Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism: Between Race and Ethnicity

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The relationship between multiculturalism and postcolonialism appears to be an uneasy one. Multiculturalism deals with theories of difference but unlike postcolonialism, which is to a great extent perceived to be defined by its specific historic legacies in a retroactive way, multiculturalism deals with the management (often compromised) of contemporary geo-political diversity in former imperial centres and their ex-colonies alike. It is also increasingly a global discourse since it takes into account the flow of migrants, refugees, diasporas, and their relations with nation-states. The reason for continuing to focus on multiculturalism, particularly a critical multiculturalism, is precisely because it is so intimately bound up in many parts of the world with those practices and discourses which manage (often in the sense of police and control) 'diversity'. Within critical theory it has often been an embarrassing term to invoke partly because it is seen as automatically aligned with and hopelessly co-opted by the state in certain kinds of conscious nation-building. As a result, for example, it is consistently rejected by anti-racist groups in Great Britain.[1] In the realm of theoretical debate it is often associated with an identity politics based on essentialism and claims for authenticity which automatically reinstate a version of the sovereign subject and a concern with reified notions of origins. Thus it becomes impossible, it seems, to mention multiculturalism and socially progressive critical theory in the same breath. But it is for all those reasons, precisely because it is a contested term, that it is crucial to continue to scrutinize the discourses and practices mobilized in the name of multiculturalism.

This chapter will briefly consider some of the different interpretations of multiculturalism in various parts of the world and will then consider the ambiguous function of the key terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' within its deployment. Particular consideration will be given to the republican debates within contemporary Australia with comparisons drawn from Canada, the United States, and elsewhere.

Multiculturalism means different things in different contexts and in Canada, the US, and the UK the term is intertwined with questions of

[1] Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 223–27.

racialized differences that have so far not been given sufficient recognition in Australia.[2] While there have always been migrations and diasporas, after two world wars and many other conflicts this century the mix of people within borders increasingly rendered traditional national models anachronistic. Multiculturalism has been developed as a concept by nations and other aspirants to geo-political cohesiveness who are trying to represent themselves as homogeneous in spite of their heterogeneity. For cultural analysts the politics of representation are at its heart while for sociologists the specificities of legislation, public policies and their often arbitrary implementation are the major concern. Multiculturalism may also sometimes be invoked as a way of signalling divergence from a notional monoculturalism often wrongly identified with the 'West' or 'Europe' and here it overlaps significantly with postcolonial concepts and debates.

Multiculturalism purports to deal with minorities and thus implies a relation with a majority, but how these two categories are defined and wielded in relation to each other is highly contested and further complicated by differences in articulation between advanced capitalist countries and the so-called Third World; between 'settler societies' and, for example, the European community. In general, the organizing factors for the minorities are such terms as 'race', 'ethnicity', and 'indigeneity' while their origins are causally linked to migration, to colonization, and other kinds of subjugation. With respect to 'race' it would be more accurate to refer to the processes of racialization involved in representing minorities than to the existence of unproblematic racial categories. 'Ethnicity' as a defining category was initially employed as a differential term to avoid 'race' and its implications of a discredited 'scientific' racism. Ethnicity was more easily attached to the European migrations which proliferated around the two world wars. In North America, phrases such as 'visible minorities' were developed to categorize non-European immigrants who formed part of mass diasporas and neatly encapsulated as well the indigenous groups and those descendants of African slaves who had been an uneasily acknowledged part of the 'nation' for several centuries. Hence multiculturalism is often perceived as a covert means of indicating racialized differences. The need to deconstruct the 'natural' façade of racialization is clear when one notes that groups such as Ukrainians in Canada and Greeks and Italians in Australia were designated 'black' at various historical stages.[3] Further difficulties encountered by indigenous groups are highlighted in Australia where the Aborigines refuse to be included in multicultural discourses on the grounds that these refer only to cultures of migration, whereas in New Zealand 'biculturalism' is the preferred official term because multiculturalism is seen as a diversion from

[2] For a summary of some of these differences see Sneja Gunew, *Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994).

[3] Gunew, *Framing Marginality*, pp. 46–52.

the Maori sovereignty movement. In Canada First Nations are occasionally included in multicultural discourses and practices and are also consistently trapped between the two sides of the French–English divide.[4] This has complicated continuing debates on cultural appropriation.[5]

Discussions must also distinguish between state multiculturalism, dealing with the management of diversity, and critical multiculturalism used by minorities as a lever to argue for participation, grounded in their difference, in the public sphere. Minorities use a variety of strategies to overcome the assimilationist presumptions of most state multiculturalism. Crucial to both areas is the notion of 'community' and here women are particularly affected.

State multiculturalism followed 'assimilation' (a term deriving from digestion and indicating 'becoming the same as') and 'integration' (separatism plus common values) and represents a kind of liberal pluralism which implies both a hidden norm from which minority groups diverge while failing to recognize prevailing power differentials.[6] State multiculturalism operates most clearly in the discourses and practices of education, sociology, the law, and immigration and is always contradictory in its application and assumptions. In educational discourses it is often framed by a liberal pluralism where cultural differences are paraded as apolitical ethnic accessories celebrated in multicultural festivals of costumes, cooking, and concerts. A recent example of schoolgirls being barred from attending French schools if they wore head scarves has precipitated major debates in which the traditional Left was aligned with the far Right because both identified Islam with religion and bigotry, supposedly at odds with the secular and rationalist republican values constituted by the French nation.[7] In sociology and immigration the 'migrant or minority as problem' is a prevailing trope and emphasis is consistently placed on compatible differences and the need to obey the laws and conform to the mores of the new country. In contrast to supposed Western tolerance the minority is often represented as primitive or uncivilized, importing its social pathologies (criminal gangs, for example, or 'uncivilized practices' such as arranged marriages or clitoridectomy).

The 'community' becomes the representative of and reference point for cultural difference and within this women, for example, rarely have agency. In the exceptional instances where they do, for example in the women's

[4] The Oka Crisis, for example, was not seen as a Mohawk/Canada struggle, but as a demonstration of how Quebec could not manage the native issue (as a sovereign nation should). Thus the RCMP/Army had to rescue the Mohawk elders and women from the 'fascist' Sureté de Québéc and from racist Québécois. My thanks to Margery Fee for this information and for her many other helpful suggestions.

[5] Marcia Crosby, 'Construction of the Imaginary Indian', in *By, For and About: Feminist Cultural Politics*, ed. by Wendy Waring (Toronto: Women's Press, 1994), pp. 85–113.

[6] David T. Goldberg, 'Introduction: Multicultural Conditions', in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. by David T. Goldberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 1–41.

[7] Max Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992).

movement, other internal differences, such as class loyalties, are suppressed.[8] In a diasporic situation minorities are characterized externally as static and ahistorical,[9] and internally often suffer from compensatory nostalgias which can lead to rather rigid constructions of and adherence to purported traditions, particularly when associated with the struggle for maintenance of religious beliefs. Women in these situations are often designated the bearers of these traditions without having agency in terms either of their interpretation or as community leaders.[10] A particularly telling example was provided by the Shahbano case in India where a seventy-three-year-old Muslim woman was awarded maintenance by the High Court of India after a ten-year battle. This in turn led to accusations by the Muslim minority that their rights under the Muslim Shariat law (personal laws governing the family within a religious framework) were being undermined by the Hindu majority. Shahbano herself rejected the decision in what was interpreted as an act of Muslim solidarity. As Zakia Pathak and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan point out, such apparent respect for minority rights repeatedly traps women between the private and the public spheres, in this case, the family and the state.[11] Clearly the legal contradictions in and limits to multicultural policies exist in all contexts. It remains to be seen how the European Community will legislate to deal both with minorities within their separate nations and with the differences between the various European nations.

Even within supposedly more enlightened contexts such as universities or academic feminism one encounters the phenomenon of the token 'woman of colour' invited to conferences,[12] or equally tokenistic cross-cultural work which repeatedly uncovers the usual round of stereotypes.[13] There is also the problem of conflating minorities in terms such as 'women of colour' or 'visible minorities' which once again serves to reinforce the notion of a legislative centre or norm.[14]

Multiculturalism's implied focus on culture can also occlude or minimize specific political activisms and their histories. Hazel Carby has noted that literary cultural emphasis on black women's texts functions as a substitute

[8] Yasmin Ali, 'Muslim Women and the Politics of Ethnicity and Culture in Northern England', in *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain*, ed. by Gita Saghal and Nira Yuval-Davis (London: Virago Press, 1992), pp. 101–23.

[9] Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[10] Gita Saghal, 'Secular Spaces: The Experience of Asian Women Organizing', in Saghal and Yuval-Davis, pp. 163–97.

[11] '"Shahbano"', in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 257–79.

[12] T. Minh-ha Tinh, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

[13] Obioma Nnaemeka, 'Bringing African Women into the Classroom: Rethinking Pedagogy and Epistemology', in *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature*, ed. by Margaret R. Higonnet (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 301–18.

[14] Himani Bannerji, 'Popular Images of South Asian Women', in *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics*, ed. by Himani Bannerji (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1993), pp. 144–52.

for actual social relations or the continuing work of desegregation and anti-racism.[15]

However, even these complicit practices have become the target of what are known as the 'PC' (Political Correctness) debates. Following multicultural policies and programmes, including such tactics as affirmative action, a number of conservative commentators have referred to the reign of the 'thought police' and 'biopolitics'.[16] The latter is a reference to the further issue of identity politics: that in the name of political agency people are identified with and reduced to their supposed sex, race, or ethnicity. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam state wryly, 'theory deconstructs totalizing myths while activism nourishes them'.[17] This formulation can lead both to backlash from the wider community and to minorities competing with each other and building hierarchies of legitimation based on oppression.

While Canada has to some degree pioneered the concept as part of state policy in dealing with minorities, there is a current plethora of studies focusing on multiculturalism in the US and while it is clear that racialized differences are at the heart of these debates there has been an interesting historical shift in the wake of the demise of the Cold War. As Rajeswari Mohan puts it:

> In its incarnation in the 1980s, multiculturalism was a code word for 'race', yoked to signifiers that included 'affirmative action' and 'quotas', among others. Since the 1992 controversy over New York City's rainbow curriculum, the term has become a code word for lesbian and gay issues. Despite shifts in the ideological freight carried by the term, what remains constant is its connotation of 'special interest' that supposedly weighs against an implied general interest.[18]

The notion that multiculturalism could be coded to register a variety of oppositional minority positions is also taken up by George Yúdice in relation to Jewishness.[19] The reference point for all these is a consolidated and hegemonic 'whiteness' as the sign for all forms of socio-economic and political privilege.

While multiculturalism is now often perceived as an empty signifier onto which groups project their fears and hopes, the future for critical multiculturalism lies in an alertness to the inherent 'hybridity' and diverse affiliations of all subjects which may be mobilized in varying combinations by particular projects or events. Coalitions may be built around 'mutual and reciprocal

[15] Hazel Carby, 'The Multicultural Wars', in *Black Popular Culture*, ed. by Gina Dent (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1992), pp. 187–99.
[16] John Fekete, *Moral Panic: Biopolitics Rising* (Montreal and Toronto: Robert Davies, 1994).
[17] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[18] 'Multiculturalism in the Nineties: Pitfalls and Possibilities', in *After Political Correctness: The Humanities and Society in the 1990s*, ed. by Christopher Newfield and Ronald Strickland (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 372–88 (p. 374).
[19] 'Neither Impugning nor Disavowing Whiteness Does a Viable Politics Make: The Limits of Identity Politics', in Newfield and Strickland, pp. 255–85.

relativization'.[20] Critical multiculturalism may still be usefully invoked to counter exclusionary hegemonic practices or appeals to nostalgic histories in a bid to return to 'basics' and the reinstatement of the conservative status quo suggested by such recent examples as the threat to abolish affirmative action policies in the US and in Canada.

Multiculturalism in Australia is too often ignored as a significant factor in the proliferating work in cultural studies or as part of socially progressive critical theory. The Republican debates in Australia include numerous dismissive references to so-called 'multicultural orthodoxies' which are glossed as representing a position in which the history of Australia's diverse migrations is forgotten in an attempt to construct a hegemonic and homogenized Anglo-Celtic centre, rather than as an attempt to stress that everyone participates in ethnicity.[21] One could argue against this that the references to 'Anglo-Celts' in the work of multicultural theorists are not simply concerned with depicting historical continuities but are often attempts to highlight a language of representation dealing with inclusions and exclusion in the narratives of the nation.[22] In other words, who is included in those various narratives of Australia's cultural traditions or other collective histories? The history of Australian immigration has been a very diverse one over two centuries but these nuances are not foregrounded when various compilations attempt to depict or characterize the nation. Of particular concern are the ways we are enmeshed in and positioned by discourses of nationalism with all their contradictions, tensions, and exclusions. The Australian caricatures of multicultural critical theory recall a timely warning contained in Paul Gilroy's recent study *Black Atlantic* in which he mentions, in the British context, 'a quiet cultural nationalism which pervades the work of some radical thinkers' who prefer not to deal with the influences of forces (such as non-Anglo-Celtic nationals and their concerns) they consider to be outside the national borders.[23] The various incarnations of radical nationalisms in Australia could also be perceived at times as falling into these conceptual traps.

Australian usages of multiculturalism tend not to signal articulations of racialized differences and this may in part be because the category represented by race is often predominantly reserved for the Aboriginal peoples who in the Australian context (unlike indigenous peoples in North America) have succeeded in dissociating their concerns from discourses of multiculturalism. But these obvious ways may be deceptive, for I would argue that by privileging 'ethnicity' as an organizing term Australian

[20] Shohat and Stam, p. 359.

[21] John Docker, 'Post Nationalism', *Arena Magazine*, 40 (February/March 1994), 3–4; Ann Curthoys and Stephen Muecke, 'Australia, for Example', in *The Republicanism Debate*, ed. by W. Hudson and D. Carter (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1993), pp. 177–200.

[22] *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations*, ed. by Sneja Gunew and K. Longley (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992).

[23] *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 4.

discourses of multiculturalism represent the erasure or evasion of race (race being used here in the sense of racialized groups, conceptions, and forms of power). The racial other is a shifting concept but this aspect is not foregrounded in the current focus on depicting the category exclusively in terms of the indigenous peoples. As Ien Ang and Jon Stratton have argued, in Australia 'the category of race should be seen as the symbolic marker of unabsorbable cultural difference'.[24]

For example, a dominant rhetorical pattern in the debates surrounding Australian republicanism suggests that Australia is borrowing to some degree from New Zealand in that it appears increasingly to be embracing a kind of politics of biculturalism. The brave new republic is renarrativized on the basis of reconciliation with the indigenous peoples and while this is admirable in itself, it is interesting that this process is framed in terms of a binary opposition which homogenizes both sides and leaves little room for their internal differences, much less for other locations of difference. For example, a recent collection titled *Being Whitefella*,[25] modelled on New Zealander Michael King's famous anthology *Pakeha*,[26] attempts to scrutinize and deconstruct the norm of whiteness or Europeanness. This represents a timely move in line with comparable directions elsewhere,[27] but in Australia these efforts once again appear to consolidate Australianness as synonymous with Anglo-Celticism, albeit without acknowledging this. For example, here is a comment from the introduction: 'Ireland and having an Irish ancestry, feature in the backgrounds of other contributors [. . .] perhaps because the Irish understand oppression, love the land and know what it's like to live on the fringe. Booker Prize winning author Roddy Doyle commented that the Irish are the blacks of Europe. A number of prominent Aboriginal people have also noticed the shared experience' (p. 23). It is clear from this who is being constructed here as part of what the back cover describes as 'non-indigenous Australians'. We are confronted with 'blacks' versus 'whites' in the familiar contexts which derive from the scientific racism of an earlier period. Where does that leave 'ethnicity', the code name given for those more recent immigrant settlers who don't conveniently derive from Britain or Ireland and who interrogate these neat categories? And where does that

[24] 'Multicultural Imagined Communities: Cultural Difference and National Identity in Australia and the USA', *Continuum*, 8.2 (1994), (Critical Multiculturalism issue), 124–58 (p. 155).

[25] *Being Whitefella*, ed. by Graham Duncan (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1994).

[26] *Pakeha*, ed. by Michael King (Auckland: Penguin, 1991). King gives the following definition of *Pakeha*: 'simply a descriptive word applied to non-Polynesian people and things in New Zealand that derive originally from outside New Zealand most often from Europe, and even more specifically, because of the nature of our history, from the United Kingdom' (p. 16). Later he attempts to argue that *Pakeha* indicates a 'second indigenous New Zealand culture' (p. 19).

[27] Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Woman, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992).

leave Aboriginality for that matter, aspects of which can arguably also be constructed in terms of ethnicity? Aboriginality is also a matter of intersubjective relations as Marcia Langton notes, ' "Aboriginality", therefore, is a field of intersubjectivity in that it is remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people create "Aboriginalities" '.[28]

Let us return, however, to those hidden reference points (hidden in the new republicanism which seems currently to be organizing the discourses of the nation in Australia), that is, race, ethnicity, and diaspora.

As a recent plethora of books suggests, the distinction between race and ethnicity is increasingly a blurred one.[29] Both are, it seems, invented in ways that accord with the particular traditions they are asked to shore up. It becomes a matter of historical specificity in relation to particular groups as to where they have been placed on those axes of nationalism or internationalism which contextualize both race and ethnicity. In an earlier era ethnicity was seen as a way of circumventing the racist history of 'race' and was associated with choice; in other words, one could choose the groups to which one belonged and within them could also choose what to preserve as part of an imagined past. Ethnicity was also largely conceived in cultural terms as a matter of the rituals of daily life, including language and religion, where culture supposedly operated as a place distinct from the political, a kind of safe haven from its exigencies.

Race on the other hand has been associated with irreducible difference (akin to sexual difference) often located in what have been termed 'visible differences' (for example, skin colour) which gained their legitimation through associations with so-called biological givens. This meant that choice was suspended in the face of racist projections emerging in response to some aspects of these arbitrarily chosen visible differences. It also means that visible differences often amount to a coded way of referring back to those apparent biological essences which formed the grounds for scientific racism. While concepts of irreducible differences can be said to work in two directions by conferring legitimacy on both racism, on the one hand, and on attempts to forge radical communities which subvert those agendas, modern theorists have increasingly undermined the bases for arguing for race as predicated on absolute differences. As David Goldberg puts it in his recent study, 'Race is arbitrary [. . .] were one to line up all the individual members of the human species according to any usual racial criteria like pigmentation, there are no non arbitrary points at which one might draw the lines of racial

[28] *'Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television. . .'* (Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993), pp. 33–34.

[29] See Anthias and Yuval-Davis, Frankenberg, and Morrison; also David T. Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) and *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. by David T. Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993).

distinctions'.[30] Models attempting to locate the absolute grounds of racial difference have been displaced by analyses establishing the mechanisms of racism and racialized forms of power which result in certain groups gaining 'race privilege'.[31] As Goldberg states, 'Race is irrelevant, but all is race' (p. 6), that is, irrelevant because while there are no non-arbitrary or absolute markers of race, 'debates about and struggles around race in a variety of societies are really about the meaning and nature of political constitution and community: 'Who counts as in and who out, who is central to the body politic and who peripheral, who is autonomous and who dependent?' (p. 83). Another way of putting it is to see it in this period of history as a struggle over who controls the codes and practices of nation-building.

Constructions of nationalism are traditionally predicated both on formulating cohesiveness within the borders of the nation and on instituting absolute differences from adjoining states, so they borrow their structures from and indeed incorporate concepts pertaining to racialized differences.[32] Therefore it is much easier to stage a national history, founded on Ernest Renan's 'moments of forgetting',[33] in terms of cohesive indigenous peoples displaced by equally cohesive colonizing powers. In the event, those other groups with their different legacies who settled the country and displaced its inhabitants are left out of the drama, particularly when they are associated with another supposed 'race' such as 'Asians' are deemed to be. Where are the histories and analyses of first contact with those many non-Anglo-Celtic settler others? While the European immigrants could (with some effort and strain perhaps) be amalgamated to the Anglo-Celts or Whites it proved rather more difficult to do this with the Asians. In other words while there is no 'natural' logic which orders racialized discourse it is made to appear as though there were.

If one were to attempt to continue to differentiate race and ethnicity it could be suggested that while race is structured by the desire to be considered human, ethnicity is structured by a concomitant desire for citizenship, that is, to be a legitimate part of political structures. This does not constitute an absolute difference but one of emphasis. It has also been argued by Goldberg that racial differences are in fact determined by ethnic choices, that is, that the arbitrary markers by means of which race is constructed are based on ethnic choices, whether this be religion, skin colour, or the wearing of headgear. As he puts it, 'invoking the concept of race is invariably ethnocentric. Ethnicity is the mode of cultural identification and distinction [. . .] assigning significance to biological or physical attributes [. . . it] is a cultural choice' (pp. 74–75). This is illustrated for example in Myrna

[30] *Racist Culture*, p. 83.
[31] Frankenberg, p. 1 and passim
[32] Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, p. 4.
[33] 'What is a Nation?' in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 8–22 (p. 11).

Tonkinson's contribution to the collection *Being Whitefella.*[34] Tonkinson, an anthropologist involved in Aboriginal land claims, hails from Jamaica via America and describes herself as of Afro-Caribbean origin (p. 162). Presumably, after years of living as a black in a highly racialized society she finds herself in the interesting position of being designated 'white' by the Aborigines she encounters who clearly displace the supposedly 'natural' markers of skincolour for those designating 'race privilege'.[35] By making Tonkinson an honorary white the Aborigines, according to Goldberg's analysis, have exercised the kind of ethnic choice which traditionally, but invisibly, structures discourses of race.[36]

Turning now to another example of the processes which choreograph the relations between race and ethnicity, in Canada recently there has been considerable controversy about whether or not the 'Legion' clubs of returned soldiers would allow Sikhs wearing turbans to enter their sacred precincts where the dominant activity seems to be the very secular one of consuming alcohol and where the Anglo-Celtic convention that men should remove their headgear prevails.[37] One presumes the Sikhs were less interested in alcoholic rites than in fighting for the right to enter these clubs, to be included in this nationally-important community. In the midst of this it was revealed that Canadian-Jewish veterans, to preserve the right to wear the yarmulke, had discreetly formed a separate chapter and that this 'choice' was of course open to the Sikhs, indeed, they were strongly encouraged to exercise it. Television screens bristled with elderly balding men who became increasingly red-faced (no doubt the results of years of attendance at their local club) as they argued that it had nothing to do with race and everything to do with 'respect' and equally elderly men in turbans who (with far more equanimity) argued the same as a way of achieving the opposite.[38] The controversy was organized around a rhetoric of 'respect' both for the war dead and for the dominant cultural conventions of a country into which one was being 'assimilated' (marked culturally by not wearing headgear in hegemonic European-Canadian culture and the opposite in a branch of Asian-Canadian culture). Thus the logic appeared to be governed by ethnic choices rather than racism. However, no one was really fooled.

[34] 'Thinking in Colour', in *Being Whitefella*, pp. 162–76.

[35] In an adjacent (and to some degree contradictory) argument, Tonkinson comments that she is perplexed by the fact that, unlike the relativist 'ethnic' mechanisms just described, much Aboriginal discourse of resistance and protest echoes the questionable essentialist terms and concepts of scientific racism (p. 169), an element which is also deplored by Paul Gilroy in his statements on the new 'Afrocentrism'. This is a whole other issue (to some extent addressed, for example, in Edward Said's recent *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993)).

[36] Consider the contrast of Graham's remarks quoted above (p. 23), where the Irish are designated honorary blacks.

[37] Julie Smyth, 'Sikh group to fight Legion headgear ban', *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, 6 June 1994, p. A3.

[38] A far more complex notion of respect is discussed in the influential 'politics of recognition' as formulated by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. See *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. by Charles Taylor and Amy Gutman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

The example illustrates once more that we are dealing with who belongs to the nation and who doesn't and that this may be organized around quite arbitrary markers. Ironically this dispute took place in the midst of commemorative D-Day celebrations thus producing a spate of letters in the newspaper asking in bewilderment how this could happen in the face of a war in which the forces of enlightenment and tolerance had won, after all, over the forces of intolerance. This was set in the context of a recurrent and heated nationalist discourse surrounding the question of whether or not Quebec would finally separate from Canada. It may well be that the debate around soldiers and headgear was in fact a diversionary tactic or displaced symptom produced by the heightened emotions surrounding the possibility of Quebec's imminent secession, but the fact remains that Canadian nationalism (like any other) is finding it difficult to sustain the protocols of nationalist discourse which attempt to maintain, as Homi Bhabha has argued, the ambivalent task of representing the-people-as-one.[39]

Diaspora is the term which hinges, rather than mediates, those oppositions of race and ethnicity. It is undeniable that questions of diaspora, particularly in the face of current European upheavals, are seen as threats to notions of the cohesive nation. Diasporic allegiances along the race ethnicity vector breach the homogeneity of the nation state with other affiliations, of increasing importance in the new structures of globalization. To some extent this movement of global connections is also happening amongst the indigenous peoples who are forming alliances across those nation-states imposed on them as a way of confirming solidarity for claims often grounded in land rights. Here the desire to be human runs hand in hand with the desire for citizenship but in this case that desire for citizenship may need to involve setting up alternate models of the nation.[40] As Goldberg's and Gilroy's studies illustrate, both impulses are regulated by a desire for supposedly natural and continuous structures of belonging (family, community, nation) in the face of modernist discourses of anonymity. Indeed, modernity, the constituting of Europeanness both as evolved civilization and as civilizing imperialism with reason and its attendant legitimations at its core, is put in question by issues relating to diasporas and their histories. As Gilroy cogently argues, 'Defenders and critics of modernity seem to be equally unconcerned that the history and expressive culture of the African diaspora, the practice of racial slavery, or the narratives of imperial conquest may require all simple periodisations of the modern and the postmodern to be drastically rethought' (p. 42).

[39] 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *Nation and Narration*, pp. 291–322.

[40] Note the Canadian terms 'First Nations' and 'Founding Nations' which indicate that nations may well exist within nation-states. Recently, gay and lesbian activists have been introducing the term 'Queer Nations' in Queer Theory. For example, see Becki Ross, *The House That Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

Thus we are faced continually with the challenge of diaspora — in what senses and at what moments do we acknowledge the ties of diaspora? How do those terms signify? How do we define these scatterings and dispersions and what remains? These are questions which are only beginning to resonate, particularly in the wake of the restructuring of Africa, the former Soviet Republic, and Europe.

But let us return for the moment to ethnicity and race. In an earlier era, dominated by critics such as Werner Sollors in the US, ethnicity was perceived as shaping the discourses of consent rather than those of descent (relating to race in the model of genealogy) which were seen as structuring an earlier period of narratives of nationalism. It amounted to the desire to be a citizen in one's differences which, being based on a *choice* of the rituals one wished to continue, tended to work towards avoiding those anxieties provoked by cultural difference in the sense of fragmentation and dispersal. Ethnicity was of course not able to deal with the characteristics pertaining to visible minorities, in other words, only functioned as an organizing rhetoric for a predominantly European settler population. This 'whiteness', as Toni Morrison has eloquently demonstrated in her recent book *Playing in the Dark*, was never able to deal consciously, for example, with Afro-American differences. The more recent era which attempted to establish multiculturalism as a token acknowledgement of these other differences also strenuously side-stepped a recognition of power differentials amongst competing minority groups (a recognition significantly absent in the recent PC backlash). Thus a profoundly conservative pluralist model of state multiculturalism has currency in the US, Canada, and Australia.

While 'race' has no basis in fact, racism does. Thus analyses of race have attempted to distinguish themselves from the scientific racism prevailing last century which in turn, according to analysts such as Gilroy and Goldberg, have served to structure both nationalism and modernity. As part of this analysis Goldberg argues that far from being inherently irrational, 'racist exclusions throughout modernity can and have been rationally ordered and legitimated' (p. 11) and indeed, that racism structures the Enlightenment legacy of the 'man of reason'. Therefore the notion that racism is irrational, that it falls outside the mechanisms of reason, is put in question. The fact that racism is indeed 'reasonable' returns agency to individuals who are therefore once again made responsible, at least to some degree, for their racist actions. Prevailing models analysing systemic and discursive racism have tended to remove the emphasis from individual responsibility and Goldberg suggests that there needs to be a corrective to this trend. Similarly, Ruth Frankenberg's analysis, based on numerous interviews, in *White Woman, Race Matters*, also argues that responsibility for certain racist actions must be maintained in what she designates as the three areas of racism: essentialist racism, colour- and power-evasiveness and race cognizant reassertions (p. 140).

In these models of inclusion and exclusion one notes that constructions of both race and ethnicity have the following features: they are structured in relation to an economy or logic of the 'natural' linking family, community, and the nation, in other words, maintaining the apparent homology and cohesiveness of such 'natural' ties. While all are discrete they are also seen as leaking into each other. In relation to this point, Gilroy's critique of the essentialist nature of American Afrocentricity shows how 'the trope of the family which is such a recurrent feature of their discourse is itself a characteristically American means for comprehending the limits and dynamics of racial community' (p. 191). Meanwhile, Frankenberg's chapter on 'interracial' marriages clearly reveals how these supposed continuities and homologies are in fact structured in terms of irreconcilable contradictions. The family of the nation is clearly at odds with the nation of families.

Such figurative logic also informs (albeit in idiosyncratic ways) a news item referring to the Bosnian war in the Toronto *Globe and Mail*.[41] It was reported that a United Nations panel had found that Bosnian Serbs had pursued 'an overriding policy of advocating the use of rape as a method of "ethnic cleansing" against Bosnian Muslims'. How might one unpack the signification of 'ethnic cleansing' here? One surmises from the many reports that 'ethnic cleansing' is powered by the desire to align groups conceived as ethnically absolute or homogeneous with particular territories. In this instance, how those ethnic groups are chosen seems based predominantly on religion rather than 'blood ties' since there has been considerable genealogical intermingling amongst the peoples of this area and presumably language (another of the privileged markers of ethnic difference) is not as clear-cut an issue as religion. Religion, embedded in history, dates back to the Turkish conquest of 1389 at Kosovo which is one of the rallying historical moments for Bosnian Serbs.[42] Thus Muslim victims now are refigured in terms of Muslim aggressors then. Ethnic absolutism is therefore not constructed in the expected racist model of the racially pure family (in the sense of bloodlines) otherwise how would one offer the logic of rape as a means of ethnic cleansing? Rape, a violent genealogical intervention in many imperialisms (including of course Afro-American ones) here interrupts a symbolically pure genealogy on both sides. It is constructed in this case, however, not as genealogical contamination but as blasphemy, if religious difference is the prime referent for each group. Thus the bodies of Muslim Bosnian women are figured as the reliquary of the 'ethnically homogeneous' family and, coherent with this figurative logic, as the sanctuary of the Muslim faith.

[41] 'Rape Routine in Ethnic Cleansing', 3 June 1994, p. A6.
[42] Myrna Kostash, *Bloodlines: A Journey in Eastern Europe* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1993).

When Michael Ignatieff concluded his series of television programmes *Blood and Belonging* which examined various nationalist trouble spots (including the Kurds, Quebec, Northern Ireland, Germany, the Ukraine, and former Yugoslavia), he stated that there were two concepts of nation: the ethnic one (for 'us' only) and the civic one (an alliance based on consent rather than descent).[43] In the example above, the publicly witnessed withholding of consent (the accounts suggest the women and girls were deliberately and repeatedly raped in front of their families) means that we are dealing with the 'ethnic' nation here. Genealogically speaking, the rapes ensure that there will be continuity between the 'them' and 'us' in the future. In other words, Ignatieff's ethnic model of the nation is perpetuated into a bloody future of continued ethnically based contention. There appears to be no room for civic consent here. Blood (in the sense of genealogy and religion) underwrites belonging in the sense of legitimating territorial aspirations. The future bloodlines injected into these bodies, as genealogy and blasphemy, establishes the corporeal continuum of a past dating from presumed comparable actions by the Muslim Turks in 1389. One assumes that this over-determined chronology serves to justify the atrocities of the present war. The absolutism projected onto ethnicity in this scenario matches the absolutism associated with race in a previous age. The mechanisms relating to both race and ethnicity are used interchangeably in this new rhetoric of constituting and managing the nation.[44]

David Goldberg suggests that 'if we see race as a fluid, fragile, and more or less vacuous concept capable of alternative senses', then instead of talking in terms of theories of race, as though 'race' were a given, 'We will take them alternatively as transformed and historically transforming *conceptions* of race, subjective identity, and social identification' (pp. 80–81). Race, as he points out, naturalizes 'the groupings it identifies in its own name', including those pertaining to the nation. As we know from studies in nationalism, notably Benedict Anderson's work,[45] the assumed natural and primordial homogeneity of the nation is actually the result of much labour to cover over the differences and disparate elements. It can take as given neither language, genealogy, nor territory and is instead sutured by specific rhetorical structures of icons and symbols which construct notions of both borders and belonging.

To what extent can cultural critics analyse the models of culture emerging from these deployments of race and ethnicity? Culture, as we've observed in these debates, too often represents a retreat from the political and clearly this is one element to bring to crisis. A prevailing trend in these debates is

[43] The series then became a book. See Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging* (Toronto: Penguin, 1994).
[44] The chain of substitutions traced in this episode owes something to Jennifer Sharpe's study of rape in the 'Indian Mutiny', *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
[45] *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).

that of self-consciously employing a differently situated perspective to deconstruct the dominant, indeed to show whether and how there is such an object as the dominant in representation, in a variety of discourses. For example, Ruth Frankenberg suggests that 'to speak of whiteness is to assign *everyone* a place in the relations of racism. It is to emphasize that dealing with racism is not merely an option for white people' (p. 6). And later, in an interesting echo of Marcia Langton's statement quoted earlier, ' "whiteness" is indeed a space defined only by reference to those named cultures it has flung out to the perimeter. Whiteness is in this sense fundamentally a relational category' (p. 231). In other words, it is the 'white gaze' (p. 18) which we can usefully define at this point. And, like blackness, whiteness is a shifting term as we have seen in the case of Tonkinson. Indeed, a Canadian example was precipitated by the recent 'Writing Through Race' controversy[46] when Myrna Kostash made the following pronouncements in the Toronto *Globe and Mail*:

> In 1908, Ukrainians were not white. Two generations later we are. How can this be? For one thing we learned to speak English. My parents, born in Canada, acquired the status of loyal British subjects — honorary whiteness, if you like. By the time I was in school in the 1950s and 1960s, Ukrainian Canadians had become part of the Canadian 'mosaic', colourful nuggets decorating the two 'founding nations'.[47]

Appeals to the facts of a nation's history are not really at issue here, since we are dealing rather with metaphors and signifying systems mobilized as part of a rhetoric of the national culture concerned with identifying insiders and outsiders.

In relation to teasing out the salient features of minority perspectives, the founding study for the construction of alterity is of course Said's *Orientalism*. Its later and local applications are many, but Toni Morrison's study is an outstanding recent example. Morrison's organizing question is: 'How is "literary whiteness" and "literary blackness" made, and what is the consequence of this construction?' (p. xii) She then goes on to examine the creation of 'Africanism' (an invented Africa) in American literature and finds, for example, that early American writing is 'in large measure shaped by the presence of the racial other' (p. 46). In the US increasing scholarly work around the construction of 'Asianness' is gathering pace in the work of Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Rey Chow, and a whole new generation of critics,

[46] For more on this episode see Cyril Dabydeen, 'Celebrating Difference', *Books in Canada* (September 1994), 23–25; Roy Miki, 'From Exclusion to Inclusion', *Canadian Forum* (September 1994), 5–8.
[47] 'You check your colour at the door', *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, 9 May 1994, p. A. 19.

often drawing upon their own personal histories of being Asian-American.[48] In Australia such work serves as a useful corrective to the over-simplified biculturalist oppositions mentioned above: for example, Suvendrini Perera's essay analysing the mechanisms of representation in which Asia and the Balkans are allied in a new model of 'absolutist politics and oriental despotism'.[49] As she puts it:

> This [. . .] is the work yet to be done by a cultural theory interested in Australian-Asian relations; it calls, not simply for the cataloguing of mutual representations by Australians and various individual Asian nations, nor for the adjudication of these representations as good or bad, but for a theorizing of the complex, often untranslatable and unequal interactions involved in the business of dealing with and dealing in dominant cultures. (p. 20)

Homi Bhabha's highly influential work is particularly relevant in attempts to think about borders and hybridity. In a recent essay he defines *hybridity* as 'the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity. Strategies of hybridization reveal an estranging movement in the "authoritative", even authoritarian inscription of the sign'.[50] We should also note that there is a suggestion in some recent criticism, based on classic deconstruction, that such analyses in the name of hybridity are dependent on the very boundaries they seek to cross or blur.[51] Such formalist dangers bedevil any counter-discourse, hence the intellectual purchase of theories such as Judith Butler's notion of performativity which constructs the subversive in terms of repetitive stagings.[52] One thinks also of Paul Gilroy's brilliant study of jazz as the detailed workings of a hybrid culture flowing in two directions of mutually beneficial 'contamination' in *Black Atlantic*.

Where does this leave multicultural critical theory? For one thing it remains a useful discourse adjacent to and partly overlapping with postcolonial theory in particular. While postcolonialism is sometimes defined as studies in Eurocentrism it should not be confined to this and one has to be alert to its usage and claims in specific instances. As Arif Dirlik has pointed

[48] See Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, *Nationalism and Literature: English-Language Writing from the Philippines and Singapore* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1993); Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between East and West* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), and *Writing Diaspora*; *Charlie Chan is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction*, ed. by Jessica Hagedorn (New York: Penguin, 1993); Sau-lin C. Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); King-Kok Cheung, *Articulated Silences* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[49] Suvendrini Perera, 'Recalcitrant Subalterns (and Other Multicultural Monsters)', unpublished paper delivered at the University of Hong Kong in 1994 (typescript, p. 13).

[50] 'Culture's In Between', *Artforum* (September 1993), 167–214 (p. 212).

[51] Annamarie Jagose, 'Slash and Suture: Post/colonialism in Borderlands/La Frontera: *The New Mestiza*', in *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*, ed. by Sneja Gunew and A. Yeatman (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), pp. 212–27.

[52] *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993). In a highly complex argument taking off in part from speech act theory, Butler suggests that sex constitutes the performing of gender and that the legitimacy of certain discursive interpellations ('It's a girl/boy!') is interrogated and undermined by the repetitive stagings of sex as gender: 'Recognition is not conferred on a subject but forms that subject' (p. 226).

out in a recent article,[53] there are problems with its deployment as being both too general and too particular: too general when used by First World thinkers 'who apply concepts of First World derivation globally without giving a second thought to the social differences that must qualify those concepts historically and contextually' (p. 340) and too specific when non-First World intellectuals generalize from the local to the global. As Dirlik points out, there is 'a contradiction between an insistence on heterogeneity, difference, and historicity and a tendency to generalize from the local to the global while denying that there are global forces at work that may condition the local in the first place' (p. 341).

In relation to this critique, multicultural critical theory can serve to remind one of both the local and the global in that it introduces minority perspectives as well as suggesting diasporic networks. It continues to be a way of situating subjectivities outside certain nationalist investments and hence may be used as a way of paying attention to minority perspectives, using them to critique dominant discourses and practices. There seems some truth in Ruth Frankenberg's suggestion that minorities see the elements which structure the dominant more clearly than do those at the 'centre' (pp. 5, 206). At the same time there is also always the caution that minority perspectives are neither free of their own investments nor do they automatically retain a hold on some kind of privileged moral capital. For example, in relation to the question of ethnicity it is interesting to note that Frankenberg's analysis shows her subjects signifying their cultural belonging in terms of 'heirlooms' or annual celebrations of certain genealogies. This brings to mind the Australian-Vietnamese writer Uyen Loewald's characteristically sharp designation of ethnic groups in Australia as comprising a 'museum culture' relevant to the cultural tourism industry rather than to themselves as part of a struggle for gaining political legitimacy in their differences.[54] This version of or complicity with an all too prevalent type of construction of ethnicity is hardly radical in either a cultural or socio-political sense and serves merely to reinforce dominant structures which always perceive the minority as consigned to a past which is rich and diverse but always safely in the past.[55] In ways that we have traced in relation to race and ethnicity, multiculturalism is now, according to Bhabha, a kind of floating signifier which gains both meaning and strategic capabilities only in a specific context. It can be used by any faction and has no privileged or unchanging meaning.

These decentred perspectives can also be used to demonstrate the ways in which certain discursive traditions haunt the new, for example, the new

[53] 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism', *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1994), 328–56.
[54] 'Feminism and Colonialism', in *Australia for Women: Travel and Culture*, ed. by S. Hawthorne and R. Klein (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1994).
[55] See Anderson, pp. 187–206.

racism referred to by Goldberg and Gilroy or the continuing covert racism hiding at the heart of modernity and at the heart of liberalism (Frankenberg). This in turn may lead to the refiguring and rehistoricizing of modernity and the various 'posts' that follow,[56] including postmodernism and postcolonialism.[57]

In the Australian context there are the thoughtful reminders promulgated by Wayne Hudson and David Carter in the introduction to their anthology on the republican debates:

> Often the history of Australian Republicanism is narrated as if it were a purely English–Irish drama. Such narration tends to ignore the ethnic diversity of the peoples living in this country and the diverse republican traditions of which many have had direct or indirect experience.[58]

However, one notes as well Gassan Hage's equally thoughtful and thought-provoking analysis of these debates which reveal them to serve the interests ofan Anglo-Celtic hegemony, in spite of their use of an inclusivist rhetoric of multicultural tolerance.[59] In the details he examines of the workings of the multicultural spectacle of the nation, the organizing tropes derive from the classificatory systems of collections and zoology which 'belong to a long Western colonialist tradition of exhibiting the national self through the exhibiting of otherness' (p. 123).

Once again we return to the question of belonging and note that these interrogations of the national emerge from both local communities and global diasporas. They can have outcomes as murderous as those of the old nationalisms, but at the same time, a retreat into nostalgias for some putative lost coherence of the nation does not appear to be an answer. Nor does the imposition of binary oppositions which trivialize the interactions of complex and non-homogeneous groups and reduces them to 'black and white' seem to be the solution. The way ahead in terms of analysing cultural texts of any kind seems to be to denaturalize the classificatory categories invoked to stabilize and legitimate all types of nation-building, and here the constellation of terms — multiculturalism, ethnicity, race, postcolonialism — all have their shifting and shifty roles to play.

[56] Note Jean-François Lyotard's suggestion that 'post' means anterior, that which has been forgotten in the conditions enabling or governing the emergence of something new, in this case the relations between modernity and postmodernity. See 'Defining the Postmodern', in *Postmodernism*, ed. by L. Appignanesi (London: Institute for Contemporary Art, 1986).

[57] Note here Paul Gilroy's critique of the ignoring of blackness by theorists such as Zygmunt Bauman or of modernity's ignoring of slavery (p. 213). See also Bhabha's concept of varying temporalities in relation to modernity in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[58] 'Reframing the Issues', in *The Republicanism Debate* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1993), pp. 2–35.

[59] 'Republicanism, Multiculturalism, Zoology', *Communal Plural*, 2 (1993), 113–37.