how one talks and occupies space in the world.

Lastly, *institutionalised* cultural capital seals the status of distinction through a person's educational and professional qualifications. Institutional recognition provides the infrastructure for one's value on the labour market, thus completing the circuit where property, embodiment and qualifications maintain the position of higher value in society.

Thus, cultural capital can simultaneously reinforce the hierarchy of class and provide the means of class mobility if a person is able to acquire the property, habitus and qualifications of the middle and upper classes.



Grayson Perry *The Asgony in the Car Park 2012.*

CULTURE, CULTURAL STUDIES AND CULTURE WARS

Used frequently in everyday life, the word *culture* is most commonly associated with what the [Merriam Webster dictionary](#) defines as ‘the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group’. The other popular meaning for culture relates to ‘high culture’ associated with bourgeois taste in the arts, such as opera and classical music. In this sense, a person is described as cultured if they consume or are conversant in the arts and canonised knowledge.

The etymology of *culture*, and the multiple meanings associated with it, prompted Raymond Williams (1976) to describe the term as ‘one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’ (p. 76). The [Online Etymology Dictionary](#) defines the early usage of the term *culture* in the mid-fifteenth century as ‘the tilling of land, act of preparing the land for crops’. This comes from the Latin noun *cultura*, whose Latin verb, *colere*, means ‘to cultivate’. We can see how cultivating land develops a relation with cultivating the mind through education and the development of taste, though this latter meaning does not emerge in English until around the nineteenth century.

It was also during the nineteenth and early twentieth century that the category of culture became attached to the study of people in the anthropological sense of observing a way of life. The common thread between the early agricultural sense and the anthropological sense of culture is one that emphasises social processes of material and symbolic systems of production.

Williams (1976) compares the English emergence and use of culture to its counterparts in French and German. He notes that, when German borrowed the French word *Cultur* in the eighteenth century, it was used as a synonym for civilisation to mark a ‘general process of becoming ‘civilised’ or ‘cultivated’’. This meaning connects to [Enlightenment](#) historians’ idea of civilisation linked with the progress of human development. German philosopher Johann Herder criticised the idea that progress was unilinear, culminating in the assumed superiority of European culture. He argued instead to think of the plurality of cultures. This not only related to ‘the specific and variable cultures of different nations and periods, but also the specific and variable cultures of social and economic groups within a nation’ (Williams, 1976, p. 79).

Questioning the measure of society’s development and progress complicates the meaning of culture and its association with cultivation and civilisation; this complication points to the fact that ideas of civilisation, progress and cultural memory are entangled in the machinations of [colonialism](#), [class](#), and other relations of power that privilege some beliefs, tastes and customs over others.

Cultural studies emerged as a counter-memory to privileging bourgeois taste in the arts and instead prioritised the narrating of history



Raymond Williams, by Gwydion Madawc Williams, 1980s.

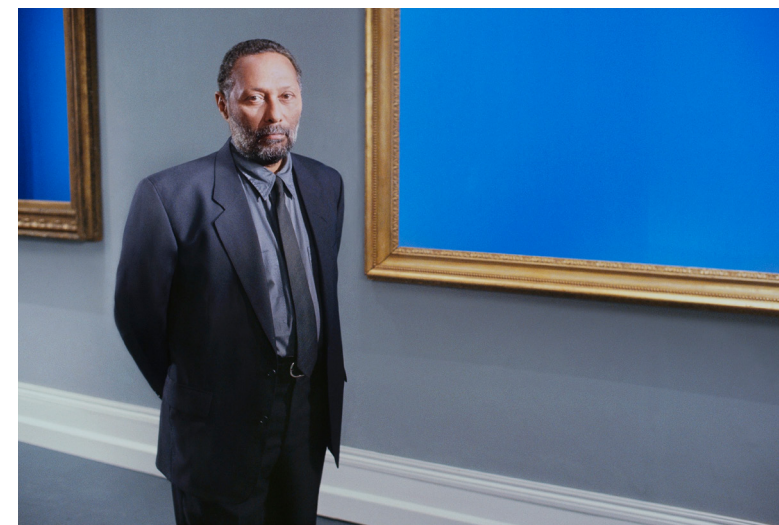
and knowledge from the point of view of the working class and underclasses. Rather than study high art and canonised literature, cultural studies focused on less-recognised artisans and folklore. Cultural studies privileges writing ‘history from below’, the narrating of a people’s history, which focuses on the common people rather than the aristocrats, nobility and clergy. The voices of the disenfranchised, the marginal, and the oppressed are privileged in all the minor area studies with entries in this book. While earlier forms of cultural studies focused more on class than on markers of identity based on race, gender and sexuality, today many programs are more reflective of a combination of many area studies. Stuart Hall, one of the founding members of The Birmingham School of cultural studies with Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart brought a more explicit racial lens to the area, while Angela McRobbie developed more explicit connections with feminism. Internationally renowned cultural theorists stemming from Australia include John Hartley and Meaghan Morris.

The introduction of area studies into universities has received a constant backlash from the time of its inception, particularly from commentators who are invested in the privileging of Western civilisation and traditional values. Culture wars take place when supposed traditional values conflict with challenges to them. Area studies anchored within the axes of gender, class, race, sexuality and disability question how nations narrate their history, canonise their knowledge, memorialise culture, and condition the infrastructures from which different types of people have opportunities to acquire safety, shelter, work and leisure. Such critique upsets what has been taken to be true and good for societies.

The influence of Marxism, poststructuralism, feminism, critical race studies, queer theory and disability studies within these interdisciplinary fields of inquiry has been criticised for being too partial, too political, and lacking in rigor and the protocols of scholarship. In response these fields have shown that what has passed for objectivity, neutrality and reasonable argument in much of the Western canon has in fact disguised the ways in which knowledge construction has been invested with relations of power. Navigating the terrain of the culture wars thus requires a confrontation with how reason is grounded, how history is told, and how to sort through the knots where knowledge and power have become tied to one another.



The Mad Square, by Felix Nussbaum (1931). In the Pariser Platz of Berlin, he pictures himself as the leader of the avant-garde, rejected by the gentlemen of the Preussischen Akademie (in black, led by their president Max Lieberman).



Stuart Hall was a Jamaican-born British Marxist sociologist, cultural theorist and political activist.

DECOLONIAL METHODOLOGIES, POSTCOLONIALISM, CRITICAL RACE AND WHITENESS STUDIES

The fields of study that take race, racialisation and racism as its central object of analysis are more varied in name than sexuality, women's and gender studies. The heading chosen here reflects the specificity of producing this book in a settler colonial context, where it is imperative to reckon with paths for decolonisation. Postcolonialism is included for its presence and impact on work around race and empire, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. As Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Association (ACRAWSA) is the professional body for researchers engaged in interdisciplinary work around decoloniality, race and white supremacy it is the most apt heading from which to outline the field of study.

Founding member for the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Association, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, from the Goenpul people, situates the field by placing Indigenous sovereignty at the forefront of analysis. This is different from critical race theory that developed in the United States. In the US, critical race theory emerged as a response to the failure of liberalism within legal theory to adequately deal with racial bias and the substantive failures of discrimination law. The foreword to *Critical Race Theory* identifies the first workshop on the subject at the St. Benedict Center in Madison, Wisconsin in 1989. Intellectuals present at that workshop created the language and literature that is associated with American critical race theory: Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda and Patricia Williams (Harris, 2017). The legal focus distinguishes these thinkers from other race scholars, who also brought a critical lens to theorising racism and race. African American, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote of the colour line in 1903. The tradition of black feminist thought and feminist writers of colour both coincide and depart from critical race theory in so far as some writers focus more on critiquing culture, capitalism and representation, as bell hooks has done in her many books. Moreton-Robinson's intervention to critical race theory is one that notices how the focus on slavery and migration can reinforce the denial of Indigenous sovereignty that laid the foundation of settler colonial nation-states.

In *The White possessive: property, power and sovereignty*, Moreton-Robinson (2015) addresses not only the actual White possession of property that in turn renders Indigenous people as property and property-less but she also tackles the *logic* of possession; this logic infiltrates the cultural fabric of sense-making. Another founding member of ACRAWSA, Fiona Nicoll notes how Moreton-Robinson aligns white patriarchal sovereignty with the national formation that connects white virtue to Indigenous dispossession. She cites Moreton-Robinson (2011, p. 647): 'virtue functions through reason within sets of meanings about patriarchal white ownership of the nation within the law, as part of commonsense knowledge, decision-making and socially produced conventions by which societies live and govern behaviour'. This is the logic of civilising missions and removing children from their families under the guise of 'for their own good' (see Haebich, 1988). To redress dispossession, Moreton-Robinson's critical race theory privileges

decolonial methodologies and makes visible the operation of Whiteness where it operates as an invisible centre.

Decolonial methodologies tend to centre Indigenous knowledge and ways of researching. Stories of survival are thus central in decolonial work. Most researchers and scholars who use the term decolonial methodologies come from a settler colonial context. As the presence of Indigenous scholars is increasing within the academy, so are decolonising methodologies. Such methodologies share with other critical race and minor area studies the critique of the colonial gaze, the drive to hear and centre voices from below, the diligence in connecting knowledge production to power relations, and the imperative to theorise and research in ways that inform agendas for social transformation (Denzin, Lincoln, Tuhiwai Smith, 2008). The distinguishing characteristic of decolonial methodologies is the particularity of its historical relationship to the settler colonial structure of violence. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith lists twenty-five Indigenous projects that draw from the specificity of the struggle against settler colonialism. These foster two broad imperatives: 'the survival of peoples, cultures and languages; the struggle to become self-determining, the need to take back control of our destinies' (2012, p. 143).

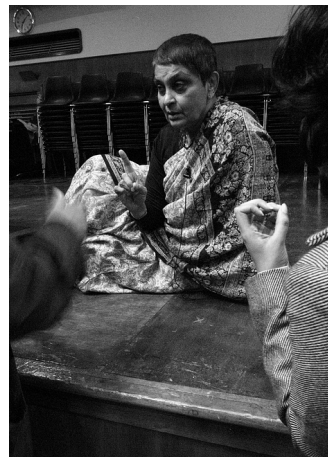
Postcolonial theory does not employ decolonising methodologies like those emerging from Indigenous scholars and nor does it fit into critical race and whiteness studies. This can be explained perhaps by the fact that the scholars emerged in relation to a form of colonisation that was invested in exploiting the resources and labour of the colonised nations in contrast to the process of colonisation intent on wiping out Indigenous populations and settling occupiers on the lands permanently (Wolfe, 1999). Emerging at a time when Marxism was being re-evaluated in light of poststructuralist critique, postcolonial theory shares more with the preoccupations of how the oppressed represent themselves and how imperatives for social transformation through anti-colonial struggles need to be rethought when relations between theory and practice are not taken as self-evident. While postcolonial theorists respect the drive to tell history in ways that privilege the oppressed, they generally question the ability to resurrect lost voices from below without contamination from above.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who is perhaps the most influential interdisciplinary postcolonial scholar, tackles all of these questions (the problem of representation, relations between theory and practice, and contamination from above) in her celebrated essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Involved in the Subaltern Studies group of South-Asian scholars in the late 1970s, Spivak combines her training in literary theory, feminism, Marxism and deconstruction to produce works that manage to situate singular stories of the oppressed within the historical mess in which social transformation becomes imperative. The ties between postcolonial theory and poststructuralism inflect the work of other writers like Edward Said

and Homi Bhaba. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin provides a good collection of works in the field. Writers like Alfred J. López have criticised postcolonial theorists for drawing from the intellectual heritage of European thinkers. López (2005) argues that this inadvertently reproduces the Eurocentrism and Whiteness of colonialism.

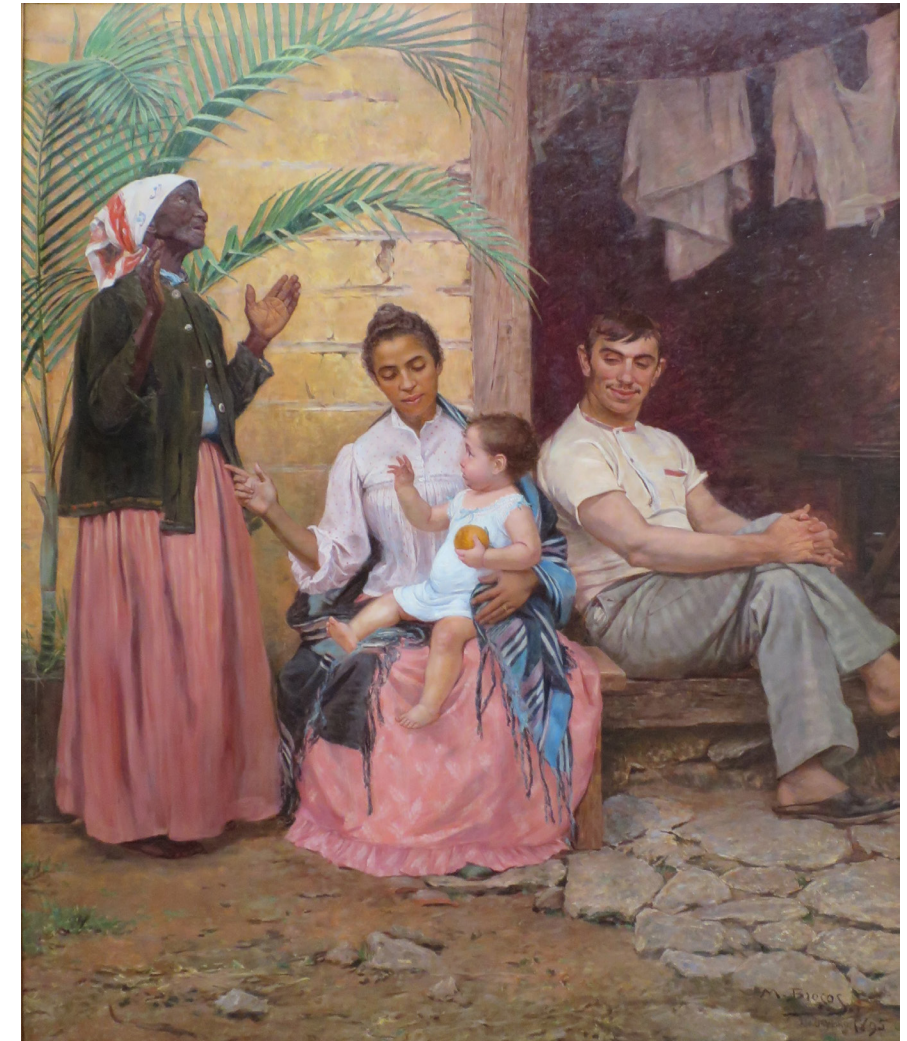
Whiteness studies draw attention to the invisibility of Whiteness in intellectual thought, in everyday prejudices and in hierarchies of privilege, innocence and virtue. While this interdisciplinary field of inquiry emerged in the late twentieth century, there does not appear to be an institutional presence as a program of study as there is for critical race. The canon of works and scholars associated with the field is also complicated, as many scholars writing about the legacies of slavery and the construction of blackness (W.E.B. du Bois), being colonised (Franz Fanon) or even living as Black in the dominance of a White society (James Baldwin, Toni Morrison) make the observations that are now gathered under Whiteness Studies. An extensive collection of work relevant to the field is collected in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's *Critical White studies. Looking behind the mirror* (1997). Other anthologies that provide useful starting points to the study of race and colonialism more generally include Les Back and John Solomos' *Theories of Race and Racism* (2000), Alfred J. López's *Postcolonial Whiteness: A critical reader on race and empire* (2005). While this entry has not addressed mixed race, there is a burgeoning field of literature gathered around the issue. Some important works are collected in Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe's *'Mixed Race Studies': A Reader* (2004).

It cannot be left unremarked that in the post September 11 context there is a growing field of work that addresses the way in which the War on Terror has woven itself into cultural representations that have aligned the signifier of terrorism with Muslims. Yassir Moris provides an auto-ethnographic account of how discourses on the War on Terror place Muslims with only two options of occupying a radical or moderate position in his book *Radical skin, moderate masks*, while Shakira Hussein tracks the changing discourses around Muslims and gender relations since 9/11 in her book, *From Victims to suspects*. In *Dangerous brown men*, Gargi Bhattacharyya (2008) discusses the sexualised racism that arises in discourses that pit the defence of democracy against Islamic fundamentalism in a global public sphere. At present such works have found their articulation within the field of critical races studies, which has expanded to accommodate the range of issues and different historical trajectories attached to different social groupings. In the US, where critical race theory emerged mainly in relation to Black studies, it now includes areas of interest focused on Asian American jurisprudence, a Latino-critical arm, an LGBT group, a Muslim and Arab caucus and Ameri-



Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak at Goldsmiths College, University of London, 2007.

can Indian scholars (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). In ACRAWSA, the trend has been to foreground decoloniality, while also attending to other racialised minorities, migrants, and the intersections with gender and sexuality.



Pair work on Whiteness studies with entries on race and racialization to observe how different forms of coloniality prompted different hierarchies of race. In Brazil, Wolfe (2016, p. 113) observes the colour classification codes had been counted at around 500, while in comparison to the United States' one drop rule and Australia's 'one way racial attrition'. All such codifications fed how settler coloniality could wear away, segregate and keep populations divided from one another.

Michael Cook is a Brisbane-based artist of Bidjara heritage, whose numerous projects such as *Civilized* (2012) *Majority Rule* (2014) and *Invasion* (2018) operate to undermine dominant narratives of identity constructed under colonial rule. *Stickman* uses elongated figures to reference historical rock iconography, gradually introducing items symbolic of colonial settlement.

Michael Cook *Stickman* #1–10 2011





DECONSTRUCTION AND DIFFÉRENCE

Think of all the times in which a binary opposition has not quite held its stability as a pair. It might be an issue that does not seem black and white—whether on one hand we all should have the democratic freedom to say as we please, or on the other hand feel obligated to curtail our speech. It might be that the oppositional pair of man and woman does not capture the in-between-ness or transgression beyond either side of the gender binary. Some might find it hard to think of democracy and communism as the opposites they became on the world stage of international affairs during the Cold War, because both ideals of governance stake a claim to representing the interests of the common people.

When we are confronted with a binary opposition in which the logical choices of making something intelligible lose their pertinence—because either each side of the binary does not capture what we are trying to make sense of, or both sides of the binary seem like equally valid options—we can say deconstruction is at work. Deconstruction happens, as John Caputo (1997) likes to say, with or without our willing it.

Deconstruction is now a commonly used word; however, it is far from simple to define. Related with the works of French thinker Jacques Derrida, deconstruction is mostly associated with philosophy and literature, though it has also influenced a lot of work in cultural studies, post-colonial studies, gender studies and queer theory. In the 1980s and 1990s the term was heavily embroiled in the culture wars, with many academics joining the critics in mass media who claimed that such writing and reading undermined the values of truth and reason by privileging rhetoric over logic. Those who write deconstructively attend to both logic and rhetoric by showing how neither can have total control of how a text operates and gets read.

It is better to think of deconstruction as something that happens within a text, in the broadest sense of ‘text’ (whether reading a book or an event). Derrida has described such an occurrence as an ‘experience of the impossible’, as deconstruction happens when an oppositional pair reaches a limit in thought and action where the path to determining what is, or what is to be done, feels blocked (Caputo, 1997). When a path is blocked, when we notice a disjuncture that cannot be reconciled, or where a contradiction cannot be solved, that is called an aporia. Deconstruction begins its work by finding a detour and another type of logic to deal with an aporia.

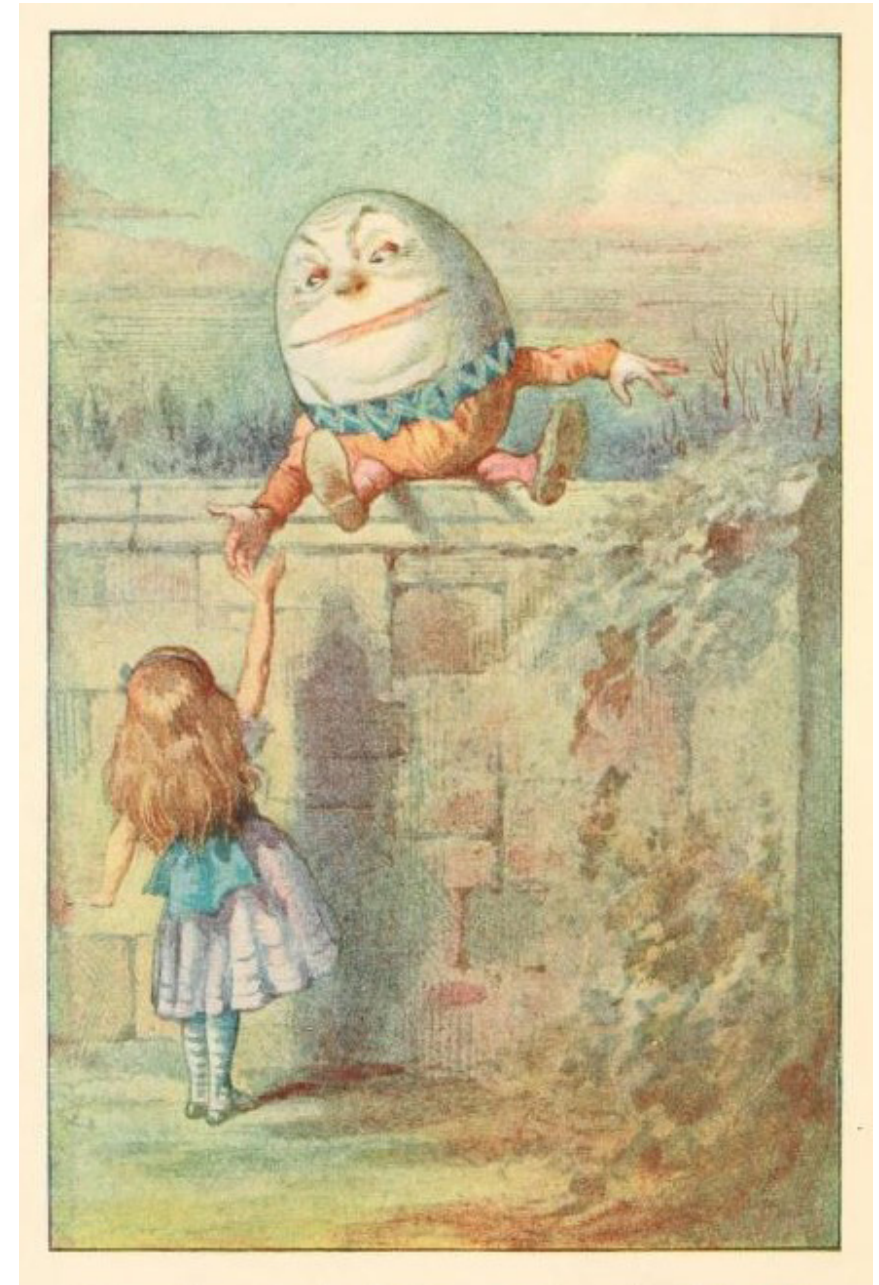
Deconstruction questions the foundations of metaphysics and ontology at the very same time that it acknowledges its indebtedness to, and unavoidable reliance on, such thinking. Metaphysics is concerned with accounting for the persistence of essential qualities within each thing that exists in a constantly changing world. Ontology is concerned with the question of being, and thus determining the question of ‘what is’, with the aim of describing things as they are. Both areas of philosophy are therefore concerned with the status of first principles and what essential conditions are necessary for any thought or intelligible experience to take place at all.

Derrida (1976) argues that all Western thought and experience is structured by the inheritance of the historical-conceptual apparatus of metaphysics in such a way that it presupposes and prioritises the value of presence. This is to say, the temporal and spatial dimensions of the here and now are privileged, presupposed, and deemed accessible in grounding 'what is'. The ontological question of 'what is' must presuppose that something 'is' and has an essence to begin with (like woman, or God, for example). The problem emerges when attempts to reach such essences expose their impossibility. There is a paradox in inescapably relying on the language of the metaphysics of presence at the very moment when we speak of its impossibility. This has implications for whatever we take to be the essence of a particular identity, a social movement, or a foundation for analysis, among other things.

Deconstructive reading seizes upon what Rodolphe Gasche (1986) calls Derridean infrastructures. Infrastructures name the economy in which oppositional differences that govern the acquisition of meaning in a text are the very same terms that undo the stability of meaning. Derrida's neologism, *différance*—or *difference with an a*, as many Anglophile Derrideans say—describes the general economy of such infrastructures (Derrida, 1973). Through replacing an 'e' with an 'a', Derrida forces French speakers to detour through the written form of the word and its neologism, because when spoken the difference between the two cannot be heard. Speaking is usually privileged as a vehicle from which we can gauge that we say what we mean and mean what we say, because the speaker is present. Because the writer does not have to be present when a text is read, there is a propensity to believe that writing is a less reliable form of communication. Derrida shows how the structure of writing already inhabits the structure of speech, so the opposition between the two is mutually constitutive rather than mutually exclusive. This undermines privileging speech with presence.

Derrida imbues the neologism *différance* with two senses that work through any sign's acquisition of meaning. The first is to *differ* and the second is to *defer*. To illustrate, take the sign of *man*: *man* acquires its meaning through its opposition to *woman*. It can also be opposed to animal or machine, depending on the situation in which *man* is the object of discussion. In all cases, however, the difference to which man is opposed is constitutive rather than separate from its meaning. The signs are dependent on one another rather than independent.

The other pathway or network, in which we make sense of sign through deference, can be gleaned from the practice of looking up *man* in the dictionary. Most dictionaries will provide the definition of *adult male human*. Thus in order to get at a sense of man, we would then have to look up the meanings of *adult*, *male* and *human*. Each word would lead us to others and we learn that we never can arrive or settle on the meaning of *man* in and of itself without this process of deferral.



"When I use a word" Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The Question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all".

While *différance* captures the general economy in which the grounds of a signifier are not as fixed as we are led to believe, Derrida deploys other infrastructures to suit the specificity of the occasion or text he works through. These include the *pharmakon* (Derrida 1981), where he focuses on the contradictory meanings of both poison and cure when dealing with Plato's reflections on writing; and *hauntology* (Derrida 1994), where Derrida exploits the resonance in sound that his neologism has with *ontology* for thinking about the impossibility of presence through the figure of the ghost. Other infrastructures include writing, the trace, text, and the figure of woman. While each infrastructure bears resemblance to the general economy of *différance* they are not substitutable to one another, as each works parasitically from within the specific situation or text in which the problem of presence exerts its contradictory status.

If the grounds through which meaning is acquired are dependent on this difference and deferral in how signs operate, then the grounds from which we understand the signifiers of identities marked by race, gender, sexuality and so on are not settled but shifting. The same process is at work for any signifier, including how we understand politics, democracy, philosophy and countless other words and concepts. This suggests our analyses and emancipatory ideals need to learn to work with this movement, rather than trying to fix the conceptual frames and strategies for change into programmatic doctrines.

DEMOCRACY

When asked to define democracy, many rely on popular quotations and textbook traits outlining what this regime of governance is meant to be. Some will recite Abraham Lincoln's pronouncement from his 1863 Gettysburg address as a 'government of the people, by the people and for the people'. Others will refer to the quip attributed to Winston Churchill that democracy is 'the worst form of government, except for all the others'. Lincoln's words resemble its Greek etymological roots in *demokratia*, where *demos* translates to *people* (sometimes *common people*), and *kratos* to *rule, power* and *sometimes force and strength*. Yet the principle of people's rule or power remains difficult to translate into the actual mechanics of how self-governance of the people is to be distributed, administered and called into account. This problem is plain to see in the number of people in democratic nations who do not have a lot of power or say in decision-making that directly affects their lives.

Textbook traits marking the ideal of democracy take us some way toward itemising how the force of the people is supposed to gain representation and influence over governance. Democracies presume free and fair elections where all citizens can vote and even become a governmental representative. They also assume a separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers, which is supposed to divide the making and amendment of law from putting law into action and making judgements about the law. The ideal of democracy is also based on equality for all citizens before the law. Liberty associated with democracies includes freedom of expression, religious belief and speech; freedom of assembly; and the right to petition the government with grievances. Freedom from religious interference is presumed in the running of state affairs, as is an independent and free press.

If these traits outline what democracies are supposed to be, we must ask: which nation-states live up to this ideal? Within international relations, the United States has long claimed the status of the world's leading democracy. This claim reached its peak just after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which had hitherto divided communist East Germany from the free-market capitalist West that equated itself with democracy. The ideological battle, or Cold War, cast between communism and democracy on the international stage dominated thinking so much that when the communist Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, USA think tank commentator Francis Fukuyama (1992), proclaimed that democracy had triumphed as the world's best form of governance, marking the end of history. Fukuyama has since modified his thesis to say democracy is hard to spread and can go backwards (Tharoor, 2017). The question for thinkers of difference, however, is whether the United States' ideal of democracy, through free-market capitalism and its leading role in wars, is the best measure of liberty and equality for all.

The propensity to link the arrival of democracy with free market capitalism obfuscates how oppressive forces operate through associating modernisation and modernity—the transformation from agrarian to industrial society and the presumption of a secular society—with democratisation. Forging such a link does not tell the history of capitalism through

its international ‘uneven and combined’ geo-political origins (Anievas and Nişancioğlu, 2015). Furthermore, democracies inherited from Europe’s modernisation (like the United States and Australia) maintain the infrastructures of a Christianised conception of secularism (Asad, 2009; Mahmood, 2009), their attachment to settler colonialism, and the need to sustain military, border, environmentally damaging and prison industrial complexes for their own economic endurance. In short, linking democracy with capitalism does not tell the story of how capitalism is undemocratic.

Furthermore, political scientists and consultants who link capitalist production and exchange to fostering representative democracy fail to reckon with how imposed processes of modernisation and democratisation reinforce power imbalances between elites and the people, and become complicit with the emergence of military dictatorships (as has been the case in some nations in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East). The opening of markets is also no guarantee against forms of ethno-nationalism and fundamentalist theocracies (Hawkesworth and Kogan, 2003, p. 29). Coming to terms with democracy needs a critical reckoning with how culture, language and religious differences among people are negotiated through the principle of nationality and other ideological and repressive state apparatuses that order the extent to which common rule becomes possible.

It is easy to get confused about democracy’s others as fascism, authoritarianism, totalitarianism for the simple reason that historical struggle is messy and the analytical tools we develop to get a handle on them necessarily simplify things. In encyclopedias and textbooks about government and politics, fascism usually gets classified under *ideology*, whereas authoritarianism and totalitarianism are associated with political systems in which electoral politics and mass movements harden into dictatorships and one-party states.

Conceptual clarity is further confounded by the belief that democratic nations are immune to and do not contain within them authoritarian, fascist and totalitarian elements. This problem arises through the way in which political ideologies become attached to regimes of governance; the parties and nations that have historically self-identified as fascist or even communist have come to define dominant understandings of these terms. The historical association of communism and totalitarianism is better thought through debates regarding Marxism. Fascism got its name from the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* movement (in Italian, *Fascio* means bundle or union), which eventually morphed into the Fascist Party through which Benito Mussolini became prime minister of Italy in 1922. Hitler’s Germany is the most famous fascist regime, sharing the Italian fascist party’s traits of ultranationalism and setting up government to be a one-party dictatorship. Fascist links with white supremacy are linked to Hitler’s nationalism that explicitly privileged cultivating a nation on the racist principle of Aryan superiority.

Upon the US election of Donald Trump as president in 2016, more political commentators asked if his nationalist brand of Making America

Great Again, anti-immigration and overt racism is comparable to fascism. Berhouz Boochani (2018) put the same question to the Australian government through his Manus prison theory, which highlights the interlocking grids of power that underpin the nationalism of Australia’s stringent border policies. Comparisons between immigration and refugee detention centres of today and concentration camps in fascist regimes of the early twentieth century focus less on the question of whether the Nazi camps were unique and more on identifying what kind of conceptual and historical work the promise of anti-fascist democratic governance requires (Agamben, 1998). Not only can such work show how the people do elect autocrats to power, but it also forces democratic nations to reckon with how their state apparatuses already contain seeds within them to grow authoritarian forms of governance and contain fascist thinking.

Catharin Dalpino (2003) observes that political theorists have measured authoritarianism not so much by definite indicators than by marking the absences of democratic features in a society. Dalpino borrows J Linz and A Stepan’s (1978) attempt to break the Cold War dichotomy of naming regimes as either democratic or totalitarian by identifying authoritarianism as within a spectrum between the two. Put simply, authoritarianism lies between the absence of the textbook traits of democracy while not quite conforming to all identifying traits of totalitarianism. Linz (2000) claims authoritarianism does not require the mass support that totalitarianism does. This concurs with Hannah Arendt’s (1976) account of totalitarianism as a movement that begins with mobilising the masses.

In *Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt (1976) explains that the principle of authority is ‘meant to restrict or limit freedom, but never to abolish it. Totalitarian domination, however, aims at abolishing freedom, even at eliminating human spontaneity’ (p. 405). It seems counter-intuitive, but Arendt explains the control of political, civil and personal life as emerging from the totalitarian state’s ‘shapelessness’ in the operation of power; the multiplication and shifting policies of organisations and offices, ‘whose functions not only overlap but which are charged with identical tasks, gives opposition or sabotage almost no chance to become effective’ (p. 404). The destruction of responsibility and competence in offices and administrations spreads through the general population, whose loyalty to the ideological base of the totalitarian movement becomes a citizenry requirement. In short, the aims for a classless society in Soviet Russia and for a master race in Germany hardened into an ideological ‘tyranny of logicity’ in ways that created ‘objective enemies’ of the state and destroyed the public realm of life. Once the idea of the classless society and master race took hold in each regime, the logical extension of identifying enemies to each doctrine became expulsion and extermination. Descendants of the ruling classes in Russia, then kulaks and political dissidents became enemies of the state. In Germany, Jews, homosexuals, political dissidents, Roma people, and those with mental and physical disabilities were deemed objective enemies to the health of the state.

It is not hard to compare the cultivation of objective enemies to current rhetoric in Australia, the US and several European countries that speak about problems with Muslims, banning so called illegal immigrants and ‘boat people’. The ‘war on terror’, citizenship tests, border security, and the division of good and bad migrants and good and bad LGBTIQ folk (depending on how they fit with national agendas), reveal what types of people get rendered expellable in the name of national interest. Stereotyping people who become a problem in need of a solution for national interest and security has long preceded today’s explicit racist language and division of good and bad (dispensable) citizens in public debate. This should give political commentators pause when claiming democracy had already arrived in those nations claiming themselves as such.

Each time democracies have proclaimed their arrival and triumph, there have been dissenters asking whether such regimes hold up to their own values. While various intellectuals and journalists have asked such questions, singers and poets put them best. In 1992, Canadian-born poet and singer Leonard Cohen released the song ‘Democracy’ on his album *The Future* in 1992. Suspicious of the victorious tone announcing democracy’s arrival to the world in the post-Cold War climate, Cohen adopts a messianic register which names the types of people, and more (including ‘a hole in the air’), from which democracy is coming. From pro-democracy calls registered in events like Tiananmen Square in China, 1989, to the minutiae of antagonistic gender relations embedded in activities that ‘determine who shall serve and who shall eat’, Cohen names people, places and events that show ‘liberty, equality and fraternity,’ the battle cry from the French Revolution, has not yet arrived. The song resonates with the 1935 poem written by Langston Hughes,

‘Let America be American Again,’ now publicised by progressive movement, moveon.org, where a roll-call of the oppressed, from Native Americans through to the working classes and those whose ancestors were slaves, echo one another in the refrain that ‘America never was America to me’ (as one of those individuals excluded from democratic participation, freedom and equality). From a different angle, Minjerribah poet, Oodgeroo Noonuccal wrote of the British invaders: “White man, who/would teach us and tame/we had socialism/Long before you came/And democracy too.”

Thinking democracy in difference has more in common with Cohen’s song and Hughes and Noonuccal’s poems than it does with Fukuyama’s commentary about the end of history or current commentators’ focus on Donald Trump as signalling the end of democracy. From perspectives that privilege history from below, reckoning with democracy focuses less on governance through the lens of the nation-state and more toward relations of coloniality (Mignolo, 2012) and hearing from those social groups of people for whom recognition as a non-marked individual citizen has been histori-



Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist from Joplin, Missouri.

cally barred and who have been obstructed from political participation. This does not mean the nation-state is not important in these studies. Rather, history from below pays attention to the buried and suppressed stories of the dispossessed, the stories excluded and marginalised in the official narratives describing democratic nation-states in terms of a linear progression toward free and equal citizenship for all.

From this angle, the story of democratic nation-states is also a narrative of counter-cultural social movements that expose the inability for some people to qualify as an abstract individual citizen in contract with a neutral government. For settler colonies like Australia and the US, which were established through the British Empire, questions remain as to how to better reckon with the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples whose lands were not ceded. Indigenous dispossession, slavery in the US and indentured labour in Australia carry the remnants of living under state-sanctioned reserves, bondage and surveillance, which goes some way to explaining the higher rates of mortality and incarceration that continue today. The story of democracy alters when relations of coloniality are brought into the picture.

Even within its own terms, democratic nation-states are still reckoning with the uneven distribution of equality and freedom. The right to own property, vote, and participate in political affairs was acquired at different points for Indigenous people, the working classes, migrants and women in which such formal equalities are yet to translate to equal opportunity. The historical medicalisation and pathologisation of gender diverse and non-heterosexual people are yet to be fully undone, as the dividing line between the included and excluded has shifted from LGBTIQ+ identity markers themselves to folk who do not easily assimilate to gender conforming and heteronormative lifestyles. Similarly, the quarantining and institutionalisation of the disabled and mentally ill have yet to be disentangled from the stigma and barriers that impede democratic participation for these social groups today. With its focus on marginalised social groups, the fields privileged in this book are interested in how democracy can deal with the diversity of people who cannot be readily abstracted.

Focusing on the history of the marginalised therefore brings to attention what is presumed in democracy’s name, while mobilising action toward a future that remains open to redefining the regulating ideal of the rule of the people. In this way, the approach taken here resonates with Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive strategy to situate democracy as always ‘to-come’. The ‘to-come’ is not situated in the sense of a future present, but with the knowledge that it is only by not closing the boundaries of democracy’s signification that there is a chance of remaining open to those others who have so far remained inaudible and below the radar.

DISABILITY STUDIES

Like other identities that have been marginalised and oppressed, disability is too often thought in terms of what a person is, or what might have happened to them to explain their difference; this misses the historical context and social construction of the category of disability, from which the meaning, significance and entanglement with relations of power come into being.

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, experts on physical, sensory and cognitive impairments were largely confined to the fields of medicine and psychiatry where the focus of interest tended to be on the individual in a derogatory and disempowering way. Articulating issues and rights in their own terms, disability activists have shown how their disadvantages in living conditions, equal opportunities and access to justice are linked to power relations and societal structures rather than problems within themselves.

In *Disability Studies Reader*, Lennard Davis (2016) writes that to understand the disabled body we need to address the concepts of *the norm* and *normal body*. As with the typing of other identities, the process of disabling bodies emerged in Europe during the era of industrialisation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Davis focuses on how the normal came to be constituted around the 1840s, gaining currency into the development of norms over the next couple of decades. He notes the etymological roots of normal with the carpenter's square that denotes that which stands at a right angle (from Latin, *normalis*). Applied to human behaviour, *the norm* becomes attached to the nineteenth century European obsession with statistics, where French statistician Adolphe Quetelet's idea of the average man became a measure of the physical and moral ideal of a person.

Queer theorist Michael Warner (1999) notes how statistical averages become normative, pushing those who fall on the extremes of a bell-curve distribution of sexual behaviours into categories of deviancy. The pattern of linking averages to normality and norms explains much about relations between knowledge, power and marginal identities. Europe's statisticians of the nineteenth century fed the interests of governing nation-states as they monitored, regulated and controlled how they wanted to constitute their populations. Davis (2016) notes that most of these statisticians were also eugenicists. He tracks the shifting conceptions of normal distribution curves, showing that ranking deviations through median (the mid-point of a frequency of values) rather than mean (the average) enabled the standing of favoured traits on one extreme of the curve while highlighting disfavoured traits at the other extreme. This is crucial for understanding how rank and normativity came to dominate the classification and perception of different types of beings (existence), people, and human physiology. When national interest is defined by a population's conformity to a set of norms that places certain types of people as undesirable, it is a short step to thinking of means to eliminate those undesirable elements.

Nations introduced bills to control and confine people with mental disabilities, while aiming to avoid inherited diseases by sterilising those with physical disabilities (Foucault, 1961; Wilson, 2018). Without this historical



Jax Jackie Brown is a disability and LGBTQ+ activist, who is also a writer, public speaker and performer in Quippings.

context, approaches to people with disabilities and disability policy will run the risk of entrenching rather than redressing the extent of stigma and discrimination. Commitment to change at the level of nation-states is articulated through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which puts issues and discrimination regarding accessibility, employment, education, health and other

services in the context of human rights. Rachel Carling-Jenkins and Mark Sherry (2014) track collective struggles and divisions among those engaged in disability rights in *Disability and social movements: Learning from the Australian experience*.

Newcomers to the idea of disability as a social construct can get confused by the difference between, on one hand, the disability of a person, and on the other hand the meanings, attitudes and societal infrastructures that impact how a person with a disability can live. To focus on the discursive and institutional construction of disability is not to deny the material constraints of a body (for whatever dis/ability), but rather to acknowledge that how we frame and think about dis/ability affects what doors may be open or closed based on that understanding.

As people with disabilities constantly show, the body does not deny one's ability to take part in such activities as sport or theatre. The Paralympic games have been running in parallel with the Olympics since around 1948, and parasports for people with a wide range of disabilities have become increasingly professionalised since the 1980s and 1990s (Brittain and Beacom, 2018). The Australian company Back to Back Theatre is a group of neurodivergent and/or disabled actors based in Australia who have received international acclaim. Based in Naarm/Melbourne, Quippings are a group of performers who coined their name by combining the terms 'queer' and 'crip', with an explicit political mission to open the public spaces for queers with a disability. In an extract of Astra Taylor's documentary, Examined Life, Judith Butler and Sunaura Taylor discuss the differences between physical impairments and one's social and political status, as they partake in everyday activities such as going for a walk, having a coffee at a café, and going shopping. All these cases show how definitions and infrastructures that condition what playing and performing can be set the parameters for who can participate in what.

Such perceptions do not just constrain what people can and cannot do in public spaces, but also concern their most intimate lives. How people with a disability are perceived in relation to sex is also entwined with state policies and practices. In 'Disabling sex: notes for a crip theory of sexuality', Robert McRuer (2010) brings his analysis together with Gayle Rubin's celebrated 1984 essay 'Thinking Sex' and Deborah Stone's book, *Disabled State*,

published in the same year. McRuer highlights Rubin's division between the 'charmed circle' of those considered as normal with 'good sex' on one side; on the other side, the 'outer limits' of the abnormal are associated with 'bad sex'. The division shows how people with disabilities routinely get classified with the unnatural and damned on the bad side of sex (which also implies they are incapable of seeking pleasure).

He then outlines Stone's analysis of how the category of disability gets called to resolve capitalism's problem with distributive justice by distinguishing the status of people in terms of whether they fit the state's governmental processes to classify them in terms of being able to work or are deemed in need of state welfare. In the work/welfare dichotomy, disability becomes a privileged category from which governments assess and manage individuals to fit with capitalism's requirements. McRuer notes that Stone's critique of neoliberal governmentality precedes the queer critique of the same through the concepts of homonormativity and homonationalism in Lisa Duggan and Jasbir Puar's works respectively; this is instructive for how crip theory feeds the more general analysis of bio-politics—the intersection of biological classifications with political administration.

Together, Rubin and Stone provide McRuer with a frame for explaining how bodies are incorporated into political administration or become ineligible for, or deemed unworthy of, certain rights (like sexual pleasure) and state protection if they find themselves falling on the outer limits of the 'charmed circle'. This bio-political lens for tracking the way the marginalised are constantly reconfigured for state incorporation or dispensability has emerged as a recurrent theme in the book; it tells the story of how classification and perception are significant components in the creation of structural oppression and discrimination. At the same time, the spaces in which power constrains how a social group of people are perceived and treated are also locations from which resistance emerges (Foucault, [1976], 1978). Jasbir Puar's (2017), *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* offers a more recent account of how the neo-liberal state (with a focus on Israel's treatment of Palestinian bodies) uses the bio-politics of debilitation and rehabilitation to align sectors of the population with the interests of nationalism.

Disability studies, like other fields covered in this book, take an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach to its subject matter. Such approaches emphasise the need to ask multiple questions and analyse disability from several angles rather than confining disability to one focus area, such as health. Thus, alongside classifying different types of disability, it is equally important to ask how disability has been classified and produced in various times and spaces. This will sometimes involve re-classifications, a practice that is increasingly common in medical and mental health practices. As activism and the field of scholarship grows, disability studies, like other area studies, has developed its own specific slant on key concepts and frameworks (Adams et al., 2015).

DISCOURSE AND DISCURSIVE PRACTICES

Laurie Anderson Only An Expert

There is an everyday sense in which *discourse* refers to language use. For Michel Foucault (1981) discourse refers to the way in which knowledge intersects with relations of power to condition disciplinary techniques of *being* and *thinking*. Discourse limits and makes possible what we can and cannot say about a designated thing, which can affect what we think we are able or not able to do. In this way, Foucault extends the understanding of how we become subjects, through ideological state apparatuses (like family, media and education) and repressive state apparatuses (like the military and police), to also include how classificatory systems of knowledge and their related authorities organise how we make sense of the world.

What we take to be true about ourselves and the world we live in, particularly regarding who we think we are, can be understood through disciplinary techniques that are applied to bodies insofar as they operate as vehicles of power. Regimes of truth get tied to relations of power in ways that organise the spaces we occupy and regulate the time scales in which we do things such as work, play, pray and so on. In this way, Truth cannot be disentangled from power as much as we may wish it to be. Through the concept of discourse, Foucault connects the dual meaning in English of the word *discipline* to cover both *knowledges* and *techniques* of regulating and governing the self.

The connection between these two senses of discipline ties the regimented *techniques of self* we adopt to cultivate and groom our bodies (from the moment we wake up and decide what dress to wear) to *bodies of knowledge* (from religion to science) that delimit the beliefs and concepts through which we make sense of ourselves. Together these two senses of discipline regulate and govern what we think we can do.

This does not mean that we can do absolutely anything we want with our bodies and that the materiality of our biological make-up does not impose limits on what we can do. Understanding the constitution of ourselves through discourse does not mean that if we think we are superman we will not die if we jump out of tall building. It does mean that believing women cannot fly planes when they have their period is spurious, because that idea is based on the limits of conceptual prejudice.

As Foucault (1981) explains, in a particular historical period of time and in specific spaces we can speak, think, write or represent any object, practice or understanding of reality, only in certain ways and not in others. It was once popularly unthinkable that women could fly planes. The history of European science is filled with hypotheses and experiments to prove the inferiority of those deemed non-normative and other to the ideal of the white able bodied, heterosexual middle-class man. Discourse helps us explore how erroneous assumptions made about certain types of bodies acquire validity because of the regimes of truth to which they get attached.



Bessie Coleman in 1923, the first African American to get an aviation license.



While medical practitioners must be appropriately qualified to diagnose disease, the medical profession has had a history of pathologising those that have deviated from norms governing sexuality and gender identity. The concept of the discursive practice is a useful tool for questioning how experts, the delimitation of a field of object, and the rules and procedures making a truth claim constrain and enable who can say what about a given object and how they have to speak in order to be heard as speaking legitimately. Sexually and gender diverse people have often spoken within the dominant language or against the grain in order to challenge wrongful pathologisation of queer and gender diverse identities.

Constraint does not mean that there are no openings from which to challenge the experts or extend the field of objects within discourse. The third characteristic of a discursive practice concerns the ‘fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 199). To be heard as speaking ‘in the true’ then, those excluded from a discursive practice and those whose objects of study are considered outside the field, must learn the norms and ways of speaking in the discourse they are contesting. Learning the language of science, biology and psychiatry has been one way in which patients, activists and gender scholars have spoken back to the historically legitimised experts of gender identity and sexuality.

As Foucault notes in the *History of Sexuality Volume One* (1976, p. 101), ‘[H]omosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or “naturalness” be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.’ Foucault’s observations about homosexuality can be equally applied to gender identity. Similarly, many feminists have spoken back to the dominance of biological determinism through speaking from within the truth of biology and neuroscience. Anne Fausto-Sterling (2003) makes her case for more than two sexes through biological discourse and Cordelia Fine (2017) speaks from within the discursive practices of neuroscience to counter such claims as testosterone levels explaining aggression in cis-gendered men. Many scholars working on the margins have learned that they must pass through the detour of the dominant discourse before their own contestations will have a chance for a hearing.

The concepts of discourse and discursive practices present truth as a moving structure of meaning, whose first principles are difficult if not impossible to ground and pin down. Thus, Foucault does not ask, ‘what is true?’ Rather, he asks, ‘what counts as true? How is truth made and how does truth operate?’ To put this in concrete terms, we do not ask, ‘what is gender identity?’ or ‘what is a woman or man?’ Instead Foucault would ask, ‘how does gender identity operate, and how do categories of woman and man operate through different knowledges, institutions and everyday practices?’

This does not mean that Foucault is saying that there is no such thing as truth. He recognises that truth is less absolute, far more complex and stratified, than we may presume. So, for Foucault, regimes of truth are tied to relations of power. There is no such thing as pure knowledge. Using the concept of discourse, we do not arrive at a singular and absolute truth about gender and sexuality. We can, however, track what kinds of disciplines, knowledges, institutions and social relations, among other things, have a stake or investment in the ‘truth’ about gender.

To think of truth as something that is not immediately observable to us is not to give up on seeking truth or on speaking truth to power. We begin with what we think we know, only to question how we know this. The concept of discourse makes us more attentive to ‘places made ready’ for us to speak before we start speaking.

Foucault (1980) argues that, in Western societies, scientific discourses are accorded with the most truth-value. Like other philosophers of science, Foucault is interested in how knowledge changes not only when new technologies become available but as the power structures attached to belief systems change also. For example, telescopes enabled better observation of planets. The idea that the Sun and not Earth is the centre of the universe, however, was initially considered heresy by the Catholic church.

For something to be considered as true, it must make sense from within a society's dominant discourse. Religion and science operate through different discursive practices (see below) and in this way are tied to different regimes of truth. Foucault does not relativise truth by pointing out these differences. Rather he is drawing attention to the way in which there can be more than one kind of truth: he attends to what needs to be in place for a certain type of truth to become more legitimate than another. This is best explained through his related concept of discursive practices. (Foucault, 1977)

Suppose we want to learn the truth about gender identity. Historically, experts on gender identity have been sexologists, medical practitioners and psychiatrists. To this day, these professionals are most often given the greatest legitimacy in speaking the truth about gender. Compare this to a gender studies scholar. Tabloid news columnists, religious lobby groups, protectors of traditional values, and even some academics in other disciplines have ridiculed gender studies as spurious. Gender scholars are usually given less value and space from which to speak about gender identity as legitimately as those with recourse to more scientific types of discourse such as biology. The first characteristic of a discursive practices focuses on who is seen as having the highest status in speaking the truth.

To highlight the disparity in evaluating experts on gender is not to argue that there ought to be no scholarly standards or protocols in methodology for acquiring knowledge to speak about identity. It is also not to discount the knowledge that sexologists, doctors and psychiatrists develop. Much of the expertise developed is crucial for understanding the biological and neurological constitution of bodies. However, scientific methods related to biology and cognate disciplines are one of many ways to look at gender—but this perspective might not be the most important and should not be the only lens from which to define or think about gender identity. This brings us to the second characteristic of the discursive practice: the delimitation of a field of objects.

If gender is defined by biology, then asking questions regarding the language about gender, as well as philosophical assumptions about gender, historical struggles over gender, or political debates about gender, will be excluded from the field of objects that influence our understandings of what gender identity is. Delimiting what can count as legitimately inside or outside the field of defining gender identity necessarily constrains what we take to be true about it.

ENLIGHTENMENT

From the tradition of European universities, which settler colonial Australia follows, you cannot study the humanities or social sciences without having to learn about the Enlightenment. Like other concepts that attempt to name an historical period, or movement in thought, taxonomies tend to iron out differences between thinkers associated with the name. It is also hard not to reduce the Enlightenment to a catch phrase, such as the 'Age of Reason'. The Enlightenment period roughly spans between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Specialist historian on the Enlightenment, Peter Gay (1964), remarks 'In its career as the target for polemical attack, the Enlightenment has been assailed for ideas it did not hold, and for consequences it did not intend and did not produce'. It is advisable to keep this in mind for any school of thought or social movement, like postmodernism, Marxism, family, and so on. It also pays to attend to those elements of Enlightenment thinkers that get suppressed or erased from dominant narratives.

Gay (1964) claims the Germans were the first to refer to the Enlightenment—*Aufklärung*—as a distinct period in history, with Immanuel Kant as the most famous philosopher associated with the age. Yet it was the French, including such thinkers as Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau, who claimed the headquarters for the movement, cultivating a new type of intellectual known as the *philosophe*. The movement was international, with Enlightenment thinkers from Scotland (David Hume, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson), the British colonies of North America (Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson), Italy (the Verri brothers, Pietro and Alessandro; and Cesare Beccaria), Scandinavian countries and Russia. Mary Wollstonecraft is the most well-known liberal feminist thinker associated with the Enlightenment.

While the Enlightenment narrative is lodged in European thinkers, there is evidence that some of them were influenced by non-Europeans and borrowed from those sources without acknowledgement. It appears that the parallels between David Hume's thought and Buddhism are not coincidental but probably stem from his interactions with Jesuit scholars who had affinities with Buddhists (Gopnik, 2009). In other words, there is reason to believe there are Eastern roots to the Western Enlightenment that have thus far been left out of official textbooks.

Furthermore as professor of literature, cultural anthropology and romance studies Walter Mignolo points out, the periodisation of the Enlightenment as the 'chronological frontier of modernity' marked in the eighteenth century, puts an academic like him, whose 'feelings, education and thinking are anchored on the colonial legacies of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas [in the sixteenth century] ... out of the game' (2012, p. 19). Mignolo notes that the European narrative of modernity, the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution fails to situate how it was 'derivative in the history of Latin America', where these same elements then became the measure of how to build a 'republic' after these lands gained

their independence from Spain and Portugal. Critics like Mignolo challenge us to re-read Enlightenment thinking through the lens of coloniality. This does not institute the imperative to throw out reason and other associated concepts of the Enlightenment altogether; rather the imperative becomes one of exposing the particularity of European thinking that too often poses itself as the ground for universal reason in many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences today.

Even within the European Enlightenment there was a lot of diversity in approach and thought. Whether a philosopher, essayist or storyteller, Enlightenment thinkers shared a commitment to the ennoblement of humanity and promoted the right to criticise. Style in argument varied from the passionate to the detached, and thinkers certainly did not agree over all issues. Not all were advocates for popular participation in political processes, for instance, even though the Enlightenment is dedicated to the value of liberty. While it is true that the Enlightenment was intent on dispelling superstition, and many thinkers opposed Christianity, not all were atheists. Opinions differed over preferred forms of government and the widening of suffrage; debates centred around the appropriateness of a ruling monarchy, whether nobilities could promote democracy, or whether craftsmen could be franchised. Amid the diversity of ideas and styles, all heirs to the Enlightenment—whether associated with critical theory or poststructuralism—share a desire to change the world for the better and emphasise the place of criticism in the process (Gay, 1964).

Immanuel Kant offers the most popularised definition of the Enlightenment as ‘man’s emergence from his self incurred immaturity’ (Kant, 1991, p. 54). His essay, ‘An answer to the question what is enlightenment’ was written in 1784, just before the French revolution in 1789. Kant characterised immaturity as the ‘lack of resolution and courage’ (p. 54) to use one’s own thinking without guidance from another. Immature thinking accepts dogmas and formulas without question, forfeiting critical understanding that might otherwise be put to service as the ‘freedom to make public use of one’s reason in all matters’ (p. 55).

Kant states: ‘By the public use of one’s own reason I mean that use which anyone may make of it as a man of learning addressing the entire reading public. What I term the private use of reason is that which a person may make of it in a particular civil post or office in which he is entrusted.’ (1991, p. 55)

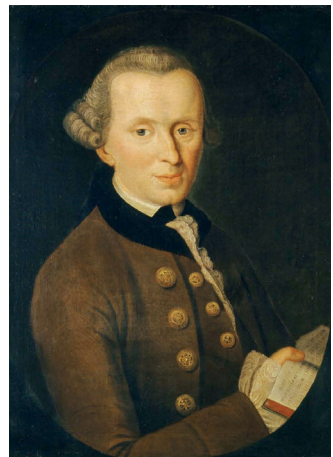
The distinction between public and private reason here can be confusing in contemporary times, as we do not associate the private with a civil post or profession. In Kant’s schema, the distinction between private and public uses of reason can best be understood by contrasting a civil post to an unlimited public. In a civil post, one is answerable to a higher authority—as in the case of a clergyman being under oath to preach a certain doctrine. This would be like any profession that binds employees to abide by the employer’s mission or creed while acting in their post.

On the other hand, a person’s use of public reason ought to be unlimited and open to public question. As Kant explains it, the clergyman’s obligation to preach a certain doctrine as a civil servant does not mean that the same clergyman cannot question that doctrine through public reason. The moment of Enlightenment occurs when public reason enables a type of government that would leave ‘all men free to use their own reason in all matters of conscience’ (p. 59).

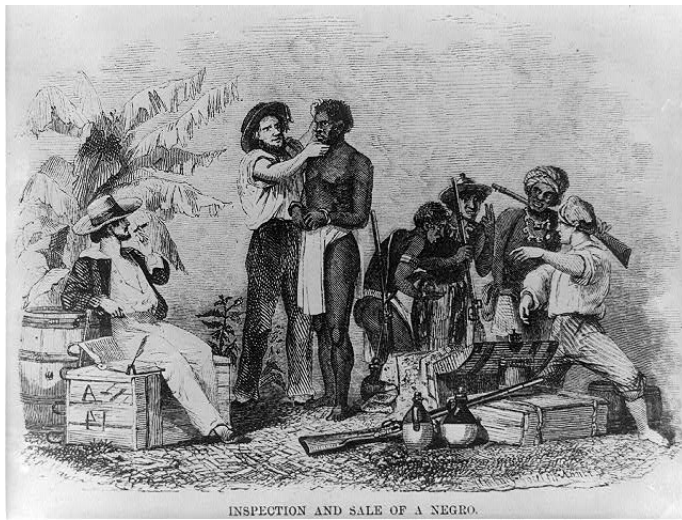
It is easy to draw the implications of this distinction today regarding debates about academic freedom and cases where people participating in public debates have been reprimanded by their workplaces for espousing views that the employer, or corporate body does not endorse. The question of defining the conditions, or public space, in which the use of reason is legitimate to discuss knowledge, politics and ethical matters is as pertinent today as it ever was during the age of the Enlightenment.

It cannot be left unremarked that the Enlightenment has a sinister side. In *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Walter Mignolo analyses ‘Kant’s Conceptual Matrix’ by noting how the German philosopher had accepted in his *Geography* the division of four continents from the initial Christian tripartite division of the earth into Asia, Africa and Europe, with the later addition of America. This was not just a description, but a Christianised hierarchy that Kant used to connect continents to people’s skin colour (2011, p. 195). Mignolo cites Nigerian Philosopher, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze’s article ‘The Color of Reason: The Idea of Race in Kant’s Anthropology’ (1997), which shows how Kant’s *Geography* ties with his *Anthropology* to follow the scientific racism encapsulated in the work of Swedish botanist, zoologist and physician Carl Linnaeus. The scientific obsession with classifying life forms continued the self-image of Europeans as the pinnacle in the Great Chain of Being. In 1737 Carl Linnaeus developed his elaborate taxonomy of life forms in *Systema Naturæ* [1735], which is also outlined under ‘Physical Anthropology’ in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Mignolo, 2011, p. 196). Linnaeus taxonomised humans into a hierarchical order: at the top were *sapiens europeaus*, ‘ruled by law’, followed by *sapiens americanus*, ‘ruled by custom’, *sapiens asiaticus*, ‘ruled by opinion’, and *sapiens afer*, or *Africanus*, were placed at the bottom and ‘ruled by caprice’ (Kendi, 2016, p.82).

These types were linked to geographical regions, physical attributes, skin colour, and social and emotional characteristics. *Sapiens Europeaus* people were perceived as smart and inventive, where *sapiens Africanus* were considered sluggish, crafty and negligent (Kendi, 2016, p. 82). It was not only Kant’s work that is linked to this classificatory system: Linnaeus’ racist taxonomy influenced Enlightenment thinker Voltaire’s ‘Essay on Universal History’ in 1756 (Kendi, 2016, p. 84). As Mignolo notes elsewhere, Christian



Johann Gottlieb Becker
Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), 1768.



INSPECTION AND SALE OF A NEGRO.

While the rhetoric of the Enlightenment is associated with liberty and rights, the 'scientific' taxonomising of race fed the narrow conception of who could enjoy freedom and participate in politics. This image depicts an African man being inspected by a white man while another white man talks with slave traders.

theology and secular philosophy and sciences constructed a system of classification of people and regions of the world that still govern us and shape all debate on the issue' (2015, p. xiv). We can observe how the first assumptions carried into (supposedly value-neutral) scientific observations were not only spurious but harmful. Racial taxonomies such as this provided the justification for the death and violence inflicted on millions of people around the world through colonisation.

Racial typing was not the only form of prejudice that emerged through the great scientific obsessions of the Enlightenment. It was during this age that the gender binary became solidified, bringing with it a focus on gender deviance and non-conformity. Alongside this classificatory bias came the equally obsessive attention to sexual non-conformity. During the age of the Enlightenment, sexual deviance was largely understood in terms of gender inversion or gender confusion.

The dark side of the Enlightenment and the scientific racism and (hetero) sexism that went with it took such forms as measuring differences between types of people in ways that supported the assumed superiority of some beings over others. In the mid to late eighteenth century, dark skin was equated with having a proclivity to violence and crime, popularised by Italian prison doctor Cesare Lombroso (Kendi, 2016, p. 257). This is the era in which people from colonised lands were toured throughout Europe in freak shows and circuses. Saartjie Baartman, otherwise known Hottentot Venus, is the most notorious example of a South African Khoikhoi woman exhibited for audiences to view what was perceived as her extraordinarily large buttocks. Many essays and even a movie have been made on Baartmann's story, where

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questions about her agency persist in questions about representation and Black womanhood today (Gordon-Chipembere, 2011). Aboriginal people from Australia were also toured during the nineteenth century and exhibited in what were called human zoos (Clarke, 2017).

The scientific obsessions with sexuality prompted such studies as measuring a woman's clitoris as a way of charting what was considered gender and sexual deviance (Beccalossi, 2012). Collecting data on patterns of deviance fed eugenicist ideas for what ought to constitute a healthy nation. Such complicity between knowledge and power ought to prompt scepticism that the Age of Reason was free from bias and entanglements with power.

The hierarchies of being that were typed during the Enlightenment fed the process whereby Europeans carved up the world into colonies from which they could bolster their own wealth. This build-up of might through colonisation, as Edward Said (1978) notes when charting the discourse of Orientalism, could not have occurred without the accompanying data that was collected on peoples, which were used to control them. The dominant narrative regarding the Enlightenment as an era of progress in knowledge and reason is thus tainted by its role in cultivating bias regarding the typing of beings. In short, the noble value of equality was premised on the belief that the concept applied to one's elite peers and not those considered below them.

During the twentieth century, the aim of decolonisation after World War II, and the evidence that progress in science could bring atomic bombs rather than liberatory goals, prompted much rethinking and critique of the Enlightenment. Those who were rethinking the Enlightenment in light of these questions are associated with postmodernism, deconstruction and poststructuralism, and have been perceived as opposing the Enlightenment and the presumed progress of reason and liberty. This perception is misleading and inaccurate.

While Jean-Francoise Lyotard (1979) claimed that the postmodern era is characterised by 'incredulity toward meta-narratives', in which the project of modernity associated with the Enlightenment would qualify, he was not suggesting that such questioning leads to an abandonment of reason or desire for liberty. Thinkers such as Michel Foucault (1984) and Jacques Derrida (1983) both are sympathetic to Enlightenment ideals of examining relations between truth and liberty whilst also calling for the need to rethink how reason is grounded and constructed. Still, the characterisation of depicting philosophy, reason and the Enlightenment as European has become so taken for granted that when Walter Mignolo responded to Hamid Dabashi's article published on the Al Jazeera website, 'Can non-Europeans Think?' Slovenian Philosopher, Slavoj Žižek opened his rejoinder with the words, 'Fuck you, Walter Mignolo!' Mignolo and Dabashi challenge thinkers to stop reproducing coloniality through academic practices of not citing non-Europeans and continuing to promote modernity and the Enlightenment as the most significant historical point of knowledge production in the humanities and social sciences.

ESSENTIALISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

During the 1990s it was difficult to speak about identity-based social movements and the status of gender, sexuality and race without also confronting debates about essentialism and social constructivism. While the two terms were often opposed to one another, with some critics aligning essentialism with an inherently more conservative politics, closer analysis reveals how both key concepts can be put to discriminatory ends (Jargose, 1994). Furthermore, the two terms are not mutually exclusive but rather entangled at a point of origin that complicates the setting of parameters for developing research methodology and theoretical frameworks.

The word *essence* has its etymological roots in the Latin *essential*, (being, essence), which is also related to the Greek *ousia* (Online Etymology Dictionary). English usage relates to the 'basic element' of anything. From the Greek word *ousia* we can see how essence is connected to the language of ontology, the language of being, which asks after that which makes something 'what it is'. The essence of something is therefore associated with what endures, which easily slips into the idea of that which is considered innate or natural.

Essentialism in academic jargon refers to presupposing what something is in its basic and enduring element. In gender, sexuality and diversity studies the term becomes a hotbed for debate, because to organise any social movement or field of inquiry around an identity marker—such as woman, gay, lesbian, person of colour, Indigenous, disabled, and so on—we run into the problem of needing to presuppose what that identity is.

To take the example of woman as the foundational identity upon which feminism and women's studies is based, we run into the question of what constitutes a woman. As the foundational identity around which feminism is formed, the parameters of woman immediately run up against its limits. The feminist struggle against biological determinism would do better to heed its own caution by restricting any definition of woman to those assigned as such at birth. Gender diversity, trans identities and intersex identities all trouble any tight boundaries that aim to define where woman might start and stop in biological terms. The category of woman is further troubled by its intersections with other markers of identity. The differences within the category of woman that intersect with markers of ethnicity, disability, sexuality and class often emerge within feminist analyses as reminders to challenge the essentialist presumption that women were White, middle class and heterosexual.

Apart from these empirical differences, the meaning of the category of woman changes through space and over time. Put in terms of deconstruction, there is more than one meaning attached to the category of woman, and all of these differences cannot be gathered into one unitary meaning (Kamuf, 1990). Whenever we try to settle once and for all who woman is, we find ourselves frustrated by an understanding of woman that either exceeds or falls short of the going definition. An explanation for why this is the case can be gleaned from understanding the category of woman (and all other identity categories for that matter) as socially constructed.

To say that something is a social construct is to indicate that it is cultivated or built. Social constructivism challenges the idea that there is an intact reality that is accessible as pre-existing our interpretation of it. This is not to argue that nothing is real or that there is no materiality to the world we live in. It is rather to say that our access to what is material or real is mediated through the sign systems in which such things become communicable. The social construction of reality was popularised by the book of that name written in 1966 by the sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann; the idea of constructivism is also associated with poststructuralist thinkers who were making an impact in philosophical and literary circles around the same time. The sociologists tend to emphasise the shared meanings of social communities in which reality becomes intelligible; poststructural thinkers pay more attention to the sign systems in which meaning is acquired.



It is a common misunderstanding to suggest that social constructivism privileges words over things to the extent that bodies and forces like gravity are denied reality. Emphasising the passage through which reality becomes legible does not mean that the material world can mean anything we want it to. Matter still exists. Events still happen. Apples still fall from trees and living things die. Social constructs enable us to make sense of things and account for how the sense we make is dependent on the grids of intelligibility we have at hand, including language.

While physical and social sciences proceed through observation, speculation, reasoning, and testing hypotheses in intellectual communities, scholars emphasising the social construction of things draw attention also to the order of discourse and infrastructures of communication that are vehicles for making things intelligible. In other words, language and sign systems are not treated as mere conduits to carry meaning but are part of the meaning we make of things themselves.

Debates that pitted essentialism against social constructivism were misleading insofar as the two terms were opposed to one another. To illustrate the paradox of the debate, Mary McIntosh (1968) and Michel Foucault's (1976) observations regarding the construction of the homosexual as a type of person provide a good example. Both writers argue that homosexuality did

not acquire the status of a type of identity until the late nineteenth century (around the late 1860s). For those people who swear that they were 'born this way', this raises the question as to what identity one would have identified as if born before the late 1860s. This is not to discount the feeling of knowing one was gay at the age of two; it merely shows that the significance of knowing oneself as such acquires meaning only insofar as the society we live in has become invested in that classification. When medicine, law, psychiatry and governance had become invested in surveying, monitoring and regulating populations to curb the perceived excess of types of people who disturbed the moral order of the model of the bourgeois family, the behaviour of certain sexual practices (such as sodomy) became associated with a particular type of person (the homosexual). This tells us that specific historical circumstances and cultural demands produced the context in which the social construct of homosexuality emerged.

The complication in opposing essentialist and social constructionist assumptions against one another occurs when we have a closer look at how research must be conducted in order to make observations. Is it possible, for instance, to give an account of the emergence of homosexuality as a construct without first assuming a certain essence of the homosexual that researchers are looking for? At the same time, is it possible to assume an essence for homosexual identity without considering the social construction of the context that guides such a question? Rather than closing in on an essence, or relativising all parameters from which to think of a social construct, research in the field requires navigating between what we assume about an identity and giving an account for why such assumptions cannot settle that identity's meaning and status once and for all.

FAMILY

The family—or group affiliation through some form of kinship—is perhaps the most important institution across cultures and through time, from which most other societal relations are organised.

Though there is much variation and contestation in definitions, academics and policy makers usually use American anthropologist George Murdock's definition: 'social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction' (cited in Maureen Baker, 2001, p. 8).

The etymological roots of *family* relate to the Latin, *familia* for 'servants, of a household', which connects to the 'household of relatives and servants' ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). This resonates with ideas of obligations and duties connected to living together, where the idea of 'parents with children' derives from the Latin *domus* (for domestic) rather than *familia*. The closer pairing of parentage or common progenitor with the household appears in English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Old English *hiwscipe* and *hiwan* and the Old Norse *hjon* also connect family to household.

The Online Etymology Dictionary states the idea of 'family values' enters the recorded English lexicon in 1966, though the OED dates the phrase to 1912. Each no doubt reflect different locations in the historical and social fabric of life, but both underscore the ideological weight of the family as a state apparatus. Presented as a cohesive, safe unit related by blood, the family has long been a site in which religious lobby groups, conservative politicians and their allies have exerted their will to preserve a patriarchal gender order. In response to the effects of such an order, both first-wave and second-wave feminists have highlighted how the family can be a prime site of gender and childhood oppression. The family and the related institution of marriage therefore functions as a contradictory site of love and conflict (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982).

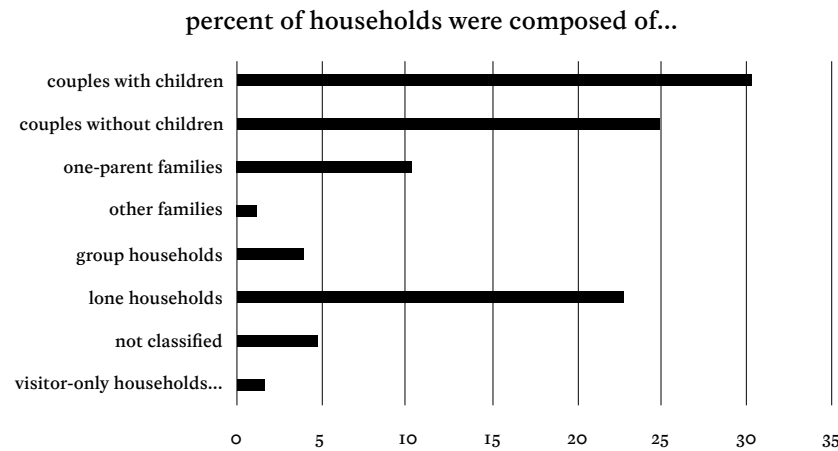
Sociologist Maureen Baker (2001, back cover) notes: 'We think of our family life as very personal, but in fact it is shaped by influences well beyond our control ... [it is] shaped by colonisation, immigration, globalisation, demographic changes, law and policy'. This is illustrated by how the settler colony of Australia has conditioned the societal structures from which people form marital and sexual relations, families and other forms of kinship.

Undoubtedly, colonisation radically disrupted Indigenous kinship systems. Indigenous formations of extended families and kinship networks have endured disruptions and changes through dispossession of land and separation of families from culture, language and communities through successive government policies (Walker, 1993). The intention to build a White nation upon the Federation of Australia also set the conditions upon which marriage, sexual relations and the formation of families were regulated by laws against inter-racial marriage and the selective composition of migrant intakes.



American family watching television, circa 1958.

The Australian census of 2016 revealed:



While lone households are almost as numerous as couples without children and not far below couples with children, much government policy, rhetoric and workplace practices still presume a nuclear family with the structure of a male breadwinner and female homemaker. As queer theorist John D'Emilio (1993) has argued, even though the physical presence of the nuclear family is declining, its ideological place in providing a normative structure for organising love, sex and kinship is still strong.

During the 1960s, second-wave feminists and the gay and lesbian movement both provided a strong critique of the institutions of marriage and the family. The twenty-first century campaign for same-sex marriage throughout the world shifted this critique, though sections of the feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements maintain the counter-cultural drive to undo the organisation of love, sex and kinship around the ties of private property, capitalism and monogamy (Nair, 2015).

Friedrich Engels ([1884] 2010) studied the changing shape of the family in relation to the capitalist mode of production in *The origin of the family, private property and state*. He argued that class division and the gendered division of labour developed side by side as the need to ensure paternal identity in the passing of private property to an heir relied on the cultivation of monogamous relations (he assumed all sexual relations were heterosexual) in a context where women were situated as the property of either a father or a husband. This European law was carried to settler colonies like Australia and the United States, where a capitalist mode of production usurped the modes that were governing production and the reproduction of life for Indigenous people. The complicity between capitalism and the nuclear family structure thus locates the family as a crucial site for effecting social change of inequality.

From another angle, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud also locates the family as the crucial site from which one's social and personal identity is formed. Gender, cultural and racial identity are acquired through one's primary carers, most often one's mother. The process by which infants come to understand themselves as separate (gendered and sexualised) beings, for Freud, is the most significant rite of passage in one's identity formation (Freud, 1910). If trauma is experienced in this stage of life, particularly when an infant is preverbal, it is very difficult to make sense of that trauma as one grows up.

While Freud has been criticised for focusing on the structure of his own White, bourgeois family structure to examine identity formation and psychological problems, others have noted that Freud is describing rather than prescribing familial relations (Mitchell, 1974). The importance of his work is identifying the family as the fundamental location in which identities are formed. Arguably, such focus on identity formation can be applied to a variety of family structures.

Alternatives to monogamous heterosexual couples and nuclear families are difficult to form in social contexts where most norms of behaviour, government policies and law are structured on those models. Life for the single and uncoupled can be harder to navigate and more expensive—from health issues to organising travel arrangements within such a context (Cobb, 2012). Queer communities have emphasised the difference between family of origin and family of choice as a way of breaking the normative structure of the nuclear family. S Bear Bergman (2013) uses the phrase 'constellation of intimates' to allow friends and lovers to occupy a horizontal approach to love rather than a hierarchical one. Polyamorous relationships and communal child-rearing are other alternative ways of cultivating a kinship structure that de-emphasises private property and looks toward the potential for building communities based on the ideal of a commons.

Even those who aim to construct alternative lifestyles, however, get entangled in the webs of heteronormativity (Barret and McIntosh, 1982). Like other ideals for cultivating a more equitable world, efforts to open the options for organising life in forms other than the nuclear family are still a work in progress. Meg John Barker's (2018) *Rewriting the rules: an anti self help guide to love, sex and relationships* is a more recent attempt to navigate the complexities and contradictions involved in such a task.



Parents Friends and Families of Lesbian and Gays at Gay Pride Parade, 2010.

FEMININITIES

When we understand there is no necessary connection between bodies assigned female and femininity, as captured in Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) famous observation that 'one is not born a woman, but becomes one', then we can also understand that there is nothing necessarily good nor bad, powerful nor oppressive, in embracing femininity.

Stereotypical traits of femininity have been traditionally associated with the more undervalued side of binary pairs of traits and behaviours between masculine and feminine, as illustrated in the table below.

There are circumstances and contexts in which the feminine side of the binary is given more value, such as with traits of caring and conciliation in the case of relationships and parenting. Similarly, there are also circumstances and contexts in which femininity is associated with a trait that might otherwise be considered masculine; for example, the 'mean girls' stereotype is associated with competitiveness.

Feminist movements have had a fluctuating relationship with the value of femininity, as it is difficult to separate one's aims and desires from circumstance and context in which femininity is or is not expressed. For instance, it is hard to think of a sport where it is not essential to be competitive. Many of the traits that accompany competitiveness in sport, such as aggressiveness, bulky body muscle, and stoicism, feed ideals of masculinity while undermining femininity. The sexualisation of female athletes illustrates the extent to which women often find themselves having to reassert their femininity and even heterosexuality to gain higher social acceptance. There are many female athletes that defy this norm and play with traits of femininity, gender neutrality and masculinity displayed in their attire and behaviour.

Fashion, appearance and behaviour are the most readable ways of expressing femininity. Second-wave feminists in particular adopted an oppositional stance toward conventional feminine attire and appearance, and it is from this era that women's liberation became associated with bra-burning and hairy armpits. Signifiers of femininity such as high heels, dresses, make-up, bras and girdles were perceived as inherently oppressive. However, there has always been dissension within the movement, where some feminists take pride in exhibiting a femme appearance whilst simultaneously living a feminist politics.

Joan Nestle (1988, 1992) demonstrates the power, desire and joy of inhabiting a more feminine way of being when she writes about butch/femme relations in lesbian working class bars and culture in the 1950s. It is a mistake to map the butch/femme relationship onto a traditional gender binary, as some hasty activists and scholars have been prone to do. Rather

Masculine	Feminine
Rational	Emotional
Strong	Weak
Muscly	Fleshy
Hairy	Hairless
Aggressive	Passive
Competitive	Conciliatory
Rough	Smooth
Aloof	Friendly
Selfish	Caring

femme and butch identity stems from a fierce love of performing one's sexuality, sexiness and sexual relations.

In the 1990s many feminists embraced DIY approaches to mixing and matching elements of traditional femininity with a punk or chic aesthetic (Rosenberg and Garofalo, 1998). Apart from emphasising choice in appearance, there are feminists who also value exhibiting their sexuality through how they look. In a society that still tends toward victim-blaming by commenting on women's attire when they are assaulted, a sexualised form of dress can also act as a political statement. Expressing one's own femininity and sexuality is never an invitation to assault, so what needs to change is attitudes and behaviour toward femininity and expressions of sexuality, not expressions of one's femininity and sexuality.

Femininity and femme expression also have a great tradition in drag culture and LGBTIQA+ circles. Gender theorist Judith Butler examines the dissociation of femininity from the assignation of a female body as one path in which her concept of performativity can be illustrated. In a reflective chapter on her work's development, she recalls thoughts that occurred to her when frequenting gay bars and seeing drag shows: 'it quickly dawned on me that some of these so-called men could do femininity much better than I ever could, ever wanted to, or ever would' (Butler, 2004, p. 213).

Butler's (1993) reading of the drag ball in Harlem documented in film *Paris is burning* takes us on an exploration of femininity (more than masculinity) from the margins, as described in more detail in the entry on performativity. Thinking of gender identity through performance of drag in Paris is burning also reveals how ideals of femininity, like masculinity, are cultivated through its intersections with class, ethnicity,

sexuality and able-bodiedness. This is to say, some markers of femininity circulate more dominantly than others, and marginalise other kinds of femininity in doing so. In a world where we predominately see people who are White, cis-gendered and heterosexual, there is an assumption that when we talk about femininity we mean one thing, one type of femininity, one way of being a woman.

In 1851, abolitionist Sojourner Truth (see femininities) delivered the famous speech, 'Ain't I a woman?' to the Ohio Women's Rights Convention, contrasting her experience as a Black woman to the presumed whiteness of women's rights activists. Her speech alludes to traits associated with traditional femininity, such as weakness, where Truth asserts her physical strength from working in the plough fields as comparable to men. Yet, she keeps asking for affirmation: 'Ain't I a woman?'

Aboriginal women in Australia have also pointed out how the femininity that is emphasised, celebrated and criticised in publics and counter-publics tends to be centred on White women. A poignant reminder of the



Unidentified Artist
Sojourner Truth, 1864.



Bob The Drag Queen at RuPaul's
Dragcon 2017.

disparity between representations of White femininity and Aboriginal femininity is told in Sally Morgan's book *My place*, when she recounts the story of Gladys Cronulla receiving a domestic servant doll in the same household in which the family employing her gave their White child a Shirley Temple doll. Cronulla laments, 'I wanted to be a princess, not a servant' (cited in Brooke, 1997, pp. 112–113)

The whiteness of femininity has been so prevalent in popular culture that we are now seeing large corporations address the issue. From the making of dolls to the selling of beauty products, there is a trend in profit-making businesses to diversify their representations of femininity. Diversity has become good for business, but the larger matter is whether profit-making is good for diversity. Seeing a more diverse range of individuals occupying positions of femininity in popular culture is a positive change, but we must ask whether the diversification in representation alters the historical undervaluing and sexism that continues to be inflicted on individuals who walk through the world with feminine and femme dispositions. This suggests deeper work needs to be done regarding the relations of power that maintain a structurally subjugated position for those occupying particular expressions of femininity.

Destiny Deacon is of the K'ua K'ua and Erub/Mer peoples, whose photography often uses kitsch artefacts such as dolls to subvert stereotypes and play with the game of identity and Aboriginal female identity in particular. She is also renowned for coining the word, Blak, which according to Artlink editorial, Issue 30:1, March 2010 takes the 'c' out of 'bloody black cunts'. *Grandstanding* pulls figures from Destiny Deacon's previous pictures. The blind and hooded stalker has run out of *Escape from the whacking spoon* (2007) and onto a sports oval around the corner from Deacon's house, the basketballer from *Going for a goal* (2009) is now playing footy with its own head and the spectator on the boundary has left her washing line in *Hanging out two* (2003) to adopt a new pose with the same intense gaze in the same frock at the edge of the game.



FEMINISM

Seinabo Sey *I Owe You Nothing*

Feminism is a set of beliefs, practices, and conceptual frames that understand gender as socially, economically and politically entwined in unequal relations of power. It has links to both activist politics and academic knowledge. Traditionally feminism has been defined as advocating for women's rights and gender equality.

According to Janet Halley (2003), for something to be feminist it usually must fulfil the following criteria:

- It must be concerned with the binary of m/f (male/female; masculinity/femininity), which often takes the form of relations between men and women
- It is concerned with the subordination of women in relation to men
- It carries a brief for women to overcome such subordination

While the category of woman is the basis upon which the struggle for gender equality is fought, feminists have had to confront the problem of feminism's own biases in defining and grounding its identity. Feminism has been criticised for favouring the lived experiences of White, middle class, heterosexual women, especially in its liberalist form. Furthermore, for all its criticism of biological determinism in its different waves of struggle, feminism has also fallen prey to an overly deterministic reliance on understanding the boundaries of woman through recourse to biology.

Feminism has become popularly defined in terms of three waves in the conventional periodisations of Western democracies. The first wave is associated with women's suffrage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—the right to vote—as well as issues regarding marriage laws, violence, and male consumption of alcohol and temperance laws.

The second wave is marked during the period of other counter-cultural movements in the 1960s, though many of the issues regarding gender discrimination and inequality are captured in Simone de Beauvoir's landmark text, *The Second Sex*, published in 1949. Second-wave feminism is granted the most space in this entry as it is from within this period that women's studies emerged in the academy. Issues popularised during the second wave focused on reproductive rights, family court matters, workplace gender discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual assault. During this time the sex/gender distinction became a tool from which to approach the cultural denigration of women in Anglophile contexts, and the slogan 'the personal is political', coined by Carol Hanisch ([1969], 2006), became a catch-cry for demands for changes in the gender order.



(top) WSPU leaders Annie Kenney (left) and Christabel Pankhurst.
(bottom) Portrait of Simone de Beauvoir.
Photo by Brassai, 1944.



In Melbourne, Australia, on March 8, 1975, International Women's Day, 1,000 women marched down city streets.



Women's march Philly Philadelphia #MeToo, 2018.

The slogan, the personal is political, relates to the idea that women's lived experiences (though we can apply it to any marginal group) in the domestic sphere of private life are connected to broader patterns of institutional power that do not get noticed, because they are disqualified from public recognition and consideration. Issues like domestic violence, inequality in personal, familial and sexual relationships, unpaid labour in the home, and raising children had all been split through the division of public and private life; as a consequence, they were unrecognisable as social, political issues. If the issues are seen as not connected to power relations, the conditions of one's disadvantage are perceived as a personal failing rather than stemming from structural inequalities.

To de-naturalise patriarchal and capitalist relations of power and make the political oppression of personal life more visible and audible, feminists engaged in practices of consciousness-raising. The practice borrows from the Chinese revolutionary custom of speaking bitterness. Consciousness-raising involved groups of women gathering in meetings to share feelings about their lives, as a way of identifying experiences affecting women as a group. Personal experience was named as systemically embedded in the conditions of social existence for women collectively, enabling thought and action to rise to a political level (Eisenstein, 1984).

Many name the third wave of feminism as arising in the late twentieth century from fractures within the movement. Differences based on class, sexuality and race had always been present within feminism. The famous speech by Sojourner Truth (see femininities) stands testimony based on race; working class women and lesbians have also historically played leading roles in feminist struggles, which has sometimes caused friction within. The whiteness of feminism had long been criticised, where the voices of women of colour, Indigenous and Black feminists in the 1980s and 1990s were gaining more traction in publications and public spaces. Despite this, the bias of liberal democracies to this day still favours the more mainstream over the marginal: and so, with feminist struggles, the issues affecting middle class, heterosexual, White women—equal pay, glass ceilings, work/life balance and double shifts based on nuclear family models—tend to sound the loudest in the public sphere.

As differences between feminists became more publicly audible in the 1990s, so the essentialist tendencies of feminism came increasingly under scrutiny in academic and activist circles. Not only were feminist and cognate movements questioning the types of women that were more privileged within emancipatory struggles, but the very grounds for defining woman were also coming under question. The influence of poststructuralist/ postmodernist thought and deconstruction, together with the growth of queer theory and trans studies, all undermined the presumed coherence and stability that was attributed to the category of woman that governed women's studies.

Meanwhile, young feminists were cultivating their own brand of DIY feminism. The late 1980s and 1990s marked the rise of an aesthetic that emphasised self-sufficiency, rawness and general grunginess in musical and artistic expression. The Riot Grrrl movement, notably Bikini Kill and Chicks on Speed, embraced a punk aesthetic and sang and spoke about feminist issues in their bands. Zine making took preference over political pamphlets in connecting personal experiences to political structures. And by the turn of the century, making one's feminism intersectional—attending to interlocking grids of oppression at the same time—was becoming a starting point rather than afterthought in more spaces for thinking and doing politics.

The problem with defining feminism into waves is that it presents too neat and linear a picture of time and progress. It is not as if all feminists are now intersectional and welcoming of difference within the category of woman. Like all political struggles, social transformation can go back and forth, as historian of ideas, Peter Gay said of the *Enlightenment*, and can tend to occupy several decades or centuries at once.

Similarly, it can be hard to choose what analytical and theoretical frames best suit the purposes of feminist emancipatory goals. The propensity to think of theories as being in competition with one another can end up foreclosing engagement with the different uses that particular analytical frames can have for specific purposes. Thus, rather than choose between *liberal*, *Marxism*, poststructuralist, standpoint or deconstructive approaches to feminism, it might be more useful to think about the circumstances in which engagement with each way of thinking and writing becomes useful. For all the political flaws that liberal feminism has, it is important to be familiar with such thinking if one is ever in a position of having to write a funding application or give advice on government policy. Similarly, while revolutionary politics might scare some feminists, Marxist feminism does the best job of analysing how capital constitutes the division of labour. Some of the best feminist slogans and observations have been inherited from anarchist, Emma Goldman, who had once said 'If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution'. While poststructuralist and deconstructive thought is difficult and does not immediately display a programmatic plan of action for politics, such thought is invaluable for the brakes it sets against dogmatism and totalising views that can, too quickly, turn into oppressive attitudes.

A twenty-first century version of consciousness-raising has been articulated by the #MeToo social media campaign. The phrase 'me too' was first used in 2006 by social activist Tarana Burke (Garcia, 2017), before taken up by actor Alyssa Milano, who tweeted in 2017: 'if all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote "me too" as a status we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem'. Thousands of women began sharing personal stories of harassment and abuse on social media, or simply indicated their experience by using the hashtag #MeToo. The campaign turned viral in October 2017, soon after Hollywood producer Harvey

Weinstein was accused of numerous counts of sexual assault. Much has been written and debated since but dealing with magnitude of problem remains. This campaign shows that it is one thing to raise public consciousness about an issue and quite another to attain radical social change and alter the unequal relations of power embedded in the cultural fabric of gender relations.

The gap between raising awareness and changing the social conditions of inequality and oppression, remains as one of the most challenging tasks facing social movements such as feminism in the twenty first century.

FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY AND EXPERIENCE

Nina Simone *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free*

Feminist standpoint theory, as the name suggests, claims that marginal identities inhabit a privileged epistemological (way of knowing) and political standpoint for transforming social relations. Early standpoint theorists aligned themselves with Karl Marx's materialist conception of history, drawing upon the insight that a person's consciousness is a product of the material conditions of their social existence. As Marx saw the social position of labour as the crucial standpoint from which to observe power relations under a capitalist mode of production, so feminists argued that women's distinctive contribution to the production and reproduction of labour better situated them to analyse social and political inequalities (Harstock, 2003 Harding, 2003).

While standpoint theory is mostly associated with American feminists Sandra Harding, Nancy Harstock, Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins (Harding, 2003), it also informs the work of Indigenous feminist scholars like Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2014), of the Goenpul people, Quandamooka, Queensland. Dennis Foley provides a useful outline of Indigenous standpoint theory and its associated thinkers in his article, 'Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous standpoint theory'.

Standpoint theorists such as Nancy Harstock (2003) emphasise that it is the social and political positions of women, and not women themselves, which constitute a privileged standpoint. The very idea of a privileged standpoint raises questions about objectivity as well as relations between what grounds ontology (the question of what is), epistemology (how we know what we know), and political (what is to be done) and ethical (how we negotiate others) behaviour.

Sandra Harding (1986) addresses these issues in *The science question in feminism, whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives*. Harding claims the experiences of the subjugated not only expose the theoretical biases and effects of power exerted by the 'master position' (usually identified as White, capitalist and male) but also can provide the grounds for constructing a better account of the world. This master position was earlier articulated in black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde's (1984) work through her poetry and essays.

Like other theorists attempting to redress exclusion of the marginal from constructions of social reality in canonical knowledges (particularly science, history and philosophy), Harding develops a concept of 'strong objectivity' with recourse to perspectives of 'devalued and neglected lives'. She extends her feminist standpoint to start from the lives of women who are more marginalised than others: 'Since lesbian, poor and Black women are all women, feminism will have to grasp how gender, race, class and sexuality are used to construct one another. It will have to do so if feminism is to be emancipatory for marginalized women but also if it is to be maximally scientific for dominant-group women about their own situation'. (Harding, 1986, p. 285)

Taken to its logical extension, standpoint theory can suggest that a subject with the most markers of oppressed identities would be the best

situated to ground a theory of knowing. This can lead to the problem that to maintain the privilege of a composite standpoint developed from marginal perspectives, subjugated identities must remain so, which can lead to an overinvestment in victimhood (Brown, 1995). Furthermore, there is an obvious impossibility in establishing a collective singular subject to ground such an epistemology, as the list of possible subjugated identities would be endless and there would be no way of occupying the position of ‘God’s eye’—as Donna Haraway (1988, p. 586) puts it—to see from all positions at once. Haraway argues ‘Subjugation is not grounds for ontology; it might be a visual clue’ (p. 586).

Harding answers this criticism by acknowledging Haraway’s concept of ‘situated knowledges’—the cultivation of partial perspectives, which take as their starting point the lived experiences of where someone is positioned. Such perspectives are always multiple, partial, and contradictory locations of standpoints that are socially mediated. Harding also insists that a ‘feminist standpoint is not something anyone can have simply by claiming it. It has to be achieved’ (Harding, 1991, p. 127).

Criticisms of standpoint theory usually focus on the emphasis placed on experience and identity. Experience remains an important concept within studies concerned with difference and identity because the clash between lived experience and knowledge is often the first clue for marginalised people that they are not included in official histories and the conceptual apparatus made available to understand their own bodies and lives. For instance, as many Indigenous people began to compare their lived experience of child removal from their families, they were able to call for a Royal Commission inquiry into the systematic government policies responsible for such practices. Similarly, the lived experiences of non-binary and trans folk indicate that the gender binary often assumed in some health science classes is inadequate for capturing gender variance.

While experience can often provide the clue that something might not be right in knowledge, expressing how this is so in a way that makes sense can be done only by first passing through already available categories of discourse. Experience on its own is not enough to give an account of how broader truths about identity groups circulate. A way of navigating the gap between a person’s own experience as a basis for knowledge and larger claims about group identity based on that experience is to pay heed to the two senses of experience that are better captured in the German language. These two senses are conveyed through the distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*.

The former sense of experience, *Erlebnis*, in Peggy Kamuf’s translation (2004, p. 28), refers to ‘the conscious lived experience of the individual’. *Erlebnis* aptly captures the sense in which consciousness-raising takes its point of departure. The lived experience of the individual is also what a Marxism might identify as the articulation of a consciousness that is thought through ahistorical terms, while a Foucauldian might identify this sense

of experience with what is uttered or enunciated by a speaking subject, without reflection on the discursive practices that shape such an utterance.

On the other hand, *Erfahrung* translates to ‘experience garnered from the past, including the tradition of a past to which an individual is unconsciously inserted’ (Kamuf, 2004, p. 28). This sense of experience is thoroughly historical and would require an analytics that takes us beyond individual self-reflection.

Invoking these two senses of experience can avoid standpoint theory’s susceptibility to implying that the grounds for making truth claims are reducible to the standpoint of subjugated identities.

Perhaps the most important point to keep in mind about standpoint theory is the need to differentiate between orders of analysis. It might often be appropriate to draw from perspectives of subjugated identities for some forms of social criticism, but this is not to be confused with drawing upon those same perspectives as a means for grounding a universal ontology. At the same time, standpoint theory might speak back against the dominance of Western perspectives in science and philosophy by being more open to knowledges that are situated in cultures that have been historically oppressed.



GENDER, SEXUALITY AND DIVERSITY STUDIES (GSDS)

Gender sexuality and diversity studies (GSDS) is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry invested in transforming the conditions that marginalise and oppress people based on such markers as their gender, sexuality, race, nationality, disability, or class.

GSDS is a very young field of inquiry in the history of universities. The oldest existing and continuing university is said to be the University of Al Quaraouiyine in Fez, Morocco, founded in 859AD by Muslim woman Fatima al Fihiri (Zafar, 2018): even so, the universities that dominate the globe now have their heritage in the European model of the university. As a settler colony, this is the model Australia has inherited. European universities were established in the Middle Ages and were closely linked to religious institutions and knowledge. Most disciplines taught in modern universities today were established in the mid to late nineteenth century, a period that aimed to secularise higher education. Still, most disciplines in the humanities and social sciences have roots in canonical knowledge that was seeded in the older religious and elitist institutions. Situating minor knowledges like gender, sexuality and race tends to be told with this Eurocentric bias.

Gender, sexuality and diversity studies is the progeny of other area studies such as women's studies, cultural studies, gay and lesbian studies, ethnic studies, and Aboriginal studies, all of which emerged in response to questioning canonical knowledge in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Women's studies is the institutional precursor to gender, sexuality and diversity studies: women's studies have preceded most university programs that go by the name of gender studies, women's and gender studies, sexuality women's and gender studies, gender and sexuality studies, and gender and cultural studies. Before becoming officially established as university courses, many women's studies programs began informally and were taught on a voluntary basis. Frustrated with the masculine bias in course content and the narrow framing of questions in existing disciplines, feminists began meeting to discuss issues and knowledge that had a definite link to the aspirations of the women's liberation movement. As these courses gained in popularity, and the urgency to redress gender inequity within the university and beyond became more visible, formal proposals for women's studies programs were put to academic boards.

In Australia there are documented instances of how these proposals were met with suspicion and ridicule (Sheridan, 1998). To this day the status of gender, sexuality and diversity studies and all such area studies is marked by varying degrees of institutional recognition. There are over 900 women's and gender studies programs across the world (Korenman, 2017). An indication of the scholarship can be gleaned from bibliographic databases: Women's Studies International holds more than 980, 000 records and Gender Studies Database holds over one million records. Books, academic articles and media publications continue to highlight the salience of gender, sexuality and diversity issues, where links between academic knowledge, activism and policy directives are possibly the strongest than any other field of inquiry.

At the time of its institutional inception, the quest of women's and gender studies was to resurrect the voices of those hitherto suppressed in the writing of history; to uncover those texts by women that were seemingly subjugated by the literary and philosophical canon; and to include the voice of experience and life in the private sphere as a legitimate tool for directing investigation in the humanities, social sciences and physical sciences. The theoretical framing and political lens were decidedly feminist.

The feminist lens, sometimes referred to as the gender lens, focuses on inequality and injustice tied to sexual difference. Accordingly, most research in women's studies has proceeded by grounding analysis on the gender binary of male/female, masculine/feminine and men/women. Relating to the activist concerns of second-wave feminism, analysis prioritised issues such as sexual objectification of women in cultural representations, the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault, domestic violence, disparity in professional opportunities and pay, work/life balance and domestic labour, health, child rearing and reproductive freedom, among others.

Early critique of feminist courses claimed that their material prioritised the concerns of White and heterosexual women. This was particularly the case with reproductive freedom and birth control, where Indigenous women in Australia and Canada were fighting for freedom from sterilisation (Huggins, 1998). Similarly, issues relating to representation, workplace opportunities and conditions, and experiences of domestic/family violence fell differently on women of colour, Indigenous and Black women than they did for White women. In ground-breaking work outlining how women of colour and Black women fell between the lines of raced based and gender-based discrimination, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) introduced intersectionality as a term to help deal with more than one axis of oppression simultaneously. In many ways this attention to multiple oppressions relating to marginal identities set the conditions for expanding women's studies programs to such names as gender, sexuality and diversity studies. The intersection of race and sexuality also raised the question, as bell hooks (2000, p. 238) had once asked, 'Since men are not equals in White supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equal to?'

Attendance to matters of race strengthened women's and gender studies, particularly in the context of settler societies like Australia. It is well known that colonial Australia aimed to build itself as a White nation and, whenever a nation is concerned with its racial composition, it will also be concerned with regulating sex and sexuality. In fact, when viewed from the perspective of regulating populations and setting targets for a healthy nation, we can see how particular identities become marginalised—this includes the mentally ill and disabled, migrants, non-normative sexualities and genders. For this reason it has become essential for gender, sexuality and diversity studies to become more multi-pronged and intersectional in its approach for dealing with difference. On the side of power, kyriarchy is a

useful concept for navigating interlocking grids of oppression at the same time.

Apart from becoming more intersectional, gender, sexuality and diversity studies also departs from its earlier incarnation as women's studies insofar as it does not take the gender binary as foundational to its analysis. From the emergence of queer theory, trans studies and the influence of poststructuralist critiques of subjectivity, the stability of the category of woman was brought into question. Given what we know about gender variance on the one hand, and on the other hand learning also that the meaning of identity categories changes in space and time, approaches to gender sexuality and diversity are more aware of questioning assumptions that uncritically essentialise identities. The aim of challenging the grids of intelligibility, power, equality and justice, through studying relations between the dominant and marginal, remains at the core of this field of inquiry.

HETERONORMATIVITY, HOMONORMATIVITY AND HOMONATIONALISM

David Byrne *Don't Fence Me In*

Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998) use the term heteronormativity in their article 'Sex in Public' to describe how heterosexuality anchors the norms in which many social and sexual relations are presumed as natural in society. The term has also circulated in queer social and activist circles for some time.

The presumption of heterosexuality is dependent on the idea that there are only two sexes and that these two sexes will form sexual and familial relations with one another. This is the bedrock upon which the institutions of marriage and the family are based, which has far reaching ramifications for how people can lead their lives depending on how well they fit with these norms.

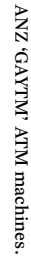
Both first wave and second wave feminists identified the normative power structures expressed within the institutions of marriage and the family but did so without using the term heteronormativity. Lesbian poet Adrienne Rich, for example, criticised heteronormativity without using the word in her book, *Of woman born: motherhood as experience and institution* (1976), and in her article 'Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence' (1980). In the book, Rich mixes her own lived experience with historical research and reference to literature to illustrate how patriarchal culture and motherhood were both institutions that subordinated women. The unorthodox mix of research with personal life became a signature of feminist scholarship, gay and lesbian studies, and queer theory. This reflects the extent to which heterosexuality was a presumed norm, in which the development of a counterculture had to be accumulated through personal experience and reading against the grain of expert knowledge. In her article, Rich names heterosexuality as an *institution* that subordinates women and erases the existence of lesbians. She saw the feminist focus on heterosexual women furthering such erasure both in history and contemporary activist agendas. Against heterosexual normativity, Rich proposes a lesbian continuum by which women identify and form bonds with other women to break with the chains of patriarchal dominance. By having sex with other women, Rich situates lesbians as occupying a privileged place as women-identified-women.

The feminist critique of marriage and the family shared a vision with the gay liberation movement. Criticising monogamy, the household based on the nuclear family, and the rigid assignation of gender identity and gender roles, connected both movements—and Western counter-culture of the 1960s in general—in their vision to build a world other than that based on patriarchy, private property and gendered division of labour. As Dennis Altman (1971) explains in *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, monogamous marriage and the nuclear family is one option out of many from which to navigate sex, love and kinship.

This history sheds a different light on liberal thinking that presents same-sex marriage as progress. While such rights should be granted, per-



Same-sex parents at the San Francisco
Pride Parade, 2008.



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The heritage of connecting queer politics to a critique of normativity and the state is further developed in Jasbir Puar's (2007) concept of 'homonationalism'. This concept relates to the tendency for gay activists to describe their goals in ways that align with narrow views of good citizenship and national ideology, rather than critique the power relations that the nation state sustains. Homonationalism exemplifies the practice of 'pinkwashing', a term Sarah Schulman publicised as a strategy of using LGBT rights within a nation to conceal violations of human rights enacted by the state in other areas: Schulman adopts the term when speaking of Israeli occupation of Palestinian homelands, where a gay-friendly Israel is presented against a homophobic Palestine.

Puar constructs her concept of homonationalism by analysing how the axes of sexuality, gender, race, nation and ethnicity are articulated and put to patriotic work in the handling of cultural representations, such as the abusive photographs of prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq taken by US army and CIA personnel in 2003; in the presentation of legal rulings, such as the Supreme court decision to decriminalise sodomy laws in the *Lawrence vs Texas* case; and practices of racial profiling of Sikh Americans and South Asian diasporic queers. Puar argues that in the context of the post September 11 terrorist attack on US soil, these assemblages of representation, law and institutionalised practices of constituting racialised work align certain queer aspirations (such as the right to serve in the military) with the US national agendas for increased securitization, pro-war and pro-imperialist practices. Such a climate fed the cultural sense-making grid of LGBT rights in terms that reinforced the idea of an advanced, human West against presumed barbaric, terrorist producing Arab and Muslim countries.

Dennis Altman and Jonathan Symons examine the international landscape in which sexuality has become a polarising issue between different nation-states in their book, *Queer Wars*. However, the landscape can change very quickly. The US had asserted itself as leading the way in LGBT rights only to witness the ease in which a new government or judiciary can plan to retract existing anti-discriminatory policies or bend them toward conservative purposes (Gessen, 2019). At present in Australia conservative lobbyists are seeking a religious exemption in cases where they may contravene the sex discrimination act (Barker, 2018). To further complicate matters, cases involving sexuality and gender diversity can only use the channels of sex discrimination legislation, which was written at a historical moment in which the gender binary was assumed as rigid and lesbian and gay sex was in some states (in Australia and the US) still considered pathological and/or criminal. These cases illustrate the difficulty of disentangling the historical prejudice against sexual and gender diverse minorities from the cultivation of what had been considered healthy and proper for national interest and security.

Puar's book has been reissued for its tenth anniversary (2017) with a postscript that updates her concept to think of 'Homonationalism in Trump times'. More recently, Paola Bacchetta and Jim Haritaworn (2011) have

coined the term homotransnationalism to 'denote the forms of neocolonial encounters, affects, and sites that connect local scenes with national and transnational contexts' (Aizura, 2018, p. 99).

The concept of homonationalism as the increasing alliance between the most visible mainstream political queer lobbying and the measure of a good national citizen also illustrates the shortcomings of reducing LGBT politics to identity. In her discussion of relations between the prison industrial complex and the intersecting vectors of labour, race, gender and sexuality regarding immigration, Yasmin Nair (2011) shows how the threat of arrest and detention for undocumented 'aliens' depends on how well gays and lesbians (and to a lesser extent trans folk) fit with norms of good citizenship. Through case studies, Nair outlines how class privilege, cultural capital and conformity to the heteronormative ideals of couplehood and family can bestow advantage on some queers and not others, including other non-queers. Nair argues immigration reform that articulates itself in terms of good and bad immigrants (and good and bad queers) will be bound to reinforce rather than undo the violence embedded in the institutional structures of state border security, the profit making prison complexes and the unquestioned normativity of couplehood, the family and gender conformity. In this way Nair deploys all three concepts discussed here to expose how norms are not innocent infrastructures that maintain law and order but can often perpetuate inequality and oppression.

HISTORY FROM BELOW

Bob Marley *Babylon System*

There is a saying that history is written by the victors of struggle, which raises at least two questions. What might a history written by the losers look like? And, if we accept the division of winners and losers as the only positions from which to recount the narratives of what happens in the world, what becomes of historical objectivity and truth?

History from below, otherwise known as the people's history, frames the debate less in terms of winners and losers and more in terms of contesting those officially sanctioned histories in the national imaginary, which leave out the points of view and struggles of the disenfranchised and oppressed.

The phrase 'history from below' is often attributed to Marxist historian EP Thompson, who wrote *The making of the English working class* (1963), though there were other historians who applied similar methods, such as Eric Hobsbawm and RG Collingwood. Lucien Febvre is credited with using the phrase in 1932 when he described a fellow member of the Annales School of economic and social history as telling 'a history of the masses, not of celebrities; history seen from below and not the top' (Kramer and Mitchell, 2010, p. 323, fn1). Less famous people were telling and writing 'history from below' well before attributions and attachments to the phrase became canonised.

There is an obvious affinity between cultivating history from below and the themes, methods and perspectives privileged in studies dealing with differences in democracy. There is a challenge to the Western canon, where dead White men tend to be privileged, as there is a challenge to the choices of great moments and monuments in the national imaginary. Lived experiences and amateur history-making are accepted as valid components of knowledge production. Ephemera, from activist paraphernalia to artefacts from popular culture, are valued as much as government documents in historical reconstructions. History from below is also open about its oppositional stance to the power of elites and bourgeois society, and so is often positioned as radical history.

History from below often begins with the voluntary labour of dedicated individuals and groups who are intent on cultivating the memory of marginal lives so that others will not be deprived of their heritage. In her reflections on the Lesbian Herstory Archives—'the world's largest collection of materials by and for lesbians and their communities'—Joan Nestle recounts that 'one of the first cultural goals of the archives project was to salvage secrets, to stop the destruction of letters and photographs, to rescue the documents of our desire from family and cultural devaluation' (1983, p. 59).

In the same essay Nestle draws inspiration from Albert Memmi's *The colonizer and the colonized* (1957) in underscoring how 'remembering is an act of will, a conscious battle against ordained emptiness' (Nestle, 1998 p. 56). Memmi, speaking as a Tunisian Jew, prompted Nestle to make comparisons



Joan Nestle at the Lesbian Herstory Archives—NYC, 1987.

with gays and lesbians, a sentiment that captures what any marginalised identity deprived of recognising themselves in history might feel: 'The colonized draw less and less from their past. The colonizer never even recognized that they had one; everyone knows that the commoner whose origins are unknown has no history. Let us ask the colonized themselves: who are their folk heroes, their great popular leaders, their sages? At most they may be able to give a few names, in complete disarray and fewer and fewer as one goes down the generations. The colonized seems condemned to lose their memory' (pronouns have been pluralised by Nestle, 1998, p. 56)

There is a handmade sign kept at the Lesbian Herstory Archives that reads: 'in memory of the voices we've lost'.

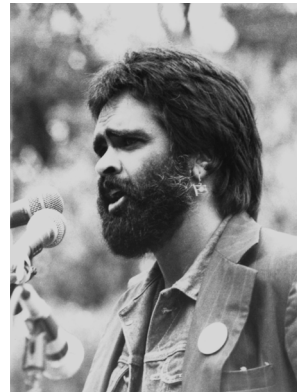
Nestle's thoughts on cultural disenfranchisement are echoed in other individual and community-based projects that keep records of lives and activities that remain less visible and audible to both the general public and the future generations of marginalised identities trying to make sense of themselves and their place in history. The Lesbian Herstory Archives is a not-for-profit volunteer-run organisation located in a four-storey brownstone house in Brooklyn, New York. The LHA also operates a digital archive.

Just as the LHA initially began through personal collections in Nestle's New York apartment, the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives began with the personal collections of many activists, though Graham Carbery taking action to find the archives a home. After decades of relying on space for the archives in other organisations, ALGA is now moving to the state of Victoria's new Pride Centre.

Keeping historical records from below for future generations can often begin as a dedicated project of an individual. One such project is Gumbainggir Aboriginal luminary Gary Foley's Koori history website, which has provided the base for building the Aboriginal History Archive at Victoria University. Now a professor of history, Foley has been collecting archival material for decades from his own activist, acting and academic activities. The digital archive features a timeline of significant moments in the Indigenous struggle in south-east Australia. The timeline exemplifies the difference between a

history from below and what is found in official historical textbooks.

It is no coincidence that histories from below usually start from voluntary labour. In its early days as a self-published forum for working class and women's history, *The History Workshop* journal explicitly associated itself with history from below and the New Left movement, while having members that also worked in the academy. The journal increasingly opened its parameters beyond its socialist and feminist beginnings to include other minor perspectives such as Black and queer histories, in which it began to resemble professionalised rather than popular history. Oxford University Press now publishes this journal. Another present-day journal that situates itself in the



Gary Foley at the People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) rally, March 1983.

spirit of privileging perspectives of the marginal is the open access journal, Writing from below.

Privileging the perspectives of the oppressed, valuing lived experience as a way of constructing knowledge, and welcoming amateur historians and archivists as part of memory building, remain as principles for those wanting to keep the spirit of 'history from below' alive.



E. P. Thompson addresses anti-nuclear weapons rally, Oxford, England, 1980.

HUMAN RIGHTS

There is a way of telling the story of human rights with a Eurocentric focus, coming into its own in the aftermath of World War II, when in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal declaration of human rights*.

Other Western versions of the historical narrative name the *Magna Carta*—the charter of liberties delivered to the English monarchy in 1215—as part of the human rights origin story. European signposts highlight the *Declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen* from the French Revolution, which is said to have been influenced by the *Bill of rights* that was written over a period of time in the aftermath of America's *Declaration of independence* (Ishay, 2004). The 'natural law' and rights upon which such declarations and bills were based are tied to the heritage of liberalism. A 'history from below' or decolonial approach to this narrative would undo the erasure of the role that the colonised and subjugated played in cultivating human rights discourse in their resistance to imperialism. It would also draw attention to the racist taxonomising structure of Enlightenment sciences that set the terms for who could be a bearer of rights (Wolfe, 2002).

The dominant narrative on human rights articulates them as the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. These rights are professed as universal, inherent and fundamental to the condition of being human; they are supposed as a property of all humans by virtue of being classified as such and without which human life would lose meaning. They are deemed inalienable, indivisible and imprescriptible; they are supposed as rights that cannot be taken away by prescription or lapse of time, and cannot be divided from other rights (Ishay, 2004).

In *The origins of totalitarianism* (1951) Hannah Arendt notes in the section on 'The perplexities of the rights of man' that all of these traits marked a shift away from identifying the source of rights and duties in God and religion, which was supposedly passed down as the divine right of clergy and monarchs to govern their subjects. Whether God, Pope or King, individuals were subject to these sources of authority to determine their place in the world. With declarations for the rights of man, Arendt notes that 'man' becomes both the source and goal of rights. Arendt goes on to talk about the perplexities this raises for claiming rights when individuals need protection against state authorities and the arbitrariness of social mores.

Her observations have obvious resonance for those types of people who have historically been excluded from state affairs and/or are deemed a threat to the health of the nation. In this view, she shares Karl Marx's observation on the 'Jewish question' that declaring all humans as free and equal before the state does not make it so. European nations were declaring themselves democratic republics and were questioning how they were going to deal with the difference of Jewish people as having different beliefs from Christians and different laws that determined where they could live, work, and own property. The principles of equality and freedom suggested that there should be no separate mores and laws for relating to the nation-state.

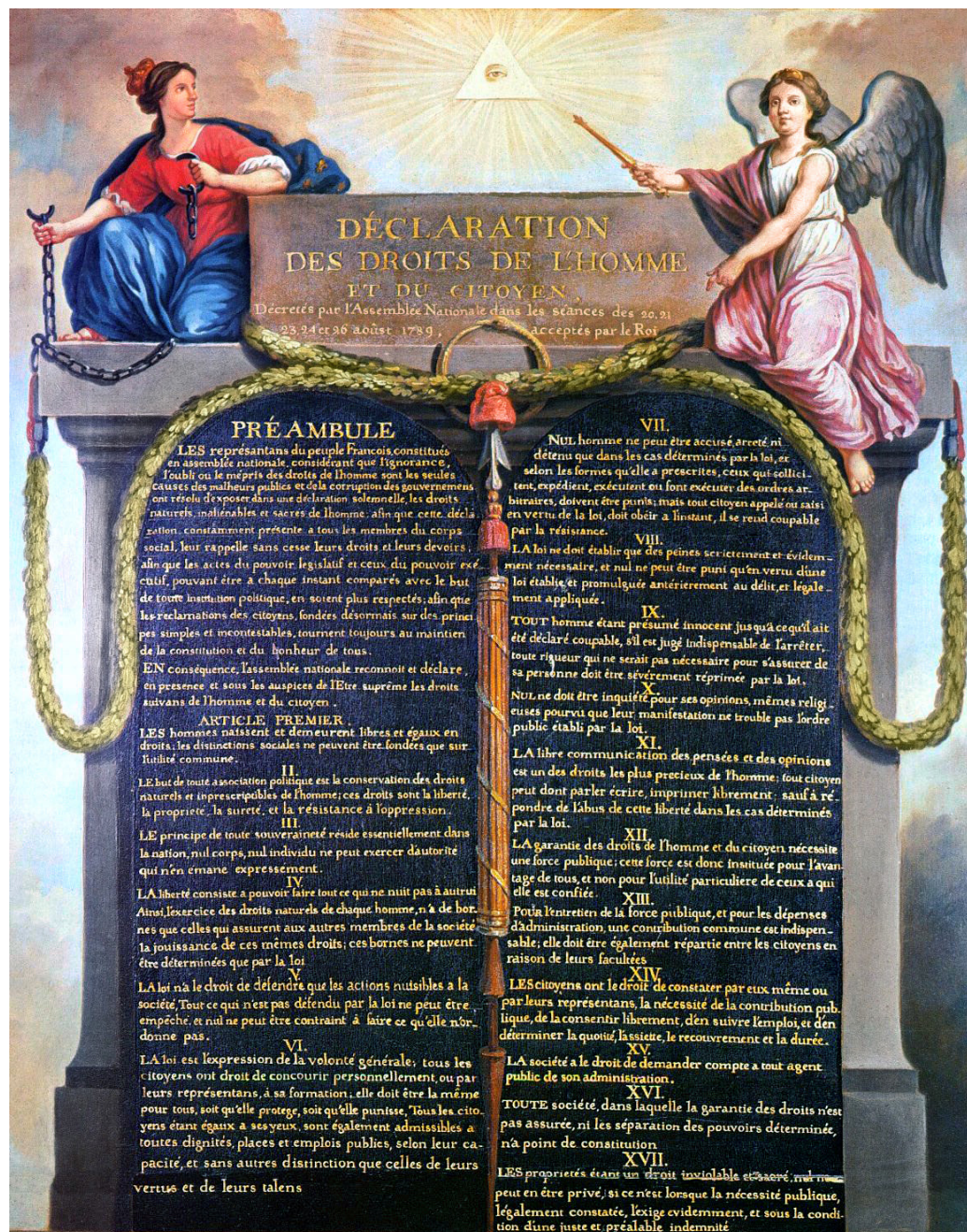
Integrating Jews into the nation-state was therefore framed as Jewish emancipation. Marx was more sceptical. He argued that formally declaring equality does not abolish unequal relations:

‘The state abolishes, in its own way, distinctions of birth, social rank, education, occupation, when it declares that birth, social rank, education, occupation, are non-political distinctions, when it proclaims, without regard to these distinctions, that every member of the nation is an equal participant in national sovereignty, when it treats all elements of the real life of the nation from the standpoint of the state. Nevertheless, the state allows private property, education, occupation, to act in their way—i.e., as private property, as education, as occupation, and to exert the influence of their special nature. Far from abolishing these real distinctions, the state only exists on the presupposition of their existence; it feels itself to be a political state and asserts its universality only in opposition to these elements of its being’ (Marx, [1843] 1972, p. 31).

The democratic ideal of universal rights, a secular state, and qualification for citizenship without having to own property, does not mean that obstacles to accessing more rights due to rank are not operative. It does not mean that all religions have equal freedom of expression; that all people enjoy the same levels of non-interference from state; or that those not owning private property will have the same status and power as those that do. The democratic secular state merely abstracts these differences between individuals. In short, the declaration of universal rights does not guarantee equality and freedom.

Arendt highlights further problems with the declaration of universal human rights in describing the paradoxical nature of them: they are supposed to be inherent to every human, independent of whether they belong to a nation-state or not. However, it is near impossible to enforce these rights if a person is not first recognised as a citizen of a nation in which such rights can be enforced. As Arendt (1976 [1951], p. 36) explains, it is ‘not that they are not equal before the law, but no law exists for them’. Put another way, without identity papers, which are the crucial documents needed to move from one place to another or to acquire governmental recognition, one becomes officially without an identity. Anyone struggling to acquire identity papers, from refugees without nationality to trans folk with a nationality, will also struggle with enjoying human rights.

Sophia Corrêa et al. (2008) argue that the current climate of the ‘war on terror’ has increased the ability for racial, gender and heteronormative ideals to justify the policing of all sorts of borders, as the links between ‘gender hierarchies, sexuality, animality, and racial otherness’ (p. 160) maintain divisions in which colonial conquest, ‘imperial policing projects’ (p. 162) and exclusion from citizenry continue to be justified.



Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789.



Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States holding a Universal Declaration of Human Rights poster in English, 1949.

While recognising that the human rights framework is often co-opted and corrupted by wider structures of power, Corrêa et al. (2008) argue that we need to approach each problem with a view to maximising the chance for justice, while bringing the powers-that-be to account. They also recognise that—while the concept of human rights has bourgeois, Western origins—non-Western agents have taken up the rhetorical structure of such rights to re-articulate and transform the biases

implanted within the abstract universal individual upon whom rights have been based.

For some activists and advocates of human rights the liberal paradigm of human rights might come with biases, but the very abstraction of the individual citizen is what leaves a space open for pushing the parameters of inclusion. This poses another paradoxical element to the discourse of human rights: those who have found themselves excluded or barred access to claiming their human rights are those who have been deemed as being unable to be abstracted from their bodies—the racially othered from the state, women, LGBTIQ+ folk, the mentally ill, people with disabilities.

To gain inclusion or recognition, marginalised social groups often have to make their claims by appealing to the ideal of the abstracted universal individual. Having been placed on the other side of reason and closer to nature and beasts, women, racialised others and LGBTIQ+ folk have had to appeal in different ways to the ideal of sameness that is supposed in the abstract subject of human rights. At the same time, these very same groups have exposed the bias of masculinity, whiteness and heterosexuality, among other things, that is supposed in the human rights subject, which is not abstract at all.

Articulating human rights as universal has therefore provided the means for both extending the reach of and criticising the Western bias instituted and carried through its discursive practices. Thus, a key to understanding the limits and biases of human rights frameworks would be to focus on what seems to fall below the radar of recognition and audibility. If we turn to those sites of exclusion such as ‘prisons, refugee camps, migrant detention centres, torture chambers’, the homeless, the medicalised and pathologised, we can turn our eyes and ears to the ‘less-than-human, less-than-citizens’ (Corrêa et al., 2008, p. 157)

When arguing within a human rights framework, we ought to be mindful that what counts as human and what does not is not transparently given to us, but something that is continually contested as we become more aware of the exclusionary practices that follow normative conceptions of being human.

IDENTITY AND IDENTITY POLITICS

The question of who we are, and how we make sense of ourselves in relation to others, makes identity a political concept, despite its hippie overtones. The entanglement between the different ways of defining identity, from the personal to the political, makes the concept one of the most frustrating and fraught to deal with when working through intersections between power relations and knowledge.

Personal identity relates to traits, attributes and values that mark a particular individual's character. In psychology, one's character is often classified through types such as introvert, extrovert and various combinations of both along a spectrum; other descriptors can encompass personality traits such as being aggressive or passive, mean or kind, among numerous other things. People will have multiple traits that characterise how they and others think of themselves. Sometimes one's personality traits are hard to distinguish from one's social/political identity, especially when dealing with marginal groups. Sara Ahmed (2010) has noted the psychologised stereotypes that have become attached to those who speak about their marginality: the feminist killjoy, the melancholic migrant, the unhappy queer and the angry Black woman. These stereotypes turn attention away from the structural conditions of discrimination and oppression, creating an environment in which the marginal are perceived as having a personality problem instead.

Occupation is another way of marking one's identity. This may relate to a profession of paid work, such as a teacher, doctor, plumber and so on; work may be unpaid, such as is the case of stay-at-home parents (most often mums), or may intersect with leisure activities such as making artworks or playing music. Whatever engages one's time in a role or activity that produces something beyond the individual can be thought of as an occupation. The path in which a person finds their professional identity, however, is tied to how their social conditions of existence might open or close opportunities to participate in the workforce. These material conditions of existence give people their social identity.

Social identity categorises people through markers of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, disability, age and so on. In the fields of studies engaged in this book, these categories are the most relevant for understanding how one's identity markers are related to patterns of inequality; this in turn fuel struggles for freedom, justice and social transformation.

The status attached to *social categories* of identity cannot be understood outside the history and political landscape in which they acquire their meaning. As entries on interpellation and performativity illustrate, social identities exist before we are born into them. So while there may be biological traits that give relative stability to what we read and understand a social marker of identity to be, such as woman or Indian for example, the status of what it means to be a woman, Indian, or any other marker of identity shifts with context and time. In other words, social identities are not qualities that are fixed at birth. We learn to live in accord with, or challenge and resist, how we are expected behave on the basis of the language we acquire, the

culture we grow up within, and the belief systems, whether they be religious or otherwise, we are socialised into through family, education and media.

Furthermore, any identity can only acquire its meaning and status through what it is differentiated from. As the logic of binary opposition and the study of signs reveal, there can be no identity without difference, and hence no self without an other through which an identity becomes what it is. This does not mean that there is no such thing as woman, or being Black, queer, or any other such identity. It simply means that these identities are not fixed, unitary and complete categories outside history and entanglements with power relations that put meaning into motion.

The illusion of social identities as fixed and natural becomes more entrenched as stereotypes get attached to them. One would be hard-pressed to find any individual that inhabited every single trait associated with a specific social identity, and the particular way in which a person may perform themselves as gendered, racialised, or dis/able-bodied would alter depending on the situation and context. At times, some aspect of one's social identity would be more salient than others, and there would be more than one way in which such identity could be expressed. In this way social identity can be thought of as both fragmentary and multiple. Apart from each of us having more than one identity (marked by nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and so on), we may not belong wholly to any one of them (we could be mixed race), or our identifications with certain categories can shift over time (from heterosexual to lesbian or vice versa). A person's own identity can be experienced as multiple, mixed and shifting just as the social meaning of identity categories themselves can alter in time and space. If social identity is not essentially fixed, and is experienced and performed as fragmentary and multiple, then organising a politics based on such markers would need to take this into account.

If the coherence and stability of social identity cannot be categorically grounded, this becomes a problem for organising collective political struggles. Identity politics is the term used to describe social movements that are based on such markers as class, race, gender, disability and sexuality. The term identity politics became associated with the Combahee River Collective when they issued a statement of solidarity (PDF) in 1977, expressing the need to use the lived experiences of oppression to articulate a liberatory politics. However, in the last few decades identity politics has become a hot point for debating how democracies can best navigate the diversity of its people, and has become a wedge issue between and within almost all actors within the political spectrum.

Identity politics are as unavoidable as they are problematic. Because oppression occurs on the basis of social categories, there is no avoiding dealing with identity. Yet there is difficulty in drawing the boundaries of membership for an identity. With woman there is question of how certain kinds of women are privileged over others (White, straight, cis-gendered). Feminists have traditionally argued to not reduce gender to biology, yet

there are some feminists that insist on maintaining a concept that 'women born as women' are somehow more authentic than those not assigned as women at birth. The issue of authenticity also plagues other identities based on race, sexuality and disability, which is one reason among many others as to why identity politics are so fraught.

Other problems facing identity politics are who gets to speak on behalf of whom and who can tell whose stories. In 'Telling the untold stories', Alexis Wright (2019), a member of the Waayni nation of the southern highlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria deals well with the political stakes of censorship and knowledge production in ways that complement Gayatri Spivak's 'Can the subaltern speak?' The matter here seems less who has the right to tell what stories, and more who gets more constrained to tell what particular stories. This shift in how we ask what questions can be applied to other vociferous debates about identity politics: matters regarding cultural appropriation, what is considered as political correctness gone mad, how to name power, what constitutes racism, sexism, homophobia, and so on. Debates around these issues tend to calcify very quickly into opposing positions of what is and is not acceptable when an identity's status is at issue. Rather than succumb to the pre-set terms of debate, it is more productive to approach each matter in its specificity and develop a multi-faceted approach that first deals with *how* the issue has come to provoke the fervour that it does.

A different kind of logic is needed to deal with identity politics in a way that does not reinforce the prejudice, discrimination and persecution, which has conditioned the need for social movements struggling for justice on the basis of who they are. Such a logic is one that comes to terms with identity and identity politics as already in deconstruction; the point of dealing with identity politics is not to fix its boundaries, but to develop a politics from the conditions in which boundaries attempt to get fixed.

IDEOLOGY

As a concept, ideology has a long history and a meaning that is far from settled among thinkers. This makes it harder to grasp and a little more complicated to explain. In everyday use, you can hear people use the term as an insult—‘that’s mere ideology’, or ‘you are being ideological’—to imply that an argument is driven by beliefs more than truth.

The term was coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy near the end of the eighteenth century in the context of ‘The Terror’ following the French Revolution (Williams, 1976). The two parts of the word can be broken into the Greek words *idéo* and *logia*—translating to the English as ‘of ideas’ and a suffix *-logy* for ‘a speaking, discourse, treatise, doctrine, theory, science’ (Online Etymology Dictionary). In de Tracy’s use, the term refers to a body of ideas that are connected to the sense people make of the world as they engage with it. From this, we can see how ideology has come to be associated with a set of ideas through which to interpret the world, which is connected to a particular group of people (Hartley, 2002).

When used positively, the term emphasises social experience as grounds from which develop ideas about the world. When used negatively, the term implies that these grounds are dubious and not rational or scientific. This makes the term difficult to situate and grasp in history from below, because on the one hand people’s experiences are valued in a positive way as a basis for knowledge; on the other hand, the Marxist heritage of writing from below emphasises that experience is better understood by focusing not on what people say about themselves but on the material conditions of social existence that condition what they experience (Marx, 1972 [1851]).

The material conditions of social existence include the era in which people are born; the state of technology at the time; the form of governance determining one’s access to national belonging; the class position one occupies; as well as the access one is granted or denied to housing, education, public and political life, among other things, depending on one’s status based on markers such as race, gender, sexuality and disability. As Louis Althusser (1971) puts it, ‘ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of social existence’.

For Marx, the dominating class controls the dominant ideology for how individuals come to see their social existence. In *German ideology*, (1972 [1845–46], p. 136) Marx argues ‘The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.’ In other words, the dominant class in society has the greatest influence over the ideas that make sense of the world. These ideas are presented as how things are, rather than as a product of all kinds of material struggle in the history of social existence. Marx’s method for observing how material conditions for producing and reproducing a society change over time is known as historical materialism.

Masking the historical struggles in which the material conditions of social existence are unevenly re/produced and distributed across the lines of class, Marx argues, naturalises inequality. Capitalists are presented as earning their profits because they are risk-taking, enterprising people, obscuring the fact that profits come from the surplus value extracted from the difference between what workers are paid to produce and reproduce themselves as commodities, and the value of the commodities that they produce. This is to say, the value of the commodities they produce in a day is more than what they are paid as a commodity (Marx, 1972 [1867], pp. 232–249).

This process of naturalising inequality such that power differentials are perceived as residing within the innate character of types of people (workers are less enterprising), rather than through material struggles of social relations, can be extended to observations involving other markers of identity. For example, common sense suggests there are only two genders and within that schema men are stronger and more capable as leaders than women; similarly, White people are deemed more intelligent than Black and brown people; able-bodied people are presented as more competent than disabled people; and heterosexuals are perceived as more normal than queer folk. In all of these cases, these types of people are represented as pre-existing the social order, when in fact it is the requirements of social order that constitute the classification of people into types.

Hannah Arendt (1978 [1951], pp. 460–479) offers an equally important take on ideology, which shows how something like Marxism, feminism (or any other -ism) can also become ideological. Like Marx, she sees ideology as a process of obscuring historical struggle; but she sees Marxism as propagating its own form of ideological thinking insofar as historical materialism presents its view of the world as axiomatic. Without questioning its own first principles and premises, any theory is bound to reduce its explanations of social relations in the world in ways that close the ability to deal with the messiness of empirical life. For Arendt it is the propensity to reduce everything to one theory, law of nature or world-view that paves the path toward totalitarianism. An ideology is less totalitarian when it allows for conflicting positions to be thought within its set of ideas.

To this day, thinkers debate the worth of ideology as a concept. French thinker Michel Foucault (1980) claims the term presumes ideology is in opposition with truth or science, and that what is true is not as transparent or as easy to disentangle from power relations as we may believe (see discourse and power/knowledge). Žižek (1989), on the other hand, argues that ideology matters not so much because the term enables access to a more accurate reality but because grappling with thought and beliefs as ideology can help to uncover how fictions structure what we take to be real.

Where the marginalised and minority identities are concerned, we ask questions about what structures our beliefs, defining what is supposed as a real woman or man, the truth-value of racial classifications, or how the

ideal of democracy lives up to what we observe through our differences. Ideology remains useful as a concept because it questions what becomes regarded as natural at the same time as it cautions against reducing explanations of the order of things to dogmatic first principles.



INTERPELLATION

When people do not know your name, they often address you in a gendered manner. They may say, 'Good morning, sir' or 'Excuse me, madam.' Does the fact that they have addressed you so formally and in gendered terms annoy you? Or does it slip beneath your notice and not bother you at all? In less formal settings, they may say, 'Thank you, love' or 'thanks, mate,' but the gendered form of address is not as clearly attached to the gender binary of man and woman as it is in the first case. Some forms of address are more rigid than others; some may feel banal, and others offensive. On the receiving end of the call you would probably respond if you recognise yourself in, and are comfortable with, the terms used.

We are also more likely to answer the call of a person in authority, say someone from the police force. If a police officer calls out in derogatory manner, 'Hey, black boy!' the person on the receiving end of the call is most likely to find the address offensive or scary if they identify with or do have black or brown skin. Responding in anger, or even to point out the nature of the offence, may incite a reprimand from the person in power. Responding to the call, however, subjects the person to the derogatory tone in the racialised address. Franz Fanon (1986 [1952]) captures the indignity and 'crushing objecthood' of the racialised address in his chapter, 'The fact of blackness' in *Black Skin/White Masks* when his 'being for others' is addressed by somebody pointing to him: "Dirty N**!" Or simply, "Look, a Negro!" The power dynamic operating through the racialised nature of this social interaction subjects the person on the receiving end to the call, whether they identify with it or not.

Whenever we are addressed in a way that ties one's self to a social relation, we are learning to think of ourselves as others see us and in accord with social categories of identity made available to address us. French philosopher Louis Althusser (1971) defined this process of responding to the way others call us as interpellation. Whenever we are addressed as a woman, a man, a person of colour, a queer, a disabled person, a foreigner, a migrant, and so on, we are interpellated.

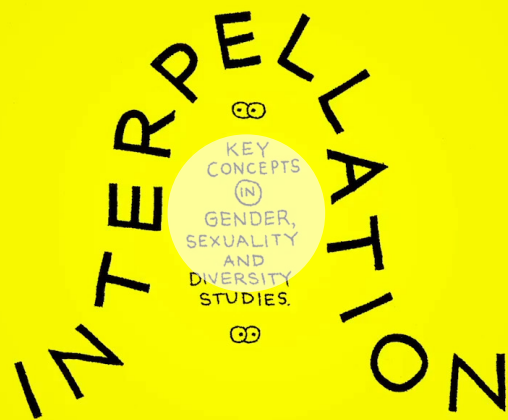
There does not need to be a person addressing us for interpellation to take place. We are interpellated when we watch television, go to the movies, read magazines, fill out bureaucratic forms, or do anything that involves being subjected to social relations that call us to think of ourselves in relation to how others categorise and see us. We may recognise ourselves in the address, resist or reject the way we are being called, but in all cases, we are drawn into the process of becoming a subject, rather than an individual free of power relations. Franz Fanon's description of the emotional imprisonment and rage when he is called the N word and pointed at as a 'Negro' is a profound illustration of his book's thesis that colonialism has a psychological impact on the colonised.

Power relations operate through identity categories, because these categories are tied to institutional forces (see repressive state apparatuses and ideological state apparatuses) and ways of making sense of the world

that become naturalised through hierarchies of knowledge (see ideology). The categories of country, nationality and sex that mark our identity papers—such as birth certificates and passports—exist before our birth into them, and so address us before we have worked out how we fit within them. The process of interpellation is also tied to historical struggles over the meaning and status of identity labels.

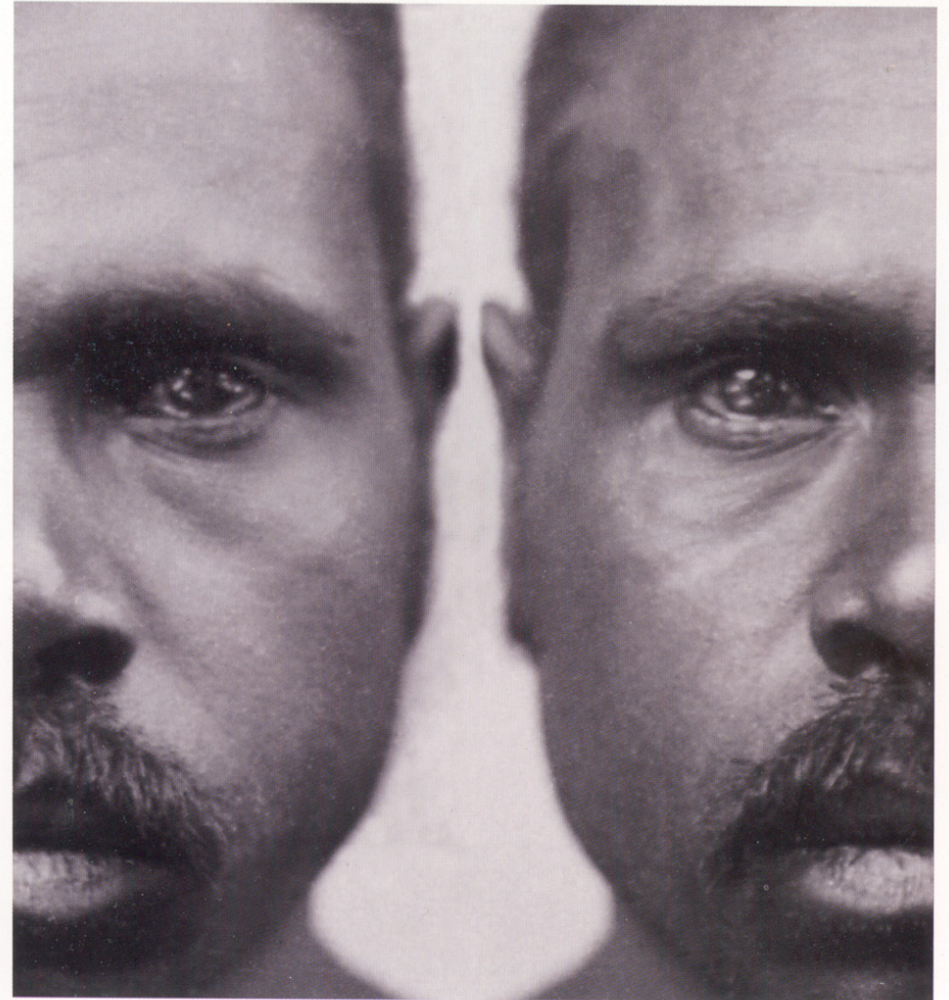
This is counterintuitive, as common sense would have us believe that we are born with a gender, race, skin colour, dis/abled body, and so on. Yet we do not have to look far into history, and the diversity of labels we have for naming ourselves, to see that the nation-states called Australia and the United States of America, for example, are named otherwise by Indigenous peoples who have been the traditional custodians of these lands for tens of thousands of years. Similarly, a recent sex survey conducted by the Queensland University of Technology identified 33 different gender categories (Jager, 2016), which would proliferate when names for gender diversity from non-English speaking contexts are counted. While categories for disability are used to identify how bodies and minds function, the meaning, status and treatment of people with disabilities will enable or limit how such people can live.

From these examples we can see that the meanings associated with the naming of identities change through time and space. Those meanings are caught up in historical struggles over the power of identity, and the identities that carry most power. As such, interpellation—the way in which we are called to be in the world—is never an innocent process or situated outside power relations.



Brook Andrew is an artist, academic and curator who engages strategies to disrupt dominant cultural narratives. His practice engages the archive, commercial branding and advertising devices and architectural interventions, in which he overlays objects, spaces and meaning with Wiradjuri language and culture.

Brook Andrew *I Split Your Gaze* 1997



INTERSECTIONALITY

Dubbed a buzzword in feminism, intersectionality can be hard to define and easy to abuse. Still, the term remains essential for analysing and changing patterns of inequality and injustice.

Put simply, intersectionality shows how a feminism that focuses on women—without also addressing the fact that women come from different classes, and are marked by differences in ethnicity, sexuality, ability and more—favours the needs of those who are white, middle-class, heterosexual and able bodied.

Acknowledging that women are affected by other forms of marginalisation has sparked much debate within feminism. For instance there was intense discussion of intersectionality during the 2017 Women's March in Washington DC. (One report had the headline “Women's March Morphs Into Intersectional Torture Chamber”.) Some feminists felt that emphasising differences between women detracted from common struggles. They did not like acknowledging that some women might be more privileged than others.

However this position elides the fact that non-white women experience discrimination on the basis of both gender and race. As Ruby Hamad and Celeste Liddle wrote in 2017, ‘mainstream feminism still cannot comprehend that racism and sexism are not experienced separately but simultaneously’. They went on: ‘The giddiness surrounding Hillary Clinton as almost First Female President™ and the silliness over Wonder Woman as First Female Superhero™ both fostered an atmosphere of hostility to any women who had the audacity not to feel “represented” by either.’

The term is attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw, though many activists and writers conveyed similar approaches to injustice well before ‘intersectionality’ was coined. Crenshaw wrote two articles in 1989 (PDF) and 1991 (PDF) addressing problems that arise when only one identity category is used to deal with discrimination and oppression.

Crenshaw's first article analysed the anti-discrimination legal case of Black American women who in 1976 tried to sue General Motors for segregating their workforce on lines of gender and race. Black women could not get secretarial jobs, which went to White women; jobs on the factory floor went to Black men. The court could not deal with discrimination claims of gender and race combined. Crenshaw imagined a law and class analysis that could deal with the intersection of gender and race in the concrete case of Black women.

In the second article Crenshaw charted how feminist practices can be race-evasive and anti-racist struggles can be gender-evasive when dealing with domestic violence, rape and obscenity law. In noticing how women of colour and Black women fall through the cracks in welfare services provision, policy development and law, Crenshaw highlighted problems infiltrating identity politics which have a very long history; this feeds into today's debates about multiple oppressions.

*sections of this entry were written for an explainer on intersectionality for The Conversation in February 2019.



New York City Women's March, 2018.

In 1851 abolitionist Sojourner Truth delivered the famous speech, ‘Ain’t I a woman?’ to the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention, contrasting her experience as a Black woman to the presumed whiteness of women’s rights activists. Her speech illustrates how speaking intersectionally can frame differences *within* an identity category, nudging social movements to remain mindful of the homogenising effects of organising under a single axis of struggle.

In the same year that Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, Indigenous women in Australia, led by Jackie Huggins (1991), objected to White feminist anthropologist Diane Bell’s article, ‘Speaking about rape is everybody’s business’, published in an international feminist journal (Bell, 1989). The Bell-Huggins debate continues to resonate with present-day conundrums regarding the issue of who can speak about what. It is not so much a question over whether it is everybody’s business to speak about rape, but more how White feminists like Bell tend to drown out the voices of Aboriginal women speaking for themselves.

When something as significant as rape is debated in public and academic spheres, it becomes easy to sideline the racist assumptions and language governing the terms in which speaking about the issue takes place (Moreton-Robinson, 2006). Intersectionality aims to deal with working along multiple axes of oppression, and advocates articulating issues in terms that do not further subjugate and separate the voices and experiences of those occupying more than one axis of marginality.

Credited with introducing identity politics into academic and activist circles, the Combahee River Collective (CRC) from Boston issued a statement of solidarity (PDF) in 1977 for dealing with several interlocking forms of oppression. As a collective of Black, lesbian feminists also committed to ending economic oppression under capitalism, it is easy to see how the CRC’s articulation of dealing simultaneously with different forms of structural inequality resonates with present-day understandings of intersectionality.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The inclusion of sexuality and disability alongside race and gender in struggles against the power differentials created by capitalism aligns closely to how intersectionality readily extends to other forms of marginality. A problem arising from such extension is that the list of subordinated identities becomes potentially endless.

In a critique of identity politics, Donna Haraway (1988) noted it was impossible to be located wholly in one, or simultaneously in all, of the possible positions of subjugation. She saw the search for the perfect marginal subject as fetishised and essentialised into the Third World Woman. In today’s vernacular, this translates to the game of ‘oppression olympics’ where the person carrying the most identity markers of marginality is judged as having the best political and philosophical standpoint.

Adolfo Aranjuez sums up the problem well when he says, ‘as a young, brown, queer, effeminate migrant with mental illness ... I’m a minority on six levels, trumping a middle-aged, straight white man.’ We are doing ourselves a political disservice if we rely on labels alone to arbitrate debates, he argues. ‘What this is about is preferring solidarity over separatism ... Shutting someone down is a fleeting win; rectifying inequality in the long term is more than a game’.

Another unfortunate interpretation of intersectional analysis is to adopt the ‘add and stir’ approach for each identity, as many diversity and inclusion policies do today. Additive approaches erroneously treat identities as if they were discrete and innate rather than porous and historical.

There are ways to avoid such problems. Contextualising identities as historically situated, socially constructed and structurally entangled in power dynamics abates tokenism. Using categories that better capture diversity in identities—such as gender over women—minimises the constraints of essentialism. Charting intersections between multiple identities as they concurrently emerge through dynamics of power and knowledge construction skirts the worst of ‘add and stir’ approaches.

Ultimately intersectionality helps us understand that the differences within an identity category, such as women, can be as significant as the differences that second wave feminists emphasised between women and men.

KYRIARCHY AND PATRIARCHY

While intersectionality captures multiple axes of oppression experienced based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class, disability and so on, kyriarchy captures interlocking forces of oppression from the side of power, domination and governmentality.

Feminist theologian Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza coined the term in her 1992 book, *But she said: feminist practices of Biblical interpretation*. She defined the term in the glossary of her 2001 book, *Wisdom ways: introducing feminist Biblical interpretation*: ‘A neologism derived from the Greek words for ‘lord’ or ‘master’ (*kyrios*) and ‘to rule or dominate’ (*archien*) which seeks to redefine the analytic category of patriarchy in terms of multiplicative intersecting structures of domination ... Kyriarchy is best theorized as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression.’

With a focus on gender inequality, feminism has traditionally relied on the category of patriarchy to capture the systemic domination of men over women. Patriarchy is tied to organising societal relations such that property and ancestry are tracked and passed on through male lineage. The etymological roots of *patriarchy* are derived from the Greek *patriarkhes*, referring to ‘chief or head of family’. Patriarchy literally translates to ‘rule of the father’ ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)).

Patriarchy has served as a crucial concept for feminism, for its capacity to tie the oppression of women to the male lineage embedded within the organisation of society. It is not just the family in which the rule of the father orders male privilege and female oppression, but in religious hierarchies, political organisations, education systems, workplaces and other structures that carry social power.

Social scientists have long debated how ‘mother-right’—the passing of lineage through matriarchal lines, which are more readily gauged beyond doubt through childbirth—became supplanted by patriarchy through power struggles to secure recognition of paternity, where fatherhood historically has been not as easy to prove (Wolfe, 1999). Frederick Engels (1969 [1884]) used this idea to tie patriarchy to the origins of private property, but the order of which structure of domination preceded the other is disputed.

Like all histories of power and subordination, the spread of patriarchal relations is uneven across time and space. The history of feminist theory shows the emergence of capitalism and patriarchy inform one another. As Silvia Federici demonstrates in her book, *Caliban and the witch: women, the body and primitive accumulation* (1998), the socio-economic system of capitalism is necessarily bound to racism, sexism and the politicisation of sexuality. The social relations of capital depend on denigrating ‘the “nature” of those it exploits: women, colonial subjects, the descendants of African slaves, the immigrants displaced by globalization’ (Federici, 1998, p. 17). We could add that capitalism tied with patriarchy also discards and expels those who are deemed non-productive, or who threaten and disrupt the social, familial and political order: the disabled, the mentally ill, sexual and gender deviants, and

political dissidents. The difficulty of capturing the differences between the types of people that are oppressed through various forces of domination often exceeds the analytical reach of any single term such as patriarchy.

Traditionally, each axis of oppression has been tied to a specific form of domination. Class oppression is tied to capitalism, race to colonialism and White supremacy, gender to patriarchy, sexuality to heteronormativity, and disability to ableism. While naming power relations through these terms supplies an analytical grid from which to identify a specific form of domination (such as male privilege), it is difficult to portray the intersections and collisions between different assemblages of privilege and oppression.

As intersectional feminism has demonstrated, understanding gender oppression in terms of women and men without also accounting for differences within each of the categories falls short of dealing with varying and conflicting forms of privilege and oppression.

Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton Robinson (2004) names the interlocking grid of power ‘patriarchal White sovereignty’, which provides an analytical perspective from which to focus on the settler-colonial structure of power. As structures of domination and subordination multiply and collide, the search for a term with sufficient analytical reach has become vital: for dealing with oppression intersectionally, and for dealing with situations in which people might be privileged by one part of their identity while oppressed in another (compare, for example, the circumstances of a Black working-class man to those of a White middle-class woman). Kyriarchy is a single term that to date has the best potential to capture the reach and complexity of multiple forms of domination and subordination.

The conceptual efficacy of kyriarchy has most recently been publicised through Kurdish-Iranian writer Behrouz Boochani’s book *No friend but the mountains* (2018). Boochani was held in the Australian-run detention camp on Manus Island since 2013. While the original detention centre was closed in 2017, because the PNG courts ruled such facility unconstitutional, Boochani, among over 400 other men, had continued to live in conditions of an open air prison. Boochani managed to find freedom in November 2019; however at the time of writing, Australia’s brutal border policies are keeping 46 men in Bomana Prison in Port Moresby, who are ‘essentially incommunicado’ (Doherty, 2019). Boochani developed what he calls the ‘kyriarchal system’ as part of his Manus prison theory to explain the ideological substrata that connect intersecting systems of oppression manifest in Australia’s border-industrial complex. Boochani’s translator, Omid Tofighian (2018, pp. 369–370), states that kyriarchy best captures the Farsi term *system-e hâkem*, which can mean “‘oppressive system”, “ruling system”, “system of governmentality” ... or “sovereign system”.’

Boochani (2018) shares Fiorenza’s articulation of kyriarchy to describe the ‘multiplicative intersecting structures of domination’ and brings the term into sharper focus by applying its articulation to the Manus prison. He describes the kyriarchal system as being ‘set up to produce suffering’ (p. 136) in a ‘culture of systemic violence’ (p. 144) whose logic is designed to turn

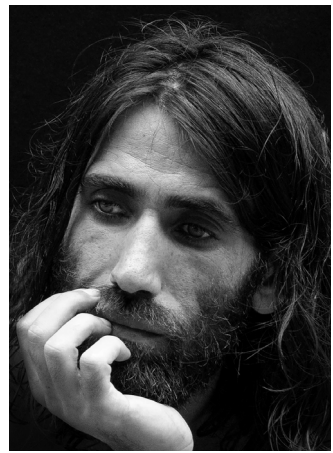
prisoners against one another. At the same time this trains workers within the system to carry the message that they ‘simply get instructions and follow them’ (p. 145). The strategy of the kyriarchal system within the Manus prison is to create conditions that force prisoners to behave badly, shrinking the space in which one can act ethically and with generosity.

In cultivating the conditions in which prisoners become dependent on the kyriarchal system, tactics are established to make them ‘enmeshed and complicit in the system’ (Boochani, 2018, p. 209). This resonates with Michel Foucault’s (1980) concepts of governmentality and power/knowledge, as well as Giorgio Agamben’s (2000) work on the extension of the prison camp as a model for social control. Yet the way in which Boochani’s poetic expression assigns the kyriarchal system an agency and deals with irreconcilable positions, such as the determination to desire escape at the same time as wanting to stand firm, situates his conceptual apparatus as deconstructive.

The affinity kyriarchy has to deconstructive strategies of reading and writing is implicitly acknowledged in Fiorenza’s reflection on the concept’s affinities to Dorothy Smith’s notion of ‘relations of ruling’. She quotes: ‘The ruling apparatus is that familiar complex of management, government, administration professions, and intelligentsia, as well as the textually mediated discourses that coordinate and interpenetrate it. Its special capacity is the organization of particular places, persons and events into general and abstract modes vested in categorical systems, rules, laws, and conceptual practices. The former thereby become subject to an abstracted and universalized system mediated by texts’ (Smith cited in Fiorenza, 1992, fn16, p. 220)

Because kyriarchy deals with interlocking forms of oppression and marginalisation, it is more useful for dealing with democracy in difference than terms for dominating structures that are restricted to one area study (such as gender) or even a few forms of oppression (gender, sexuality and race). Kyriarchy has the capacity to include, Tofighian (2018, p. 370) notes, ‘racism, heteronormativity, economic discrimination, class-based violence, faith-based discrimination, coloniality, Indigenous genocide, anti-Blackness, militarism and xenophobia’.

A further conceptual advantage accorded to kyriarchy stems from its non-dependence on a binary opposition to understand oppression. Because the term can accommodate the multiple and fractured nature of most people’s identities, it does not rely on neat binaries such as patriarchy’s separation of men and women, capitalism’s divide between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, colonialism’s divide between the coloniser and colonised, and so on. Consequently, kyriarchy can better encompass analysis regarding non-binary genders, mixed-race people, and any other identity that does not neatly fall into a coherent category of identity.



Behrouz Boochani, Kurdish Iranian journalist, writer and human rights defender was detained at Manus Island through Australia’s notorious border and asylum seeker policies between 2013–November 2019. At one stage, over 600 men were detained on the island. At the time of writing, around 46 men remain, having been moved to Bomana Prison in Port Moresby.

LIBERALISM

The aspirations of liberalism are grand. Liberty and equality are two of the three catchcries of the French Revolution; and when the third—fraternity—is converted from its masculine inflection to a less sexist idea of cultivating friendship and community, these values are appealing grounds from which to foster the art of governance. When the ideal of freedom and equality confront the actuality of constraint and inequality, liberalism has a hard time finding equilibrium between the two. John Rawls, possibly the most famous liberal thinker of the twentieth century, dealt with the tension between freedom and equality in his book, *A Theory of Justice* (1971).

In English the word *liberal* was used positively in the fourteenth century to mean ‘noble, free’ and was associated with being selfless and admirable; this sense resembled the old French *liberal* ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). In the mid-fifteenth century the term also took on a more negative connotation to become ‘extravagant, unrestrained’. These meanings derive from the Latin *liberalis*: ‘noble, gracious, munificent, generous’. There is a definite connection between these traits as ‘befitting of a free person’, which ties the liberal ‘to a class of free men as distinct from others who were not free’ (Williams, 1976, p. 148).

The Enlightenment period in Europe tends to favour the sense of being ‘free from prejudice, tolerant, not bigoted or narrow’ as described in the etymology of the word, despite the fact that this period of thinking buffered the racism underpinning colonialism and the obsession with normality that divided all sorts of bodies into categories of criminality, pathologisation and deviancy. The tension between the idea of being free from restraint and free from prejudice continues to haunt arguments over the meaning of *liberal* and *liberalism* today.

As political doctrine liberalism privileges individual rights and freedom as the kernel from which a society ought to order its form of governance. Liberalism distinguishes itself from conservatism, where the latter is more explicitly invested in protecting the interests of monarchs and the rich while espousing traditional values associated with Christianity and the patriarchal nuclear family. Liberal thinkers take themselves to be anti-authoritarian, whose most influential advocates argued for a separation between state and economy and for minimal intervention in the art of governing the people and societal affairs.

Michel Foucault ([1978–1979] 2008) locates this separation between politics and economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the first place in which a certain form of rationality and regime of truth asserts itself for guiding governance. Rather than relying on divine right or a sense of justice for determining the art of governance, liberalism introduces a rationality for measuring the effects of policies and practices in terms of the *equilibrium* and the health of the state: the economy serves as the prime measure of this balance. Liberalism provides the frame for presuming that the capitalist market economy is the most free and fair way for organising the production and distribution of wealth. In valuing freedom and equality between



Allan Ramsay
Portrait of David Hume
(1711–1776), 1754.

individuals, liberals often take the credit for propelling the expansion of democracies. For Foucault, liberalism also marks the birth of biopolitics, where forms of governance get tied to disciplinary techniques for monitoring and regulating populations.

In European philosophy John Locke is credited as providing the foundational text for liberal ideology with his *Two treatises of government* ([1689] 2017). The list of liberal thinkers after Locke is lengthy, though most share the idea (most popularly associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau) of a social contract between the individual and state and uphold the right to bodily autonomy and private property (Pateman, 1988, Bryson, 2003). Carole Pateman (1988), offers a feminist corrective to this in showing how the social contract was also dependent on everyday sexual contracts that preserved patriarchal relations. Furthermore, situating liberalism with a European heritage can betray the influence that Eastern thinkers had on their Western counterparts. Alison Gopnik (2015) provides a persuasive case, for instance, that David Hume was largely influenced by a student of Buddhist philosophy. Acknowledging such intellectual exchanges keeps us alert that the European tradition of thought is not as self-contained as its reputation in higher education suggests. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill are also well-known foundational liberal thinkers who were both adherents of utilitarianism—promoting happiness through the principle of aiming for the greatest good to the greatest number of people (Bryson, 2003). Mill was deeply influenced by his wife, Harriet Taylor, who not only shaped his work on women's rights, but contributed to his famous essay *On Liberty* (Popova, undated).

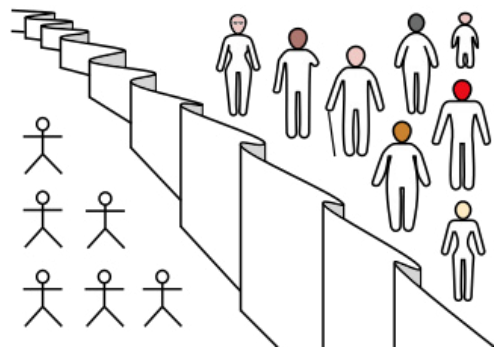
Mary Wollstonecraft is the most famous feminist liberal thinker. In *A vindication of the rights of woman* (1792) she argued that 'the fairer sex' lacks not reason but education; if given the opportunity to study and engage with public life, women would be able to perform as well as men (Bryson, 2003). To this day, this kind of thinking influences liberal feminists who articulate most of their goals in lobbying for equal opportunity through a framework based on ideas of inclusion and extension of rights afforded to men. Other feminists have been more critical of the liberal feminist's acceptance of the heterosexual nuclear family, the patriarchal bias in the social contract, and the non-questioning stance liberal thinkers have in relation to market capitalism and the nation-state.

Marxists are the most renowned opponents to liberal thinking. In response to the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and declarations that citizens of these re-established nations in Europe were all free and equal, Karl Marx wrote a cutting rejoinder tackling 'the Jewish question'. The question of treating all citizens as free and equal raised the issue of how Jewish differences in law and customs could be assimilated into these nations. While democracies were supposed to separate



Unknown artist Harriet Mill circa 1834

Harriet Taylor Mill (8 October 1807—November 1858) was a philosopher and women's rights advocate, who made substantial contributions to John Stuart Mill's work.



the church from the state and get rid of aristocratic privileges of rank and wealth, Marx argued that de-politicisation of rank and religion was nominal only. In actuality religious belief, occupation, private property and education, when left 'to act after their own fashion', merely entrench the particularity of their influence and power (Marx, [1843] 1972).

Liberal thinkers like John Rawls are

not averse to confronting the question of power, but the framing and methodology deployed is more abstract and analytical than the Marxist approach of historical materialism. Rawls is less focused on the history of struggle and how inequality gets produced and more focused on approaching conflict through hypothetical scenarios and thought experiments. His experiment of 'original position' and the 'veil of ignorance' both exemplify this. In order to create a just society, Rawls (1971) suggests that people need to deliberate for justice by adopting a stance, whose original position presumes everybody is already equal and can see one another only through a veil of ignorance; nobody knows anybody else's gender, race, class position and so on. This is supposed to foster both neutrality and rationality in deliberation and imbue each subject with no investment in wanting to maintain their own wealth and power. If everybody presumes they start from the same original position and cannot see anybody else's differences, Rawls contends they will choose fair and equitable policies. This is the antithesis of Marx's argument in the Jewish Question, which goes some way to explain how Marxist and liberal frameworks became thought of as opposites in sociological thinking.

The opposition between Marxism and liberalism was often presented on the stage of international affairs and the struggle between communism and democracy. In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida (1994) takes a critical view of the idea that democracy had finally triumphed through liberal market capitalism by re-reading the competing voices within Marx's philosophy, political works and critique of political economy. Rather than burying Marx with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Derrida looks at how a critique of the evils of capitalism can be reworked to retain the emancipatory spirit of communism within the idea of a democracy-to-come.

The association of free-market capitalism with democracy is also attached to the term *neo-liberalism*. It can be hard to distinguish the liberal from the neo-liberal, as rugged individualism and capitalism characterise both. The Enlightenment ideal of tolerance and freedom from prejudice, however, lent itself to forms of liberalism becoming associated with the welfare state. Neo-liberalism does not pretend to have a heart for the poor and a bank for public goods. Instead it can be described as the privileging of monetary policies, advocating even less state intervention in the welfare of populations, and the deregulation of markets in order to place profits of multi-national corporations ahead of the needs of living beings and the planet.

MARXISM

Karl Marx and Marxism, as providing a theoretical and political frame for understanding and transforming social relations in the world, have acquired a bad reputation in many academic and political discourses for what has happened in their names. Marx is known for developing the theoretical framework of historical and dialectical materialism, providing a scathing analysis and critique of capitalism in his work on political economy, and writing the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* ([1848] 1972) with his sometime co-writer and friend Friedrich Engels.

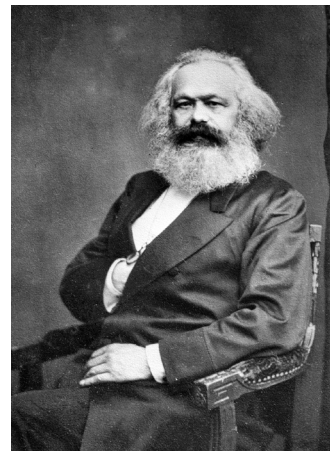
Marxism's attachment to communism played out on a stage of international affairs in which democratic nation-states attached to free-market capitalism were opposed to it. It is almost impossible to disentangle the ideological knots that have been tied when reckoning with the wars, violence and polemics about justice, inequality and power that are caught up in the opposition of communism and capitalism. Marxism is a part of these knots tied in historical struggle, as are liberalism and democracy.

Marx ([1845–1846], 1972) was aware of the way his own writings were entangled in what he called the 'muck of ages', which leaves his readers having to wrestle with fundamental question of how people cultivate the world in which they live from the circumstances they inherit. In Marx's words: 'Men (*sic*) create their own history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing' ([1851], 1972, p. 437).

This view of human agency captures the heart of historical materialism. Materialism privileges the social conditions of existence as structuring consciousness rather than the other way around: 'it is not social consciousness that determines being, but rather being that determines consciousness' ([1859], 1972, p. 4). This relates to the perennial philosophical problem of whether thought precedes existence, or existence precedes thought.

For Marx ([1851], 1972), how we think of ourselves is dependent on the era we are born into, the state of technology at the time, the access we have to education, whether we are born into a religious community, and so on. What distinguishes humans from other animals—their species being—is situated in the way in which humans are labouring animals ([1844], 1972). For Marx, humans are the only animal to produce above and beyond their own means and levels of subsistence. As a labouring animal, the driving force organising the material conditions of social existence for humans is their mode of production: the politico-economic and social means by which a society produces and reproduces itself.

Marxism situates capitalism as becoming dominant globally during the period in which the Industrial Revolution in Europe began to govern how the forces and relations that make up a mode of production were altering feudal relations. Forces of production include land, raw materials, machinery, tools and, most importantly, labour without which no production



John Jabez Edwin Mayall
Portrait of Karl Marx (1818–1883) 1875.

can take place (even fully automated machines initially need living labour power to make them). Relations of production refer to the position a person occupies in the social hierarchy as a result of their place in the production process (Marx, [1859], 1972).

Marx and Engels ([1848], 1972) characterise capitalism as marking the era in the long history of class struggles when society becomes divided into proletarians (labourers or working class) and the bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production). As workers become more aware of their shared conditions of material existence as a class in itself, they develop a consciousness by which they move to a class for themselves.

In the *Communist manifesto*, Marx and Engels ([1848], 1972) call for the formation of a party not so much to take control of the state machinery as to oversee the development of all other parties with proletarian alliances that are part of the international labour movement. Assessing the right moment from which the proletariat rises to play an historical role in bringing about the abolition of private property—so that the means of production becomes common to all and not just the bourgeoisie—occupies much of the content of the different prefaces written to each new publication of the *Communist manifesto* from the original German edition in 1848 to the English translation in 1888.

The political uncertainty regarding if and when to seize state machinery is related to the theoretical conundrum between the more determinist interpretation of historical materialism and its supposed opposing philosophical position of free will for the social agent of history. In combining historical materialism with the dialectical understanding of all phenomena as being in a continual state of movement between opposing forces, the *Communist manifesto* focuses on the opposing forces of capitalism and communism on the one hand, and the bourgeoisie and proletariat on the other hand. The proletariat exercises its agency by working with the opposing forces of capitalism and communism in order to make history from the material circumstances that define the different classes.

The historical circumstances in which to seek reform, revolution, or retreat from state politics altogether, continues to trouble Marxism and the international labour movement. One of the most contentious interpretive debates among Marxists is the extent to which the capitalist mode of production is advanced enough to become superseded by communism. As explained in the manifesto, just as feudal relations of property became ‘so many fetters’ on the new productive forces of machinery, steam technology, railways and electric telegraphs, so capitalism’s exchange and property relations are supposed to burst those fetters asunder and shift into communism.

Marx proposes the inevitability of communism as the final stage of human progress and saw capitalism as a necessary step toward this. The heinous side to the manifesto is that Marx and Engels situate capitalism with the racist language of claiming that ‘the rapid improvement of all

instruments of production, by immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization’ ([1848, 1972, p. 40).

As it happened, revolutionary aspirations for communist societies took place in agrarian societies. For example Russia, initially not mentioned at all in the first publications of the *Communist manifesto*, became a test case from which to ponder how peasant societies could be industrialised in the process of transforming to a communist society. The killing of land-owning peasants, known as *kulaks*, together with the famines that followed Soviet actions and policies, led to mass deaths; at the same time, the seizing of state machinery turned Russia into a totalitarian rather than liberated society.

In *Black Marxism: The making of the Black radical tradition*, Cedric J Robinson ties the totalitarian turn in Marx and the Marxist tradition to inadequately dealing with the ‘development of world capitalism ... by the particularistic forces of racism and capitalism’ (1983, p. 9). Drawing from W E B DuBois’ *Black Reconstruction in America* ([1935] 1969), Robinson notes the Marxist-Leninist focus on the industrial worker as the revolutionary agent of history missed comparisons between peasants with poor whites and slaves in America, among other movements of labour. He cites DuBois’ 1938 observation that Russian communism had forsaken a democratic path to communism by choosing a ‘dogmatic program’ of ‘oligarchic control of government and industry and thought and action (DuBois cited in Robinson, 1983, pp. 320–321). Robinson claims the Eurocentric bias in Marxism, coupled with the assumption of seeing the development of capitalism as inevitable, is a failure in historical investigation: it is a failure to see the origins of capitalism as a world system through the lens of the *particular* ethnic, cultural, regional, colonial, slave trading, prison forming, mercenary producing, and migrant inducing labour ‘pools’ that were thoroughly racialised. (Robinson, 1983, pp. 9–37).

Not only was racism crucial to the development of capitalism, but so was the gendered division of labour; and wherever race and sex are hierarchised, so is sexuality. In *Women’s Oppression Today*, Michele Barrett (1980) analysed debates about the role women played in the production and reproduction of labour; the heterosexual familialism that underpins the economy of unwaged labour in the production and reproduction of capitalism; and the ideologies of femininity and masculinity in sustaining an economy and culture that ties women’s oppression and heterosexuality to capitalist exploitation. Silvia Federici (2004) also documents the tie between the oppression of women and the development of capitalism in *Caliban and the witch: women, the body and primitive accumulation*. Federici adds the historical specificity of witch-hunts to the records of charting the development of capitalism. Like anti-colonial critique of Marxism, Federici also argues that there was nothing inevitable about capitalism coming to be the dominant mode of production on a global scale.

The deterministic aspect of Marx's historical materialism is one that continues to plague interpretations of his work. This is of most concern regarding what is to be done in order to transform the material conditions of existence that breed oppression, particularly in light of totalitarian states that pledged allegiance to Marxism as guiding theory for transforming society. There are Marxists who argue that Soviet Marxism is a perversion of the real Marx; and there are anti-Marxists who argue that Marxism is inherently totalitarian. To grapple with the worth of Marxism today it is useful to focus on the inherent contradictions within the theoretical frame of historical materialism.

Marx claimed that social existence determines one's consciousness. He transposed this notion into a revolutionary imperative to change the material structures of society in order to eradicate inequality. For instance, to overturn religion's role in maintaining the passivity of the faithful in the hierarchies of the clergy and their lot in life, Marx argued it is not enough to change one's ideas: the material structures of the church itself need to be abolished ([1845–1846], 1972). The Soviet Union took up this call and at least on the surface of things demolished churches and banned religion. Communist states in Latin America, however, found ways to combine the two. Navigating whether to abolish or change material structures nevertheless remains difficult.

In his reading of Marx, Jacques Derrida (1994) confronts the contradiction within the imperative to change the material conditions of social existence. He asks: how can a materialist identify what social conditions need to be changed without first passing through the realm of consciousness and ideality (something whose existence can be named and understood only through a mental conception)? Derrida does not highlight this contradiction in order to privilege the ideal over the material; rather, he leaves it as a paradox, the *aporia* that always accompanies *deconstruction* as an event, and suggests this creates the necessity of working through it. More recently, new materialists, such as Vicki Kirby (2011) takes up Derrida's deconstructive challenge to reconsider how life reads and rewrites itself through the nature/culture binary. Put another way, if not careful, deconstructive readings of materialism can fall prey to what Karen Barad (2003) calls a neglect of conversations between matter and meaning (See also, Barad, 2007).

In dialectical terms, this suggests that opposing forces gives us the interminable task of adjusting the political question of what is to be done within new situations. As such, from within Marx, from Derrida's deconstructive reading of him, and new materialist approaches to matter, meaning and action, a less doctrinaire interpretation of historical and dialectical materialism suggests the task of changing material circumstances is not transparent and there is nothing inevitable about stages for human progress.

MASCULINITIES AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

Studying masculinities has been awkward within some women's studies and gender studies programs, as the signifier of *Man* had for so long circulated in Western knowledge as if it were representative of all people. The connection between patriarchy and masculinity can obscure the fact that masculinity, like femininity, is better understood as multiple.

This is not to say that the operation of power relations does not privilege a certain kind of masculinity that produces male domination in many institutional sites (such as the family, workplace, politics and religious organisations) and discursive practices (such as expertise in science, medicine and intelligence organisations). Keeping a handle on the multiple ways in which masculinity can be inhabited by different people, at the same time as noting how patriarchal relations become reinforced, is crucial for understanding and transforming relations of power.

Interest in masculinity within gender, sexuality and diversity studies (GSDS) emerged from a variety of angles, particularly where gender intersected with other marginal identities. When bell hooks (2000) asked feminists what men women wanted to be equal to, she highlighted the difference that race makes to gender-based analyses. Similarly, gay, queer, trans and intersex identifying males are differently situated when calculating whether one's safety may be at risk in comparison to many heterosexual and cis-gendered men. To understand a gender order that privileges men thus requires charting what positions of masculinity become dominant and are imbued with more power in the cultural, economic and political fabric of society.

The term *hegemonic masculinity*, attributed to Raewyn Connell, emerged to chart what traits and characteristics feed male dominance in the gender order. There are so many publications in which this concept has been rethought that it is difficult to keep track of what was refined when. Connell describes the trajectory of the concept and her thinking on masculinities on her personal website. Here is a summary: The term was first coined in 1982 in a collaborative study that looked at hierarchies of masculinities in school settings. The articulation of the concept was then published in a co-authored 1985 in the article, 'Toward a new sociology of masculinity', and Connell refined the term, with its cognate of emphasised femininity, in *Gender and power: society, the person and sexual politics* in 1987. In response to criticism of the concept Connell reworked it in another collaborative article in the feminist journal *Gender and Society*, 2005.

To date, hegemonic masculinity is one of the most often-cited concepts to explain the fact that masculinities do not equate to men, and has provided the foundation for a vast amount of research (all the way up to the United Nations) to inform research and practices invested in changing gender inequality

Hegemonic masculinity allows us to think about what kinds of traits and characteristics centralise the idea of masculinity, while showing at the same time that masculinity is plural and can therefore be ambiguous and contradictory.



Portrait of Antonio Gramsci
around 30 in the early 1920s.

The concept is built from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony ([1926]). Hegemony refers not just to domination but an ideological structure that gains the consent of those who are subordinate in such a system. When an ideology (where patterns of making sense of the world appear as 'natural', as if separate from historical context, power and knowledge) becomes dominant, and people give consent to conform to processes of normalisation, we call that process hegemonic. In other words, hegemony is not a coercive exertion of power; people are not forced to align their interests with dominant ways of thinking. Rather, people willingly

submit to prevailing ideologies tied to blocs of power.

Hegemonic masculinity reflects patterns of practices that create and perpetuate conditions for male dominance in society. It reinforces an ideal type and stereotype of what it means to be a man, and we all bear the consequences of that in a gendered society (Connell, 2005).

The traits associated with hegemonic masculinity are risk-taking, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and being rational and strong. The types of subject that can occupy a position of hegemonic masculinity are more fluid, however. While hegemonic masculinity tends to favour whiteness on a global scale, non-White men can and do occupy hegemonic positions of masculinity. Depending on context, hegemonic masculinity might favour a middle-class or working-class disposition; the gender order of society works in close proximity with capitalist relations, which depends on the ideological consent of the bulk of the population to not revolt. The value of heterosexuality within hegemonic masculinity can work through gay males by keeping them closeted or by encouraging an exhibition of the traits of aggressiveness, rationality and so on. A similar pattern imbues women who can occupy a position of hegemonic masculinity by adopting the traits associated with that form of subjectivity (Connell, 2005).

Hence, the concept stands as a normative measure of masculinity rather than a disposition that every male occupies or a disposition that those not assigned male cannot occupy.

Accordingly, masculinity is not the exclusive domain of those assigned male at birth. *Female masculinity*, written by J. Halberstam in 1998, questions the gender binary assumption that masculinity can sit only with those assigned male at birth. Spanning back to nineteenth century practices of women passing as men, through to butch lesbians of the twentieth century and the birth of drag kings, Halberstam shows that the fluidity of gender expression is not new. From literary texts such as Radclyffe Hall's *The well of loneliness* through to the popular culture of Hollywood films, Halberstam explores the many subject positions—gender inverts, butches, trans folk—in which female masculinity is occupied.

A focus on the heterogeneity and fluidity of masculinity does not mean that patterns of patriarchal behaviour and male privilege are any less real. What it does mean is that strategies to counteract these patterns cannot be located in an essentialist understanding of men and women.

NATION, NATION-STATE AND NATIONALITY

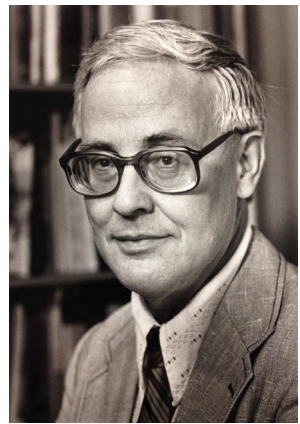
For a concept that is accorded world-wide political legitimacy to establish recognition of a people, *nation* is hard to define and remains contentious. The English word *nation* derives from the Latin, *natio*, which refers to ‘birth, origin; breed, stock, kind, species, race of people, tribe’ ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). More literally, the derivative from *natus* refers to that which ‘has been born’. Similarly, the Old French word *nacion* refers to ‘birth, rank; descendants, relatives; country, homeland’. From this etymology we can see how present-day English assimilates the senses of common descent, culture and language to suggest *nation*’s political meaning to name a common people. This is often combined with the term *state*—as in nation-state—to delimit a shared territorial and social space.

Historian and political scientist Benedict Anderson coined the phrase *imagined political community* to define nation. He calls the community imagined because those who belong to the nation do not meet most of their fellow members. Apart from giving an historical account for how nations have emerged as a globally recognised political unit for conducting domestic and world affairs, Anderson’s *Imagined communities* (2006) also explores how nationalism has come to exert such a strong hold over common people.

All fields of study entered in this book are concerned with how national identity functions, as the interests and representation of minorities and the marginalised are often excluded or suppressed in official histories, governmental priorities and canonised culture. Raymond Williams (1976) notes the significance of the overlap between racial grouping and political formation, as claims for political recognition of nationhood are usually based on the commonality of a people. Such an overlap enters the tricky territory that comes with the nineteenth century European obsession with classifying life forms and typing people. Such typing is more commonly understood today as scientific racism and had counterparts in the (supposedly scientific) classificatory pathologising of homosexuality and gender diversity.

Both the etymological root of nation to birth and the Enlightenment focus on classifications and rights, can explain how easy it can be to think of nationality, race and ethnicity as connected. Mainstream meanings of the term would distinguish between the presumed abstract citizen of the nation-state, the anachronistic reduction of race to a person’s physical characteristics, and the association of ethnicity with shared language and culture, which can include religion. The propensity to conflate the terms with one another shows how easy it is to develop allegiances with ethno-nationalism on the basis of what people look like in terms of their skin colour, bone structure, hair and so on.

There have been historical moments in which nations attempted to purify their people based on national, religious or ethnic membership, as well as of their physical or mental disability or of their sexual orientation. Unfortunately, associating national identity with the purity of a people is



Benedict Anderson in 1991.

not a thing of the past, and the twenty-first century is witnessing another resurgence in the type of nationalist sentiment and patriotism that feeds war and fascism. Feminist anarchist, Emma Goldman, describes patriotism as providing the 'implements of civilised slaughter' in a speech preceding the United States' entry into WWI. Actor, Sandra Ho reads an abridged version of the speech for Voices of a People's History.

The ties between national identity and birthright also need to be placed in the context of imperialism and colonialism, the inheritance of dynasties, and the flow of capital and labour. Charting the historical grittiness of how language, religion and culture are transmitted and territorialised over space and time reveals that aligning national identity with one people is not as straightforward as nationalists may suppose. Feminist critic, and literary and postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Spivak (2011) underscores how nationalist claims of birthright can obfuscate the ways in which migration, marriage, and historical conflict are legitimised through what she calls the assumptions of reproductive heteronormativity.

Reproductive heteronormativity explains how sex and sexuality become crucial sites for monitoring and regulating populations. In a settler colony like Australia, for instance, the drive to build a White nation steered law and policy to prevent sexual relations between the White and Indigenous population: the colonial possession of land and possession of women are interlinked (Moreton-Robinson, 2005). The drive for a White nation was further cemented when six colonies of Australia became federated and the first two Acts of Parliament expelled Pacific Islanders, who were brought here as indentured labourers, and Chinese people who had migrated during the gold rush (Banivanua-mar, 2007; Lake and Reynolds, 2008).

The state refers to a set of institutions with official powers to govern a particular territory. The combination of governance with the idea of a people is what forms the *nation-state*. The question thus arises as to what accords the state its authority to govern. Postcolonial critics like Homi Bhaba (1990) argue that the nation-state is constituted through the narration that converts the bloody struggle over territorial space into historical experience.

This raises how important memory, history, and the preservation of language and culture, are to the survival of a people. Hannah Arendt notes minorities and the stateless were the two types of groups whose survival was more precarious than all others in the aftermath of the two world wars. Not fitting into the historical consciousness of state narratives that were claiming national sovereignty, these two groups of people were forced to live unfollowed laws of Minority Treaties or no law at all. For minorities and the stateless, 'the very phrase "human rights" ... became the evidence of hopeless idealism or fumbling feeble-minded hypocrisy' ([1951] 1976, p. 269). Following Otto Bauer's notion of 'peoples without a history', Arendt stresses the role historical consciousness plays in the formation of national consciousness. She observes how those minorities fighting for self-determination throughout Eastern Europe became invested in preserving their own

national languages from popular vernacular and engaging with 'a kind of philological revival ... to prove that the people who possessed a literature and a history of their own, had the right to national sovereignty' (176, p. 271).

This fits with the imperative of the marginalised and those minorities who are engaged in constructing a history from below within present national narratives. All the minor studies and identities raised within this book have in some way or another been engaged in preserving a popular vernacular or resurrecting lost languages, documenting an alternative literary canon and raising an historical consciousness. This is the case even when not dealing with an ethnic minority. Language, literature, history and culture carries the work of passing on a heritage for those others, such as the working classes, women and LGBTIQA+ folk, those with a disability, who have felt themselves written out of national narratives.

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Fiona Foley *HHH#3* 2004



OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity is supposed to work in favour of building a shared reality where no one experiential perspective is privileged over another. Values are to be separated from facts. Argument is to be based on evidence, not opinion. Objectivity is supposed to be synonymous with impartiality, where the investigator or speaker presumably adopts a neutral position concerning the matter at hand. Hence, objectivity requires that the truth be told, independent of one's own biases, agenda, interpretations, feelings or political position. This is what is meant by disinterest. Some go as far as to say that objective work should always be written in the third person with no reference to personal experience. As such, an objective point of view is often opposed to subjective point of view.

Objectivity is traditionally associated with the physical sciences, where human observation and interest are presumed to be easily separated from the objects of inquiry. In Western thought the birth of the social sciences is associated with the Enlightenment, in which the cultivation of knowledge was tied to the idea of becoming separate from, and superordinate to, religious and spiritual belief. As the history and philosophy of science and the social sciences reveal, however, the presuppositions and beliefs that investigators hold—no matter what objects are under investigation—are not easily disentangled from observation, methods, perceived problems and theoretical frameworks.

Furthermore, ideals of objectivity and the development of scientific methods associated with the age of the Enlightenment and reason coincided with colonial conquest. As Edward Said notes in *Orientalism* (1978), the scientific projects deployed through colonialism involved sending experts with the fleet to observe and record the life of the peoples and lands they were invading. The more information that could be collected on the mores, habits, and beliefs of the colonised people, the easier the task of subjugating them would be. This kind of scientific enterprise cannot qualify as disinterested and free from bias or agenda. Another consequence of colonial recordings of Indigenous lands and peoples is that Indigenous knowledge regarding agriculture, astronomy and law, amongst other things, were ignored, deemed barbarous or not acknowledged as influencing the construction of Western knowledge (Pascoe, 2014).

When focus is turned back on the history of Western reason and science, we find other historically marginalised identities placed as incapable of objectivity. Women, so-called sexual deviants, racialised others, the mentally ill and the disabled have all been subjected to scientific studies where the starting premises deemed these types of people as already irrational or uncivil. By speaking in terms of what had been sanctioned as reasonable, and charting how the lived experiences of subjugated identities offered alternative accounts of knowledge, those subjects associated with the activist and academic work of minor fields of inquiry, such as writing history from below, have transformed understandings of objectivity and impartiality.

The questions then arise as to what becomes of objectivity and how to cultivate knowledge that can give an account of its legitimacy and truth value. Surely it is not a matter of reducing scientific knowledge to the standpoints of the subjugated? Standpoint theorists have been grappling with this question for decades now.

Hannah Arendt (1958), writing about developing a common space for the public to deliberate politics, provides one path for dealing with a multiplicity of perspectives when rethinking the concept of objectivity:

‘the reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself and for which *no common measurement or denominator can ever be devised*. For though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, those who are present have different locations in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects. Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position ... Only where things can be seen by the many in a variety of aspects *without changing their identity*, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.’ (emphasis added. Arendt, 1958, p. 73)



Unknown artist,
Photograph of Hannah Arendt, 1933.

If one is talking about the shape of a ball or the characteristics that make a chair a chair, it is relatively uncontentious to see sameness. However, when discussing the traits of democracy or the essence of woman, the variety of perspectives produces more dissension. This is even more fraught when a majority of people are influenced by a dominant ideology that presents the institutional arrangements of law and social order as natural rather historically contested and imbued with power relations.

Arendt's passage resonates with Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of cultivating knowledge through building upon the necessary partiality of multiple standpoints and perspectives ([1886], 1989; [1887], 1998). Critics of Nietzsche have interpreted such partiality as leading to a relativism in morality and truth, but this would be the case only if one trusts that binary opposition—such as reason and irrationality, or truth and falsehood—are absolute and do not co-constitute one another. The very thought that truth and falsehood could be crocheted together, as Nietzsche ([1886]) puts it, is too much for many to bear—particularly when it comes to finding one's moral compass. However, if combined with Arendt's goal to 'see sameness in utter diversity' while confronting the contradictory logic that places the presupposition of an essence to any (id)entity in deconstruction, a reworked idea of objectivity can begin to emerge.

In his reflections on reason and its place in the university, Jacques Derrida (1983) focuses on two aspects of reason that are instructive for developing a regulating ideal of objectivity. The first is to learn to confront rather than obscure reason's principle of non-contradiction when thought becomes stuck or blocked—faced with an aporia—by equally compelling opposing imperatives or senses of meaning. The second is to give an account of how the grounding assumptions are set. When presented with an aporia, the search for a more objective approach is not to aim for a bird's eye view from above, but rather to inhabit the text (whether a book or event) in which the contradiction arises in order to work through how opposing positions get set.

To concretise this: in the case of debating same-sex marriage in the last two decades, many queers in Australia faced the aporia of having to vote for the right to join an institution that they would otherwise criticise. Mainstream ideas that define objectivity as presenting both sides of an argument failed to attend to two important factors that condition how the issue had to be presented. First, the grounds upon which marriage had to be discussed needed to presume rather than contest the sanctity of the institution. Second, having to argue in terms of 'for' and 'against' same-sex marriage, presented the debate as if each side were of equal historical weight.

A deconstructive approach to reason within this debate would start with the 'experience of the impossible'—the dilemmas of having to accept the terms of the debate one doesn't want to have, only to take aim from within to show that the grounds upon which one has to argue are historically shifting rather than naturally fixed. Beginning from the side that has been historically marginalised attends to an ethical call of responsibility, which also concerns how the terms of debate have been set. This would have a better chance of meeting Arendt's criteria of seeing sameness in utter diversity than an approach to objectivity that presumed everybody shares the same relation to the grounds and terms from which to deliberate.

Questioning the grounds of objectivity does not undercut adherence to reason; rather, such questioning confronts situations in which first principles of establishing grounds (like religious desire to protect the so-called sanctity of marriage) and defying the logic of non-contradictions (like wanting the right to join an institution one would otherwise see as repressive) need to be exposed. When we can give an account for the shifting grounds through which we reason, and deal with competing and sometimes contradictory perspectives while looking at the supposed 'same' thing (like neo-liberal economists and Marxists explaining how capitalism works) then we are reaching a more sound idea of objectivity.

ORAL HISTORY AND TESTIMONY

Oral history is a qualitative method of gathering information from either individuals or groups of people as a way of reconstructing and understanding past and present events. It can involve one person interviewing another or a group and can also be presented in the form of autobiographical accounts of specific events (Alasuutari et al., 2008).

Traditionally oral history was considered an unscientific methodology because data collection involved ‘subjective factors’ of first-person narratives and ‘human documents’ such as people’s private collections of letters and diaries (Alasuutari et al., 2008, p. 84). The charge that oral history is unreliable, in other words, stems from the idea that recounting experience can never be objective. However, an understanding of what documents are deemed more objective would have to assume that official records bore no mistakes and that human bias is not present in the framing and recording of them.

The status of oral history, therefore, also depends on what theoretical assumptions people have about how things are (ontology) and how we can know what we know (epistemology). If one accepts that understandings of reality change over time and context, and what has passed for official history has been put into question, then counter-narratives of events become an important means to contest what has taken place in a specific situation.

Oral history is important for oppressed social groups, as it is the stories from marginal perspectives that have traditionally been excluded and subjugated in official history. The power of oral history is that it can provide an avenue from which lived experiences of individuals can be collated into a broader narrative. For example, as many people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent shared their personal stories with one another of being separated from their families during childhood, a collective narrative named the Stolen Generations emerged, which rebuked official accounts of history (Briskman, 2003). These new accounts contested the idea that children were removed for their own good, by exposing how specific Acts of Parliament worked in collaboration with government, church and state agencies to absorb those children considered to be mixed-race into the White population. Around the same time in which over 1500 personal testimonies were collected in a [Royal Commission report](#) (Commonwealth of Australia, 1997), a plethora of biographies and autobiographies were published which wove personal stories into broader relations of power and policy enacted through colonisation.

Testimony refers to a formal written or spoken statement that says something you believe or know to be true, usually in the context of law. The word is etymologically related to the Latin *testimonium* for ‘evidence, proof, witness, attestation’, which is related to *testis* as the ‘witness, one who attests’. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary the resemblance between *testis* and *testicle* ends there. However, there are claims that relate *testimony* to *testicle* on the supposition that, in the Roman court of law, men were required to clutch their testicles to swear they were telling the truth (Aronson, 2010).

Testimony involves bearing witness to what has happened, where the speaker has undergone or observed the experience of the information they are relaying. As in the case of the Stolen Generations, survivors of the Holocaust, war stories, people living with AIDS, and other personal accounts of experiences that tell a broader narrative of law, policies or occurrences relating to systematic abuse, oppression, discrimination and persecution, testimony offers a mechanism through which a larger history can be recounted.

It is no surprise that personal testimony, oral history and biography are popular methods for telling history from below, as the experiences of the subjugated have traditionally been framed and told through the eyes of mainstream experts. Under the guise of objectivity, experts often carried out studies with frameworks that already assumed that marginal identities based on race, gender, class, disability and sexuality were inferior. Oral history became popular as part of the 1970s trend to supply counter-narratives to these views.

Oral history and testimony capture the messiness, trauma and spirit of survival that conditions what can be passed on to those belonging to minority identities. For identity groups—such as LGBTIQ+ folk or those with disabilities—whose belonging is not passed on through traditional family structures, such narratives are a lifeline. Learning the history of a social identity one belongs to can be inaccessible, because it remains unwritten, or sanitised by the tendency for official histories to present a progress narrative. Sarah Schulman rebukes this trend nicely in her own work, as well as her work with Jim Hubbard, regarding how queer activism and the AIDS crisis is told. The documentary, *United in Anger: A history of ACT UP*, has an accompanying study guide that breathes the spirit of an history from below.

Lived experience is important as a starting-point for contesting history and knowledge: however, it cannot suffice on its own to explain how broader structures of power and formations of knowledge intersect. To interpret the experience of people against the grain of official history, it is also crucial to be able to analyse the cultural, political and economic context in which such experiences are rendered intelligible.

ORIENTALISM

Edward Said (1978) coined the term Orientalism to describe how Europeans cultivated views and representations of the Orient, which says more about Western experience than the supposed Eastern 'other'. The book *Orientalism* focuses on how British and French (and, later, American) colonialism relied upon the Orient to cultivate their own 'material civilization and culture' (p. 2), though many other European nations adopted similar stances. Orientalism encompasses art forms, academic writings, travel writing, anthropological studies, doctrines, a colonial vocabulary, style and bureaucracies, all of which support the imperialist enterprise of empire. Orientalism captures how Western culture gave itself the authority to speak of and represent the Orient.

In an interview Said describes Orientalism in relation to his own experience of Egypt and Palestine, noting the Orientalist style of thought was at odds with his own and others' experience and view of Egyptians or Arabs themselves (Media Education Foundation, 1998). Said focuses on the Arab and Islamic Orient mainly through the lens of British, French and American colonialism, although he includes India, the holy lands and northern Africa as part of his geographical reach. The division of the East and West, which can be more specifically marked as a distinction between the Orient and the Occident, Said notes, is the usual starting point for descriptions and accounts concerning people, their customs and mindset, which range from travel writing to political theory and philosophy. American perceptions of the Orient are usually related to the Far East of China and Japan, though American ascendancy after World War II comes to play a hand in Orientalism—particularly regarding modern-day stereotypes of Arabs. The habit of casting the Orient as other is so strong, Said contends (1978), that Orientalism conditions the thought of Aeschylus, Victor Hugo, Dante Alighieri and Karl Marx.

Orientalist thinking pervades much Enlightenment thought, whose scientific racism and warnings against uncontained sexuality and 'irrational' conceptions of the world, placed non-Europeans and those deemed barbaric as 'other' to the concept of West, and not sufficiently reasonable or civilised to govern themselves. Even Marx and Engels, in the *Communist manifesto* ([1848], 1972), refer to those living in colonised lands as uncivilised barbarians.

As Said (1978) notes, the colonial project was accompanied by a scientific project to record those natives to be colonised. Collecting information about the mores, habits and beliefs of colonised peoples made it easier to subjugate them.

Thus, apart from coming to terms with colonial discourse on the Orient, the Orientalist style of thought, which perpetuates what can and cannot be said about the Orient, can also act as a guiding tool for mapping how the West took dominion and authority over the Orient in an institutional manner from roughly the start of the eighteenth century.



Used on the cover of the first edition of 'Orientalism' by Edward W. Said. The Eastern world depicted in *The Snake Charmer* supposedly illustrates the sensuous beauty and cultural mystery of the fiction that is "the exotic Orient".

Said is careful to say that Orientalism does not offer its critique as a means for presenting a more real picture of the Orient, or to deny that there are cultures and nations that challenge the thesis that the West dominates what can be said about them. His interest is with what tends to persist in Western hegemonic framings of the Orient. Heavily influenced by Michel Foucault's concept of discourse (1981), Said is interested in how power relations and knowledge intersect in the production of who can say what about the Orient, and how they must act to be heard as speaking authoritatively.

Said's approach to Orientalism thus brings into focus the status of the investigating subject, which is crucial for those doing research in gender, sexuality and race. The investigator who has a stake in Orientalism and is from the Orient is perceived as partial rather than objective; Said asks why Americans or Europeans are not perceived as partial for their own entanglement to the side of power, which has an interest in the Orient. This highlights the uneven distribution of power over who is positioned as being able to know and research whom. Said claims that even works of literature and philosophy in the nineteenth century bear the traces of views on race and imperialism. This is not to privilege politics over knowledge, but to complicate the idea that knowledge is free of politics when it comes to matters such as reproducing Orientalist thinking.

Said's Orientalism also provides valuable advice for approaching colonial knowledge (which we can extend to other kinds of hegemonic knowledge) with a view to finding a better and more just space for subjugated knowledges and marginalised voices to be heard: 'The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original. The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and the *faute de mieux* [with the lack of anything better], for the poor Orient.' (Said, 1978, p. 21)

Instead of looking for the 'real thing' that is the Orient, we turn our attention to the techniques of representation, which 'rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed upon codes of understanding for their effects'. Nevertheless, Said makes it very clear that he has a stake in the representation of the Orient and who gets cast as Oriental (Said, 1978, p. 22).

Scholars dealing with other areas of empire have taken up this approach for dealing with colonial violence through a focus on representation and power. Tracey Banivanua Mar (2006) has adapted Said's word to coin *Melanesianism* as a way of looking at colonial violence in the Pacific region. Similarly, the term *Aboriginalism* (McGhee, 2008) has been used to describe the experience in settler-colonial lands.

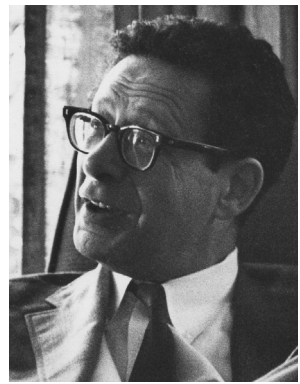
PASSING

Passing describes the process of moving from one identity category to another without being read as inauthentic or not real. In daily life we are constantly reading one another in relation to the social categories of identity made available to us. We often register or guess people's age group, gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity and so on, by looking at them. People do not often realise they are reading other people's identities until they experience a situation where they find it difficult to put somebody into a category. For instance, people of colour are often asked where they are from by complete strangers. Similarly, non-binary and gender-queer people are often asked to name their gender as either male or female. Passing becomes an issue because it involves the crossing of one identity boundary to another in social contexts in which such categories are presumed as fixed and inherent. Socially ambiguous identity categories such as mixed-race or non-binary are more entangled with passing than are other categories.

Sociologist Harold Garfinkel used the term 'passing' in his *Studies in ethnomethodology* when discussing the case of Agnes in his research. Agnes Torres presented herself as intersex to the medical establishment, seeking surgery to align with her female sense of self. Agnes was assigned male at birth and knew that if she did not present as intersex she would not qualify for surgery, as transgender people were routinely denied such procedures. Agnes's presentation as feminine was aided by acquiring her mother's oestrogen pills. Agnes's disclosure of taking the pills in order to pass as intersex provides the basis from which Garfinkel forms his definition: 'The work of achieving and making secure their rights to live in the elected sex status [or other identity] while providing for the possibility of detection and ruin carried out within the socially structured conditions in which this work occurred I shall call "passing"' (Garfinkel, [1967] 2006, p. 60).

The case of Agnes tells us as much about societal norms as it does about Agnes's own experiences of feeling at odds with the sex she was assigned at birth. The issue for Agnes was to pass as female without the possibility of somebody else reading a sign that would count as male. In this instance, we see the extent to which biological determinism affects readings of a person's gender, especially the assignation of sex at birth based on the presence or not of a penis. In our everyday lives we do not get to see people's genitalia, and so we read people's gender based on secondary sex characteristics (e.g. facial hair, breasts, muscle and body fat), modes of behaviour, or how they dress.

The extent to which a person is read as the gender identity they present as, which could be anywhere between or beyond the gender binary, measures the extent to which they are passing. This raises the question of what gets invested in passing; Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore's anthology, *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the rules of gender and conformity* (2006), explores how not passing can feed a more progressive agenda for social transformation.



Harold Garfinkel
Photograph of Harold Garfinkel Unknown date.

While more recent discussions on gender passing tend to focus on trans and non-binary genders, late nineteenth and early twentieth century passing was associated mostly with what was then known as passing women.

The term ‘passing women’ is misleading, because to today’s ears it may sound like these are people who pass as women. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, passing women were those who were assigned women at birth but lived, worked and sometimes married as men during their lives. Lucy Chesser’s *Parting with my sex: cross-dressing, inversion and sexuality in Australian cultural life* (2011) explores passing women and their various motivations. Reasons were sometimes for theatre and performance, sometimes for sexual encounters with other women, and sometimes to enable better employment prospects and societal benefits of being read as male.

Upward mobility has also influenced practices of racial passing, though mobility is not the only reason a person may wish to pass or be read as passing in a racial category other than their own. Countries with histories involving dispossessing Indigenous people from their land, expropriation of labour and resources on a colonised land, slavery and indentured labour, also have a history of spawning people of mixed racial heritage. As mixed-race people can sometimes appear racially ambiguous or even have fair skin, passing as White could release a person from restrictions placed on where they could live and work, as well as whom they could marry (Perkins, 2004). Each nation has its own specific racial histories and laws, so passing needs to be contextualised within the circumstances in which the appeal or need to pass arises. Racial passing may involve whiteness—as in the cases of Australian Aboriginal people, Native Americans, and African Americans passing for White—though this is not always so. In Nazi Germany the need arose for some Jews to attempt to pass for Aryan.

People of mixed descent can sometimes feel the pressure of having to pass in the culture of their non-European heritage. Assumed markers of authenticity may include skin colour, speaking the language, eating and cooking the food associated with their non-European culture, among other things.

There are also cases of people from a more privileged racial category attempting to pass in an identity category with a history of oppression. A notorious case occurred in 2015, when civil rights activist Rachel Dolezal claimed she was African American and held the position of president in the Spokane chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Oluo, 2017). Lesser-known cases involved White people attempting to obtain benefits from affirmative action policies. Today, racial passing is more often considered a betrayal of one’s own racial heritage.

In April 2017, controversy arose when feminist philosophy journal *Hypatia* published an article by Rebecca Tuvel, which compared aspects of Rachel Dolezal’s attempt at racial passing with celebrity Caitlyn Jenner’s status as a trans woman. The furore that followed the article suggests that

comparisons between the histories both of gender and race as social constructs need very careful situating. Such comparisons can be undermined by their context and by the framing and understanding in which both categories relate to the lived experiences and social statuses of those identities concerned. Tuvel’s analysis was mostly lacking in its racial and cultural literacy, specifically in how markers of identity are tied to different histories and related to different vectors of power/knowledge relations. Comparing categories of race and sex on the level of abstraction is sure miss the mark where lived experience, and the experience of making sense of the history in which identities acquire their intelligibility, is involved. In other words, if you start with dodgy assumptions, no acumen in reason or logic is going to save your argument.

The Tuvel event prompts activists and academics to take better account of power relations and consider what kind of ethical standards can be formed for undertaking scholarship related to passing, identity assignment and identity crossing.

Passing prompts us to think about relations between power, identity and lived experiences. This beckons closer inspection of how we understand the performance of identity itself. For this reason it is fruitful to consider passing alongside an engagement with how one’s lived experience may relate to a theoretical standpoint. It is also useful to situate an understanding of passing with feminist philosopher Judith Butler’s concept of performativity.

PERFORMATIVITY

Feminist philosopher Judith Butler developed the concept of performativity in her book *Gender trouble* (1990) as a way of disturbing the rigidity of the gender binary of man and woman, as well as the heterosexual bias within dominant narratives of feminism.

The concept of performativity combines notions of citationality (the way in which a sign, for example, is recognised through its repetition), discourse, and a critique of essentialism to trouble the idea that gender is a natural, unchanging state of the body that can be separated from the language, norms and contexts in which gender acquires its meaning. This is put simply through Butler's much-cited idea that gender is not something we are, but something we do. Her troubling of gender rests on her critique of subjectivity, a critique of the idea that we come into the world with our identities already intact.

Like the concept of interpellation, performativity asks how we become gendered subjects by responding to the call to fit into pre-established ways of occupying feminine and masculine traits. Depending on how we get classified in the world, we learn to perform our gender through repeating codes of behaviour, styles of dress, ways of speaking, ways of taking up space, and ways of perceiving ourselves. From the moment we wake up, we make decisions about whether we put on make-up, wear a dress, pants or skirt, high heels or flats. Over time, we cultivate whether we put a swagger in our walk; whether we spread or cross our legs when sitting on public transport; how we grow, shape and polish our nails or not; decide on our hair length and style; we even modulate the pitch and tone of our voices in accordance with how we perform ourselves across the spectrum of masculinities and femininities.

Gender is therefore tied to citationality through what becomes recognised as the repeatability of these norms and behaviours. In *Bodies that matter* (1993, p. 11), Butler argues there is no pre-discursive subject that is recognisable in some essential or foundational form before or outside this repeatability. What gets recognised as gender comes into being at the same time as the repetition of the traits, norms and behaviours that get tied to the classification of sex. This poses obvious questions to the sex/gender distinction and a rethinking of what previous feminists identified as the socialisation of individuals into gender roles.

Performativity is different from socialisation and departs from Simone de Beauvoir's famous assertion that 'one is not born a woman, but becomes one' (1949), insofar as Butler troubles the category of woman itself. As useful as it is to think about how one learns to become a woman, de Beauvoir's analysis of what she calls the second sex still relies on the sex/gender distinction, where sex is presumed as the raw materiality of the body upon which the cultural meanings for gender are imposed.

Butler does not deny the materiality of bodies, as some critics of *Gender trouble* presumed. In *Bodies that matter*, Butler clarified her position on questioning the idea of a pre-discursive sex by highlighting how discourses



Webster Hall, located in Greenwich Village, hosted several Drag Balls during the 1920s.

around sex mark the contours of what counts as male and female, and what can and cannot be said from within such framing. The gender binary is rather an effect of the societal requirement to maintain what she calls the hegemony of the heterosexual matrix: 'that grid of intelligibility through which bodies, desire and gender are naturalized' (1990, p. 151, n6).

In the introduction to *Bodies that matter*, Butler responds to critics who were concerned over the idea that the ability to challenge the gender binary through performativity gave undue emphasis to the agency of the subject by implying that one's gender could become anything one wanted it to be. The criticism stems from the short section in *Gender trouble* where Butler uses drag queens as an example of how performativity can work. Her argument follows the logic that if repeating regulative norms is something that reinforces identities, then appropriating these norms is one way of performing one's identity in order to pass in one's own assumed category.

In using drag as a potent site of analysis, however, it can be easy to conflate the idea of performance with performativity. Drag is clearly a performance in the theatrical sense of the word. Performance in this sense relates to dressing up and putting on a character different from the self that one usually inhabits in daily life. For Butler, this is not to be confused with performativity.

She draws a distinction between the two by noting the different subject position a body occupies in a performance, as opposed to a body's repetitive enactments of reaching for one's gendered subjectivity through performativity. As Butler puts it: 'it is important to distinguish performance from performativity: the former presumes a subject, but the latter contests the very notion of a subject' (Butler, 1994, p. 33).

It is not always easy to discern the difference from within Butler's own works, but the words themselves might give us a clue. The noun *performance* implies an act or task that can be delimited in time and space. The suffix *-ity* attached to philosopher John Austin's concept of the performative statement—that which enacts what it is describing ('I name this child Carol')—suggests a condition of becoming rather than a state of being.

Put concretely, the drag character is delimited in a way that precedes the act of performance. The drag performance of someone like Sasha Velour

PERFORMATIVITY

is the character that Alexander 'Sasha' Hedges Steinberg has created and steps into on stage. This performance can exist only through the infrastructural support and culture of drag. Gender performativity, on the other hand, repeats traits, norms and behaviours to enact feminine and masculine subject positions without such a conscious role in creativity and without being able to complete or essentialise what it means to be a woman or a man. As Butler puts it, one finds oneself in a category not of one's own making.

Butler revisits this theme in *Bodies that matter* through a commentary on how power operates through subjectivity in the documentary *Paris is burning*. The film features mostly Black and Latino gay men and trans folk, from poor socio-economic backgrounds, who participate in a yearly drag ball in the Harlem district of New York City. Contestants exhibit their prowess in 'passing for real' in the category they enter (Ivy League student, executive, military officer, 'banjee realness'). If they can be 'read' as 'impersonating', the judges have deemed that contestant as being unable to pass in mainstream society. Sasha Velour gives their own impersonation of Butler in Ru Paul's Drag Race, which takes inspiration from the lives of those in *Paris is burning*. Every so often the show provides the opportunity to exhibit how the history of drag ([YouTube](#)) is also part of the history of categories of gender and the history of queer and gender activism.

Butler's reading of power and subjectivity in *Paris is burning* counters criticisms that her concept of performativity suggests our gendered, or any other, identities can be anything we want them to be. Rather, performativity can recognise the constructed nature of identity and show that we learn to perform our gender, race and sexuality with categories made available to us through the grids of knowledge and institutional structures that condition the places made ready for us to be.

Finally, understanding identity markers through performativity alerts us to the way in which categories themselves are mobile and depend on societal norms and mores for their interpretation. Thus, when someone is murdered for presumably failing to pass in their presented gender identity, as was the case with Venus Xtravaganza in *Paris is burning*, this depends on how her realness was read; not whether she could be counted as a real woman.



Sasha Velour at RuPaul's DragCon in NYC in 2017.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Political correctness gone mad has become a catch phrase to describe the claim that people are too afraid to speak and express themselves for fear of punishment for saying or doing something sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic or ableist. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines political correctness as ‘conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex and race) should be eliminated’. While dictionary definitions like this capture the abstract description of the term, they do not connote the messiness and venom that inheres in everyday debates about how political correctness gets used.

In 2014, the Attorney General of Australia at the time, George Brandis, remarked that ‘people have the right to be bigots’, when he was discussing plans to remove certain sections of the Racial Discrimination Act. Specifically, [section 18C](#) of the act makes it unlawful to do something that is reasonably likely to ‘offend, insult humiliate or intimidate’ someone based on their race or ethnicity. Section 18D states exemptions to protect freedom of speech on the basis of artistic expression, scientific debate, or matters of public interest, provided it is done in good faith. Public discussion over the desire to remove 18C, however, became quickly voiced in terms of an urgent need to deal with what was assumed as political correctness going mad.

The urgency for the removal was voiced after a group of Indigenous writers took tabloid columnist [Andrew Bolt](#) to court for insulting and offending them in one of his columns. Bolt was charged with breaching 18C in 2011. Bolt had written three columns where he implied that people identifying as Aboriginal who have fair skin had done so for personal gain. Mark McMillan (2015) writes about his experience of being on the receiving end of Bolt’s accusations in “‘Words are like weapons, they wound sometimes’: andrew bolt, gay white men and an out and proud gay black man’. When found guilty of the charges, Bolt claimed it was a sad day for free speech. Like most cases debating political correctness, an act or legislation whose beginnings aimed at combatting discrimination and persecution, too quickly became manipulated as indictments against free speech and expression.

The fixation with political correctness is not new, but the field in which twenty first century debates are taking place has an amplified sound through social media and extend well beyond university campuses that they have been traditionally associated with. Issues around political correctness can involve what is taught in curriculum, practices of no platforming speakers who are known for prejudiced views, and affirmative action and discrimination policy, to name a few. Conservative commentator, Dinesh D’Souza wrote one of the more scathing descriptions of political correctness on campus in his 1990s book, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* (1991).

From the 1990s to the present, public dialogue regarding how political correctness has become entangled with the way democracies deal with difference—which range from narratives about a nation’s history to how social groups are represented, publicly recognised and subjected to



Barbara Kruger
Untitled (Your body is a battleground) 1989.

discrimination—reveals the instability of declarations, constitutions, and party platforms that supposedly hold fast to values of freedom, equality and political unity.

At first sight, accusations of political correctness mostly operate as an insult for supposedly displaying too rigid a rule on what is and is not acceptable speech and behaviour. On closer inspection, these debates expose a fundamental blockage in thought and action—an *aporia*—when political principles harden into rule bound doctrines, which bring a halt to critically engaging with the specificity of a situation. In this sense, political correctness can affect any social movement or political party. However, from the 1980s onward, it has acquired a currency that mostly gets used against the marginalised.

Richard Feldstein (1997) traces the genealogy of the term in his book, *Political Correctness, A Response from the Cultural Left*. He observes that socialists were the first to use the term against communists in the 1940s to condemn those who ‘unthinkingly took the party line without considering the consequences of their actions.’ He also states that the term was ‘employed by Jews to condemn members of the Communist Party [during Stalin’s reign] who sided with Hitler (p. 4).

Within English speaking left wing circles during the 1980s and 1990s, the phrases ‘ideologically unsound’ (Bennett, 1993) and ‘correct lineism’ (Epstein, 1991) were uttered with irony and self-deprecating humour when supposed allies to one another found themselves transgressing what was perceived as the ‘party line’ or central committee’s view on certain thoughts and activities (like objectifying women, liking rugby, drinking coca cola, or eating at MacDonalds). Present day uses of the term are aimed mostly against those associated with *identity* politics.

The common thread operating through debates about political correctness in the 1990s through to the 21st century is woven through the perception that identity politics is destroying the supposed shared values of democratic nations. Conservative, liberal and some left thinkers have accumulated quite a list of rights and fears believed as policed by political correctness in their combined criticism of identity politics. These include: the right for cartoonists to satirise religious deities and minority groups; the fear of using language that might be *racist*, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or ableist; the right to wear the attire, use religious symbols from, and write and speak about minority cultures that one does not belong to (cultural appropriation); the fear of criticising the speech, customs or work of minority groups and marginalised people; and the fear of holding the wrong political position on a given issue.

The frightening thing about these debates is they get entangled in reckonings that range from the seemingly trivial—like having one’s speech corrected by a friend (being asked to say woman instead of lady, for instance)—to the consequentially deadly (like the shootings of staff at *Charlie Hebdo*, France’s satirical magazine, which had published cartoons of the prophet Muhammad while mocking Islamic fundamentalism). Dealing with both kinds of expression as a problem with political correctness—whether accepting rules or defying them—obscures rather than clarifies what is at stake when dealing with the need for *both* freedom *and* constraint when navigating differences in democracies.

The difficulty in distinguishing what might be trivial to what can become deadly is that the *same language* regarding political correctness governs and operates through both types of debates. Moreover, judgement between what renders something trivial and deadly would be more apparent to the person on the receiving end of somebody else’s so called right to be a bigot than the person proclaiming their right to free speech—just think of the number of suicides that are related to a person’s experience of bullying. Whether dealing with a case that seems trivial, or one that has been deadly, the terms of debate rapidly settle on the position taking of free speech vs political correctness, which fuel all cases.

It is significant that the status of minority and marginalised social groups lie at the heart of political correctness debates, as these are the groups who have the least visibility and audibility when it comes to political and cultural representation in the mainstream. It is also significant that

those decrying political correctness are often those who have been historically granted louder audibility and greater opportunities to speak and be heard in the public sphere about what annoys them.

The stakes for how a marginalised group are spoken about and represented are therefore much higher and harder to hear than for the mainstream or dominant ideology. This is exacerbated by the playing field in which debates about political correctness often occur. It is easy to forget that the playing field of debate most often operates through the erroneous assumption that those in the mainstream can occupy a position of an abstract person, who can supposedly judge an issue with disinterest and impartiality. In the case of Charlie Hebdo, imagine the different positions of a white, Christian speaking about the issue in France and predominantly Christian countries, as opposed to a brown Muslim within those same countries. Consider the difference between using an anti-racist framework from which to analyse the event and presuming that an impartial point of origin for debating exists, in which Whiteness does not affect the lens of analysis (Lentin, 2019).

Power differentials in speaking positions have been obfuscated by the historical struggles and politico-cultural fabric in which the issues, and people's lives attached to them, acquire significance and are framed in ideologically loaded ways of making sense of differences in democracy. The rules of civil debate in other words often proceed as if there is no remainder of the historical classifications that positioned women, racialised others, sexual and gender deviants, and so on, as incapable of rational thought and gracious conduct.

On this point, it becomes important to not give in to the temptation to simply reverse the binary between the powerful and less powerful and conclude that those on the other side of power are always right. Rather it becomes more important to identify the discursive practices operating through debates in order to follow the threads to ask who can say what about whom, and how they have to do so in order to be heard as speaking with legitimacy. A sticking point in navigating the question of how one says what about a given identity is that the wrong questions take the centre stage of debate no matter who is doing the speaking; instead of asking what kind of responsibility a writer or speaker has when their subject matter involves an identity they do not belong to, debate gets stuck on the question of whether one has the right to free expression.

This form of reductionism was at work when novelist Lionel Shriver gave a keynote address at the Brisbane Writers Festival in 2016, titled, 'What are fiction writers "allowed" to write, given they will never truly know another person's experience?' Media presenter and writer, Yassmin Abdel Magied famously walked out 20 minutes into the talk, and on the following day wrote in *The Guardian* that instead of hearing what could have been a "fascinating philosophical argument", Magied instead heard Shriver deliver

a monologue that took aim at "cultural appropriation, identity politics and political correctness".

As Shriver spoke about her incredulity over US students she claimed were getting prosecuted for wearing sombreros to a Mexican themed party, the audience laughed along with her. She took her seat for question time wearing a sombrero herself. According to SNOPEs, a fact-checking online resource, it turns out the issue of cultural sensitivity involved a harassment case related to the party and not the wearing of sombreros. As we have come to learn, facts are easily hidden once debate has fired up.

In a youtube vlog where Shriver and Magied were both invited to air their respective views on the Brisbane incident, Shriver cited cultural appropriation cases where Oberlin students allegedly objected to serving sushi in their cafeteria and the University of Ottawa students objected to Westerners teaching yoga classes. On closer look at other articles that deal with the Oberlin controversy, it appears to be true that the term cultural appropriation was used to describe complaints about how badly traditional Japanese and Vietnamese cuisine was cooked and served on campus. A more generous reading than political correctness going mad would be to acknowledge the genuine annoyance one feels when a dish advertised as traditional is made badly and with the wrong ingredients; but at the same time, these examples do point to the ease in which arguments about cultural appropriation can amplify. Sticking to the topic, Magied aired concern that a writer would take no care in making sure their characters did not perpetuate the cardboard stereotypes that continue to fuel the prejudice against minority identities. Once again, the terms of debate had gotten lodged in the opposing positions of political correctness vs freedom of expression.

Examples so far all refer to debates where people are on opposing political positions and occupy different identity markers. Yet, people from within, and allies with, marginalised groups can also become stuck in screaming matches that can feel as regressive as the power structures being criticised. The call out culture of perceived bad behaviour, or the practice of piling on criticism when the accused has transgressed a political line is not uncommon within social movements and the social circles of marginalised groups. Intergenerational disputes within the LGBTIQ+ communities, for instance, are constantly arguing over what letters best capture those that belong to the movement, where some people loathe to use the word queer while others wear it like a badge of honour.

This signals that social anxiety around political correctness are attached to a much deeper infection in the cultural body for determining who one's friends and enemies are than the symptoms of the dis-ease around identity politics can tell us. A first step in navigating debates about political correctness may be to refuse the logic of for and against and widen the lens for analysing how to better combat bigotry without reinforcing the same power dynamics one is fighting.

Ian Abdulla was from the Ngarrindjeri peoples and lived and worked in a small regional settlement, Cobdolga, in South Australia. He came to art late through the mentorship of art activist Steve Fox. His work draws on and narrates his childhood memories and is more subtle in its political aspect than many of his local contemporaries. This work presents a moment in attempting to be politically correct about sex gives way to humour.

Ian Abdulla *Sunday's Drive* 1995



POSTMODERNISM, POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Public Enemy Don't Believe The Hype

There are always competing explanations for what constitutes an historical period, a style of architecture, a way of writing, a form of political activism, a theoretical perspective, and so on. Postmodernism, like modernism, is associated with all of these things. The difference with explaining postmodernism is that contradictory interpretations are characteristics associated with the term itself.

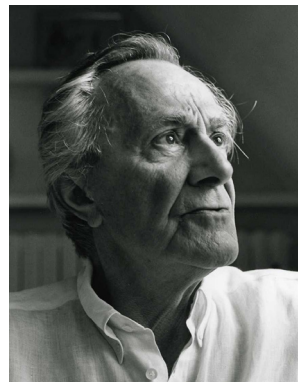
Situating the truth about postmodernism can therefore become entangled in a circuitous reflection on how postmodernism situates truth. So many debates, both popular and academic, have taken place around the status of the term that it has become easy to get caught in a nebulous practice of avoiding all moves to describe it (Frow, 1990).

Within the word, 'post' suggests both coming after, and being dispatched or sent from, modernism. Modernity aligns with the historical period of industrialisation in Europe, roughly spanning the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, intersecting with philosophical and political thought associated with the Enlightenment. Feeding off the Enlightenment's great faith in reason and science, the project of modernity shared the quest to break with tradition and link progress in knowledge with progress in liberty. Modernity professedly aimed for universal truth and emancipation; as the entry on the Enlightenment shows, such universality was partial to Europeans.

When Jean-Francois Lyotard (1979) was asked to give a report to the government of Quebec on post-industrial society, he claimed that belief in grand narratives of scientific progress and emancipatory projects, organised around meta ideals like communism, humanity and freedom, were starting to wane. He gave a name to this 'incredulity towards metanarratives'—*The postmodern condition*, the title of his book.

For some theorists, postmodernism threatened modernity's project (Habermas, 1983). In contrast, some embraced the suspicion of meta-narratives as a way of coming to terms with problems and failures in emancipatory projects such as communism and feminism (Haraway, [1985], 1989). Others found the fragmentary and contradictory taxonomising of postmodernism as a reason to disengage with the increasing propensity for people to talk past one another while debating the term's status and efficacy (Frow, 1990).

Postmodernism gets associated with deconstruction, poststructuralism, discourse analysis and Lacanian psychoanalysis, even though there are differences between theorists associated with each of these terms (Butler, 1995). Thinkers associated with poststructuralism, who are tied to other entries in this book, are Jacques Derrida (deconstruction), Michel Foucault (power and discourse) and Judith Butler (queer theory and performativity). The most prominent poststructuralist thinkers featured in this book are Derrida and Foucault, so both will be used further below to explore their relation to truth over other thinkers classified in the same category.



Bracha L. Ettinger
Jean-Francois Lyotard Unknown date

In the academy, poststructuralist thought is most likely to get taught under French continental philosophy and literary theory, and usually include works from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Roland Barthes, Jean Francois Lyotard (as mentioned above), Jean Baudrillard and Jean Luc Nancy. Peggy Kamuf and Gayatri Spivak, both translators of Derrida and theorists in their own right, brought poststructuralist thought and deconstruction into the fields of literary theory and feminism.

As the term suggests, poststructuralist thought emerged in relation to structuralism drawing most notably from the works of Ferdinand de Saussure in linguistics (see sign and deconstruction) and Claude Levi-Strauss (see binary opposition) in anthropology. A moment in which the 'post' became attached to structuralism is often cited as the 1967 conference at Johns Hopkins University where Derrida gave his paper, 'Structure, sign and play' (Lucy, 2004). Still attending to the significance of differences and binary oppositions in the acquisition of meaning, the poststructuralist move focuses on the impossibility of *grounding* the structure of distinctions—whether speech/writing, man/woman, material/ideal, or any other two opposing terms—to a point of origin (like God, reason, materialism, or even structure, for example). This question of origins and grounds can send people down the rabbit hole in search of an ever-elusive Truth, so it is important to follow the moves that account for why the inaccessibility of an absolute ground for knowledge does not lead to relativism.

Questioning the ground for an Absolute Truth does not give up on accounting for how truth claims are made and legitimated, and neither does it retract the desire to speak the truth (after all, it is only through the pursuit of truth that one finds things are not as absolute as we may sometimes wish them to be). To conclude that the only space left by such critique is no truth or a relativisation of truth places too much faith in rigid binary thinking where terms are forced to function as mutually exclusive mirror opposites of one another (such as assuming that questioning the ground of reason leads to irrationality). Poststructuralist thought takes the structuralist co-constitution of oppositional terms (such as the true and false, good and bad, accident and purpose) further by confronting the 'scandalous' contradictions that often inhabit the formation and movement of binary pairs, such as being able to place the origin of seemingly universal prohibition on incest on the side of nature or culture (Lucy, 2004, p. 134). Dealing with the undecidable point of origin for grounding a taboo as natural or cultural does not dispense with truth; it complicates it.

Study any binary opposite for long enough and you will encounter how the principle of non-contradiction can run into a wall. One meets contradictions in gender politics constantly, where people can display traits of both masculinity and femininity, or inhabit neither one nor the other. In other words both A and not A can exist within the same person. More complicated examples arise in abstract binaries such as the opposing concepts of materiality and ideality.

Derrida deals with challenges to the principle of non-contradiction not by abandoning truth but by inhabiting the shifting grounds between two opposing poles where each side is impossible to settle upon in a presented binary or situation. Regarding the ground for truth in Marxism, for instance, Derrida (1994) does not choose between (Marx's) materialist and (German philosophy's) idealist accounts of the world. He does not yield to the temptation of the either/or logic that must land on the side of either materialist empirical observation, or idealist interpretive speculation; and neither does he find a mid-point between the two, as if that were possible. Rather, he performs a reading of Marx that inhabits the latter's materialist account of the world in a way that forces a reckoning in good faith with the idealism Marx was opposing. The contradiction arises because one cannot privilege the material world without having to pass through the level of ideality to say so; at the same time, one cannot conceive of ideas without reference to the material world. It is impossible to privilege one over the other; the point of origin for the opposition is undecidable.

Marx's unacknowledged inability to expel ideality in his grounding of materiality exposes the gap, the disjuncture, which presents these two as opposites; Derrida inhabits this disjuncture to prevent the closure of Marx's theoretical ground into a totalising ideology (e.g. materiality explains everything). Derrida argues that there is no way to get outside of the metaphysical baggage that essentialises the poles of oppositions (such as materialism and idealism); anyone attempting to land on one side of such a binary will run into this problem. To deal with this paradox, Derrida works from within what is ineluctably presented as an essence (e.g. materiality, class, etc.), in order to bend the impossible resolution of opposites toward the side of justice (or a democracy-to-come).

Foucault ([1969] 1972), on the other hand, states that he can bypass the metaphysical baggage of essentialism through his methods for analysing discursive formations. As explained under the heading of discourse, Foucault deals with the question of truth and origins, not by asking the ontological question of 'what is?', but by looking at how a network of power/knowledge relations *function*. Rather than asking after the truth of Marx's materialism, Foucault would look at the discursive practices that operate to produce Marxism's truth. Working at the level of how a theory or position (political or otherwise) enunciates itself, Foucault is interested in the rules and procedures that come into play to both limit and enable what will count as truth. For this reason, Foucault has been read as a thinker who shares similarities with pragmatists, like Richard Rorty.

In their approaches to the question of whether it is possible to escape essentialism and the inheritance of metaphysical thinking, Derrida and Foucault begin to look quite different. Nevertheless, they can both fit the poststructuralist category insofar as they each confront the problem of origins and the grounding of structuralism. Both are suspicious of meta-narratives, though Derrida would attend to the impossibility of dispensing with

the inheritance of them. No doubt, other thinkers listed as poststructuralist in this entry approach the issue of meta-narratives differently. As with any taxonomy, the term can serve as a building block from which to gather a general orientation to a set of common questions. Regarding questions guiding the entries of this book, the terms in which poststructuralist thought is often conflated with the postmodern condition orbit around the status of identity, truth, and power in minor area studies.

Debates about postmodernism within feminism and Marxism were more polarised than research relating to postcolonial and queer theory, perhaps because the latter two became institutionalised as areas of study in the 1990s, when poststructuralist thought was becoming more influential in the Anglophone sphere. However, within some race and gay and lesbian studies, there was still resistance to poststructuralist thought. For area studies based on identity markers and liberation movements, postmodernism and poststructuralism brought challenges insofar as such thought questioned the epistemological grounds of the knowing subject. Situating relations between words and things as temporally and spatially mobile suggests there could be no essence to being human, a woman, a lesbian, or any other identity marker for that matter. Each identity marker could only acquire its meaning through a web of signification, with no fixed point of origin or end point. Feminists had long been questioning masculine bias in the presumed grounds of reason but had to face the challenge of presuming a ground for woman as a replacement (Kamuf, 1990). If there was no essence to human, man, or woman, the question of what subject could ground emancipatory politics became uncertain.

For thinkers like Peggy Kamuf, this was not something to mourn for feminism. In a famous exchange with Nancy Miller (1990) regarding whether a real Portuguese nun, or a man had written *The Portuguese Letters* of 1699, Kamuf (1990) warned against investing feminist analysis on the ground of an authentic gendered signature (many feminists did not believe that a woman would write about sex in as masochistic a manner as the alleged Portuguese nun). If all criticism rested on the gendered identity of the author as a woman, this would fix analysis of the text *before* reading begins. If reading the text is not reduced to the (presumed unitary) identity of the author, analysis would have to 'lead through whatever it has meant, will mean, and can mean (as well as all it has *not* meant, will *not* mean and can *not* mean) to be "as and like" a woman, as if a woman were something one is—or is not—purely and simply' (Kamuf, 1990, p. 298). Poststructuralist analysis does not get rid of categories, such as woman; rather, it cautions against the propensity to homogenise and fix them.

Postmodernism's challenge to the idea that truth and history are unitary, and progress occurs in a linear fashion, makes it difficult for liberation movements like feminism to articulate a destination for their emancipatory projects. Some see this as destroying the very grounds and aims for liberation, while others see this as containing totalistic and fascistic

impulses of any form of political organising (Benhabib, 1995; Butler, 1995). Instead of seeing these two positions as opposed, it is more productive to see each as holding a check on the other: the first can question forms of theorising that bear no relation to their political implications, while the latter can ensure that emancipatory politics do not allow themselves to turn into the oppressive forces they are opposing.

POWER, POWER/ KNOWLEDGE AND BIOPOLITICS

Nina Simone *Ain't Got No, I Got Life*

Patti Smith *People Have The Power*

A simplistic way to think of power is to identify those who seem to have it and those who don't: capitalists over workers, men over women, colonisers over the colonised, and so on. Another common way of conceiving of power is to locate it within the state machinery of a nation and law: when people are deemed as being outside of, or are seen as transgressing the rules and norms of the state, they can be detained, imprisoned and sometimes killed. In such cases, power is taken away from people. Most conceptions of power also focus on its repressive and enduring effects, which tends to obfuscate acts of resistance.

While all these ways of conceiving power accurately describe the dynamics between oppressors and oppressed a lot of the time, locating power in identities (e.g. men over women) cannot explain counter examples of who becomes aligned with the side of oppressor and nor account for how seizing a site in which power is believed to be lodged—like the state apparatus—does not necessarily bring liberation. Observing the way many oppressed people have resisted and transformed power relations in different times and spaces, shows that power is not as fixed within people, centrally located in the state, or as totally repressive as the above descriptions suggest.

French thinker, Michel Foucault, conceptualises power in ways that emphasise paths for resistance and the mobility of its operations rather than as something existing in a fixed state. His concept of power is indebted to prison abolitionist activists he associated with (Weheliye, 2014, pp. 62–63), which included the Black Panthers movement in the USA, as well as gay liberation and feminist struggles.

Alexander Weheliye (2014, p. 62) refers to Brady Heiner (2007) and Joy James for noting Foucault's indebtedness to the Black Panthers. Before Foucault (1976) identified sex and sexuality as a particularly dense site in which power relations operate, his lectures (published posthumously) show that he first began to rethink dominant understandings of power by focusing on race. This is significant, because it tells the story of which authors become attached to what terms by way of the thinker coining a concept or titling a book—like Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* for example. Those who become noted for particular terms often name ideas or frameworks already operating in the works of other thinkers (as is the case with Louis Althusser coining interpellation for the experience described so well by Franz Fanon). In this case Foucault's conception of power and knowledge, resembles works of Angela Davis and George Jackson. This is to say, the intersections of power and knowledge, connecting what proper names get connected to fields of knowledge, are also working through the dynamics of power within the conceptual apparatus that aims to reflect on this.

Foucault thus offers a succinct theoretical summation of what has been already operative through other activist and academic work. Foucault observes, like many activists do, how power can be tackled on a micro level,



Angela Davis is an American political activist, academic, and author.

or what we understand as grass roots level, rather than focusing on the state, law or elite groups as first and given end point of exerting power. This sense of power resonates with the old French word *pouvoir*, which means ‘to be able’.

For democratic nation-states, where sovereignty is supposed to reside in the rule of the people, rather than in a monarchical figure or autocrat, the distribution of power is expected to be shared and so to be necessarily more dispersed. The distribution of power is not equal, but not because elected representatives do not attend to the perspectives and interests of the people (sometimes they do and sometimes they don’t, and in the ideal of democracy they are supposed to). Inequality is maintained through other means: the logic and machinations of capitalism, supposedly operating through a market free from state intervention, together with ideological infrastructures that perpetuate patriarchal relations, white supremacy, heteronormative family structures and normative bodies. The interlocking grid in which these different distributions of power operate is articulated through the concept of kyriarchy (Fiorenza, 1992, Boochani, 2018).

As Foucault explains it, power is not something that is only *possessed* by the state over its subjects, or by one class (capitalists) over another (workers), or by one group (e.g. men) over another (women). Rather, he sees power as something that is *exercised* through disciplinary techniques regulating the constitution of such groups. Techniques of self-discipline, concerning health, hygiene, grooming, exercise, how much or how little sex a person has, how they occupy their time in work and leisure, and so on, are all activities that illustrate how power is exercised. The institutions and authorities that drive economies, determine laws and set societal norms provide the infrastructure through which such techniques are established. The cultural fabric that supplies the grid in which people make sense of themselves and move about in the world sets the terms in which people perceive their capacity to exercise power. In this way, power operates *through* people’s bodies rather than upon them.

Foucault also argues that we should not think of power as located in one central place—like the state, or in law. Rather, we need to think of power as operating through many sites, in a bottom up, decentralised manner, which emerges in relation to ‘regimes of truth’. People do not get confined to a psychiatric ward, put in a prison, or deemed deviant, unless there are authorities and institutions connected to knowledges that supply information on how best to deal with and define the parameters of such things as mental illness and criminality. Learning how knowledge and authority combine to determine state policy in this way, opens up the infrastructure from which to expand sites from which to identify mechanisms of social change. When the state is not given the first and final word in social transformation, the possibilities for multi-pronged approaches to social change open. Social movements often work like this. Feminist, anti-racist, queer, disability rights movements all exhibit numerous forms of action that emerge from aiming to change direct experiences of oppression. This

involves seizing the tools of subjugation to alter the landscape in which social transformation can take place.

Altering the landscape involves changing language from what has become dominant and oppressive to reasserting what has been subjugated. In settler colonies this can involve acknowledging and using the name traditional custodians of the land use for themselves (this book was written on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations). As LGBTIQA+ folk, people with disabilities, women and other marginalised groups have also argued, the politics of naming (using the terms social groups use to describe themselves) and forms of addressing people (using correct pronouns) is not innocent. Naming, however, is also subject to historical struggle and will change in time and space. To mobilise force in subverting power relations, it is more effective to adjust to historical circumstance than to solidify terms as if all situations require a predetermined programmatic template from which to speak. For example, it is not always accurate to use the LGBTIQA+ acronym. There are instances in which sexuality and gender diversity may need to be separated, so that only the T and I are the relevant terms to use. Moreover, no one can fit all letters of the LGBTIQA+ acronym at the same time.

Bottom up, decentralised approaches to shifting power relations also tend to follow the logic of DIY methods and direct actions. The heritage of social movements is filled with self-help guides and direct responses to oppressive circumstances. The Boston Women’s Health Collective’s 1970 book, *Our Bodies Ourselves*, Redfern’s community controlled Aboriginal Medical Service, established in 1971 (Foley, 1995), and New York’s community based AIDs service organisation, and Gay Men’s Health Crisis founded in 1982, are all examples of self-determining not for profit bodies that had altered the power dynamics of state run health establishments. Responding to the welfare failures of state machinery, women’s and youth shelters, free breakfast programs, and free legal advice for disenfranchised and oppressed people are other examples of direct support and mutual aid initiated largely by feminist, anti-racist and queer struggles. However, many such not for profit services of the 1970s and 1980s soon sought state support for wages and operating costs, which clawed back their autonomy. The challenge with such decentralised approaches to altering power relations remains as how to best navigate competing imperatives affecting self-determination, securing funding, and bypassing state or corporate control. A present day version of such activism, dealing with mutual aid and resistance is exemplified through Big Door Brigade, based in Seattle.

Foucault’s third way of reconceiving power focusses on productivity and resistance. Instead of thinking of power as something that is only repressive, Foucault looks at how prohibitions incite desire and action. Taboos and censorship, he argues, often produce desire for what is prohibited. Censoring talk about sex, watching a film, or reading a document, will incite curiosity and desire to talk, watch or read these things. The campaign for same-sex marriage is another case in point. Gay liberation had historically criticised



Women's march Philly Philadelphia #MeToo, 2018.

marriage as an institution, but the overt prohibitions of same-sex marriage in Australia's *Marriage Amendment Act 2004*, had incited matrimonial desire among many gays and lesbians. In Australia, same-sex couples in de-facto relationships could access health insurance and could be a spousal benefactor for a will without marriage, so the prohibition had acquired an obvious symbolic value to many who began articulating their desire for inclusion in this institution.

Foucault's most contentious reconceptualisation of power centres on pairing the term with knowledge. Foucault often uses the term power/knowledge to indicate the complicity between the two. Power cannot operate without making use of knowledge, and the types of knowledge that acquire most legitimacy are tied to relations of power. This does not mean that the two are reducible to one another and that there is no use in accounting for or assessing the validity of a knowledge claim because power supposedly determines truth. There would be no point in contributing to knowledge production if that were the case. Rather, the questions asked, the research funded and supported, the authorities that determine the hierarchy of experts in a field and the way in which knowledge acquires its legitimacy are not free from relations of power. Qualifications, delimiting a field of objects for study and establishing rules and procedures from which to conduct and produce knowledge are all still important. Equally, to not confront the way in which power relations may affect who becomes an expert, what limits or opens a field of inquiry, and what constitutes legitimate methodologies and

frameworks for constructing knowledge, would enable the worst kind of practices in which knowledge is put to use (like making bombs).

The intersection between power and knowledge is best paired with Foucault's concepts of discourse and discursive practices, which encapsulate the dual meaning of discipline: bodies of knowledge, and techniques of control. The techniques of disciplining bodies through ways in which knowledge production intersects with power relations is best captured in the term bio-power or biopolitics. Biopolitics captures the way in which the monitoring and regulation of populations works upon bodies through classifying them into types and setting societal norms and values that police behaviour.

In *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1* Foucault explains that 'bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes' ([1976] 1978, pp. 140–141). Biopolitics also explains governments' investments in tying sex to reproduction and using sexual mores and sometimes laws to regulate populations in terms of racialised and disabled bodies. Historical experience suggests that articulating a nation's preferences for the constitution of its population sets up a path to expel those who threaten its composition.

Whenever a nation articulates itself by distinguishing the pure from the impure, the normative from the non-normative, health from contagion, the machinations of bio-power approaches forms of governance that resemble totalitarianism. Italian thinker, Giorgio Agamben combines Foucault's concept of bio-power with Hannah Arendt's writing on totalitarianism to expose how democratic nations use their sovereign power to institute the conditions of a permanent 'state of exception'. Increases in governmental powers to act as if always in a 'state of exception', as witnessed in anti-immigration policies, the establishment of detention centres, the demonisation of political dissidents and non-normative bodies, enables the onset of a 'legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system (2005, p. 2).

Agamben's observations accurately describe the current landscape in which democratic states are exerting their power. This does not contradict Foucault's reconceptualisation of power that warns against situating the state and law as the prime site of power. Rather, Agamben adjusts the concepts of power/knowledge and biopolitics to analyse contemporary forms of governance, which do not need dictators or a one-party state to render some bodies as disposable and unworthy of life. In this way Agamben's work concurs more readily with Achille Mbembe's (2011) concept of necropolitics, which shifts the focus from how people have to adopt disciplinary techniques as part of integrating their lives into a healthy population to how conglomerations of power/knowledge relations set up the infrastructure from which some people are exposed and ushered toward the path of death.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE DISTINCTION

Changing ideas of what belongs to the private realm of life and what is public reflect the changing status of historically marginalised groups, such as women and their presumed place in the kitchen; it also influences which seemingly personal issues, such as who can have sex with whom, get counted as political.

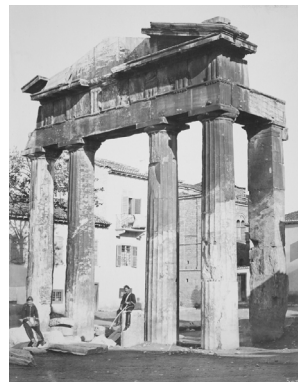
The distinction between the private and public has run alongside the division between domestic life and professional life, as well as personal matters and political affairs. The dividing line is not fixed or natural but is entangled within the historical struggles of how a society organises itself, from sexual behaviours to international affairs.

The fourteenth century English sense of *public* pertaining to what is 'open to general observation' relates to the Old French *public*, which comes from the Latin *pūblicus* ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). The Latin adjective refers to 'of the people; of the state; done for the state' and suggests 'common, general, public; ordinary, vulgar'. As a noun *pūblicus* refers to the 'commonwealth; public property'. There is also an etymological connection with the Latin *pubes*, which refers to the adult population. Queer theorist Michael Warner (2002) notes that *pubic* is associated with coming of age and so being initiated into the public world.

The meaning for *private* emerges in contrast, also in the fourteenth century, as 'pertaining to or belonging to oneself, not shared, individual; not open to the public' ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). The contrast to the public is evident from the Latin *privātus*, which means 'to separate, deprive' the individual presumably from public life. By the seventeenth century, the English sense of *private* became used as an alternative to *common*, which had negative connotations from the fifteenth century use of 'those who did not hold public office'.

The distinction between the public and what pertains to the household also relates to the Greek distinction between *pólis* (city) and *oikos* (household). Hannah Arendt (1958) draws on this connection between public and political affairs of the city when she discusses the cultivation of governance as a human artifact. Following Aristotle, she argues that political activity is concerned with what occurs in public. This is characterised by 'being seen and heard by others' in a way that is 'deprivatised and deindividualised' (p. 69). The common that institutes a public realm must transcend 'the life span of mortal men' (p. 74). What appears in public must survive the generations that come before us and move toward those that come after us. In this way, the public strives for a common that transcends our earthly lives and mortality.

Working for a common raises the question of how everyone invested in the public is able hear one another, given that each is placed in a different position from others. In this sense, the public relies on developing a notion of objectivity that enables things to be seen from a variety of perspectives



Gate of the Agora. Building Date: 2nd century. Photograph date: circa 1865–1895.



Johann Peter Hasenclever 'The Reading Room' 1843.

Since the early nineteenth century, public reading rooms had been important meeting places for conversation and the spread of enlightened thinking. This image of all white men says it all.

'without changing their identity' (Arendt, 1958, p. 73). This has obvious implications for the perspectives of the marginalised, which explains why standpoint theory has come to be so significant in questioning objectivity and political neutrality in knowledge. Arendt departs from feminists and other theorists who write history from below, in that she situates the public as necessarily detached from the domestic domain and the supposedly private affairs of love, sex and the family. In this way, she shares the view with Marxist inspired Frankfurt School-influenced social theorist Jürgen Habermas (1962), who is best known for his work on casting the public sphere as a space that needs to bracket the partiality of one's identity out of deliberative discussions regarding politics.

Habermas stresses the importance of 'publicity' as a way of calling into account those in charge of governing the people. He locates the demand for state accountability as emerging during the bourgeois revolutions, when aristocratic and absolutist forms of governance were highly concentrated around wealth and little heed was paid to anything other than their own interests (some would argue little has changed).

The development of a bourgeois public sphere responded to the call to subject state activity to public opinion. To achieve this, there needed to be a separation of government affairs from a sphere in which free assembly, free speech and a free press could flourish as conduits to express public opinion and be heard by representatives in parliament (Habermas, 1962).

Following the Enlightenment tradition, Habermas places faith in reason as a means for deliberating competing views. As critics like feminist theorist Nancy Fraser (1990) and queer theorist Michael Warner (2002) have pointed out, the public has never been as coherent, reasonable or as value-free as Habermas would like deliberation in democracy to be. Habermas' later works acknowledge this (2006), though the question remains as to how much of one's presumed private life or experiences based on one's social identity are granted entry into deliberating over public opinion.

Learning the history of property relations, nation building, and how capitalism changed the *oikos*, helps to explain the way in which private life, professional life and politics can interfere with one another when debating issues in the public sphere like work/life balance, diversity at work, and representation in political and cultural life. *Oikos* not only translates to 'household' in English; it is also tied to *Oikonomia* that refers to household management and forms the basis for what we call economics today. The way in which gender, race, sexuality and disability have acquired their public status is connected to the history of institutional arrangements relating to who belonged in a household, where one was placed in an international division of labour, and whether one's sexuality, mental and physical abilities were deemed normal enough to participate in political and public life.



Michael Warner serving as moderator at the Writers on Writing about Technology roundtable at Yale University, 2009.

Like Habermas, Nancy Fraser (1990) stresses the need for a public sphere that is autonomous from the governance of the nation-state. She states that the public should not get conflated with the economy of paid employment. Yet what can be heard as intelligible within the public sphere is affected by government policy and the organisation of paid employment. For feminists this means it has been difficult to get issues like unpaid domestic labour, domestic violence, and sexual harassment at work, heard in the public sphere, because government policy and workplace practices had historically relegated these matters to interpersonal relations.

The feminist slogan, 'the personal is political,' challenged the division of the personal and political by creating counter-publics or subaltern publics from which to articulate and establish social movements that provided space and support for women experiencing discrimination, oppression and persecution in domestic, professional and work environments. Telephone crisis lines and shelters for those fleeing domestic violence were initially started as voluntary organisations to help women deal with their immediate personal experiences, which stemmed from the broader institutional arrangements that favoured patriarchal relations. At the same time as these spaces helped deal with material circumstances, feminists worked on transforming the language in which such seemingly personal issues could be heard in the broader public as connected to the political.

Most marginalised groups have established counter-publics in similar ways: Aboriginal people, for example set up their own medical and legal services at the same time which they press to alter debates in public around sovereignty (Foley, 1995). The tactic for getting heard in public, however, has not followed the Habermasian and Arendtian condition of abstracting oneself from one's partiality and social markings of identity. Rather, social difference and the uneven historical positioning in political representation and the public sphere has been emphasised. Michael Warner explains this element of counter-publics in relation to gender and sexuality:

'The bourgeois public sphere consists of private persons whose identity is formed in the privacy of the conjugal domestic family and who enter into rational-critical debate around matters common to all by bracketing their embodiment and status. Counterpublics of sexuality and gender, on the other hand, are scenes of association and identity that transform the private lives they mediate ... Their protocols of discourse and debate remain open to affective and expressive dimensions of language. And their members make their embodiment and status at least partly relevant in a public way by their very participation' (Warner, 2002, p. 57).

As different counter-publics create spaces for self-determination and articulate their political goals, the dividing line between the public and private in society in general changes also. This suggests that the public/private distinction is one that is historical and in flux; the lines of its division

reflect how the personal relates to the political and how the political is woven into the personal. To develop a common out of a history that carries inequality and oppression within it therefore requires a reckoning with the movement between the personal and political through a general public and counter-publics, rather than trying to settle once and for all a dividing line between what is private and what is public.

QUEER THEORY, LGBTIQA+ IDENTITIES, GAY AND LESBIAN STUDIES

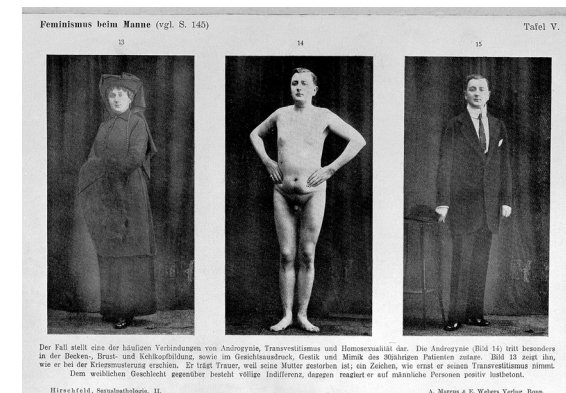
Bronski Beat *Smalltown Boy*

Early feminist theory and gay and lesbian studies largely took for granted the discrete gender categories of men and women as discrete. This assumption lent itself to articulating sexual preferences in terms of opposite-sex desire and same-sex desire. Like other marginalised identities, the search for representation of oneself in culture and history, and for a way of making sense of one's difference in society, became the focus of early gay and lesbian studies.

Dennis Altman's *Homosexual: oppression and liberation*, written at the cusp of the burgeoning gay liberation movement, captures the journey of making sense of one's deviant sexuality, using his own lived experience against the institutional and cultural arrangements setting the grid of intelligibility from which to do so. This book, published in 1971, marks an era in which gay and lesbian writers began writing on their own behalf. In 1972 Karla Jay and Allen Young co-edited the anthology *Out of the closets: voices of gay liberation*. These non-fiction books took a defiant tone, challenging the dominant discourses for speaking about deviant sexuality and gender diversity, which had hitherto been trapped in the pathologising and criminalising discourses of medicine, psychiatry and law.

Same-sex sexual behaviour and love have been represented through art in ancient times (Skinner, 2014); written of in poetry passed through the ages (Bozorth, 2011); published in great works of fiction in the nineteenth century (Sedgwick, 1990); and shown through hot kissing and same-sex sexual innuendo in early cinema (Russo, 1981). Nevertheless, discourse about LGBTIQA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and asexual) identities does not appear labelled as such before the late nineteenth century, because before that time sexual diversity was not named through discrete identities. This issue is raised beautifully in the title of Lilian Faderman's *Surpassing the love of men: romantic love between women from the Renaissance to the present*. The book is a lesbian classic, though the term was not used for most of the 500 years covered in Faderman's book.

The naming of the homosexual as a type of person can be tracked back to around 1868. Sociologist Mary McIntosh (1968) and French theorist Michel Foucault (1976) both noted how the social category of homosexual was imposed onto people as a way of monitoring what became regarded as deviant behaviour for the purposes of social control. Prior to this time, sexuality was spoken about in terms of behaviours and practices. Before medical and psychiatric practitioners were concerned with labelling sexual deviance into types of people, they were concerned with how much or how little sex people were having with one another (Foucault, 1976). As heteronormative reproductive sex (Spivak, 2011) became



A male patient in Magnus Hirschfeld's Sexualpathologie.



Panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt as part of AIDS Walk Austin and Austin Red Week 2010.

more favoured by governing bodies, the focus on sexual behaviours narrowed on classification into types, like many other things swept into the scientific obsessions of the nineteenth century. It remains a curiosity as to how practices of anal sex—which anyone can perform with anyone else—became attached to the sodomite as homosexual man.

Distinguishing categories of identity from the people marked by them paved the way for navigating between social constructionist and essentialist understandings of sexuality. Out of this context, queer theory emerges as changing the shape of gay and lesbian studies.

The coining of 'queer theory' is credited to Teresa de Laurentis (Halperin, 2003), and coincided with the emergence of poststructuralist critiques of identity and subjectivity in the 1990s. Queer theory is more focused on questioning the stability of the gender binary, and hence same-sex attraction, as a stable type of identity. Of course, before queer theory, there were plenty of real-life examples of people who disrupted the gender binary and sexuality labels: men had sex with men without identifying as gay; and plenty of people did, and still do, shift in their sexual preferences and gender identities over their lives.

In the activist realm, queer theory supplied a language from which to think of sexuality and gender in terms aiming to be anti-identitarian, while continuing gay liberation's political attitude of coming out to the streets. Coinciding with the period of the AIDS epidemic, queer theory developed within a political landscape in which homophobia, gay bashing and murder became heightened and more visible. The conservative response to AIDS, which resulted in more deaths due to lack of research and care in dealing with the epidemic, was coupled with open societal prejudice against gay men in particular. The lack of care and prejudice had altered the tone and urgency of articulating how sex and sexuality mattered in everyday life and politics (Cvetkovich, 2003).

Embracing the more radical, non-assimilationist elements of gay liberation—the self-knowledge and self-governing tactics mirrored in feminist and Black services in health care—AIDS activism called for new collaborations between different disciplinary knowledges. Activists and academics drew from disciplines as diverse as biomedicine, psychiatry, sociology, cultural studies, literature, history and even marketing to adopt a multi-pronged approach to changing public perception, government policy and the very way in which sex and sexuality was represented and understood (Crimp, 1988).

Governments in various nations had different reactions to the crisis, and some responded earlier than others to understanding the disease, and addressing faults in legislation, bureaucracies and drug research. Writers in Australia, for instance, note the difference Australia's universal health care made in comparison to the United State's chronic underfunding of AIDS research and medical neglect in approving drugs and health facilities (Sendziuk, 2003; Altman, 1994, Robinson, 2013, Willett, 2000). The activist

organisation AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), beginning in New York, created the space for an international agenda to combat the epidemic (Filar, 2014); ACT-UP adopted an explicit activist agenda that situated HIV/AIDS as a political (not only health) issue.

Chapters of ACT UP spread to other countries, which used similar tactics and strategies to suit the specificity of the medical and political establishments of their own nations. Despite people living with HIV/AIDS in Australia having greater access to health care, there were still neglect in and hold ups to treatment and care through government bureaucracies and drug evaluation committees. The nation wide 'D-Day' campaign on 6 June 1991 was one of the more famous ACT-UP feats, where activists had given the government a time frame in which to increase funding for drug trials and speed up approvals in pharmaceutical evaluations. The Melbourne chapter famously dug up the iconic Floral Clock, sitting at the front Queen Victoria Gardens, replacing the foliage and flowers with white crosses (Power, 2011; Connors, 2006).

The emergence of queer theory and activism also coincided with aims to find the space for a sex-positive politics within feminist movements. The moralistic calls for abstinence during the early years of the AIDS epidemic in particular coincided with some feminists calling for legislative responses to pornography and sex work. During the sex wars of the 1980s, Gayle Rubin wrote her influential essay 'Thinking Sex' (1984) in which, among other things, she emphasises alliances between sexual deviants through their sexual behaviours rather than identity markers.

The turn away from solidified ideas of gender identity and sexuality, toward what troubles any identity's foundations, marks the work of other queer theorists. In 1990 Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the closet* and Judith Butler's *Gender trouble* marked a turn to more theoretical questions regarding relations between gender and sexuality. Both thinkers show a strong influence from Michel Foucault. Sedgwick's earlier work on male homoerotic desire paved the way for her attendance to sexual relations, not in terms of fixed identities but through attention to language and idioms that upset the binary opposition of heterosexual and homosexual.

Similarly, Butler challenges the sex/gender distinction as part of arguing that gender identity and sexuality are not cultural impositions on a pre-given sex. Like Sedgwick, Butler notes how the gender binary naturalises and reinforces heterosexuality. However, denaturalising the gender binary does not mean that we can escape the terms in which sex, gender and sexuality are discursively inscribed. If we are drawn into repeating the ways in which sex, gender and sexuality are engraved and cited on bodies, this opens the opportunity for troubling the very same identity categories.

The troubling of identity categories in academia, together with the defiant politics and focus on sexual practices emerging through AIDS activism, enabled a re-appropriation of the word 'queer' from its earlier derogatory connotations. For a time, queer operated like an umbrella term

for what today has become the alphabet soup of LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, trans*, intersex, queer, asexual) identities. As activists and academics keep debating what acronym best describes and captures the aims of the social movement and bodies of knowledge attached to its changing *letters*, it is important to remember that all these forms of identifying one's sexuality and gender identity emerged from the dominance of European histories of classifications and institutional arrangements. The common historical experience of being typed as deviant goes some way to explaining the affinity between all of the letters in the alphabet soup today.

Despite its more positive re-appropriation, many older activists still feel uncomfortable with the term queer. Some of this stems from the lived experience of hearing this word as a slur while being bullied or bashed; other people are uncomfortable with defining queer to include heterosexuals engaged in non-conventional sexual practices. For better or worse, many gays and lesbians have become attached to the typing of sexuality as an identity and prefer to maintain a difference from straight people in terms of who they have sex with. Furthermore, as an umbrella term, queer does not capture the gender diversity illustrated in the acronym's T and I. The LGBTIQ acronym is further complicated in a settler colonial context, where the gaps between language, self-identity, and making oneself legible or readable, as Madee Clarke (2015) notes, can further entrench rather than decolonise the protective borders of the White nation.

Queer theory publications proliferated in the 1990s. While their titles are dissimilar, anthologies such as *Fear of a queer planet* (Warner, 1993) and *The gay and lesbian studies reader* (Abelove, et al. 1993) both mark their distinction from feminism and women's studies by privileging sexuality as a site of analysis. As time has gone on, however, like all theories that privilege one marker of identity over another, queer theory has had to confront its own tendencies to obfuscate other struggles such as those based on class, race, dis/ability and nation. A way to deal with these issues is to pay more attention to the interlocking systems of oppression as well as the intersectional dimensions in which such oppression is experienced. The key concepts of kyriarchy and intersectionality both enable a way of addressing this issue.

Michael Cook is a Brisbane-based artist of Bidjara heritage, whose numerous projects such as *Civilized* (2012) *Majority Rule* (2014) and *Invasion* (2018) operate to undermine dominant narratives of identity constructed under colonial rule. *Australian Landscapes* (2010) simultaneously disrupts equations of sex, gender and nature, along with implicit associations of indigenous peoples with nature. *Australian Landscapes* was exhibited at La Trobe University as part of the queer Midsumma Festival in 2015. Each of the photographs features an Aboriginal person in drag set against the backdrop of an Australian landscape in which stereotypical Aboriginal people are expecting to be. Cook's photographs question ideas of authenticity while showing viewers how not to think of Aboriginality and queerness as discrete identities that do not intersect.

Michael Cook *Australian Landscapes* #1–10 2011





RACE, RACIALISATION AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

The Temptations Ball Of Confusion (That's What The World Is Today)

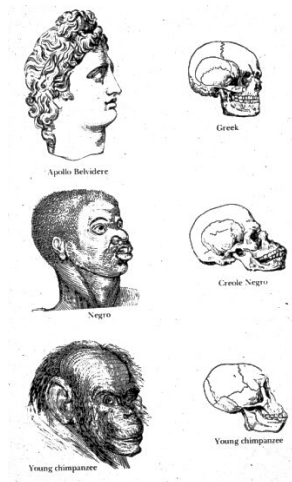
The relationship between the concepts of race and racism is so entangled that some people are tempted to believe that if there were no concept of race there would be no racism. This idea is reflected in clichés like ‘we all belong to one race, the human race,’ or ‘we are all the same underneath our different skin colours.’ Such seemingly benevolent points of view miss the point of how race, like any other category of identity, can become a source of pride but also has been and can be weaponised. We cannot communicate or understand the world we live in without classification so, for better or worse, race continues to have currency as a way of thinking about difference. The more important point is how we classify and account for the veracity of what have been typed as biological differences, and how we use such classifications.

The etymological root of *race* in English is found in the early fifteenth century as ‘group of people with common occupation’ and by the 1540s became associated with ‘generation’. By the 1560s, the word starts to resemble contemporary understandings as ‘tribe, nation, or people as regarded of common stock’. The popularised meaning of race that still circulates as an implicit assumption in public discussions emerges in around 1774 as ‘one of the great divisions of mankind based on physical peculiarities’ ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)).

The eighteenth and nineteenth century scientific obsession with classifying species and taxonomic hierarchies forged unsavoury bonds between race thinking and racism. The period that celebrates Enlightenment thinking is also the period in which the Industrial Revolution furthered the wealth of capitalists and nations through colonisation. Taxonomies of humans were set into hierarchies of racial types such as Linnaeus’ Americanus, Asiaticus, Africanus and Europeanus; and George Cuvier’s Mongoloid, Negroid and Caucasoid (Banton, 1998; Kendi, 2016).

Patrick Wolfe (2002) reminds us that the classificatory concept of race emerged as a hierarchical measure that set Europeans as the norm, and those that deviated as defective; physical differences were connected to cognitive, cultural and moral ones. This produced the tension of the ‘Enlightenment taxonomies of natural science with the political rhetoric of the rights of man ... [where] race provided the categorical boundaries that ensured the exclusiveness of the bearers of rights’ (Wolfe, 2002, p. 52). As Tracey Banivanua-mar (2007) illustrates in her work on the indentured labour of Pacific Islanders to work on sugar plantations in Queensland, this presumption of the exclusivity of rights, mixed together with travel journals and literary traditions describing Indigenous people as savages and cannibals readily translated into justifications for colonisation.

The specificity of different forms of colonialism gave rise to the *racialisation* of different populations, which refers to the active productivity of classifying and thus producing race (Wolfe, 2016, p. 10). Situating race



A scientific demonstration from 1868 that professed the so called Negro was as distinct from the Caucasian as the chimpanzees. Josiah Nott was a polygenist who believed that the “races” of “man” had always been separate.

as a ‘trace of history’ Wolfe illustrates how Aboriginal people in Australia and Native Americans were both classified as dying races and were seen as an obstruction to the expansion of settlement. As such, there was greater investment in whitening Indigenous peoples to absorb them into the cultivation of the new White settler nation. African Americans, on the other hand, were classified through the one-drop rule as they were seen as valuable labour commodities in which their segregation became imperative to maximise the reproduction of slaves. The situation in Brazil was different again, where colour classifications proliferated in numbers; this system ensured keeping populations divided from one another (Wolfe, 2016).

In *Exterminate all the Brutes*, Sven Lindqvist (1996) reminds us that the first victims of industrialised warfare were colonised peoples. The idea of exterminating entire populations had already materialised by the time scientific racism came along to claim the inevitability of inferior races dying. A great advocate of seeing to it that ‘inferior races’ die out, German thinker Friedrich Ratzel influenced Hitler’s quest to exterminate Jews. Adam Hosh-schild (2014) reads Lindqvist as therefore prompting us to include European colonialism alongside studying the heinous acts of totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and Soviet communism.

In the aftermath of Nazi racism in Germany, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) put out statements about ‘the race question’ to combat racism. Much controversy followed regarding the scientific, sociological and anthropological basis for claims regarding race thinking (Lentin, 2008). However, as Hannah Arendt notes in *The origins of totalitarianism* ([1951] 1976 p. 184), ‘Imperialism would have necessitated the invention of racism as the only possible “explanation” and excuse for its deeds, even if no race-thinking ever existed in the civilised world’. That Arendt expresses this sentiment in the very same sentence in which she refers to the ‘civilised world’ betrays the extent to which racism works through writers and the cultural fabric of intelligibility, even when analysing racist thinking and behaviour.

Debating racism in the public sphere often gets stuck in the rut of deciding what constitutes racism, and whether a person should be condemned or forgiven for their statements or actions if they did not mean to be racist.

In the sporting arena, this has taken the form of deciding whether an ape insult uttered at Indigenous Australian Football League player Adam Goodes during a match was a racist slur (Bradley, 2013), and whether a ‘jigaboo’ cartoon was a racist depiction of African American tennis star Serena Williams and the whitening of her opponent, Naomi Osaka, a woman of colour, in the New York Open singles final (Baker, 2019). Many debaters reduced their judgement to the intentions of the person uttering the remark and of the cartoonist. In both instances, people arguing that the slur and depiction were not racist would refer to the personality and behaviour of the sports person, claiming that insults are part of a game and caricatures are

the tools of the cartoon trade. In each case, many people reduced racism to prejudice on the level of personal intent and failed to consider how race and racism are historically embedded into the political, economic and cultural fabric of social relations. The propensity for these debates to explode suggests the public sphere lacks adequate tools to both identify and deal with the way in which race and racism acquire their significance and meaning.

Sport is part of popular culture, and so understanding of racism rarely allows room for an historical sense of how race operates in the broader grids of power/knowledge relations. However, professionals who have an interest in how power works can also exhibit a lack of racial understanding. In March 2019 a controversy broke out within academia when a La Trobe University debate was advertised under the title, ‘Does Australia have a serious racist problem?’ During community and university mobilisation that questioned the title and the line-up of speakers, the forum changed the title to ‘Has racism in contemporary Australia entered into the mainstream?’; organisers also added new speakers. Munanjahli-Yugambeh, South Sea-Watego academic, Chelsea Bond spoke on how the debate in both its forms had missed fundamental understandings of how racism operates (Cromb and Pearson, 2019). The controversy over the debate highlighted how talking about racism in a settler colony remains unsettled and is unsettling. All these events highlighted the fact that public literacy around race and racism is out of step with those engaged with racial issues in their daily personal, professional and political lives.

The concept of institutional, or structural, racism explains how race thinking, and the prejudice, discrimination and persecution that is enacted on the basis of race, are built into structures of thought, networks of power, and arrangements of governance and living.

The term ‘institutional racism’ is attributed to Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, who wrote *Black power: the politics of liberation* in 1967. They argued that individual, explicit acts of racism, like the bombing of a Black church that killed five Black children, are acknowledged as such by the majority of the population. However, Black deaths that are caused through poor living conditions and discrimination—emerging from institutional arrangements of substandard and inaccessible health services, education, shelter and housing—are not as widely recognised as stemming from racism (1967, p. 4). Black Power and present-day prison abolition activist Angela Davis writes that Black, Latino and Native American people have a greater chance of going to prison than getting a decent education (2003, p. 10). In Australia the same can be said of Indigenous people. The life chances, mortality rates and incarceration rates for Indigenous people compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts tell the story of how racism is embedded within the institutional arrangements through which so many nations have been established and constructed. This is to say, personal prejudice is facilitated by institutionalised injustice and discrimination. The aim



Black Lives Matter protest, 10 November 2015.

of campaigns and movements like #BlackLivesMatter is to bring such an understanding into public view as a means of changing the structural conditions that produce and perpetuate racism. As the website for [#BlackLivesMatter](#) says, its mission is ‘to build local power and to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes’. Campaigns to stop Black Deaths in custody in Australia similarly underscore disproportional incarceration inflicted on Aboriginal people through such matters as public drunkenness, offensive language, perceived behavioural issues or getting perceived as causing public disturbances (Gorrie, 2019).

Institutional racism can take two forms: direct, or indirect. Direct institutional racism occurs when a government’s policies and practices intend to discriminate and reduce the life chances of a particular group of people on the basis of their race. When six different British colonies formed the Federation of Australia in 1901, the first Acts of Parliament were based on cultivating a White nation. The Immigration Restriction Act 1901 was otherwise known as the White Australia Policy, which effectively barred people from non-European descent from immigrating to Australia. The policy was intentional and therefore a direct form of institutional racism.

Federal Parliament did not pass any specific legislation relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, believing that various state legislations would see the Indigenous populations die out and/or become absorbed into the White nation. The history of various state Aborigines Protection Acts explicitly restricted where Aboriginal people could live, where they could work and learn, and whom they could marry (Commonwealth of Australia, 1997, chapter 7). The drive to absorb any Indigenous people who were the offspring from sexual relations with the White population was enacted in systematic policies and practices of forced child removal. Those affected by the separation of children from their families, land, culture, community and language, are known as the Stolen Generations, where the traumatic impact of this direct institutional racism remains. Systemic racism can carry through to such things as maligning one’s sense of identity on one end of the scale, to creating a path of continued institutionalisation. On the other end (Sister Inside, 2018). Direct institutional racism in the form of forcible removal of children from their families of origin was also inflicted on Native Americans in the United States and Canada and occurred in other settler-colonial states that dispossessed Indigenous populations.

Indirect institutional racism is not enacted with any intention in policy and procedures to have discriminatory effects. Rather, institutional structures carry an unconscious bias that adversely affects particular racial groups because the organisational arrangements of governance and culture favour the dominant over the marginal. While everyone is supposed to be equal before the law, enactment of the law can fall unevenly on different people due to the social conditions of their existence based on race (among other identities). For example, the three strikes law passed in Western Australia in 2015 meant that a person who was brought before the courts for

the third time would receive automatic sentencing (Lawson, 2018). Thus, if a young person was caught burgling a house, or in some cases if a person was caught for a minor crime like stealing a drink from a shop, they would be sentenced to detention if it was their third offence. Such laws fall disproportionately on Aboriginal people, particularly youth.

Indirect racism is carried through other institutional sites such as the education system, public space and media. School curriculum is the same for everybody, but social references and methods of teaching disadvantage those whose language and traditions are different from the dominant culture's. Every student might read the same history textbook, but what is said and not said favours a particular version of national identity which omits large parts of the racialised networks of power that have formed what is counted in the celebration of a country's heritage.

As we take stock of cultural representations in public spaces, broadcasting networks and popular culture, we start to see how exposure to the same stories and images can fall unevenly on a person's sense of self. When the very fabric of society has been cultivated with the idea of building a White nation, as was the case with Australia, the institutional structures of law, education, religion, family, media and workplaces continue to carry uneven relations of power that endow people with different levels of privilege and oppression.

It is also important to situate this particular instance of nation-building within the broader project of imperial expansion and colonisation. The racial politics of Australia were born through the international expansion of the British Empire, an empire whose dominion over other territories varied in form (from expropriating labour power in India through to dispossessing Indigenous people from their lands in Australia and the Americas). The Empire could not have developed without the violence of expropriating lands and establishing the slave trade and indentured labour to accumulate its wealth. Prison abolitionists like Angela Davis (2016) argue that we cannot understand institutional racism, and high incarceration rates for those who are not part of White dominant culture, without recognising that the justice system tackles the end-point of criminal behaviour and not its root causes such as capitalist expansion and the production of poverty.

Empire-building justified these practices by finding alliances in certain strands of knowledge production—including scientific racism, and the science of sex and sexuality—that enabled typing of people into categories of the superior/inferior, civilised/uncivilised, and normal/deviant. In this regard, we can see how institutional racism is also tied to the regulation of sex and sexuality. You cannot build a White nation without also monitoring and controlling who is allowed to reproduce with whom. It is a short step from controlling populations based on race to regulating types of people—such as the disabled and mentally ill—in terms of their worthiness of being included in the democratic ideal of 'rule of the people'. This is how different forms of institutional prejudice and oppression are connected.

When racism is placed in the institutional context of carrying the history of knowledge production that accompanied colonisation, we can see how calling an Indigenous sportsperson an ape, or drawing a 'jigaboo' cartoon of an African American sports star, is not empty of and cannot be separated from the institutional structures that carry power, privilege and oppression. In 2019, two documentaries have been released detailing the events surrounding the case of Adam Goodes. Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* reflects on the racially motivated attacks on Serena Williams. When talk shows and opinion polls asked the public to vote on whether they thought such booing was racially motivated, they exhibited bad faith in conducting debate; they refused to acknowledge how the racialisation of both sports people overdetermined how each was read.

Just as it is erroneous to explain the jeering toward racially marked sports stars to their personalities, so is it flawed to think that the intentionality of a speaker absolves them from taking responsibility for how the historical dynamics of colonisation and racial thinking remain and operate through language and representation. Furthermore, racism does not always take the form of overt utterances or discriminatory policies. Racism is carried through networks of power, including our bodies as micro vehicles of power. In her book, *The Habits of Racism*, Helen Ngo (2017) examines how racism can be carried through gestural expressions and racialised perceptions. For these reasons it makes no sense to imagine that contemporary society can speak of reverse racism, as comedian Aamer Rahman summarises so well (Rahman, 2013). This does not mean that prejudice toward dominant racial types, such as White people, cannot be expressed. What it does mean is that such expressions take place on an uneven historical playing field, where institutions continue to skew the intersections between power relations and knowledge production in favour of the dominant culture.

Michael Chavez engages themes of racism, culture, gender and identity. He utilises satirical approaches and pop culture references to explore both his Filipino heritage and Australian manifestations of racism and parochialism. In 2009 he generously gifted *Fear of a Brown Planet* to La Trobe University.



REPRESENTATION

How do the voices of different people's views and interests get heard in the governance of everyday life? And how do we make sense of others and ourselves through what we observe, through words, pictures, stories, signs and songs, among other things?

Two of the eight definitions for representation in the Oxford English Dictionary help answer these questions. The first refers to 'the fact of standing in for, or in place of, some thing or person'. Representatives in government, a council or club, for example, are supposed to 'stand in' for their members' beliefs and aspirations. This sense of representation is captured in the word proxy. The second meaning for representation refers to 'an image, likeness, or reproduction in some manner or thing'. A photograph or even a description of something or someone in some way resembles the real-life subject or object that is depicted. This sense of representation is best captured in the word portrait (Spivak, 1988).

In democratic nations, representation through proxy is supposed to be guaranteed through free and fair elections. Politicians generally belong to parties that have platforms for what principles and policies they stand for, though there is an increasing trend for people in democratic nations to run as independents. If elected, members of parliament are supposed to listen to and represent the views of everybody in their constituency. The principle of majority rule is meant to deal with the problem of competing views of citizens in an electorate, which raises the question of how minorities and the marginalised could possibly compete fairly with the mainstream to get their views heard. Exploiting the ideals of democracy to be representative of the people by the people and for the people, identity based social movements have historically called the state into account for excluding certain types of people from political participation and representation. If identity politics keep frustrating majority rule and the ideal of state neutrality before the plurality of its people, it is because of the political heritage of having established democracies by initially excluding from participation Indigenous people, those without property, women, and those criminalised and confined based on their sexuality, gender identity or disability.

Some suggest addressing the problem of this heritage by introducing quotas; this has largely focused on boosting the number of women, Indigenous people, other racial minorities and sometimes gay and lesbian candidates. While this can certainly address issues of equal opportunity, the question of representation is more complicated. There is the propensity for such candidates to get grilled about their ability to remain impartial in political decision making (as if the default white, able bodied, cis gendered, heterosexual male is automatically situated with neutrality), which can incite politicians elected through a designated quota to minimise their criticism of mainstream institutional arrangements. Another problem arising from quotas is the propensity for parties to cherry pick their candidates in such a way that representation becomes tokenistic. Thus, the idea that greater

representation from the marginalised and minorities will guarantee that the perspectives and interests of such groups will be heard and addressed has been frustrated rather than enabled. Greater numbers of marginal representatives cannot transform the grids of intelligibility, bureaucratic authorities, and institutional rules and procedures already setting the conditions in which members of parliament are required to participate. Addressing the machinations of power operating in governance requires much deeper structural change than quotas in order to address the issues of people who do not find their interests represented by those elected.

Increasingly, it is not only minorities and the marginalised that are losing faith in the ability for democratic nations to be representative of their people. At the time of writing there are scores of people taking to the streets all over the world to protest government failures to address issues such as climate change, lack of access to jobs, housing, education, public transport and health care among other things. There are those who engage in direct action and call for alternative forms of organising politics (e.g. no leaders, horizontal decision making); and there are those who turn to electoral politics in order to fix what they see as a broken system (Tormey, 2015). One does not have to choose between electoral politics and direct action, or quotas and no quotas. But if democracy is to have any chance of making good on its promise for power to be distributed through the force and rule of the people, the politics of representation needs to dig deeper than a simple numbers game of majority rule and tokenistic measures of meeting quotas.

Iris Marion Young (2000) addresses some of these issues by rethinking identity in terms of Jacques Derrida's *différance* (see entry with deconstruction). Rather than maintaining the idea of a proxy in terms of a substitution, which presumes an elected member can authentically stand in for someone else, Young suggests that *différance* can enable a way of approaching the representative as separate from and connected to their constituency. This tactic begins with the assumption that any group (whether a minority or nation) will be internally differentiated, where traces of the formation of a group's identity are not homogenous but shifts through space and time (as shown for categories for race, gender and sexuality in this book). When temporality and context are highlighted, the relationship between representatives and their constituents is sensitive to traces of the past as well as an anticipated future that structures the present moment.

Young's rethinking of representation has implications for the other definition of representation as portrait. Cultural representations that paint a picture of how we see ourselves and others are also dependent on the relationship between the mainstream and marginal. Marginalised and subordinated groups of people are not as widely represented as dominant groups, or can often be negatively represented, in popular and high culture; consequently, the marginal become more invested in representations that do circulate. There is a tendency for marginalised groups to respond to this situation by wanting to seize control of self-representation, or sometimes

buying into an idea of presenting a better or more accurate picture of the representations in circulation. Young's rethinking of representation through *différance*, much like Gayatri Spivak's (1988) consideration of whether the subaltern can speak, implicitly warns against too hastily homogenising an identity as a means for correcting its negative representations. This does not mean there should be no accounting of bad representations or that no agency is possible for marginalised subjects; but enabling greater audibility and visibility for the marginalised is no guarantee that stereotypes will not be reinforced.

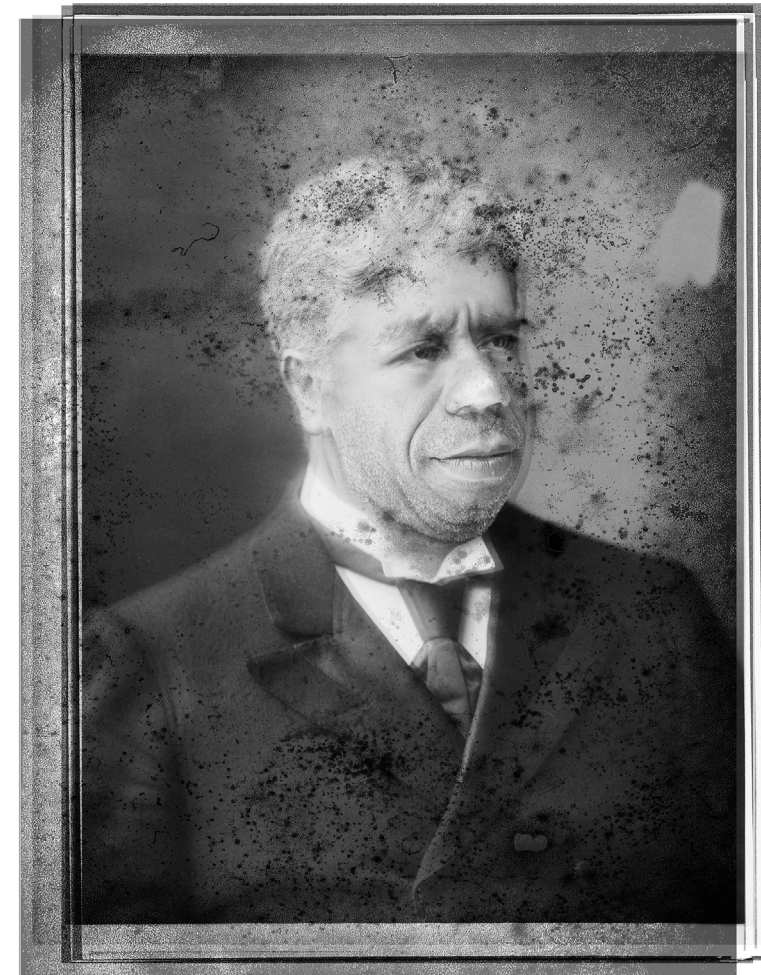
As discussed in the entry on stereotypes, marginalised groups sometimes try to counter negative representations circulating in popular culture, of which there are plenty. Think, for example, of news stories that repeat tropes associating Black youth with gangs and crimes, Muslims with terrorism, or Aboriginal people with drunkenness. Similarly, think of the sexual stereotypes of good (chaste) and bad (licentious) women, and good (hetero-normative) and bad (unconventional) queers; in these cases, conservative values favour lifestyles culminating in the monogamous, couple-hood of marriage that presumably provides the foundation for making a family. The problem with all these representations is twofold. First, they function as stereotypes that conceal differences within such social groups of people; stereotypes affect the perception of all people belonging to that social group. Second, such representations perform a regulating role of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour, which coincides with the dominant ideology that supports unequal relations of power.

With the first problem, members of these groups sometimes try to combat the stigmatisation of stereotypes by calling for more accurate or positive representations of themselves. With the second instance, some group members feel compelled to present themselves as ultra conservative to earn respect. Both these strategies of dealing with negative representations locate their counteractions by reinforcing the idea of an essentialised, 'good' group member without transforming the unequal playing field upon which such representations acquire their power to divide and weaken the marginalised in the first place.

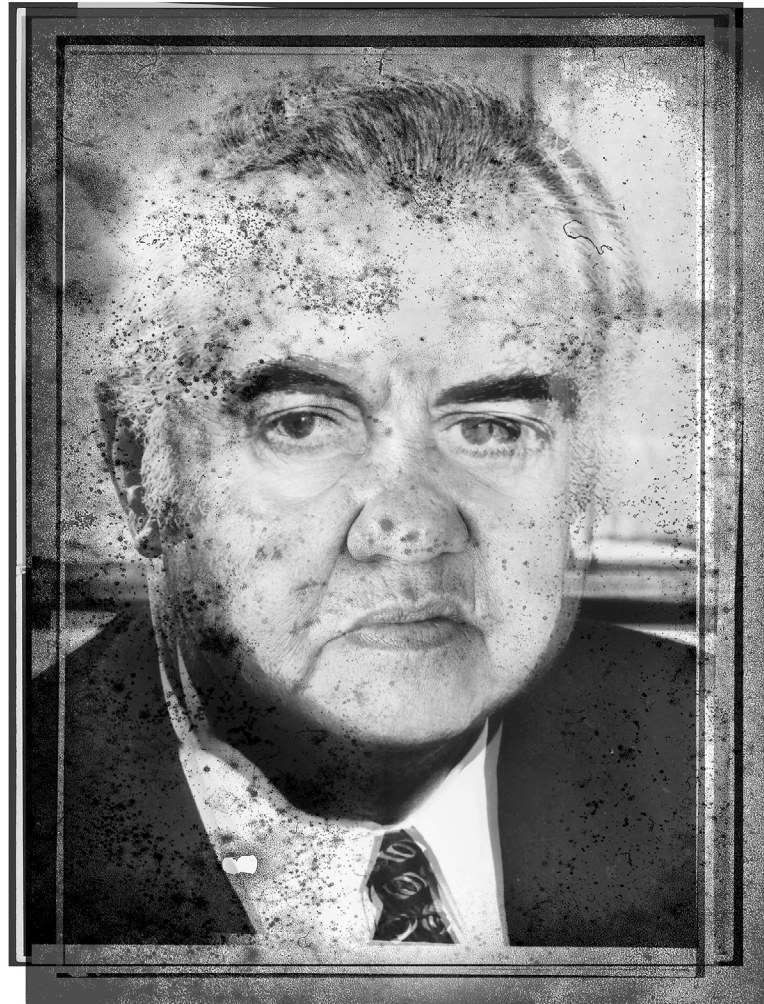
The task is not to focus all energy on trying to prove the inaccuracy of a stereotype—it is relatively easy to find examples of folk who both do and do not fit a stigmatised image. And neither is the task to calculate what criteria would qualify someone to authentically represent a particular social group. There will always be difference within, which makes the search for the essentialised group representative impossible. The more transformative approach is to chart how representations work on an ideological level, such that redressing power and injustice becomes a multi-layered task of not just challenging what we see but transforming the infrastructures—from language use to altering unequal relations of power embedded in such things as the flows of capital, and the social, political and environmental arrangements that make up the fabric of life.

It is for this reason that arguments about whether non-trans actors can play trans characters, whether fiction writers can write about characters whose identity does not coincide with their own, or whether white artists have the right to appropriate musical styles from cultures other than their own, can lead to dead end debates. Most objections to these forms of (cultural) appropriation occur when the representation under question is performed insensitively or badly. If we asked a different set of questions, there would be less propensity to get locked into polarised positions. The question in these cases is not so much who has the right to say what, but to ask, what obligations does one have when taking on the responsibility of representing those other than oneself, especially if one is more privileged?

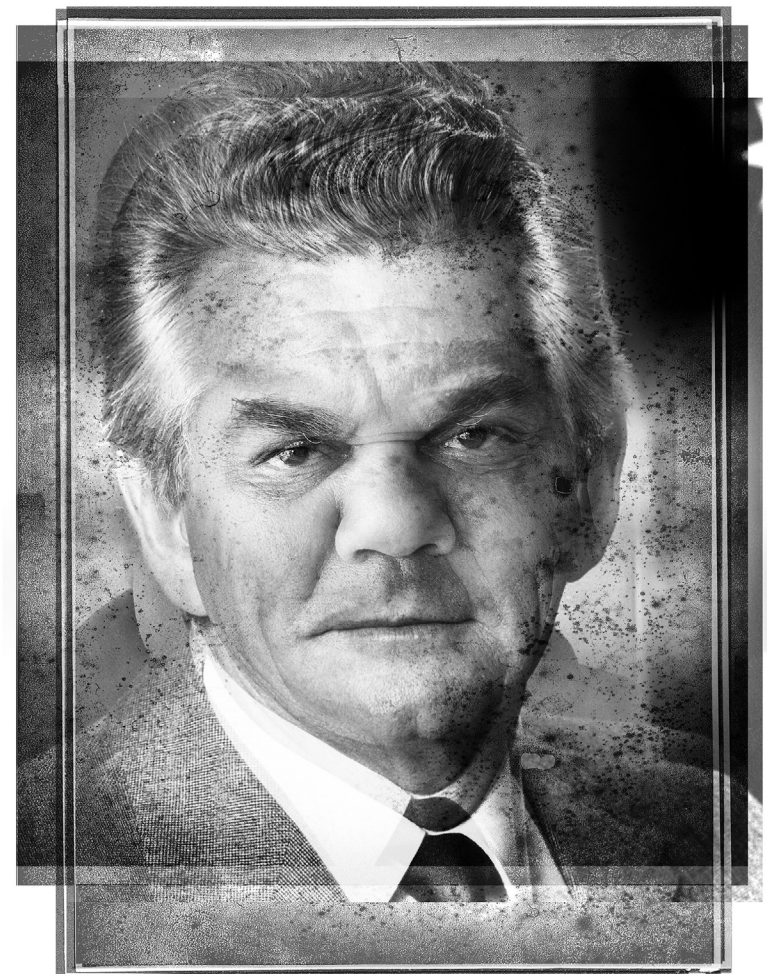
Michael Cook is an artist of Bidjara heritage, whose photographic projects undermine dominant narratives of identity constructed under colonial rule. *Through My Eyes* overlays images of Australia's Prime Ministers up to, and including, Julia Gillard with portraits of Indigenous men and women to activate an Indigenous gaze on history.



Edmund Barton - 1901-1903



Gough Whitlam - 1972-1975



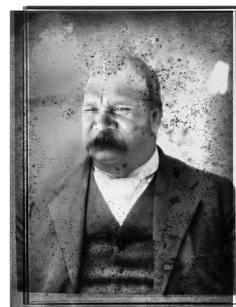
Robert Hawke - 1983-1991



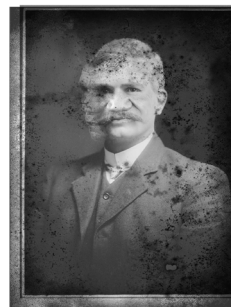
Alfred Chandler - 1861-1952/1951-1952/1953-1954



Elmer Wilson - 1862



George David - 1864-1901



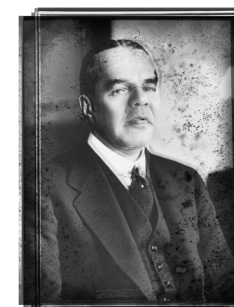
Andrew Tucker - 1864-1901/1891-1901/1902-1903



Joseph Cook - 1867-1912



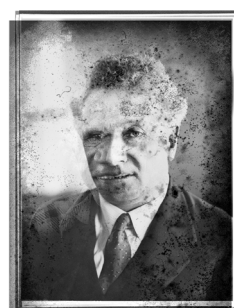
William Henry Hughes - 1867-1912



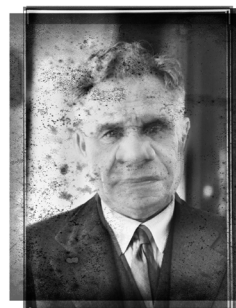
Anthony William Brown - 1867-1912



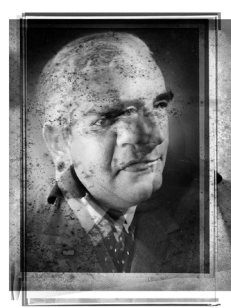
James Chandler - 1869-1912



Joseph Hyman - 1870-1912



Paul Hyman - 1870



Charles Morgan - 1870-1907/1908-1909



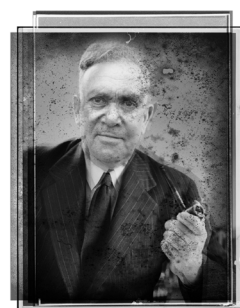
Andrew Tucker - 1870



John Carter - 1870-1912



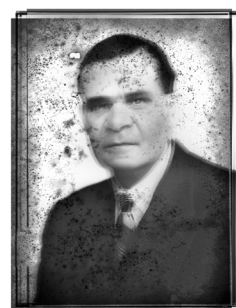
Thomas Cook - 1871



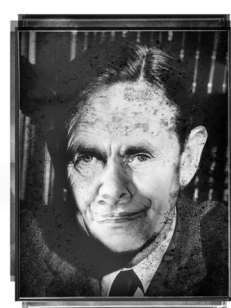
John Clifley - 1871-1912



Harold Cook - 1871-1912



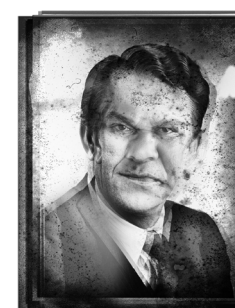
John McKim - 1871-1912



John Hyman - 1871-1912



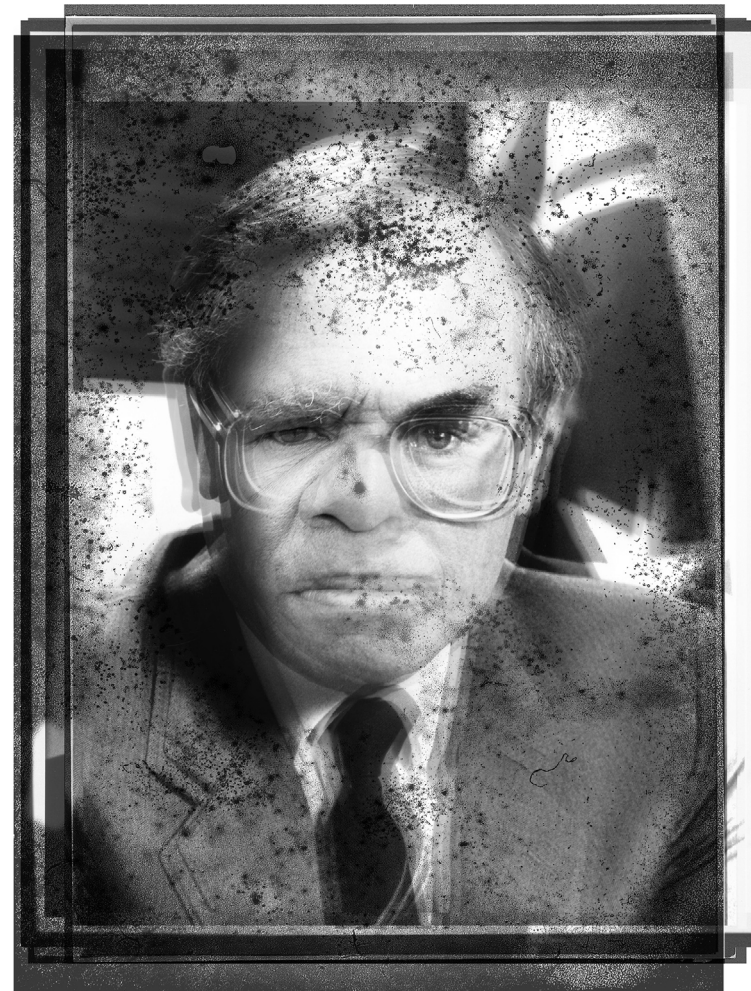
William H. Tucker - 1871-1912



Nicholas Brown - 1871-1912



Paul Keating - 1991-1996



John Howard - 1996 - 2007



Kevin Rudd - 2007 - 2010



Julia Gillard - 2010

REPRESSIVE STATE APPARATUSES AND IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES

Talking Heads *Once In A Lifetime*

Bruce Springsteen *57 Channels (And Nothin' On)*

Louis Althusser (1971) coined the terms *repressive state apparatuses* and *ideological state apparatuses* (or RSAs and ISAs) to describe how ideology is carried through the material form of institutional arrangements. Recalling that a person is much more likely to respond to a racialised address ('Hey! Black boy!') when hailed by an official in a uniform than by an everyday person on the street, we can observe a force in the ability accorded to police officers to regulate the behaviour of others.

The police, the military, the prison system, law enforcement and even government administration all carry a force that can coerce people to do things. Because these institutions can coerce behaviour, they are known as repressive state apparatuses. The state can use repressive state apparatuses to enforce 'law and order', as the state defines it, on 'the people'.

What's more, the police, the prison system and the military are entangled in the history of oppression, where the disadvantaged are disproportionately arrested, incarcerated and subject to military rule. Democratic nations still carry the residue of slavery and colonisation, as well as the aftermath of eugenicist national policies that has regulated sex and sexuality, as well as ability, criminality and mental health.

The complicity between repressive state apparatuses and the profit-driven corporations which invest in the industries of arms, prison infrastructure and military/security enforcement of national borders, has earned the labels of prison industrial complex, military industrial complex and border industrial complex (Davis, 2016; Boochani, 2018). The complicity between capital and the conditions of incarceration in prisons, camps and borders is the ground upon which abolitionists argue for replacing the carceral infrastructures with rehabilitative and community-based systems of dealing with conflict and crime in society (see Spade, 2018, *Sister Inside*, 2018). As the law and crime carries the bias of favouring capitalists and other powerful figures in society (like the clergy), an abolitionist approach to repressive state apparatuses attends to the inherited oppressive conditions that situate some types of people as more susceptible to commit certain crimes than others. Abolitionists therefore focus attention on divesting from and dismantling the profit-driven approach to rehabilitation, and seeking more local and community based ways for dealing with law, order and justice.

The power knowledge systems that keep such repressive apparatuses in business cannot be maintained without at the same time getting support from ideological state apparatuses. Coercive power might be more concentrated in the state in repressive state apparatuses than in ideological state apparatuses, but the latter provide the vehicles through which power gets exercised.



Ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) operate on behalf of the state in a more diffuse and less coercive manner. As the name suggests, ISAs function through the articulation and dissemination of ideas and beliefs about the order of things in the world. Not directly tied to state action, ISAs can accommodate a greater variety of arrangements under the same institutional banner. ISAs include education, religion, media and communications, the family, and other cultural organisations encompassing activities such as sport and recreation. The greatest difference between ISAs and RSAs is that individuals' subjection to ideology in the former is experienced as more voluntary.

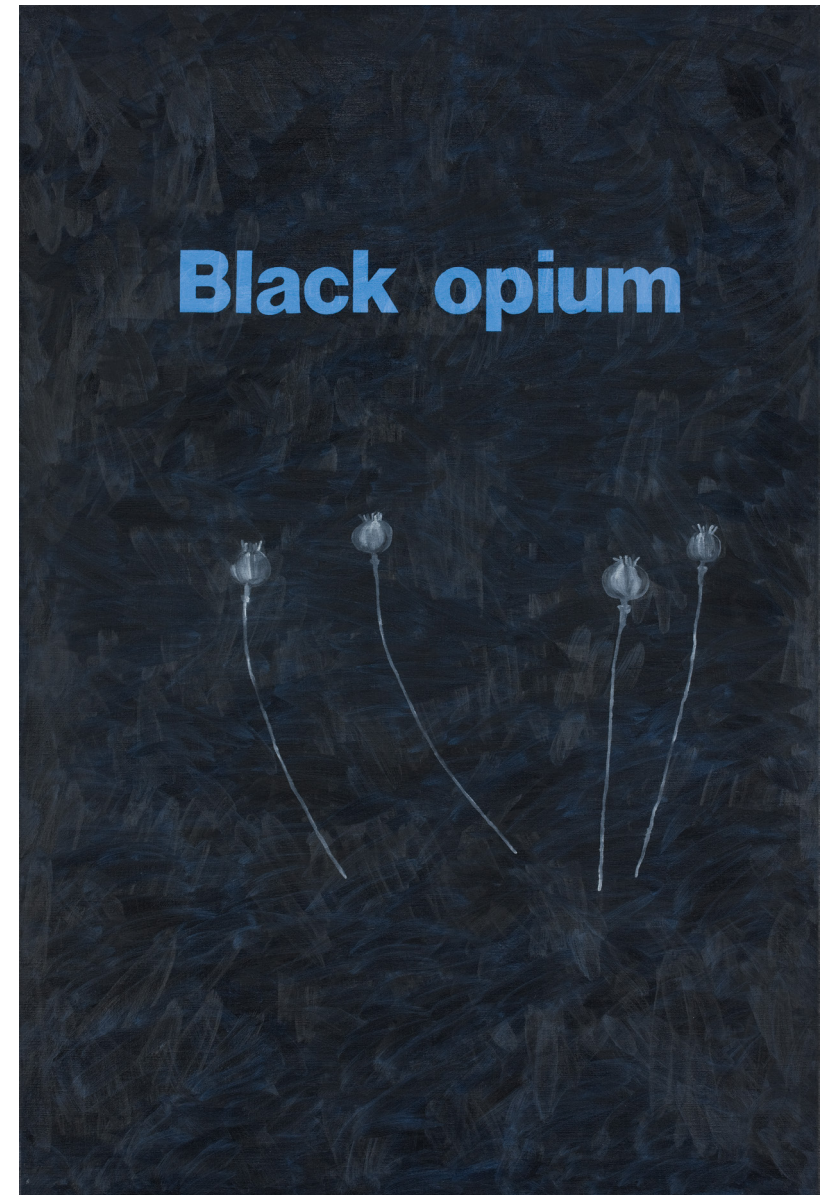
Althusser's schema of RSAs and ISAs enables an analysis of how the dominant ideology of the powerful is enacted through and behalf of the state. While the state presents itself as a neutral actor, arbitrating between and representing a plurality of different interests, analysis of RSAs and ISAs reveals a different story. John Hartley (2002) illustrates this well when he explains that, while all students may sit the same exam in a school, only certain ideologies will pass. Similarly, while all individuals are supposedly equal before the law, there are certain types of people who are more criminalised and have far higher rates of incarceration than others. The media claim to be impartial and represent 'both sides' of a story, but some points of view are considered as incapable of being objective (e.g. women, people of colour), while certain representations are more negatively stereotyped than others. In nation-states like Australia the disproportionate distribution of media ownership, together with the industry's drive to make profit, severely compromises the ability for the press to be free and impartial. Wedge issues and feverish debate increase the hits and circulation of stories, which conditions much reporting to forgo nuance. Together with the concepts of ideology and interpellation, analysis of RSAs and ISAs reveals how the order of things is not natural, or just how things are, but is constituted through struggle between dominant ideologies and marginalised groups.



A protest held to commemorate the anniversary of Ms Dhu's death in police custody.

Fiona Foley is an artist and academic who's 2007 PhD examined Queensland's legislation, "The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act", 1897. It highlights historical methods of control and segregation introduced by the State and provides a space to reflect on contemporaneous practices of control.

Fiona Foley *Black Opium II* 2006



SECULARISM

Most definitions of secularism refer to the principle of separating religion from state affairs. Some interpret this as adopting a stance of state neutrality toward all religions, so that no one religion is privileged over others. Another angle understands that religion should have no influence over state affairs in ways that excludes all religious considerations from all decision-making and policy.

The etymology of *secular* is related to the old French, *seculer*, of 'living in the world, not belonging to a religious order' and 'belonging to a state'. The late Latin, *saecularis*, 'worldly', also pertains to being 'of an age' ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). These meanings contain a shift from locating belief in a divine order to basing belief in the material world.

This shift illustrates the significance of navigating different belief systems when aiming to cultivate 'the common' for the political task of governance. Religious beliefs can be the earliest sense-making grid into which people are socialised for forming a world-view, moral compass and political sympathies. It is easy to see how religious difference presents challenges for a state's neutrality and affairs.

Democratic ideals can become contentious over secularism when placed in relation to the human right to religious expression. In the most generous interpretation, each religious community—whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or otherwise—ought to have the freedom to live their lives in accord with their own faith. This commitment to cultivating a state where the plurality of religious beliefs can co-exist stems to some extent from the desire to avoid the bloodshed associated with many religious wars and crusades (such as the Latin Church aiming to usurp Muslim rule in the Holy lands during medieval times).

The concept of secularism idealises the circumstances needed to negotiate between different religions and sects within them; it is assumed that there is a neutral position from which to deliberate about matters where religious belief influences perception of governmental policies. As essential as such an ideal might be, it must be remembered that the supposed neutrality of the public sphere and state bodies is aspirational, not actual.

If the aim is to develop common ways for speaking about political and ethical matters (such as abortion, euthanasia, the meaning of marriage, or the call to arms), where opinions can differ depending on one's religious, agnostic or atheist beliefs, then creating a space where everyone can hear one another's differences is essential. Reason is supposed to be the channel through which everyone can speak and hear one another whilst also providing the means from which to reach sound decisions. The great faith in this Enlightenment ideal loses stability when the first assumptions regarding what grounds reason come into question and when historical power relations embedded in forms of governance and sociality come into view.

Discussions about the concept and strategies for living up to the ideal of secularism often take place without recognising the historical remnants of the religious traditions that had an instrumental hand in governing state

Woman symbolizing Justice standing at door of building "State", as soldiers block steps to members of different religions.



affairs. From the sovereignty of kingdoms through to the development of nation-states, religious leaders played and still play a role as the keepers of knowledge, arbiters of laws, and conveyors of counsel. Declaring a state secular does not miraculously get rid of religious influence. Western society's ties to Christianity, for instance, dominate the order of the calendar—from tracking what is now called 'before the common era' (BCE) back to when the period was termed 'before Christ' (BC), to noting what public holidays (holy days) are observed. In the United States, the Lord's Prayer is recited at the opening of Parliament. When describing The United States, Tracy Fessenden notes:

'An avowedly secular United States is broadly accommodating of mainstream and evangelical Protestantism, minimally less so of Catholicism, unevenly of Judaism, much less so of Islam, perhaps still less so of Native American religious practices that fall outside the bounds of the acceptably decorative or 'spiritual'—then religion comes to be defined as 'Christian' by default, and an implicit association between 'American' and 'Christian' is upheld even by those who have, one imagines, very little invested in its maintenance' (2007, p. 3)

This context is crucial for understanding the terms in which Western nation-states use a Christian understanding of blasphemy to frame discussions concerning insults aimed at Islam deities (Mahmood, 2008). Presently Islam is also at the centre of the tension between secularism and freedom of religious expression in relation to Muslim women wearing the burqa and hijab (Amer, 2014). The uneven playing field in which such debates take place is well illustrated through the capacity for the Catholic church to withstand explicit exposure of their corruption in relation to institutional child sexual abuse. Comedian, Aamer Rahman makes this point well in his skit on the burqa ban. The situation for Muslims in Western societies today is comparable to the Jewish question throughout Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when visibility and different religious practices and laws became viewed as a problem for state assimilation.

What appears as first sight as a straightforward definition of the division between state and religion is therefore much more muddled on closer inspection. The slant of interpretation, and the particularity of the way people, culture, language, religion and nation are historically entangled, will determine how secularism can be navigated as a democratic ideal. Working through the bias and remnants of previous religious traditions embedded in state institutions and the cultural fabric offers a better chance of cultivating a common polis than presuming that state neutrality is already achieved.

SEX/GENDER DISTINCTION

The sex/gender distinction is used to separate the anatomical assignment of one's sex at birth from the cultural significance and societal expectations that attach to one's designation as male or female. As the gender binary is not as stable as often imagined, and sex, like any other category of identity, has come to be understood as inseparable from its social construction, the sex/gender distinction has also become destabilised.

The English language distinguishes between sex and gender, but other languages such as Spanish and French do not (Haraway, 2001). In French, the closest word to *gender* is *genre*. English's gender binary of men and women is expressed as *sexual différence* in French. The similarity between gender and genre, however, reminds us that the language of Middle English (roughly falling between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries) also classified nouns as feminine or masculine. This is known as grammatical gender. For example, the French *la lampe* (feminine) translates to the English *lamp*; *le lit* (masculine) translates to bed in English.

The etymological roots of *gender* relate to 'kind, sort, class, a class or kind of person or things sharing certain traits' (Online Etymology Dictionary). This aligns with the heritage of more ancient thinking in what we understand as Western and Eastern cultures insofar as both traditions classified physical and metaphysical things in terms of masculine and feminine principles. Rather than aligning each side of the classification with male and female bodies, grammatical or metaphysical gender divided these principles into active and passive associations.

Claire Colebrook (2003) has argued that the fluidity between masculine and feminine principles did not mean that there weren't differences in the status of men and women in earlier times. Citing the work of Thomas Laqueur, she notes also that scientific and medical literature preceding the eighteenth century shows that it was once believed there was only one biological sex. Thinking of sex in terms of a binary opposition of men and women accompanies the increasing association of feminine and masculine principles with the distinct female and male anatomies rather than variations within the same type.

The connection of gender to the binary of sexed bodies is thus a relatively modern idea. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe is marked by seismic shifts in societal organisation, in which classifications for typing identity (race, gender, class, sexuality, disability) solidify. As colonising nations hardened their borders, amid the increasing eugenicist aim to improve the quality of the human population, the solidification of sexed identity emerges in a context where monitoring and regulating heteronormative reproduction becomes a crucial component of governance (Spivak, 2011).

The assignation of two biological sexes became generally accepted, even though there was medical and psychological data suggesting gender variance and intersex bodies are part of the human population. For instance, in the early twentieth century Magnus Hirschfeld, a sexologist, physician, gay rights advocate with eugenicist sympathies, argued that variations in gender

identity were potentially infinite. Hirschfeld's *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Research) was opened in Berlin in 1919, but all archives in the library were destroyed during one of the infamous Nazi book burnings in 1932. Nazi Germany is a notorious case in which a pathological slant on typing identity categories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries fuelled a national obsession to exterminate members of Germany's own population. It is not the only case, however; understanding how the particularity of typing bodies can feed inequality, discrimination and persecution is thus crucial for social justice movements based on identity (Stryker and Whittle, 2007, p. 28).

As social roles ascribed to male and female typed bodies became more restrictive, resistance to the rigidity of dimorphic sex roles emerged. Emphasising how convention was instrumental in assigning roles to sex thus became one way of resisting the assumed natural connection between one's biology and inhabiting masculine or feminine traits.

French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's famous observation in 1949 that 'one is not born a woman, but becomes one' captures this resistance well. The implication here is that the assignation of sex does not and should not prescribe one's societal roles or personal characteristics. This view is also evident in the work of anthropologist Margaret Mead, whose fieldwork in the 1920s and 1930s showed that gender roles varied from one culture to another. Variation in gender roles would not be possible if masculinity and femininity were fixed in biology.

The differentiation between biology and culture became more widely circulated in the 1960s, on its way to becoming articulated as the sex/gender distinction.

As sex became associated with the biological markings of male and female, and gender became associated with the cultural and social inscriptions of what a person is expected to be on the basis of these markings, sexologist and psychiatrist John Money stressed the conventionality of gender roles. In arguing that gender is something that is learned rather innate, his work became tied to the idea that gender identity can be also cultivated through both medical and behavioural interventions (Butler, 2004). This emphasis on gender roles emerged at a time when nature/nurture debates were popularised.

The way in which Money's work is entangled within the nature/nurture debate requires careful navigation. This is especially the case regarding intersex and trans people. Money's work on gender variance developed at a time that was popularising the practice of performing surgery on intersex infants in order to make them conform to either male or female. This practice is widely condemned by intersex activists who have demonstrated that in most cases there is no medical reason to alter the bodies they have been born with; intersexed bodies are not life-threatening. Money's practices have been further condemned for his intervention in the famous case of David Reimer (referred to as John/Joan case), for whom he performed sex-reassignment surgery and continued hormonal treatment after a botched

circumcision when David was an infant. David committed suicide at the age of 38 (Butler, 2004).

In discussing the case, some have confused Money's focus on 'gender as learned' as meaning the same thing as understanding both sex and gender as a social construction. The difference is that learned behaviour of gender is something that people are socialised into, whereas the social construction of gender refers to the way the meaning of the category of gender shifts through space and time. This focus on the shifting meaning of the categories of both sex and gender is taken up by Judith Butler, as further discussed below.

Another psychiatrist, Robert Stoller (in Stryker and Whittle, 2007), also working with trans people, concluded in the late 1960s that traits of masculinity and femininity are not necessarily connected to a male and a female sex. Coinciding with the second wave of feminism, and work published by researchers like Ann Oakley, the finding that there was no necessary connection between one's sex assignation as male and masculinity, or assigned female and femininity, had obvious political valency.

If there is no natural connection between men and masculinity, women and femininity, then inequalities between the so-called sexes are not natural. Many feminist practices begin analysis with this assumption. As such, they focus on how the category of gender gets used to form different structures of power and inequality where men's interests gain dominance.

A lot of equal opportunity policy assumes that cementing traits of masculinity and femininity to male and female bodies is the cause of inequality, and what needs to change are 'culturally produced assumptions, expectations, conventions and stereotypes' dictating what is supposed as normal behaviour for binarised gender of men and women (Cranny-Francis, 2002).

As useful as the sex/gender distinction has been for feminist analysis and policy making, Judith Butler questions the grounding of sex in biology, but in a different way to sexologists and psychiatrists like Money and Stoller. For Butler (1990, 1993), sex as a category is also dependent on the language and culture that makes that category intelligible. As it was once believed there was only one biological sex, and as different cultures count more than two sexes (the *hijra* are recognised as a third sex in India), we can see that the categories available to any language and culture change according to historical period and/or social and political context. The biological divisions made through the category of sex are thus dependent upon the political and cultural conditions in which such typing becomes important.

Butler questions the sex/gender distinction that fits a social constructionist lens in both *Gender trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that matter* (1993). Through reflecting on the idea of construction, we can reconsider the relationship between the categorisation of sex on the one hand and on the other hand the concept of gender performativity—that gender as something we do rather than something that we are—with both aspects becoming entangled within the discursive grid that renders sex and gender intelligible. Butler asks if it is possible to think of the construction of something—gender



Students organized by the Nazi party parade in front of the building of the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin prior to pillaging it on May 6, 1933. They confiscated its books, photos and periodicals for burning. The Institute had been established by Magnus Hirschfeld, a Jewish homosexual doctor, as a center for sexology. It provided counselling and other services, and sought rights for homosexuals and transsexuals.

for instance—as dependent on a pre-given thing—like sex—where the latter is supposed as extra-discursive (beyond or outside discourse). Like poststructuralist theorists who her work is aligned with, Butler asks how it is possible to reach the extra-discursive without articulating what is delimited as such through the discursive. If we supposed that sex is the already-there raw material from which gender acquisition and socialisation are imposed, we would have to forget that we can only make such a claim that is ‘formed from the very discourse from which it seeks to free itself’ (Butler, 1993 p. 11). Butler goes on:

‘This delimitation, which often is enacted as an untheorized presupposition in any act of description, marks a boundary that includes and excludes, that decides, as it were, what will and will not be the stuff of the object to which we then refer. This marking off will have some normative force and, indeed, some violence, for it can construct only through erasing; it can bound a thing only through enforcing a certain criterion, a principle of selectivity’ (Butler, 1993, p. 11).

The destabilisation of the sex/gender distinction is therefore twofold. Firstly, the empirical evidence already shows that intersex and gender variant bodies can be charted in biological discourse, rendering the idea of only two discrete sexes as inaccurate even within its own terms. Second, what is delimited as sex/gender issues within biological discourse is itself guided by the presuppositions researchers take into their work.

Research results will be different if only two sexes are supposed in data collection, as opposed to a broader spectrum of gender identities. The assumption of two discrete, stable sexed identities also cultivates the terms in which non-normative sexualities are understood. Hence, the destabilisation of the sex/gender distinction also disrupts the categorisation of sexuality in terms of same-sex desire and relations. Butler calls the normative complicity between categorisations of sex, gender and sexuality, the heterosexual matrix. The heterosexual matrix forms a conduit through which populations can be monitored and regulated. Whether aiming to cultivate a White nation, as was the case in Australia, or even a ‘healthy’ population, the heterosexual matrix governs the way in which sex, gender and sexuality play a role in the desired composition of a society. In this way, Butler’s critique of the sex/gender distinction extends the analysis to the way in which sex, gender and sexuality can be understood. This in turn extends the potential for challenging power relations.



Judith Butler at CCBH 2018.

SEX WARS, SEX WORK AND PORNOGRAPHY

Divinyls *Pleasure And Pain*

Velvet Underground *Venus In Furs*

The politics of sexuality produce some of the most polarizing and intense debates in the public sphere, where odd alliances are sometimes forged between feminists and conservatives. While most of written literature about the sex wars is in the US, the same issues and debates were fought in Australia and other nations. The height of the sex wars took place in the 1980s and 1990s, but many of the debates remain today.

American professor of social and cultural analysis Lisa Duggan describes the sex wars as political and cultural ‘battles over the regulations of pornography, the scope of legal protections for gay people, the funding of allegedly “obscene” art, the content of safe sex education, the scope of reproductive freedom for women, the extent of sexual abuse for children in day care centers, the sexual content of public school curricula, and more’ ([1995] 2006, p. 1).

Duggan addresses the sex wars from a position of sexual dissent as a means for forging ‘a connection among sexual expressions, oppositional politics and claims to public space ... for sexual minorities and gender non-conformists’ (2006, p. 5). She divides the sex wars into three main categories of sexual dissent ‘in sexual representation, in the law and in activism in the academy’. For each of these divisions, debates erupt not just between conservatives and feminists but among feminists themselves. These debates also extend to education and often involve activists and academics from LGBTIQA+ communities.

To put things in context, there has been a proclivity for some feminists to turn to methods of prohibition and censorship to deal with issues relating to the oppression of women. Early temperance laws were supported on the assumption that less alcohol would lead to less violence against women. Lessons from that era tell us that prohibition did not lead to emancipation (Duggan, 2006, p. 66).

Some early feminists also supported laws against what was then called prostitution on the basis that selling sex through access to one’s body further oppressed and objectified women. As anarchist feminist Emma Goldman wrote in *The traffic of women* (1910): ‘Nowhere is woman treated according to the merit of her work, but rather as a sex ... it is merely a question of degree whether she sells herself to one man, in or out of marriage, or to many men.’

Similar issues have been repeated in second wave feminism, where the promise of a counter-culture that emphasised sexual liberation did not translate into increased pleasure and freedom. Many women claimed they still experienced objectification and subordination in their sexual relationships with men, which were reinforced by cultural representations that did the same. The goal of sexual liberation that feminists had shared with the gay and lesbian movement was tarnished by the dissatisfaction and continued objectification of women as a social group (hooks, [1984] 2000).

The feminist opposition to objectification and subordination had created a situation in which segments of the women’s liberation movement



CODE:RED Venice. The red umbrella march, public action, 49th Venice Biennale, 2001.

saw little or no difference between what gets called prostitution and what constitutes pornography. One of the difficulties facing feminist discussions regarding the sex-related industries centres on the entanglements that can arise between economic exploitation and sexual exploitation.

There is no doubt that sexual trafficking and human trafficking are heinous acts of exploitation with a long history in which millions of mostly women and children—both girls and boys—are traded and sold for sex without their consent. The sex wars and sex work are not about disputes regarding the factual existence of trafficking. However, because there are some feminists who have argued that selling sex in any form is coercive and cannot be consensual (McKinnon, 2007), it has become important to stress the distinction between forced sexual labour and the choices people make for themselves, sometimes through migration, sometimes not, when entering into what is now called sex work. Some may argue that constructing a dichotomy between trafficking and sex work is misleading; it is precisely because the two get spoken of together so often that one needs to be careful about how to navigate the difference (Bettio et al. 2017)

The term *sex work* was coined by Carol Leigh (1997), also known as Scarlot Harlot, a long-term activist in San Francisco. The year before Margo St James, who founded sex work organisation Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics COYOTE), made a claim similar to Emma Goldman's: 'to make a great distinction between being paid for an hour's sexual services, or an hour's typing, or an hour's acting on a stage is to make a distinction that is not there' (Chapkis, 1997).

Anthropologist Laura Agustín takes up this emphasis on work to separate the conflation of trafficking from those who sell sex. Deploying the approach of listening to people speaking on their own behalf about issues

SEX WARS, SEX WORK AND PORNOGRAPHY

affecting their life experiences, Agustín says in an interview with Susie Bright, 'I wanted to know why there was such a big difference between what migrants said about themselves, and what Europeans said about them, and I couldn't begin to understand why there was such prejudice toward women who sell sex.' (Agustín and Bright, 2007)

When feminists debate sex work among themselves, matters seem to get stuck or become undone over whether selling sex is inherently violent or whether conditions of labour have fostered violence due to stigmatisation of this work. Much of the time, people debate sex work without clarifying what such work entails. Sex work can range from private escorts to street workers, those who provide erotic massages in residences to brothel workers; sexual acts can range from hand relief to BD/SM and kink, to porn actors in film and strippers on stage, and telephone sex to sex through web-cams. Not all sex workers are women, though most are. There are males who sell sex to women, males who sell sex to other males, and women who sell sex to women as well. Trans and gender diverse sex workers, especially those of colour, are disproportionately subjected to violence, and have expressed higher levels of fear when anti-trafficking laws get conflated with and adversely affect their profession (Stahl, 2018). It is evident that where decriminalisation and occupational, health and safety conditions for sex workers are prioritised, they are less prone to becoming subjected to violence and murder (Sky News, 2010).

In contrast to Agustín, legal feminist Catharine McKinnon (2007) regards sex work as inherently coercive. McKinnon advocates the Swedish or Nordic model in which men are criminalised for buying sex. McKinnon's position that sex work is an issue of gender equality, and will always subordinate women, also informs her notorious views on pornography.

The sex wars during the 1980s in the United States reached a peak when Catharine McKinnon, alongside radical feminist Andrea Dworkin, wrote the Anti-pornography Civil Rights Ordinance. In this ordinance, they shifted away from defining pornography in relation to the obscenity standard, instead proposing a law that classified pornography as 'graphic sexually explicit materials that subordinate women through pictures or words' (McKinnon and Dworkin, 1988, p. 36). In this proposal, pornography shifted from an issue of public morality, as implied in obscenity law, to an issue of the subordination of women. While several US states passed various forms of this ordinance, the legislation became largely struck down and inoperative due to it being seen as a violation of free speech.

As with sex work, debates often erupt without any agreed definition of what constitutes pornography. Under McKinnon and Dworkin's definition, anti-pornographic material can easily fall prey to containing images and text with sexually explicit material that subordinates women. Thus Dworkin's own books, like *Intercourse*, anti-pornographic movies like *This is*



Photographic portrait of Emma Goldman, facing left, circa 1911. T. Kajiwara.

not a love story and *Lesbian erotica*, could all technically qualify as perpetuating the subordination of women.

Sex-positive feminists responded by pointing out the irony in silencing those women who did not see their own work or representation in the porn industry in terms of falling victim to the patriarchy. As Donna Haraway put it, MacKinnon's understanding of women's experience 'does not so much marginalize as obliterate the authority of any other women's political speech and action. It is a totalization producing what Western patriarchy itself never succeeded in doing—feminists' consciousness of the non-existence of women, except as products of men's desire' (Haraway, 1989, p. 183).

The other troubling aspect of perceiving pornography in terms of always subordinating women concerns representation. McKinnon (1994, p.20) overtly states that 'representation is reality' and logically concludes that 'pornography is no less an act than the rape and torture it represents'. The relationship between representation and reality is not so simple.

Dworkin and McKinnon's positioning of pornography leaves no room to think through its complexity: while representations might indicate what is going on in a culture, in a specific site, this does not mean that censoring representations will necessarily produce a different culture, or that representations constitute reality. Such a totalising view of representation, coupled with a failure to distinguish sexual explicitness from misogyny and violence, has implications for dealing with sex in other areas that have also been subjected to moral panic.

It seems the very mention of sex, especially if related to pleasure rather than reproduction, and more so if it involves discussions of LGBTIQA+ identities, is enough to incite a culture war. A recent example occurred in Australia: sex education in the Safe Schools program.

In February 2016, *The Australian* newspaper ran a front-page story on the Safe Schools Coalition with the headline, 'Activists push taxpayer-funded gay manual in schools'. The coalition actually ran an anti-bullying program, funded by the federal education department, which discussed issues relating to sexuality and gender identity. The aim was to create a more inclusive environment for LGBTIQA+ students, teaching all participating students about the values of safety and respect regarding sexuality and gender. The February article was the first of around 200 stories that appeared in Australia's only national newspaper over the following year. On the day of the first story, Safe Schools was debated in Parliament, and within a fortnight the government had launched a review of the program. During the moral panic one of the leading teachers, Roz Ward, was suspended from her role and then reinstated, and over 30 articles were published about her alone. Articles commented on her gender presentation and her sexuality, and noted that she identified as a socialist and Marxist. In the first weeks of the panic, federal funding was suspended; by the end of 2017 the program had been transferred to be administered and taught under state control (Law, 2017).



The campaign against Safe Schools was launched during another sex panic over marriage equality. In both campaigns, the scare tactics focused on the idea that vulnerable children were exposed to sexual depravity and subject to what tabloid columnists call gender ideology. Like most sex panics, the Safe Schools controversy revealed how conservative forces will resort to old tricks of expressing care about taxpayers' money and vulnerable children when their actual political alliances and policies work to cut programs and support for youth, education and redressing economic equality.

While the Safe Schools controversy did not pit feminists or LGBTIQA+ folk against one another in the same way that sex work and pornography have done, there was internal dissent and infighting which split people over sex-positive and sexually conservative approaches to the issue. The controversy did not produce explicit alliances between conservatives, LGBTIQA+ folk and feminists, but conservative forces certainly affected how people from within, and in support of, the Safe Schools Coalition would talk about sex and in some cases minimise talk of sexual pleasure, sexual acts and gender diversity. If there is one thing that remains constant in sex wars, it is the difficulty of maintaining a space for talking about and engaging in a sex-positive culture.

SIGN

The concept of the sign is key for textual analysis and making connections between representation and ideology. The study of signs is known as semiology or semiotics and emerges from the works of Charles Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure (Sebeok, 1994; Hartley, 2002).

Signs are important to Charles Peirce ([1985] 1994) because they are the conduit through which representation takes place and through which meaning is acquired. Interpretation is crucial to both representation and meaning acquisition. Peirce developed a very detailed and complex classification systems of signs, which can be reduced more simply to three types: the iconic, indexical and symbolic. Iconic signs resemble that which they represent. For example, a picture or toy globe resembles the Earth in miniature. Indexical signs, like the indexical finger, are those that point to some kind of causal or correlative relationship. A scowling face indicates an unhappy emotion like anger or displeasure. The smell or sight of smoke indicates a fire is nearby. Black clouds indicate impending rain. Finally, a symbol is the kind of sign that bears a somewhat arbitrary relationship with that which it represents. Nouns are symbols insofar as the word bears little to no resemblance, correlation or causal relationship with the thing it represents.

While the icon, index and symbol can be useful for distinguishing varying levels of connectedness and conventionality between a sign and what it represents, it can be difficult to work out the scale between resemblance and convention. Take for example, the stick figures that are often used on bathroom doors that are supposed to represent male and female icons. In what way does the supposed dress, drawn in the shape of triangle on the stick figure, resemble what we take to be women? We would have to take into account the conventionality of codes of dress as gendered before jumping to the conclusion that the triangle resembles women; thus what might appear as iconic to some at first sight (the assumption that only those assigned women at birth wear dresses), is not on closer inspection. As an indexical sign, we could conclude that there is a correlation in space and time between women and the dress drawn on the stick figure, but then again the history of dress codes is conventional. When signs are perceived as more conventional, they are perceived as less natural and accurate markers of truth.

The conventionality of signs is captured in Saussure's division of the sign into the two components of signifier and signified. The signifier and signified are connected like two sides of a piece of paper. The division between the front and back of the paper cannot be seen, even though it makes possible the distinction between the two sides. The signifier indicates the 'sound-image' whereas the signified is the concept. If we sound out *c-a-t*, for instance, this signifier conjures the concept of *cat*. We know that the word for cat will sound very different depending on what language we speak (*chat* in French or *keci* in Turkish), so there is nothing natural or inherent in the actual cat or concept of the cat that connects to the signifier. Saussure describes this conventionality between the signifier and signified as the 'arbitrariness of the signifier'. For textual analysis, teasing out relationships

between the signifier and signified can show us how conventional associations between a signifier and signified relate to the power relations carried through an ideological level of meaning Saussure ([1916] 1985, pp. 37–39).

Roland Barthes ([1957] 1972) developed Saussure's semiotics to more explicitly deal with ways in which signs are linked to ideology. Barthes attaches the signifier and signified to what he describes as the denotative and connotative level of meaning. These two components of signs combine in a third order of signification, termed myth. Myth relates to the ideological level of meaning—the level at which culture naturalises the conditions in which history gets made. Barthes method of textual analysis is perhaps the most accessible and productive tool for denaturalising myths—in the ideological sense—of culture.

The denotative level of meaning, or signifier, operates on the level of the literal sound impression or image under analysis. At this level of meaning, the analyst describes what is literally seen or heard. I may see an image of a long-stemmed red rose. I may read a text on a packet of spaghetti and notice the colours of the packaging. I may look on the cover of a magazine, and register the approximate age, gender, skin colour, clothes and stance of the person on it. The connotative meaning, as the word suggests, refers to the associations of the literal description.

In Western culture the colour red usually denotes passion or danger. It is associated with prosperity in Chinese culture. It can also signal blood. The situation, other signs around it, and context will condition what associations dominate a reading. In the case of a long-stemmed red rose, the most common association would be passion and romance. In Barthes reading of spaghetti, he notices the packaging bears the same colours of the Italian flag, connoting a level of authenticity in the product's relation to nation in which such food is local and famous.

When Barthes analyses the cover of *Paris Match* magazine he finds in a Barber's shop, he notices a young black boy, dressed in a French military uniform, who is saluting with his head raised. This is the denotative level of meaning. Readers can readily associate the soldier's stance and expression with patriotism, which is the connotative level of meaning. When Barthes identifies the soldier as Algerian, he notes how the history of Algeria's struggle for independence from France must be dissociated for the boy's French patriotism to be read as natural.

Barthes explains that the biography of the soldier must be 'put at a distance' in order to reinforce French imperialism. History is passed into nature, purifying the colonial past into innocence. Compare Barthes' example to the way in which Aboriginal people are sometimes used as symbols of national unity: Athlete, Cathy Freeman lighting the torch for the Sydney 2000 Olympics; Australian Football League player, Adam Goodes named Australian of the Year in 2014. As the third order of signification, myth attaches cultural values and beliefs to the first two orders of signification (the signifier as denotation and signified as connotation). The symbols

and rhetoric of national unity are often attached to minority identities to pull difference back into the realm of the presumed commonality of dominant culture.

Tracking the way in which cultural values and beliefs get attached to signifiers exposes how meaning changes with context and can be deployed to influence public opinion. Consider the changing connotative meanings on refugees in nations like Australia, the United States and Britain. The condition of the people in question has not changed—the denotation stays the same in that refugees are those who are displaced from their homeland. However, the combined forces of a profit driven press, a border-industrial complex and successive government campaigns and policies couched in terms of national security has shifted the connotations from people in need to those who are a national threat. The repeated use of terms like boat people, queue jumpers, economic migrants, illegals has altered the dominant grid of intelligibility from which discussion about refugees can take place. Learning about signification shows us that language is not merely a vehicle to express meaning; it is constitutive of it. Engaging with how signification and language operates is one way of understanding and transforming the terms of debate for dealing with difference in democracies.

SOVEREIGNTY

Dictionaries define sovereignty as supreme power or authority. Such power is usually associated with a body politic and is sometimes used to describe having autonomy over one's own body. National sovereignty refers to a state having the right to govern itself without outside interference. Similarly, we can think of a sovereign subject as one who has the right to self-determination.

The English word *sovereign* derives from the thirteenth century Old French *soverain*, in which the noun refers to 'sovereign, lord, ruler' and the adjective refers to 'highest, supreme, chief' ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). From vulgar Latin, *sovereign* relates to *superanus*, translating to 'chief, principal' and derives its meaning from *uper*, meaning 'over'. The spelling comes from the folk etymology for *reign*, which relates to 'kingdom, dominion, rule' ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). The historical lineage that follows the association of sovereignty with kingdoms to present-day ideas regarding the governance of democratic nations prompts the question of how the parameters of self-governance, or rule of the people, can be drawn.

In relation to national sovereignty, the principle of self-governance of a people confronts the difficulty of deciding who gets included in and recognised as 'the people.' To take the example of a settler colony like Australia, the sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was never ceded and remains without a treaty to this day. While the authority and legitimacy of Australia as a nation-state might be recognised by the international body of the United Nations, the institution and declaration of autonomous rule has occurred through dispossession of the self-governance of the traditional custodians of the land. Academic and lawyer Irene Watson (2002), who is an Indigenous woman of the Tanganekald and Meintangk peoples, gets to the heart of the problem when she states, 'Aboriginal Law holds the position of the European ideas of sovereignty. But is different in that it is not imposed by force of arms and is not exclusive in its embrace'. To illustrate the difference she distinguishes between laws of place, connected to the traditional custodians of the land, and laws of states.

Aboriginal people continue to claim their sovereignty, which was famously articulated in 1972 when a group of activists set up tents on the lawns of the old Australian Parliament in Canberra, establishing the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. There are still activists who keep the Tent Embassy alive through a semi-permanent assemblage. Many Aboriginal people argue that democratic inclusion by way of citizenship cannot undo the violence of settler colonialism, which compromises the very idea of Australia as a sovereign state (Howell, Foley and Schaap, 2013).

The struggle for Indigenous sovereignty has wider implications for the sovereignty for democratic nation-states in general. As the ideal of democracy is based on the principle of the rule of the people, the question arises as to how such rule is to be shared. Self-governance makes better sense over one's own body (though the very identity of a self is dependent on its difference from others) but, where a body politic is concerned, the self-identity of a nation contains the division of differences among the people.



The history of establishing democratic nations shows that the constitution of a people must tackle differences among the population from the start. Political participation and voting rights did not initially include women and were restricted to property owners. As nation-states declared themselves democracies, the idea of treating everyone as equal citizens also raised concern as to how to deal with the difference of diasporic Jewish people who were abiding by their own rabbinical laws and customs throughout Europe.

Karl Marx ([1843] 1972) argued that, while democratic states are supposed to eradicate differences established through birth, rank, occupation and education, their decrees for equality were nominal only. For Marx the Jewish question, the woman question, and the status of working classes showed that, in actuality, religious belief, occupation, private property and education, when left to 'act after their own fashion', merely entrenched the particularity of their influence and power. From this perspective, the sovereignty claimed by nation-states is based on a false equivalence and universalism between citizens. All these differences within a democracy therefore call into question the self-identity and autonomy that sovereignty presumes.

French philosopher Jacques Derrida (2005) focuses on the paradox of presuming the indivisibility of a sovereign state or body politic and dealing with the divisions through difference within democratic nation states. This paradox suggests it is impossible for a nation to reach a unified self-identity. Rather than seeing this as a cause for alarm, Derrida claims this is what gives the ideal of democracy its best chance to remain open to hearing the call for equality and freedom from anyone. It is as if the power or authority to rule is held in check by constantly having to adjust to those others through which a self (whether a person or a nation) is able to form its own identity. As such, the whole idea of sovereign borders must be seen in all their historical messiness rather than as an already intact entity.



STEREOTYPE

Stereotype is a word used in everyday language that takes on more significance when studied in the context of differences in democracy. Stereotypes refer to the way a few general characteristics or traits associated with a social group become fixed, such that anyone perceived as belonging to that group becomes stamped with the same impression.

The word *stereotype* emerged in the late eighteenth century, referring to the method of printing from a metal plate onto paper ([Online Etymology Dictionary](#)). Rows of typesetting were cast into a mould so that the metal plate could make multiple copies of the same text at a high speed. Once the metal plate was set, the typesetting could not be changed. Like the stereotype designating the metal printing plate, stereotypes attached to people and things rapidly reproduce the same image in ways that are hard to change once they are set.

Stereotypes usually rely on a few visual clues as a means of characterising people. Markers such as skin colour, hairstyle, accent and modes of behaviour, for example, serve as ways of identifying what type of person an individual is expected to be through a stereotypical reading of such traits. Consider the character Apu in the long running American animated sit-com *The Simpsons* (1989– present). Set in the fictional town of Springfield, the show centres on the working-class life of the Simpson family, consisting of a mother, father and three kids. Apu is the Indian immigrant who runs the local convenience store, the Kwik-E-Mart. He has a thick Indian accent, prays to the God Ganesh, and has been depicted as selling spoiled merchandise such as groceries that have gone past their use-by dates.

In 2017 comedian Hari Kondabolu wrote and starred in the documentary *The problem with Apu* as a way of showing how the Indian stereotype has a negative impact on people of South Asian descent. Critics argue that Apu's character enables racially motivated bullying toward kids who look South Asian, for example by mocking the Indian accent in the frequently uttered storekeeper's phrase, 'Thank you, come again'.

The problem with the stereotype is not a question of presenting a more accurate picture of South Asian people. No doubt we will be able to find people of South Asian descent who do have an Indian accent and work in convenience stores. The problem is rather to recognise how the stereotype operates in the broader cultural fabric of everyday life and how this links to prejudice, inequity and oppression. This involves identifying how representation is connected to power relations.

Minorities and the marginalised become invested with the circulation of stereotypes because representations in popular culture are so few. Compared with other groups, marginal people do not have the same means and access to producing images in the dominant culture. Representations that do appear in popular culture for a minority or marginalised group have widespread impact for how all people belonging to that social group are read and perceived. In contrast, people behaving badly within a dominant culture are cast as a few 'bad apples' among the good. Stereotypes, in other

words, disallow complexity in character for the marginal. This is illustrated in numerous examples such as media portrayals of ‘terrorists’, women in leadership roles, crime associated with migrants and Black youth, and suggestions of drunkenness and welfare bludging that become attached to portrayals of Aboriginal people. All of these stereotypes share the erroneous practice of classifying people with fixed traits, as if they were inherent to the character of the social group and not caught up in the classificatory processes and uneven distribution of power borne out of historical struggles.

While stereotypes can fix perceptions of majority and dominant cultures in a positive manner, this does not mean that stereotyping is therefore a positive practice. For instance, superhero stereotypes attached to masculinity still have the effect of diminishing traits associated with femininity. Positive portrayals of Australian mateship (the idea that friendship among men in Australia is imbued with loyalty and equality) still makes it easier for some gendered, sexualised and racialised characteristics to be valued over others. As Cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall (1997) argues wherever stereotypes operate, divisions cut the line between those who are accorded greater status over others, those who belong and those who don’t, and those who are deemed normal and abnormal. Ultimately stereotypes operate in ways that create a ‘them’ over whom an ‘us’ maintains its power.

To transform the divisions that stereotypes create, it therefore might be more productive to focus on which institutional structures uphold some representations over others rather than aiming to present the ‘real’ character of a particular social group. All social groups contain diversity within their ranks; it is, however, only the dominant culture that is not negatively impacted and constrained by cardboard cut-out versions of itself (Hartley, 2002).

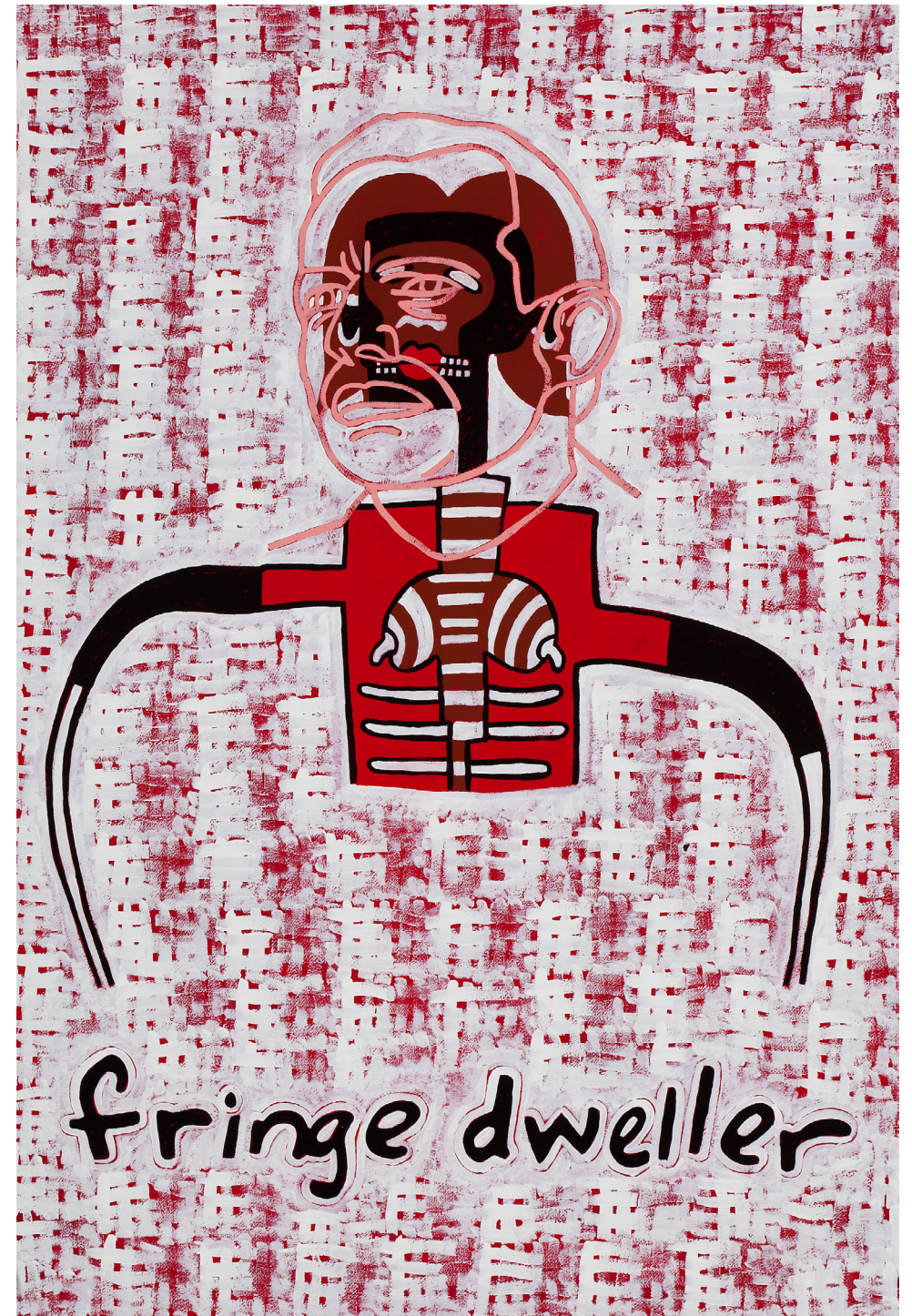


A stereotype mould (“flong”) being made, 1953.



An engraving of the peoples of the world. Showing: A European couple, an Asian couple, an African couple and an American couple. Below are an Englishman, a Dutchman, a German and a Frenchman.

Gordon Bennett challenged cultural identity, both self identity, and applied identity. Bennett variously reclaimed Indigenous practice, criticised non-indigenous forays into those aesthetics, and refused to be pigeonholed into a declared type. *Abstraction (Fringe Dweller)* shows a magazine personality portrait superimposed over a First Nation form.



TRANS AND INTERSEX IDENTITIES, TRANSGENDER STUDIES

The Rocky Horror Picture Show *Sweet Transvestite*

Gloria Gaynor *I Am What I Am*

Trans identities have been debated by everyday people and public figures as if all were experts on both historical knowledge about and the lived experiences of those that identify as trans. Mark Lilla's (2016) notorious New York piece on identity politics situates debates about trans bathrooms in terms that trivialised the matter as one that distracts citizens from more important issues. In debates about anti-bullying programs and sex education, scare campaigns have been launched that educators are messing with kids' gender identities by speaking about trans issues. On the subject of trans kids, people who have never studied biology, sexology or gender feel qualified to speak about puberty blockers, hormone treatment and the decisions that trans kids, their parents and their professional support networks may need to discuss. Americans keep debating and changing their rules about the inclusion of trans folk in armed services, while proposed amendments to the Gender Recognition Act in the UK has inflamed debates between some feminists and trans folk and activists. In all these debates trans identities are often discussed as if the category of gender itself stands on fixed grounds. How would debates about gender and transgender change, if we paid attention to the way in which gender identity has been produced over time and space, and so conditioned the frameworks we have to express our lived experiences? How can a more sensitive public vocabulary be developed for talking about this stuff become more available for those who experience dysphoria between the sex they were assigned at birth, and the gender identity they believe fits their sense of self and body better?

Trans is an umbrella term to describe variance to one's assigned gender identity at birth. The term has been contested for what it can include and for how it can fail to distinguish between very different lived experiences by people who may identify as such. At its broadest, trans—sometimes written as trans*—has stood for transgender, transsexual and even intersex. In earlier times, terms such as 'transvestite' and 'cross-dresser' were used within the gay and lesbian liberation movement, though these words are considered derogatory and inappropriate nowadays. From the mid twentieth century, trans identities also intersected with those performing as drag kings and drag queens, butch lesbians and effeminate men, even though people from both sides of the trans and non-trans identities would object to being perceived as the same or similar (Stryker, 2007).

More recent identity categories like non-binary and gender queer do not necessarily come under the trans umbrella but share some characteristics with some trans folk who consider themselves between or beyond the gender binary. Many trans folk and scholars distinguish between transgender and transsexual; this is mostly because the latter term has been used by self-identifying transsexuals to signal having undergone sex affirmation surgery. Within the trans community, however, there is much variation in the amount of hormonal or surgical alteration a person might undergo. This short description of the various ways in which trans can be used to describe gender identity reflects the ways in which language itself is a moving system

of differences from which humans attempt to find some stability in the acquisition of meaning.

Trans has not been the term for gender variance in non-European societies. Many Indigenous people have their own 'linguistic frameworks for dealing with sexual and gender diversity' (Whittaker, 2015). In Australia, sistergirls and brotherboys are more frequently used than trans (Clarke, 2015, Hodge, 2015). For Native Americans the term 'two spirit', having both male and female identity within the same person, does not quite translate to trans, or gay, or lesbian. Western anthropologists have sometimes used the term 'third gender' to describe gender variance in cultures as varied as Samoa's Fa'afafine to Hijra in South Asia. The terms that can be used for gender variance and for transition from one's assigned gender at birth to a different gender at puberty and adulthood are many (Parker, 2017). Connections between activist and academic work, between non-European gender diverse communities and European trans and gender diverse communities, are continually growing. As with so many other forms of classification and knowledge production, Anglophile nomenclature has come to dominate the setting of international agendas insofar as trans and gender diverse categories are becoming the most prevalent way of articulating gender variance and gender transition. As always, those working with gender-diverse people in non-English speaking and cross-cultural contexts need to be mindful to hear how people identify themselves against the institutional power/knowledge relations in which they live.

The prefix *trans* signals the meaning for 'across, beyond, through, on the other side of, to go beyond'. The Online Etymology Dictionary also describes the chemical use of trans as 'compound in which two characteristic groups are situated on opposite sides of an axis of a molecule'. From this meaning, we can see how the term *cis* has come to be used to describe cis-gendered people. The prefix *cis* marks something as 'on the near side of, on this side', so can describe someone whose birth assignment matches their gender identity as cis-gendered. Julia Serrano's *Whipping girl* (2007) is possibly the first publication to use the term cis-gender, so it seems the term is attributable to her. The term *cis* helps de-pathologise the historical marking of trans.

Pick up any psychology textbook published prior to the 1970s to see how mainstream European psychiatric and medical discourses categorised and pathologised people through the terms transsexuals, transvestites (under the same heading of sexual perversions as homosexuals), asexuals, fetishists, and those with sadist and masochistic desires. Prior to the coining of these terms, sexual excessiveness and frigidity were both increasingly understood in the late nineteenth century as related to gender confusion or gender inversion, which goes some way to explaining why some people still have trouble distinguishing the LGBTQ letters from the T in discussions today. In the alphabet soup acronym the I, for intersex, has been also subsumed or left out of the dominance of LGBTIQ+ agendas for similar reasons.

Intersex folk have organised on their own behalf and distinguish themselves from trans people insofar as their identities have been classified through anatomical variance from the normative biological classifications for male or female. There are many intersex conditions, which include having both ovarian and testicular tissues, traits of what is designated as female and male in genital development, and variations in expected hormonal levels and chromosomal make up in contrast to the average male and female classifications. Very few intersex conditions are life-threatening and activists have spent many decades opposing those medical practitioners who advocate altering the bodies of newborns and babies who display variance in their assignment of sex. In recent controversies in the sporting arena, there have been uninformed calls for body alteration in adults, as has been the case with the runner Caster Semenya.

Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA) and the Intersex Society of North America are two organisations that have kept watch on the status and rights of people who have intersex conditions. The ISNA ceased operating in 2008, and their work is archived through InterACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth. Intersex Studies is emerging as a field of inquiry, organising their own interdisciplinary conferences since 2016. Medical and legal discourses still tend to drown out the voices of intersex people organising their needs on their own behalf. Classification of intersex is contested between medical practitioners and gender theorists who are also biologists, like Anne Fausto-Sterling (1993, 2000, 2012). Medical practitioners still carry a bias as to what is visible in an infant's body and so have a lower estimate of how many people have intersex conditions. In reviewing all available data, which can only be estimated given the medical establishment's reluctance to pay attention to the lived experiences articulated through intersex organisations, the IHRA states that approximately 1.7 percent of the population have intersex conditions. Intersex people have to navigate and negotiate institutional arrangements that stigmatise their identities as ranging between and beyond the gender binary; for decades, and against the inheritance of spurious medical and psychiatric intervention, intersex activists have advocated an acceptance of gender variance as part of the normal distribution of a population.

A way of distinguishing trans from intersex is that the former more often articulate a disconnect between the sex they were assigned at birth and the sex that they feel themselves to be. The clinical term for this is gender dysphoria, which is now used in the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental illnesses* 5. Trans communities have varied responses to the existence of the classification of gender dysphoria, because of its relationship to a manual for mental illness. Activists have fought against the pathologisation of their own identities, at the same time as they have navigated the gatekeeping power of medical, psychiatric and legal institutions to access what they need to lead a sustainable and healthy life (Chase, 2006, Spade, 2006). Learning how gender identity and sexuality have been historically entangled can provide

some knowledge in the journey of depathologising the ways in which gender variance, diversity and sexuality have been understood.

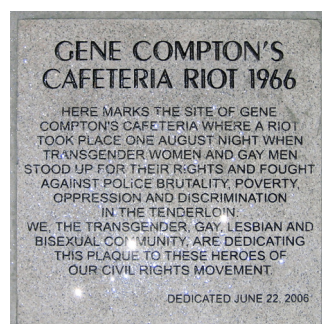
To mark the difference between gender identity and sexuality, Dr John F. Oliven wrote a medical text coining the word *transgenderism*. This term more accurately describes transsexual, and most trans scholars attribute the coining and popularisation of transgender to Virginia Prince (Trans Media Watch, 2013). Trans scholar Susan Stryker writes that Prince, an advocate 'for freedom of gender expression ... used the term to refer to individuals like herself whose personal identities fall somewhere on a spectrum between 'transvestite' (a term coined in 1910 by Dr Magnus Hirschfield) and 'transsexual' (a term popularized in the 1950s by Dr Harry Benjamin)' (Stryker, 2006, p.4).

Stryker (2006) attributes contemporary understandings of transgender identities in relation to community and politics with the popularisation of Leslie Feinberg's 1992 pamphlet, *Transgender liberation: a movement whose time has come*. The 1990s signalled an increased visibility of trans as a more discrete and autonomous marker of identity within the LGBTIQ+ acronym, even though the alphabet soup had not as yet become popularised. It was not that trans folk had not been around or politically active before the 1990s; it was rather the case that trans folk had cultivated more public space from which they could speak from their own perspectives against those narratives that had hitherto

colonised and obfuscated their voices.

Apart from criminal, medical, and psychiatric discourses dominating the way in which gender variance and trans identities have been spoken about, trans voices had also become subjugated in the narration of landmark moments in LGBTIQ+ history. The 'T' in the commemoration of America's Stonewall riot and Australia's Mardi Gras has been complicated by the messiness of the evolution of the LGBTIQ+ acronym (in both events, gay liberation had stood for all the letters of the alphabet), as well as the difficulty that comes with popular culture dominating over *history from below* as a way of recounting what happened. For example, the 2015 feature movie *Stonewall* has been criticised for not centring stories of Latino and Black transgender protestors Silvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson. It is not just a contest of historical accuracy as to who was seen as throwing the first brick in the Stonewall riots, but how the creation of origin stories for a social movement can turn multiple smaller acts of resistance into a single date, while alliances and antagonisms between identities within social movements can get lost in simplified narratives.

The narrative of social transformation is also hard to document, as the illegality and pathologisation of LGBTIQ+ people had meant that political and social spaces were less visible than those of the mainstream. Sharing identities marked as deviant, criminal and perverted meant that



Compton's Cafeteria Riot Commemoration 40th Anniversary Historical Marker, San Francisco, CA, USA



Camp Trans, by Mariette Pathy Allen. Depicts protest outside Michigan Womyn's Music Festival.

LGBTIQ+ folk, and often political dissidents and bohemians, frequented the same private parties, social venues and became involved in the same political issues. Bar raids were common before Stonewall and the events that led to Sydney's annual Mardi Gras parade. It is not that the people did not resist or protest before these commemorated events, but these are the ones that gained public traction and occurred at a particular point in history when counter-culture and the formation of alliances with other oppressed identities was on the rise (in the first Sydney Mardi Gras, protesters were chanting: 'Stop police attacks, on gays, women and Blacks'). Stonewall and Mardi Gras have become marked as turning points for the gay liberation movement, as it was predominantly called then. However, many trans folk mark San Francisco's Gene Compton's Cafeteria Riot in 1966 as more significant for transgender visibility and activism (Broverman, 2018).

Different letters of the acronym and different social movements did not have smooth and uncontested grounds for alliances. Within the LGBTIQ+ acronym, those traditionally identifying as radical lesbian separatist feminist have had a tense and sometimes hostile relationship with transwomen in particular. This hostility is shared by some contemporary feminists in general, who have become associated with the label trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs). Lesbian feminists such as Janice Raymond, who published *The transsexual empire: the making of the she-male* in 1979, argued that transsexual women appropriated what Raymond understood to be women's identity and territory. Sheila Jeffreys has taken a similar stance throughout the decades and more recently published *Gender hurts: a feminist analysis of the politics of transgenderism* (2014). Lesbian feminists like Raymond and Jeffreys argue that transwomen are basically deluded by the rigidity of the

gender binary, and gender reassignment surgery serves to reinforce gender roles and therefore maintains the structure of patriarchy. Such an argument falls into the trap of its own confusion regarding the social construction of the gender binary on the one hand, while adhering to their own version of biological determinism (what they call ‘women born women’) on the other hand.

One of the more famous ‘women born women’ cases centred on the presence of trans women at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. While the festival acquired a reputation for being trans exclusionary, there were organisers who did not support that policy during its forty-year history (1976 to 2015). In 1994 protestors set up their own Camp Trans outside the festival. In social and activist circles these views continue to be debated, particularly the question of whether it is okay to exclude trans women’s participation in events labelled as women only (Kendall, 2013).

Responding to the radical feminist critique of trans women, Sandy Stone produced *The empire strikes back: a post transsexual manifesto*, which was written and circulated in the 1980s and formally published in the journal *Camera obscura* in 1991. Having been directly named in *The transsexual empire* as a trans woman who was allegedly taking over the spaces of what Raymond called real women, Stone not only questioned the foundational assumptions of what constitutes women, but also advocated that trans people come out as trans with pride and speak from a trans position through all its instability and variety. This option is articulated as preferable and more truthful than arguing over what constitutes the authenticity and definition of one’s supposed womanhood.

Stone’s manifesto was published at a time when the lived experiences of trans people were woven into academic critique of subjectivity, in which poststructuralist thought was becoming influential. As was the case with queer theory, trans studies began to blossom as a distinctive area of scholarship from the 1990s onward. This was also the time in which queer folk, trans folk and sex workers were forming stronger alliances in the fight against prejudice, lack of concern and inaction in relation to how these communities were affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Trans women have historically tended to have more visibility in the public sphere than trans men. More movies feature trans women as central subjects, though *Boys don’t cry*, the 1998 movie about the life, rape and murder of Brandon Teena, earned a lot of publicity through its many film industry award nominations and wins. The movie also brought attention to the disproportional rates at which trans folk are subjected to violence and murder (Stryker, 2006).

Trans male identities have been caught in taxonomic disputes with lesbian identities ranging from literature (such as whether Stephen Gordon in Radclyffe Hall’s lesbian classic, *The well of loneliness*, can be considered as proto-trans) to community debates (such as whether identifying as butch is giving way to more lesbians becoming trans). Given that nomenclature for

naming sexuality and gender identity cannot be separated from the institutional authorities and grids of classification that both forms of identity are historically entangled with, it is not surprising that such disputes arise (Love, 2001).

As with other identity categories it is perhaps more politically productive and ethically advisable to work with the concrete lived experiences of what categories are available to make sense of ourselves, particularly as trans women of colour experience higher levels of violence and articulate a more fluid relation to linguistic descriptors of identity (Valentine, 2006). At the same time we should note how power relations and institutions of knowledge production both constrain and enable what we can and cannot say about the types of gendered subjects we would like to become. Trans and non-binary identities have made an impact on the way in which gender pronouns are used in both everyday interactions and more formal situations like workplace meetings. It is not uncommon to now begin group discussions in a variety of contexts with pronoun go-rounds, the practice of introducing oneself with one’s name as well as one’s pronoun. In 2018, Jen Manion questioned the practice in *The Performance of Transgender inclusion. The pronoun go round and the new gender binary*. Dean Spade (2018) wrote a response, arguing that the practice of turning focus to the fight for justice, as Manion advocated, did not have to preclude the benefits of identifying how a person wants to be addressed.

There are now two volumes of the *Transgender Studies Reader*, which collects historical and contextual articles from academics, activists and those involved in the early stages of creating nomenclature to describe the identities, lived experiences and institutional forces surrounding the meaning of trans. This is accompanied by a burgeoning field of creative non-fiction, memoir, poetry, academic journals and even kids books that deal with trans identities.

He	She	They
Him	Her	Them

VIOLENCE

Defining violence is not straightforward. Dictionary definitions usually say violence is the use of physical force to inflict injury or damage. This captures violence as hitting, punching, slapping, kicking and pushing, but does not capture those circumstances and conditions in which psychological and social intimidation, or the deprivation of certain liberties and bodily autonomy, produces the same result of inflicting harm, damage or injury. Whether speaking of violence inflicted upon one person by another or violence through civil and international war, a focus on only physical force is inadequate for cultivating an environment that can lead to a peaceful and free existence that maximises potential for life rather than diminishes it. For this, the dictionary definition of violence needs to be extended.

Peace researcher Johan Galtung defines violence 'as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is' (1969, p. 168). He says violence 'increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance'. Galtung illustrates the point by considering a person dying of tuberculosis in the eighteenth century as opposed to the twentieth century. In the former time, without the knowledge and medical resources to cure the disease, death would have been unavoidable. Because tuberculosis can be cured today, and somebody dies from not receiving the correct medical attention, Galtung says violence would be present. His definition extends to the matter of whether an earthquake could be avoided, or if the life expectancy of a person is cut short due to wars, social injustice, or both. In these cases, life potential is stymied by not using the insight and resources available to prevent injury, harm or death. Thus, the direct violence of killing during a war is accompanied by the indirect violence of channelling resources and insight away from 'constructive efforts to bring the actual closer to the potential' (p. 169). This is precisely the argument AIDS' activists used in the 1980s and 1990s to bring attention to the government's production of millions of deaths by failing to act on the epidemic.

This distinction between direct and indirect violence is analogous to the distinction between direct and indirect racism, sexism, homophobia and so on; both distinctions are connected to institutional or structural bases of harm, inequality and injustices that have become embedded within the social conditions of existence of those who remain oppressed. Those marginalised based on race, sex/gender, sexuality, disability and mental illness are more prone to an early death because of these conditions of discrimination and oppression.

Writers, scholars, activists and poets involved in the grass roots struggles of social movements have pointed out for decades, if not centuries, that violence is structurally and symbolically embedded in institutions. Feminists and critical race scholars, such as Angela Davis, draw from lived experience, political activism and systematic studies to highlight connections between direct physical violence and indirect psychic and structural violence. The

feminist slogan that the personal is political became the means by which women could relate their experiences of what was considered a private issue, such as domestic violence, to institutional structures such as patriarchy. While anti-racist feminists like Davis have had much to say about gendered and racial violence, they are not cited as often as they should be when it comes to showing how much physical violence is the end-point of broader psychic structures that interlock with state violence.

This can be explained by the tendency for feminist and anti-racist work to be recognised within the confines of social movements, while liberal and prominent male leftist thinkers tend to be accorded a universalist position when they speak. This is the case with Slavoj Žižek, who condenses into a schema what activist scholars like Davis have revealed for decades through the grittiness of description. I cite Žižek here because his distinction between subjective and objective violence is useful for schematising what others have done through speeches, essays and poetry.

For Žižek (2007) subjective violence is the physical, direct violence that is covered in a dictionary definition. He argues if we really want to analyse violence in terms that will open ways of minimising violence in the world and combating the conditions that give rise to violence, we need to allow ourselves to suspend our focus on violence in only this physical form—that which can be attributed to an agent/individual/subject. This physical/subjective form of violence is only that which is most visible to us. In domestic and family violence this includes hitting, punching, pushing, slapping, pinching, and kicking. In war, it is direct killing and maiming.

Žižek says we need to slow down discussions of violence and approach it sideways, so we can see that subjective violence is an effect of a much more complicated picture of social, cultural, political and economic relations, which he calls objective violence. Objective violence is divided into the symbolic and systemic.

Symbolic violence includes language, speech forms and the way in which the order of things is embedded in a ‘universe of meaning’. Before Žižek tabled this schema for thinking about violence, many feminists and critical race theorists had written about how language used in scientific studies, for instance, will use metaphors that cast women and non-Europeans as unruly and irrational. Representations of the marginal and oppressed in media reporting and popular culture more often than not resort to stereotypes that reinforce the narratives that blame social groups for the conditions of their own disadvantage. Demeaning language, including slurs that are racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and ableist, counts as symbolic violence. This does not mean, however, that language of violence and the violence of language is transparent and immutable; language constrains and enables. Nobel prize winner for literature, Toni Morrison put this best in her 1993 acceptance speech:

‘The systematic looting of language can be recognized by the tendency of its users to forgo its nuanced, complex, mid-wifery properties

for menace and subjugation. Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge. Whether it is obscuring state language or the faux-language of mindless media; whether it is the proud but calcified language of the academy or the commodity driven language of law-without-ethics, or language designed for estrangement of minorities, hiding its racist plunder in its literary cheek—it must be rejected, altered and exposed. It is the language that drinks blood, laps vulnerabilities, tucks its fascist boots under crinolines of respectability and patriotism as it moves relentlessly toward the bottomed-out mind. Sexist language, racist language, theistic language—all are typical of policing languages of mastery, and cannot, do not permit new knowledge or encourage the mutual exchange of ideas.’

Symbolic violence does not have to be so direct; lack of representation and stereotypical representation can also perpetuate a grid of intelligibility that maintains a hierarchical way of seeing some beings as more worthy than others.

National symbols, monuments and official historical narratives reinforce what Aileen Moreton Robinson (2004) calls ‘white, patriarchal sovereignty’ which maintains the indirect violence of channelling away the appropriate resources and insight to redress what Galtung would see as the gap between the potential and actual for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s lives. The cultural grid of intelligibility that maintains the hierarchy of power relations as natural—rather than something attained through colonialism, war and struggle—perpetuates and increases rather than decreases the distance between the potential and actual. This qualifies as the presence of violence in Galtung’s schema.

Systemic violence is not immediately discernible, because progress narratives of history present the oppression and exclusion of minorities and the marginal as something that belongs in the past. In nation-states calling themselves democracies, systemic violence is embedded within institutional structures and sense-making grids that have been naturalised to appear as just the way things are. All levels of violence are illustrated through the Nuclear testing conducted on the lands of Aboriginal people between 1955 and 1963. On a symbolic level, Aboriginal people were not counted as such in the census till 1967; government policies systematically ignored land rights and civil rights; this symbolic and systemic violence both enabled and was continued by the physical violence of exposure to radiation in Maralinga.

In gender, sexuality and diversity studies (GSDS) systemic violence has been named through the machinations of capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, White supremacy, sexism, heterosexism, cis-sexism, and ableism. Naming these interlocking grids of power and knowledge all at once is



Maralinga Prohibited Area sign on Nawa/Dingo Flat Gate road.

quite a mouthful, so intersectionality and kyriarchy supply efficient ways to conceive these forces of oppression together.

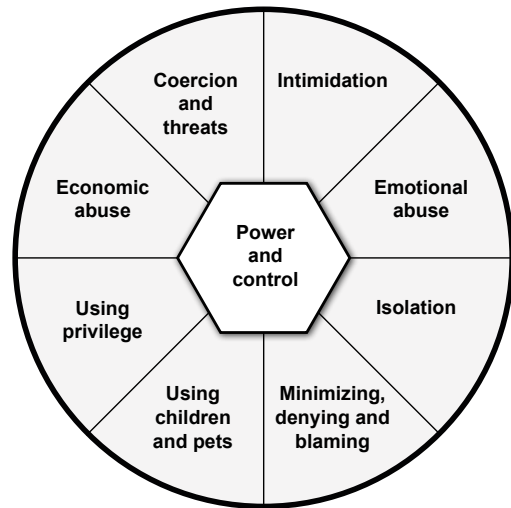
As an activist and scholar of liberation struggles, who privileges telling historical narratives from an intersectional point of view, Angela Davis (2016) re-articulates responses to direct and indirect violence by adding more grit to the commemorative events associated with one of the most world-famous preachers of non-violent action: Martin Luther King. The non-violent strategy of civil disobedience for the Black civil rights movement is associated with King, and often pitted against the Black Panther Party. The comparison is often cast as one between violence and non-violence, even though the self-articulated aim of the Black Panthers was one of self-defense in the face of police brutality.

Without diminishing the role King played as a civil rights leader,

Davis brings to light the role that women played in the 1955 Montgomery boycott, which most of us learn through the story of Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat to a White woman on the segregated buses. Davis stresses the importance of changing the symbolic order that enables violence: 'Regimes of racial segregation were not disestablished because of the work of leaders and presidents and legislators, but rather because of the fact that ordinary people adopted a critical stance in the way in which they perceived their relationship to reality' (Davis, 2016, p.67). Collective consciousness-raising is crucial for combating violence. The hashtags #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo represent two such campaigns.

According to their website, '#BlackLivesMatter was created in 2012 after Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman, was acquitted for his crime, and dead 17-year-old Trayvon was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder. Rooted in the experiences of Black people in this country [US] who actively resist our de-humanisation, #BlackLivesMatter is a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society' (Black Lives Matter, 2019). This movement has been connected to the Black Deaths in Custody campaign in Australia (Allam, et al, 2019) and has been taken up in other struggles using slogans such as #DontShoot, #HandsUpUnited and #ICantBreathe to form solidarity.

Feminists have long exposed the gendered pattern of violence, where understanding how masculinity, femininity, and the values and institutions surrounding how love, sex, kinship and family get negotiated are vital for learning how power operates through gendered and sexual relations.



The power and control wheel from the Domestic Abuse Intervention project shows how symbolic, systemic and physical violence operate on a continuum.

Changing the conditions that perpetuate the prevalence of such violence has proved more challenging.

Having been engaged in collective social movements, Davis calls for collective responses to dealing with violence, whether #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo. She notes how the ideological frame of neo-liberalism obfuscates the structural and systemic elements of violence through its focus on individual victims and individual perpetrators: 'But how is it possible to solve the massive problem of racist state violence by calling upon individual police officers to bear the burden of that history [slavery and genocidal colonisation] and to assume that by prosecuting them, by exacting our revenge on them, we would somehow have made progress in eradicating racism' (Davis, 2016, p. 137). She extends this to dealing with sexual violence through what she calls 'carceral feminism'—'the call for criminalization and incarceration of those who engage in gender violence' (p.138). This does not solve the problem of gender violence, but merely 'does the work of the state'.

Davis's analysis suggests that strategies to combat violence, whether in its gendered, racialised, homophobic or transphobic forms, need to take place on several fronts. In the symbolic and psychic order in which we make sense of the world, we need to hear narratives of history that expose the power/knowledge relations in which democratic nation-states have been established; this enables a shift in the perceived relationship to oppressed groups' poorer life chances.

Shifting focus from thinking of disadvantage as the problem of the social group to one that is embedded within the grids of intelligibility and institutional arrangements of the social order, also involves connecting the dots between nation-states and the interests of capital. A profit-driven global economy, which heavily invests in what Davis identifies as the military-industrial complex and prison industrial complex, does not operate in the interests of the rights of everyone to access shelter, jobs, free education, and free health care. Evidence is readily available to show the correlation between those who end up incarcerated, dying earlier than average, and those whose access to these rights is diminished. The road to changing these patterns, Davis (2003) suggests, is through an abolitionist stance that seeks ways to deal with all sorts of violence other than through incarceration (Sister Inside, 2018).

The decision to use physical force or arms to end continued systemic, symbolic and physical violence against particular peoples troubles many social movements and political struggles. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon writes that decolonisation can occur only through violent resistance. The interpretation of violent and non-violent tactics in resistance, however, can shift. Non-violent tactics associated with the civil-disobedience Martin Luther King ([1963] 2007) defends in his Letter from Birmingham Jail has been commended only after governance and laws were changed; during time of struggle civil disobedience usually gets associated with unruliness



of breaking the law. The decision to turn from civil disobedience to armed struggle is set out in Nelson Mandela's speech, 'I am Prepared to Die'. A former anti-apartheid prisoner and subsequent President of South Africa, he outlines that the decision to form a military wing of the African National Congress was made only after 'all lawful modes of expressing opposition to this principle [of white supremacy] had been closed by legislation in which we had either to accept a permanent state of inferiority, or defy the government' ([1964] 1991, p. 295). The military arm was also developed as a way of channelling what looked like unrestrained and unfocused violence through frustration. At the same time as the ANC developed a military wing, they also fiercely supported the non-violent strategies of boycotts, divestments and sanctions against the white South African government's apartheid.

This non-violent anti-apartheid strategy has been adopted by contemporary Palestinian activists in their Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). The BDS movement aims to bring pressure on the Israeli government to comply with international law by dismantling their occupation and colonisation of Arab lands, to recognise Palestinians as having full citizenship rights and equality, and to allow Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties. The grid of intelligibility in mainstream society, however, is resistant to hearing the non-violent foundations of this movement; this has much to do with the way in which symbolic and structural violence underpins the actual construction of nations calling themselves democratic.

Colonisation, the construction of border walls, apartheid policies of racial segregation, and racially marking certain people as threats to national security provide the structures from which refugees, many migrants and racialised others inherit their symbolic and material conditions of social existence. Since September 11 2001—the marking of when al-Qaeda terrorist

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attacks on US soil became so instantly recognisable as a global event that the date suffices to name it—'the war on terror' has let loose a cultural grid of representation where the signifier of Muslims has become associated with terrorism. This event unleashed the nebulous moderate/radical binary from which Muslims in general are often forced to identify themselves as good or bad citizens (Morsi, 2017); Muslim women get situated in particular through the victims/suspects binary (Hussein, 2019).

The dichotomy of good and bad citizens not only affects racialised others, but those who have historically been deemed as outlaws to the state based on sexuality and gender. In *Terrorist Assemblages* Jasbir Puar (2007) explains how legislative gains for queer folk has relied upon aligning the aims of the movement with national and heteronormative ideologies to form what she calls homonationalism. The online archive, Against Equality, similarly critiques mainstream gay and lesbian politics, asking whether queer inclusion into the military is in the interests of queer liberation around the world, or is more aligned with feeding US imperialism. These works expose good citizenship as feeding nationalist and patriotic ideals that feed violence rather than peace. The 'war on terror' accompanies the justifications for US led coalitions to invade countries abroad, while identifying terrorist suspects destined for indefinite detention at home. Distinguishing violence from non-violence in such contexts requires work that will move beyond reliance on simple binaries of the good and the bad citizens, the rescuers and the saved.

No doubt war and politics are messy, and the wars and nations that deem certain types of people as a threat to national security obfuscate rather than clarify the stakes of armed conflict. Conceptualising violence and attending to how different types of violence are represented in the public sphere is crucial to public discourses about war, national security and the consequences this has on different types of people. Measuring Galtung's gap between the actual and the potential, applying Žižek's schema of symbolic, systemic and physical violence, and following Davis's attention to the industrial complexes that are formed through military, prison and border expenditure can at least realign the cultural grid from which violence acquires its intelligibility.

Identifying how violence operates through symbolic and structural forces does not automatically provide a blueprint for what is to be done in order to change the kyriarchal grids of power and knowledge. It does, however, provide a starting-point from which to contest the mainstream thinking that classifies violence as something exceptional and pathological. The more we learn about knowledge history and power, the more we can see that, from intimate partner abuse and murder to state oppression and war, the presence of violence is carried through the fabric of everyday life rather than through something exceptional and imposed from outside the social order of things.

Noel Counihan was born in Albert Park, Melbourne. A member of the Communist Party and anti-conscription movement, in 1949 he represented Australia at the World Congress of Peace in Paris. His linocuts *War or Peace* were published in 1950 accompanied by poems by Jack Lindsay. LTU Art Collection acquired the full series of prints in 1990.



Author Bio

Having been constantly called to explain who she is to complete strangers, Carolyn D'Cruz has ended up with a research focus on identity politics and the collisions between personal, professional and political life. She is author of *Identity Politics in Deconstruction: Calculating with the Incalculable* and co-editor of *After Homosexual: Legacies of Gay Liberation*. Carolyn is a Senior Lecturer in Gender Sexuality and Diversity Studies at La Trobe University.



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List of La Trobe Art Institute Artworks

Michael Cook, *Segregation—The Tram*, 2012
 Michael Cook (1968–)
Segregation—The Tram, 2012
 Inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag
 100 x 270 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection.
 Donated through the Australian Government
 Cultural Gifts Program 2011.
 LTU2391
 © the artist. Images courtesy the artist and This
 Is No Fantasy

Michael Cook, *Stickman #1—10*, 2011
 Michael Cook (1968–)
Stickman #1—10, 2011
 Inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag
 40 x 100 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection.
 Donated through the Australian Government
 Cultural Gifts Program 2011.
 LTU2400.1–10
 © the artist. Images courtesy the artist and This
 Is No Fantasy

Destiny Deacon, *Grandstanding*, 2017
 Destiny Deacon (1957–)
Grandstanding, 2017
 Lightjet print
 54 X 46 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection, purchased
 2018.
 LTU2475
 © the artist. Image courtesy of the artist and
 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Fiona Foley, *Black Opium II*, 2006
 Fiona Foley (1964–)
Black Opium II, 2006
 Oil on linen
 137 x 92cm (12189)
 La Trobe University Art Collection, purchased
 2013.
 LTU2384
 © the artist. Image courtesy the artist and
 Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

Michael Chavez, *Fear of a Brown Planet*, 2007
 Michael Chavez (1969–)
Fear of a Brown Planet, 2007
 Screenprint acrylic on linen
 229 x 369 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection.

Donated through the Australian Government
 Cultural Gifts
 Program by the Artist, 2009.
 LTU2238
 © the artist

Brook Andrew, *I Split Your Gaze*, 1997
 Brook Andrew (1970–)
I Split Your Gaze, 1997
 Black and white resin photograph
 112 x 104 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection, purchased
 2007.
 LTU2072
 © the artist

Michael Cook, *Australian Landscape #1—10*, 2010.
 Michael Cook (1968–)
Australian Landscape #1—10, 2010
 Inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag
 60.0 x 150.0 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection.
 Donated through the Australian Government
 Cultural Gifts Program 2011.
 LTU2399.1
 © the artist. Images courtesy the artist and This
 Is No Fantasy

Fiona Foley, *HHH#3*, 2004
 Fiona Foley (1964–)
HHH#3, 2004
 Ultrachrome print on paper
 101 x 76cm (9248)
 La Trobe University Art Collection, purchased
 2006.
 LTU2014
 © the artist. Image courtesy the artist and Niagara
 Galleries, Melbourne

Ian Abdulla, *Sunday's Drive*, 1995
 Ian Abdulla (1947–2011)
Sunday's Drive, 1995
 Acrylic on paper
 84.0 x 102.0 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection, purchased
 1998.
 LTU1023
 © The artist

LIST OF LA TROBE ART INSTITUTE ARTWORKS

Michael Cook, *Through My Eyes*, 2010
 Michael Cook (1968–)
Through My Eyes, 2010
 Inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag
 50.5 x 40.5 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection, purchased
 2012.
 LTU2346
 © the artist. Images courtesy the artist and This
 Is No Fantasy

Gordon Bennett, *Abstraction (Fringe Dweller)*, 2013
 Gordon Bennett (1955–2014)
Abstraction (Fringe Dweller), 2013
 Acrylic on paper
 102 x 67 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection.
 Donated through the Australian Government
 Cultural Gifts Program by Dr Jonathon Hartley,
 2003.
 LTU2379
 © The Estate of Gordon Bennett

Noel Counihan, *War or Peace [Here Peace Begins]*, 1950
 Noel Counihan (1913–1986)
War or Peace [Here Peace Begins], 1950
 Linocut
 38 x 49 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection, purchased
 1990.
 LTU0736-11
 © Courtesy Estate of Noel Counihan

List of Works

Adam Goodes

‘Recognise Campaign Adam Goodes Presser’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)

‘Ferdinand de Saussure’ by F. Jullien Genève from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

Non-binary Pride Flag

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Binary code

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Eugenics poster

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Image attempting to associate brain types to criminal behaviour

‘Criminal brains’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

Stop forced sterilization rally poster, 1977

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Free Passage for refugees

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Manus Island regional processing facility

‘Manus Island regional processing facility 2012’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Mexico-US border wall at Tijuana, Mexico

‘Mexico-US border at Tijuana’ by Tomas Castelazo from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

A Palestinian boy and Israeli soldier

‘Boy and soldier in front of Israeli wall’ by Justin McIntosh from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Amazon warehouse

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Occupy Melbourne's First General Assembly

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The Great National Policy Song, Sheet Music

Composer: W. E. Naunton, Composer: H. J. W. Gyles, [Museums Victoria](#)

Monument against War and Fascism, Vienna

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A 1911 Industrial Worker (IWW newspaper)

‘Pyramid of Capitalist System’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

Joseph E. Baker, The Witch No. 2, circa 29

February 1892
‘The Witch No. 2’ by Joseph E. Baker from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

Melbourne eight-hour day march

‘Melbourne eight hour day march-c1900’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

James Gillray, The Plumb-pudding in danger, 1805

‘Caricature gillray plumpudding’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

Frantz Fanon (1925–1961)

‘Frantzfanonpjwproductions’ by Pacha J. Willka from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Decolonize This Place

‘Decolonize This Place protester’ by Sai Mokhtari used with permission

Sovereignty sign at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, Canberra, Australia

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Grayson Perry, The Agony in the Car Park, 2012

Adapted from ‘Grayson Perry’ by Tony Hisgett from [Flickr](#) used under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Raymond Williams, by Gwydion Madawc Williams, 1980s

‘Raymond Williams’ by Gwydion Madawc Williams from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

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Felix Nussbaum, The Mad Square, 1931

‘Nussbaum - The Mad Square - 1931’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

Stuart Hall

Source: Isaac Julien, Encoding / Decoding in Blue (In Memoriam Stuart Hall), 2014. Photographic print on Hahnemuhle photo Rag 308g. 53.9 x 39.4 cm, 21 1/4 x 15 1/2 in, edition of 60 plus 10 artist’s proofs. © Isaac Julien, courtesy of Victoria Miro Gallery and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, used with permission from Isaac Julien

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

‘Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’ by Shih-Lun CHANG from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Modesto Brocos, Ham’s Redemption, 1895

‘Redemption’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

Humpty Dumpty

Adapted from ‘Humpty Dumpty’ by Lewis Carroll illustrated by John Tenniel from [New York Public Library](#) used under [CCO](#)

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Bessie Coleman in 1923

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Surgeon with pride flag

‘Surgeon with flag on background’ by Elvira Koneva from 123RF used under 123RF standard licence

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‘Kant gemaelde 3’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

An African man being inspected by a white man

‘The inspection and sale of a slave’ by Brantz Mayer from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

I perform this way

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American family watching television

‘Family watching television 1958’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) used under [CCO](#)

Gay Pride Parade, 2010

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Unidentified Artist, Sojourner Truth, 1864

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Bob The Drag Queen at RuPauls Dragcon 2017

‘Bob The Drag Queen’ from [Wikimedia Commons](#) by dvsross used under [CC BY 2.0](#)

WSPU leaders Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst

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Portrait of Simone de Beauvoir

‘Simone de Beauvoir’ by Brassai from [Flickr](#) used under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#).

International Women’s Day, Melbourne, Australia, 1975

Women on the march wave their placards at the International Women’s Day march, Melbourne, March 8, 1975 [picture] / Australian Information Service photograph by John McKinnon, National Library of Australia, nla.obj-137045864, used with permission

Womens march Philly Philadelphia #MeToo, 2018

‘#womensmarch2018 Philly Philadelphia #MeToo’ by Rob Kall from [Flickr](#) used under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Perspectives—Deep-water by Frits Ahlefeldt

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San Francisco Pride Parade, 2008

‘Parents’ by Caitlin Childs from [Flickr](#) used under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

ANZ ‘GAYTM’ ATM machines

Adapted from ‘GAYTM’ by William Brougham, used with permission

Joan Nestle at the Lesbian Herstory Archives—NYC

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Gary Foley at the People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) rally, March 1983

Gary Foley at the People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) rally, March 1983, University of Melbourne

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Photographer: John Ellis

E P Thompson, Oxford, England, 1980
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Carolyn D'Cruz

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