



**Queensland University of Technology**  
Brisbane Australia

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

[Moreton-Robinson, Aileen M.](#) (2006) How White possession moves : after the word. In Lea, T., Kowal, E., & Cowlshaw, G. (Eds.) *Moving Anthropology : Critical Indigenous Studies*. Charles Darwin University Press, Australia, Northern Territory, Darwin, pp. 219-232.

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# **Moving Anthropology**

*Critical Indigenous Studies*

**edited by**

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***Charles Darwin University Press***

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First published 2006.

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ISBN 0 9758356 1 0

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## *Afterword*

### **How White Possession Moves: After the Word**

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AILEEN MORETON-ROBINSON

The chapters in this book are a timely intervention into a field of study identified as Australian Aboriginal anthropology. They seek to provide the reader with new perspectives about what critical Indigenous studies can offer: a focus on relationality rather than isolation. Aboriginal anthropology has found wanting its traditional models of kinship, social organisation and land tenure in the wake of Mabo, Wik and the nefarious *Native Title Act*. As someone who was involved in a Native Title representative body, I witnessed anthropologists struggle to make sense of Indigenous contexts that are not in remote areas of Australia, hermetically sealed and untainted by discourses of progress, development and race. The relationality of these contemporary contexts, which was produced by conditions not of the Indigenous participants choosing, was hard to fit neatly into classificatory systems of kinship and ritual which, with the use of their disciplinary knowledge, anthropologists had been trained to find. Elements of traditional Indigenous culture could be identified as remnants of a lost culture but the other stuff was better off being classified as Indigenous contemporary life where identifying ‘culture’ becomes a tricky business. This predicament is of course not solely produced by anthropology’s lack, though its knowledge has helped produce legislative restrictions that inhibit the production of more nuanced and sophisticated analyses of Indigenous land tenure systems. The anthropologists’ frustrations mirrored my own as a student who was being trained in a discipline that appeared blind to two important points: the majority of Indigenous people do not live in remote communities, and capitalism knows no boundaries and loves ‘Indigenous culture’ particularly when it can be detached from people making collective rights claims.

While the majority of chapters written in this book are based on ethnographic encounters in remote Indigenous communities they differ from the traditionalist stream of Australian Aboriginal anthropology. The editors argue that critical Indigenous studies sets itself apart from ‘remedialism and

from the pathologies of binarism'. It moves away from analyses of Indigenous pathology and the shortcomings of 'colonial and neo-colonial' governance to situate itself within a broader debate in the public arena. The primary concern is to engage with 'political epistemology' as the foundation of knowledge that informs the cultural domain of decision-making about Indigenous governance. The book is based on ethnographic encounters that seek to offer 'something different from what we all already know to know' by rejecting a myopic gaze on the 'Indigenous problem' and studying the social dynamics of the problems that white Australians present for Indigenous people. They argue that the diachronic manifests in everyday practice which is why history is important and requires further detailed examination in order to recognise the current desire for its rewriting and reconfiguration. Their primary ambition is to provide innovative ways of evaluating some old problems while understanding that as ethnographers they also carry cultural baggage shaped by the social and discursive processes they wish to understand and analyse. The editors acknowledge the limitations of their epistemology in undertaking the task of establishing a critical Indigenous studies but are satisfied with offering the book as pregnant with ideas from which new engagements can begin. This acknowledgement also provides fertile ground for an engagement from outside the confines of anthropology.

The ethnographic encounter has been proposed as always being concerned with the 'social' not the textual but as Clifford (1986) and others have persuasively argued, people write culture decontextualised from the 'social' of their encounter with the 'other' within the confines of one's home or office. As such the 'other' is usually not envisaged as those who will read and engage with the text for their function is to remain the object of study. Thus the production of knowledge about the 'other' is 'socially managed, regulated by the general concerns of social authority, and self-imposed by the specific interests and concerns of the disciplinary specialist' (Goldberg 1996:150). So what happens when the 'other' is given the text to read and analyse? Not the 'other' of the ethnographic encounter experienced and written about in the book but one whose life experiences have more in common with the Indigenous 'objects' of study and who also shares some commonality of training with the subjects conducting the study. Whose interests does the invitation to engage serve? Is this an effort to give the Indigenous other 'voice' as a generous gesture for the sake of some value attached to my moral authority and/or academic credibility? After all Indigenous scholars are heavily reliant upon the goodwill of whites in order to have their work published, such is the nature of power relations within and outside the academy.

These are interesting questions to consider as an Indigenous reader of a text produced by white anthropologists, but I will not digress by answering them here for the challenge is to respond to the invitation in an engaging and constructive way. For my purposes this book lends itself to an analysis drawn



from critical race and whiteness studies for it is a racialised text born of racialised contexts, knowledges and subjectivities. As Goldberg (1996:150) eloquently argues 'racial knowledge consists *ex hypothesi* in the making of difference; it is in a sense and paradoxically the assumption and paradigmatic establishment of difference'. The literature within critical race and whiteness studies identifies whiteness as a significant racial characteristic of power relations in the construction of identity, representation, decision-making, subjectivity, nationalism, knowledge production and the law (Morrison 1992; Frankenberg 1993; Crenshaw *et al.* 1995; Harris 1995; Haney Lopez 1996; Dyer 1997; Delgado & Stefancic 1997; Hill 1997; Flagg 1998; Brodtkin 1999; Cuomo & Hall 1999; Rasmussen *et al.* 2001; Levine-Rasky 2002). Montag (1997:285) argues that with modernity whiteness became an invisible norm through the universalisation of humanness, which simultaneously erased its racial character and made it a universal. Contributing to this growing literature is the work of Australian scholars who are establishing a field of whiteness studies that engages in a variety of ways with colonisation and Indigenous sovereignty (McKay 1999; Nicoll 2001; Anderson 2002; Hage 2003; Moreton-Robinson 2004; Nicoll 2004). In particular the work of Ravenscroft (2004), Nicoll (2004), and Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos (2004) considers the relationship between Indigenous sovereignty and the psycho-social and ontological realms of subjectivity, while others such as Kate Foord (2004), illustrate that the white fantasy of *Terra Nullius* and the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty are fundamental to the narration of Australian identity and nation building.

I have argued elsewhere that whiteness is an epistemological *a priori* that informs knowledge production by establishing the limits of what can be known about the other through itself, disappearing beyond or behind the limits of this knowledge it creates in the other's name (Moreton-Robinson 2004:75–79). As an epistemological *a priori* it functions discursively within modes of rationality, disciplinary knowledges and regulatory mechanisms, all of which are exposed to different degrees in *Moving Anthropology: Critical Indigenous Studies*. What I am interested in exploring with this book is the ways in which each chapter is useful in providing insights about white possession. Let me be a little clearer. While there is an abundance of literature that acknowledges Indigenous people have been colonised, very few writers have theorised how white possession manifests itself in everyday encounters, how it works discursively, materially, ontologically and epistemologically for Australians of every colour. Yet white possession is synonymous with sovereignty and the everyday practice of institutionalised power. Colonisation as a racialised project disciplines subjects in particular kinds of ways. The right to take possession was embedded in British and international common law and rationalised through a discourse of civilisation that validated war, physical occupation and the will and desire to possess. In Australia white possession became solidified in the form of

a racial contract between the state and its citizens whereby race became the organising principle operating politically, morally and epistemologically (Mills 1997). In this way white possession becomes mediated and regulated within society. As a means of controlling the population, white subjects are disciplined, though to different degrees, to invest in the nation as a white possession that imbues them with a sense of belonging and ownership. White possession moves and is performed in the everyday, as I will disclose from the chapters in this book.

### *Text and verse*

Franca Tamisari in the first chapter discusses her initial encounters during fieldwork in Milingimbi reflecting upon how she reacted to her situation and the responses of her Indigenous family. She notes how these encounters shaped her thinking about the structural position she was allocated when she arrived and what transpired in due course as a member of the community. Drawing on the work of Bertrand Russell (1948) she argues that anthropology has been concerned with *savoir*: knowledge about the other and should instead be interested in *connaissance* which is knowledge derived from direct experience, from acquaintance. She argues against reducing the essential individuality of people to being 'exemplars of their culture', instead anthropology should be concerned with thinking about the essential individuality of a person which 'announces itself as hidden, secret, internal and deep' because the personal is both political and social. What Franca's chapter highlights is how the disciplinary knowledge of anthropology has shaped the way Indigenous people are interpellated within certain structural relations which are perceived to govern the way they behave. This way of knowing the other denies 'autonomy to those so named and imagined, extending power, control and authority, and domination over them' (Goldberg 1996:150). Traditionalist Aboriginal anthropology is a form of racialised knowledge that requires a demarcation of difference which entails defining the 'limits of the other's possibilities' (ibid). The Indigenous other becomes a white possession through the way in which we are represented outside of the possibilities of friendship which is multi-layered, continuous and changing while susceptible to different kinds of individual investment and interest. Attaching categories to people legitimates the ownership of the knowledge producer and the discipline that manages that knowledge. Through their disciplinary knowledge, anthropologists transform the object of their study from friends into a possession which simultaneously works to 'identify the subject capable of possession with the white colonizer. Through their mediated possession...the logic that frames the colonial subject-world relationship renders both Australian subjectivity and Australian territory as exclusively white' (Nicolacopoulos & Vassilacopoulos 2004:42).

The second chapter by Tess Lea argues that discourses of progress and modernity function to promote prosperity within the Northern Territory

through economic development and social cohesion. This includes producing subjects that can fulfil their potential by engaging in both production and consumption. However, different kinds of social and economic relations are forged between Indigenous subjects, who are primarily welfare dependent, and other Territorians. Central to this economy is Indigenous use of roads and purchasing of four-wheel-drive cars which enable mobility and contribute to the capitalist development of the Territory through their consumption and use. However, this mobility leads to itinerancy and anti social behaviour to which the State responds through strategies of surveillance and containment. Lea reveals how the Indigenous itinerant is an outcome of the infrastructure established to facilitate access to markets for business. This access is two-way as it enables mobility that produces subjects that are both desirable and undesirable in their occupation of civic space. This space is defined and identified as a white possession through regulatory mechanisms that work to name and police an unruly blackness which is perceived to be trespassing as it disrupts white civic virtue. The proprietary rights of white possession are embedded within a spatial ontology that governs movement, protocols and use as well as civic and architectural design in exercising sovereignty over territory. As such they are normalised within a racialised and spatialised form of politics and territorial distribution that refuses both the unruly and the compliant presence of Indigenous sovereignty.

In chapter three Philip Batty argues that repatriation can be seen to be an act of white redemption as museums seek to implement government policy as a response to accusations of the theft of Indigenous cultural material. To his knowledge, based on the diaries, letters and official reports of white people, most of the cultural material he was returning in the Northern Territory was either given away or sold to white people. He argues that the return of material to Indigenous communities produces unintended outcomes that may cause a great deal of grief. His solution is to establish keeping places in communities which could house material for the benefit of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Batty's solution is similar to one that was put forward by those of us who fought for the return of cultural material two decades ago but governments are unwilling to provide such facilities to Indigenous communities. The continuous rhetoric of governments is that there is 'not enough money' and it is 'not a priority given the other pressing needs of Indigenous communities' and this is supported by white middle class Australian voters. The rhetorical strategy of governments masks the value of Indigenous cultural material in museums to be given or taken as a white possession. The government's repatriation policy acts to repress the idea of the dispossession of Indigenous land, displacing it through an act of Indigenous re/possession of cultural material. The repressed acts of colonisation then surface in the implementation of the policy faced by those who have to deal

with the reality of returning Indigenous property. 'This redemptive strategy of white possession serves a number of purposes: it pacifies white guilt and affirms white virtue while it moves to reimburse those it has dispossessed.

Based on her study of health professionals in the Northern Territory, Emma Kowal in chapter four maps the way 'culture' discourse operates in health care policy and delivery as a 'technology of distinction'. She illustrates how a variety of discourses of culture operate in this field. There is cultural maladjustment, cultural loss, cultural fixity and cultural overvaluation. The latter is espoused by those on the 'right'. However, Kowal focuses on the 'interveners', health care professionals who have a consciousness of the history of colonisation. They believe in culturally appropriate health care programs which they perceive distinguishes them from their forebears and those who espouse a resistance to their work. Thus the 'spectre of assimilation is untenable for interveners'. What can be gleaned from Kowal's work is how discourses of culture are fed by certain disciplinary knowledges and regulatory mechanisms to produce the 'cultured Aboriginal object'. Through a 'technology of distinction' Indigenous people come to be possessed as captives of 'culture', as objects of a white gaze that generates its own discourses which pathologise and essentialise Indigenous people. Health remains the property of the white discourse of medicine, albeit with a new respect for 'culture'. According to this possessive logic, 'culture' is represented as involving the non-material world and it is the only possession we are perceived to have within the political economy of health care policy and delivery. As a 'technology of distinction' operating through various discourses of Indigenous 'culture' it forms part of the regime of power by which white possession moves in the everyday.

Sarah Holcombe's chapter five concerning mining companies' community benefit packages, is drawn primarily from research in the Pilbara in Western Australia and is illustrative of the location of land use agreements within a discourse of development. She explains how Indigenous people actively engage in different ways within the context of these agreements through political strategies, employment, disengagement and intermittent engagement. The diversity of Indigenous agency is however shaped by the mining company's organisational culture which requires white normative responses and engagement with the benefit flows from land use agreements. What Holcombe's work reveals is the way that land use agreements are part of the regulatory mechanisms which operate structurally within the company and the Aboriginal Training and Liaison Unit (ATAL). They regulate and discipline Indigenous experience and expectations by circumscribing Indigenous people's choices through minimising options, restricting resources and limiting information among other things. These strategies of coercion and seduction facilitate Indigenous people's movement towards, and participation in, the mainstream economy which serves the mining company's development of potential and interests. Indigenous people's property rights are marginalised by

the proprietary interests of the company which operates through a discourse of development tied to the exclusionary interests of a white possessive nation. Governments continue to locate Indigenous people outside the nation's boundary by not including and defining our interests as interests of the nation. In this way, the mining company's culture mirrors the exclusive possession of the nation as economic development and its benefits are the preserve of those deemed entitled to possess.

Similarly Tony Redmond's chapter on community trucks discloses the way in which bureaucratic intervention and regulation of the consumption of these goods in Indigenous communities, attempts to circumscribe their use. In their movement from indentured workers to being welfare dependent, Indigenous people in the northern Kimberley region engage with their circumstances through a services/gift economy which privileges the obligation and reciprocity of their exchange with each other by investments in the relationality of their cultural status. Their relationship with the state is mediated through this economy so, on the one hand, they expect certain benefits in reciprocity for the theft of their land and their low socio-economic position and, on the other, they feel a sense of shame in receiving them because they are not given on the basis of their equity as owners of the land. Instead, the state functions as a 'put upon giver'. White possession creates the conditions under which this dynamic unfolds. The 'gift of welfare' is not predicated on an acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty, but rather on white benevolence and it carries different obligations and values. Indigenous people in the Kimberley region are presented with the limitations of their own power and status outside the cultural domain that gives meaning to their lives as sovereign subjects. As a regime of power that operates through discourse, regulatory mechanisms, organisational structures and embodied practices, white possession actively forecloses the possibility of Indigenous people as property owning subjects by treating them as objects of welfare dependency.

How discursive structures of music function as an implement for change and development 'cultivating cultural integrity' is articulated by Åse Ottosson in chapter seven as he focuses on Indigenous music making. Interviews and ethnographic encounters with Indigenous musicians, non Indigenous educators and artist managers as well as an Indigenous producer provide the data to show how music making works discursively within a discourse of progress. Ottosson argues that the disjuncture between the ambitions of Indigenous musicians and those of music industry stakeholders are twofold. Indigenous musicians produce and perform music for their cultural contexts reinforcing their moral and social status while simultaneously contributing to the wellbeing of their communities. They consider their recognition in the white music industry as secondary to their contributions within the Indigenous sphere. The normative expectations of music educators, managers and producers who

are concerned with developing Indigenous music for a wider audience, do not provide the impetus for their music making or employment. Indigenous music makers are acutely aware of who holds the power within the broader music field as they 'constantly have to deal with having their choices, options, desires and aspirations limited by being reified in terms of racial and cultural differences that are not consistent with their lived experiences'. Ottosson's chapter demonstrates how the discourse of progress informs the terms of reference of inclusion within the music industry which are usually negotiated and rejected by Indigenous music makers. Indigenous music makers' control of their music is limited to cultural domains outside the mainstream industry and ironically what they produce is culturally appropriate music for these contexts, not the white market. Indigenous music makers' experiences reveal that the discourse of progress entails white possession of the infrastructural and ideological frames of the music industry as well as certain norms, expectations, values, ideas and practices that are designed for investments by white subjects. Thus within the discursive frames of music making 'culturally appropriate' becomes a signature for whitening Indigenous music.

Gillian Cowlishaw argues in chapter eight that the history wars have had effects beyond the public debate between historians. In rural towns such as Bourke the new progressive history of invasion has created tensions between different generations of Indigenous people and their relations with whites as well as white responses to that history. She calls for an understanding of entanglement in the writing of history, one that considers the complexity of subjective and emotional responses of agents as a way out of the moral binaries that pervade the writing of the nation's history whether by conservative or progressive historians. She illustrates how older Indigenous people's responses to the specifics of their history involve high self-esteem, warm feelings about white bosses, shame and pride. In contrast the younger generation grasps the mantle of victim-hood to express anger and frustration about the treatment of Indigenous people at the hands of whites, in particular those in the service of the state. On the other hand, whites do not feel they are complicit in the nation's history of invasion. Instead they seek to shore up their honour and pride, refusing to take responsibility for the violence and are concerned with retribution by Indigenous people for past cruelties. Some even recall the poverty and injury of their own family's past as a way of locating themselves as separate from the history of invasion. What can be discerned from Cowlishaw's focus on the subjective and emotional responses by Indigenous and white rural people is the degree to which the specificities of the social conditions that produce subjects can only ever be consciously partially known and possessed. To deny complicity and responsibility for violence, or to affirm pride and self-esteem born out of exploitation, or to be angry or to love a white man does illustrate the complexity of racialised social entanglements as does the notion

that Indigenous people are angry because of the history white men have written. However, the focus on the subjective and the emotional has the effect of producing a subject that transcends the oppression or privilege that produces it; this transcendence becomes validated within consciousness as part of one's subjective history. Racial hierarchy appears innate within these histories and the moral and material capital accumulated by white possession of the nation remains invisible within power relations that shape the moral, emotional and subjective. The sovereignty of Indigenous people continues to be disavowed by the possessive investments of participants in the history wars and country towns. The fact of illegal dispossession is muted by focusing on the subjective contentment or resentment of Indigenous subjects in relation to this dispossession. In the absence of shared recognition of the crime of dispossession on the part of white and Indigenous subjects, virtue functions as a white possession on both sides of the history wars, dispossessing Indigenous people from the ground of moral virtue even as their positive or negative experiences and memories are given belated recognition by anthropologists (Nicoll 2001).

In chapter nine Elizabeth Povinelli argues that predominant modes of analysing the incommensurability and indeterminacy of Indigenous life worlds has been through separating off legislation from class relations and racial struggles or pathologising epistemological and moral orders by decontextualising the social, separating the traditional from the historical and privileging models of descent rule. As a regime of power, the law is reflected in different ways in Indigenous social relations. She illustrates how the state disciplines Indigenous subjects through the law to maintain its power by relying on indeterminacy and incommensurability within legislative regimes. This regime of power seeks to simplify Indigenous life reducing it to a set of presupposed rules that function rationally despite the irrational way the law operates itself through 'incommensurate though often mutually referring state regimes'. She argues that indeterminacy and incommensurability are embedded in Indigenous social life and that they provide creative strategies for the navigation of the actual complexity of living. This presupposition requires a methodological shift within anthropology to become creatively irrational. Povinelli's work illuminates how white possession moves through discourses in the everyday social life of Indigenous people. The racialised hegemony of the State operates through its various mutually referring regulatory mechanisms and disciplinary knowledges such as anthropology, defining its version of the 'rational' Indigenous subject within a number of discourses. Indigenous people in this sense become the possessions of the legislative regimes and are predetermined and managed accordingly. In this sense Indigenous people are not imagined as property owning subjects but as the objects of property. However, the discourses that are produced within Indigenous contexts work

dialectically with others ensuring that white possession is resisted, manipulated and negotiated by Indigenous subjects who continually confront the limits of their power over white embodied institutional practices.

Examining in chapter ten the Howard government's fourth term, Tim Rowse outlines the shift in government policy from an Indigenous rights agenda to a social justice platform based on practical reconciliation. This shift began with the abolition of ATSIC, which was promoted through a discourse of Indigenous corruption and redemption. This change in policy also involved amendments to the legislative regime and the establishment of the National Indigenous Council as the government's advisory body. Rowse notes that this shift is not simply a return to assimilation policies of the past. Instead, Howard has 'mainstreamed' Indigenous programs for the first time in Commonwealth history. This form of mainstreaming is restricted in four ways: the retention of Indigenous specific programs within mainstream departments; an Indigenous specific agency to monitor these programs; shared responsibility agreements; and the funding of an Indigenous sector to monitor and deliver service provision based on need. The existence of these four conduits to 'mainstreaming' is an expression of the Howard government's recognition of the special needs of Indigenous communities. An explicit part of the practical reconciliation agenda is the establishment of a statistical archive, which is designed to measure outcomes through social indicators of disadvantage. Rowse argues that 'one of the ideological functions of shared responsibility agreements is to remind the public that people may fail to live up to the goodness of their governments'. However, research within the statistical archive indicates that governments are failing in their responsibilities to Indigenous people because they under-fund Indigenous programs compared with mainstream programs. Rowse's chapter reveals that the state has embraced and contributed to the discourse on passive welfare by reconfiguring its regulatory mechanisms to manage Indigenous social pathology through technologies of welfare such as shared responsibility agreements. The state's practical reconciliation agenda of welfare reform through mutual obligation is a way of accounting for the investment of the Australian tax payers' money in a 'racially corrupt group' who must redeem themselves through 'aggressive welfare'. The discourse of passive welfare works in the interests of the state by allowing it to implement an aggressive welfare agenda that demonstrates its capacity for 'economically responsible' and 'socially just' governance. The intimate relationship between white possession and asset accumulation in Australian society is reinforced by a consistent pattern of expectations and interests that protect its investments through diminishing and regulating Indigenous entitlements. Technologies of welfare work in the interests of white possession by denying Indigenous people the opportunity for asset accumulation and economic development.



In chapter eleven David Turnbull explains how, as a mode of rationality, boundaries are embedded in western spatial ontology determining and limiting movement spatially, temporally, socially, epistemologically and ontologically. These forms of demarcation operate through a sense of fixity and certainty. Unlike western constructions of boundaries, Indigenous boundary-making is predicated on flexibility, indeterminacy and negotiation which is perceived as being problematic when determining boundaries for land claims that will affect the interests of mining companies who require certainty of demarcation to ensure their ability to explore and establish mining leases. While this indeterminacy is positioned as being the problem, in mapping the terrain for a land claim the Ngaanyatjarra Land Council itself experienced difficulties in defining boundaries due to the imprecise location of the Western Australian border and the lack of precise details of leases on Aboriginal reserves and the number of bureaucratic agencies involved in boundary surveillance. Turnbull concludes by stating that western spatial practices are unwieldy, irregular, incomplete, sometimes incommensurable and are socially negotiated and constructed 'across and between cultures'. Instead of 'messy places' being transformed into 'rational spaces', the flexibility of boundaries offers scope for the narration of 'multiple contesting stories of boundaries and movement...in the "complexities of tension" (Law 1999:12) with one another, and the boundaries of stories are performed together in dynamic interaction'. What we can discern from Turnbull's argument is that the imprecise and indeterminate nature of boundaries on the survey ground produces logistical nightmares. However, the very existence of boundaries drawn on maps and existing in law clearly delineates who holds exclusive possession as does the very act of 'returning country' to traditional owners and the existence of white border control mechanisms and interests. Spatially, temporally, socially, epistemologically and ontologically, white possession is not erased by the existence of Indigenous boundaries and the implementation of land rights regimes because the land tenure offered is not Indigenous sovereignty in the form of exclusive possession. The boundaries of that story would require a completely new and different narration.

Andrew Lattas writes the last chapter in the book, reviewing some of the reviews of Elizabeth Povinelli's new book *The Cunning of Recognition*. Lattas argues that Povinelli has become the new whipping girl of Australian Aboriginal anthropology because her book represents a disturbing ontological and epistemological presence within a discipline that prides itself on knowing the other but not itself. Lattas explicates how Povinelli's work is located within a wider contested discursive field than anthropology, engaging an international audience 'concerned with modern discourses, technologies of power, liberal governance and Althusserian understandings of how the state interpellates and forms subjects'. Povinelli is interested in the nation's desire for traditional

native subjects. It is precisely this interest and the intellectual instruments she harnesses and hones that causes such angst amongst her reviewers who seem to be concerned primarily with the 'self-citation, polite debate and subtle theoretical discussions over patrilineal descent that form a world of their own'. Povinelli is condemned for omitting citations, ignoring Australian work, excluding the origins of liberalism, speaking for Aborigines, being esoteric, neglecting normative and offensive forms of Aboriginal otherness, misunderstanding multiculturalism, misrepresenting Aboriginal sexual practices, simplifying Australian anthropology's study of kinship and lacking reflexivity in relation to her position as a white Yankee woman *vis-à-vis* other white anthropologists. Lattas welcomes Povinelli's work noting that her concerns and interests have been shared by those on the margins of Aboriginal anthropology whose exclusion works to assist in defining the discipline's boundaries. What Lattas' review reveals is how the epistemological project of Aboriginal anthropology is the traditional Aboriginal other not the productive practices of those who desire to possess them as the objects of their white gaze. The reviewers' criticism harnesses the knowledge that they have contributed to developing in their obsessing about the other to negate Povinelli's analysis of their desire and complicity. Her intervention is perceived to threaten white possession of the discipline which must be defended by its practitioners who are protective about knowledge accumulation and ownership. Their possessive investment in Aboriginal anthropology positions Povinelli as race traitor, disciplinary heretic and un-Australian. Her whiteness as a northern interloper is also tainted by its proximity to what is perceived as a false theoretical post-modern trope that corrupts truth by distorting reality.

### *After the word*

I was first contacted by the publishers of this book to make comment on its contents prior to publication noting that Frances Peters-Little was to write the after word, but I declined on the basis that I was already overcommitted. Later, I was contacted by Gillian Cowlshaw to write the after word for this edited collection of essays that emanated from an anthropology conference which I did not attend. I immediately thought I was perhaps the wrong person for the job. My area of study is critical race and whiteness studies and I am neither a sociologist nor an anthropologist according to the disciplinary requirements for qualifications at the postgraduate level. The invitation was couched tongue in cheek as my being the 'token Aborigine' and I am footnoted as writing in my capacity as the 'critic of white scholarship'. Needless to say these wonderful racialised positions reminded me about how Indigenous people are never outside the discourses and power relations that produce us. We continuously experience such racialised moments in our daily encounters within a nation that is imagined as a white possession, and the force of their repetition requires hard work as we seek to dull and counter their effects

whether we are on the streets of Redfern, sitting on the banks of the Daly River or working with white colleagues within the academy. My aim here has been to identify the whiteness within racialised discourses that enable both the production and reproduction of a racialised hierarchy in the everyday encounter. I can only relate the stress, injury and insults that have to be carried on a daily basis to the idea, so often propagated by both left and right leaning intellectuals and those who perceive themselves to be in between in their debates about white guilt, that Indigenous people have an abundant supply of moral power.

Moral power is such a strange thing. Anthropologists often think they have an ethnographic edge as reflexive subjects over people in other disciplines, but I am still to meet one who declares their work as involving being a white critic of white scholarship, yet this is integral to their knowledge production as Lattas's chapter discloses. This book is evidence that oppositional white voices do exist in a highly racialised discipline that imparts authority and legitimation to racialised social meanings in the everyday and it is well worth the read. However, there is more work to be done because white possession remains under-theorised as the most powerful aspect of the relationality that the contributors to this volume have claimed to address. Perhaps this is why Indigenous scholars do not engage in the nuances of debates at anthropological conferences where white possession moves but remains invisible to its investors.

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