

Syracuse University

SURFACE

Theses - ALL

5-2015

Embedding Nationalism: Construction & Effects of National Narratives in the XXVII Olympic Games' Opening Ceremony

Rachel Elizabeth Presley
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/thesis>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Presley, Rachel Elizabeth, "Embedding Nationalism: Construction & Effects of National Narratives in the XXVII Olympic Games' Opening Ceremony" (2015). *Theses - ALL*. 110.

<https://surface.syr.edu/thesis/110>

This is brought to you for free and open access by SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses - ALL by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Abstract

This thesis examines the construction and effects of the XXVII Olympic Games' opening ceremony as a national narrative, scripted by and for the state. The performance's chronological structure and staging of its characters have profound effects on how Australian bodies are read and remembered as citizens. The ceremony's narrative features a distorted retelling of colonial history that produces enormous consequences in how Indigenous and non-Indigenous, male and female actors are presented. An analysis of these characters reveals how the national narrative comes to function as a piece of political propaganda that perpetuates idealized forms of citizenship within a hegemonic patriarchal society.

Embedding Nationalism:
Construction & Effects of National Narratives in the
XXVII Olympic Games' Opening Ceremony

By

Rachel Elizabeth Presley

B.A. Washington & Jefferson College 2013

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Communication and Rhetorical Studies in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Graduate
School of Syracuse University

May 2015

Copyright © Rachel Elizabeth Presley 2015
All rights Reserved

Acknowledgements

I wish to express an endless amount of gratitude to my adviser and mentor, Dr. Erin Rand, and thesis committee members, Drs. Anne Demo, Sascha Scott, and Bradford Vivian for providing me with ample guidance, feedback, and encouragement to develop this project.

I am also grateful to each and every faculty member within the Communication and Rhetorical Studies department at Syracuse University for the knowledge and resources they so graciously bestowed.

And of course, to my wonderful parents and family for their 24 years of unwavering love and support. I owe all my successes to you and the wisdom you have shared.

Table of Contents

Introduction - Staging National Narratives within the Olympic Arena	1
Chapter 1 - “Awakening” Nationalism: How Spectacle Underwrites Hegemony	21
Chapter 2 - Constructing a “Symphony” of Normative Ideologies	39
Conclusion - The Re/Constructions of Spectator Memory on Race and Gender	56
Bibliography	67

Introduction

Staging National Narratives within the Olympic Arena

With an aim towards globalization and an increased appreciation for multi-culturalism, there is no doubt that the Olympic Games have come to represent one of the most prominent mega-events¹ broadcasted to a worldwide arena. Its breadth and depth as a global spectacle has wide-reaching socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sociopolitical impact, as it works to unite both domestic and foreign audiences together in one public sphere under the pretext of an esteemed sporting competition. Thus, such an event not only emphasizes the physical performance of competing athletes but also encourages an intercultural appreciation of internationalist and humanistic ideologies among participating countries.

As described in the “Olympic Charter,” Olympism can be interpreted as a philosophy of life:

[E]xalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind . . . [with a goal] . . . to place everywhere sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity. (11)

While athletic abilities are, of course, admired and celebrated in this event, it is the unification of the masses and the promotion of global sportsmanship among competitors and spectators that truly encompasses the foundation of the Olympic Games.

One site at which to analyze this convergence and intertwining of global and national identities is the stage of the Games’ opening ceremony. While the opening ceremony has been a

¹ As Maurice Roche defines, mega-events are “large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance” (1). This term will be utilized frequently throughout the paper to convey the wide-reaching impact of the Olympic Games as a worldwide spectacle.

long-celebrated and integral part of the Olympics, it was the 1980 Games in Moscow that marked the beginning of such stylized, spectacled artistic displays (“The Modern Olympic Games”). Since then, the opening ceremony has become a highly celebrated group performance in that each country engages in a structured, theatrical presentation of national identity while simultaneously converging with other foreign bodies on one center stage. Indeed, each nation creates and performs a national narrative—a ceremonious spectacle that reveals the cultural identity of a country, combining elements of traditional garb, native music, indigenous dance, and historical remembrance through role-playing among performers.

The ceremony has profound significance for the host country in particular, as its spectacled display of national culture seeks recognition by an international community while also reaffirming and celebrating its own identity. As Jilly Traganou comments, “parallel to the tensions of us versus Others, the mode of self-representation (or of watching ourselves) is constitutive of the host nation’s experience of the Olympic events” (12). For the host country, then, the opening ceremony is a discursive construction—a set of images, symbols, landscapes, and rituals that represent the shared triumphs, sorrows, and achievements of the nation that collectively defines its citizens. As a result, a host country’s performance acts as a metaphorical barometer that indicates the domestic and international acceptance of the nation and its performed narrative.

This ceremony therefore must perform two distinct roles, both of which are saturated with globalist and nationalist ideals. First, the ceremony must express some sort of universal principle, like multiculturalism or reconciliation, anchored in the humanist or internationalist intentions that the Olympic Charter discusses. Second, the host nation must seek to express a distinct identity—to create a performance representing its culture. The challenge thus resides in

the ability to present culturally specific elements to a domestic audience but in a manner that is easily digestible by international standards. Roel Puijk equates this performance to a modern television show “whose aim is to present tradition in a creative, new and refreshing way without duplicating previous ceremonies” (qtd. in Klausen 97). Vying for acceptance by a nation’s own citizens as well as the international community significantly affects the discursive construction of the ceremony’s performance, in particular the national narrative that is placed on public display.

For the purpose of my thesis, I engage with the XXVII Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia as the primary case study for analysis due to its record numbers of viewership, local, and international coverage, as well as the narrative construction and temporal dimensions of the performance. The “Sydney 2000 Olympic Official Report” in fact cites that it was the greatest Games in the event’s history: “Never before has a city embraced the hosting of the Olympic Games so fully, nor has an entire nation taken the Olympic Games to heart so dearly” (1). International Olympic Committee president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, even described the opening ceremony as “the most beautiful the world had ever seen” (“Opening Ceremony”). In regards to viewership, the “Sydney 2000 Olympic Official Report” documents the following:

Sydney 2000 spectators purchased a total of 6.7 million Olympic Game tickets, more than 92.4 percent of the available ticket pool, breaking the previous record of 82.3 percent that had been set in Atlanta. More than four and half million fans passed through the gates of Sydney Olympic Park to witness the seventeen days and nights of the Olympic Games . . . The magnitude of the Olympic Games is difficult to realize. The reach of Sydney 2000 is difficult to conceive. Imagine: 3.7 billion television viewers. Nearly every person in the world who had access to a television stopped for at least a

moment during those seventeen days to tune in to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. This marked an increase of 600 million viewers over Atlanta 1996. (4)

Even more, the opening ceremony for these XXVII Games was the first to construct a coherent and chronological narrative with protagonists as central figures to the performance's storyline and plot progression. Previous Olympic ceremonies were staged as a series of independent vignettes with no connective thread between segments, so this performance is monumental in the fact that it was the first to utilize narrative as a method by which to perform national identity. As will be discussed in depth, the ceremony follows a young girl and Aboriginal elder as they chronologically narrate Australia's evolution from its indigenous origins to its contemporary standing. As such, the opening ceremony as an object of study begs to be analyzed by a rhetorical framework that questions narrative construction in addition to its social, cultural, and political effects on national spectators. Australia's Aboriginal culture adds an additional layer of complexity to the already complicated notion of nationalism. The inclusion of Indigenous symbols within the performance symbolically places its narrative as the central link between past and present, native and foreigner. Thus, such rich historical detail of immigration and colonialism enables Australia to rewrite its national narrative into a ceremony that affectively unites Australian citizens through themes of unity and progress.

Within this project I aim not only to delineate prominent themes within the visual narrative but also to discuss how said themes are saturated with implications for identity construction and its subsequent effects on collective memory. I hope to complicate our understanding of national narratives by coupling rhetorical theory with a shift towards public memory studies, thereby allowing us to analyze the Olympic opening ceremony as a performance of citizen identity, scripted by and for the state. This spectacted performance is a

platform by which to connect threads of narrative theory, visual rhetoric, critical cultural communication, and public memory studies. By broadening our analytic lens to encompass each of these aspects, we can discuss the ways in which the ceremony's staging greatly impacts how its characters' bodies—Aboriginal and Anglo, male and female—are written and read by the spectator-as-citizen. My thesis strives to problematize Australia's construction of its national narrative by calling attention to its embedded effects on framing Indigenous and non-Indigenous gender and culture. By examining this case study through scholarship regarding racial and gendered discussions of nationalism in relation to public memory studies I seek to provide concretized evidence of identity construction and its politicizing variables.

Contextualizing the Physical Arena

The ceremony, premiering on Friday, September 15th 2000, features a cast of over 12,687 performers, including Indigenous representation. The entire ceremony consists of six performance segments, the hoisting of the flag, the parade of athletes, and the lighting of the Olympic flame. I aim to deconstruct two performance segments within the overall spectacle, delineating how the depiction of race and gender among Indigenous and non-Indigenous performers are saturated with political implications for constructing nationalism via visual narratives. The following information is intended to contextualize the overall ceremony as it begins to frame my latter analysis.

The ceremony begins with a tribute to the heritage of the Australian Stock Horse in which 120 riders intricately maneuver their horses to form the five Olympic rings—an immediate “celebration of Australia's outback heritage,” as NBC Universal commentator Garry Wilkinson notes (Wilkinson). Following the Australian National Anthem, sung by pop vocal

group Human Nature and solo artist Julie Anthony, the opening performance follows two protagonists: actress Nikki Webster, a young fair-skinned girl, and Djakapurra, an Indigenous² tribal elder. As the child falls into a dreamscape, she befriends the Aboriginal Australian, guiding him chronologically through monumental moments in Australia’s national history. The ceremony is divided into six artistic segments, each of which is briefly outlined below:

- I. “Deep Sea Dreaming,” a tribute to the Great Barrier Reef, joins human with animal in that a young girl, the protagonist of the opening narrative, falls asleep and enters a dreamlike state, surrounding herself with remarkable sea creatures and various aquatic fauna. The oceanic performers swirl around the stage in an elaborate dance meant to symbolize the fluidity of water and the intermingling of all forms of sea life—undoubtedly an evocation for the unity of humankind as well.

-Segment Director & Choreographer: Meryl Tankard
-Assistant Director & Choreographer: Steven McTaggart
-Designer: Dan Potra
-Costume Designers: Dan Potra and Meryl Tankard



“Deep Sea Dreaming I”



“Deep Sea Dreaming II”

² I employ the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal Australian interchangeably throughout this paper for the sole purpose of stylistic variance and to avoid excessive repetition of words. While the use of racial and cultural descriptors are saturated with political connotations and inherent differences in social, cultural, and linguistic customs, it is not my intention to offend readers or depoliticize subjects but rather to increase the readability of the concepts I discuss. As NSW Health’s “Communicating Positively: a Guide to Appropriate Aboriginal Terminology” describes, the use of “Aborigine(s)” or “Aboriginal(s)” as a noun to identify and name Indigenous peoples are generally regarded as culturally insensitive. The terminology I employ is widely accepted by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, activists, and citizens alike, also discussed in Flinders University’s “Appropriate Terminology, Indigenous Australian Peoples.”

II. “Awakening” connotes both a physical awakening from the young girl’s dreamlike state as well as an emotional awakening (or heightened awareness) of Australia’s Aboriginal origins. Djakapurra invites Webster to join him in a Native dance in which an Indigenous clan of painted performers in headdresses leads the audience in a celebratory ceremony. This linkage between past culture and present generation is exactly what allows the “youth of today and the ancient culture of years gone by” to unite in their shared origins (Wilkinson).

-Segment Directors: Stephen Page and Rhoda Roberts

-Designer: Peter England

-Costume Designer: Jennifer Irwin

-Choreographers: Stephen Page, Matthew Doyle, Elma Kris and Peggy Misi



“Awakening I”



“Awakening II”

III. “Nature” begins with the spark of a metaphorical bush fire that incites a regeneration of life—quite literally a cleansing of the environment through burning. Performers, still to the beat of an Aboriginal dance, physically transform from withering, blackened ashes into a hyper-colorful mass of blooming wildflowers, again mimicking the renewal of life forms by fire.

-Segment Director: Peter Wilson

-Designer: Eamon D'Arcy

- Choreographer:** Doug Jack
- Charting Choreographer:** Jason Olthoff
- Artwork Graphic Design:** Jeffrey Samuels



“Nature I”

- IV. “Tin Symphony,” representing the colonization of Australia by European settlers is prefaced by Wilkinson as an “irresistible force with . . . new culture and people. It’s an age of discovery and the beginning of modernization” (Wilkinson). This showcasing of Australia’s development into a civic country is riddled with symbols of technological advancements, yet performers simultaneously merge the industrialization of the nation with the rural, pastoral elements of the countryside, indicating a harmonious hybrid of machinery and nature.

- Segment Director:** Nigel Jamieson
- Designer:** Dan Potra
- Choreographers:** Karen Johnson Mortimer, Doug Jack, Legs on the Wall
- Charting Choreographer:** Jason Olthoff



“Tin Symphony I”



“Tin Symphony II”

- V. “Arrivals” indicates the multiculturalist aspect of the Olympic Games, as depicted by vibrantly colored floats representing cultures from each visiting continent. As this portion of the segment comes to a close, each ceremonial float surrounds the Australian performers with their arms reaching towards the audience—an obvious symbol for the ‘welcoming arms’ of Australia and the gratitude of this host country to invite a conglomeration of diverse people from around the world to join with them in sport.

-Segment Director: Lex Marinos

-Designer: Eamon D'Arcy

-Costume Designers: Jenny Kee, Lisa Ho, Norma Moriceau, Peter Morrissey

-Choreographer: Jason Coleman



“Arrivals I”



“Arrivals II”

- VI. “A New Era and Eternity,” the final segment of Australia’s opening narrative, symbolizes the building of a new nation and the joining of its people. All of the performers converge on center stage around a crane-like structure in which Webster and Djakapurra stare out wondrously at the spectacle before them. The image of Sydney Harbour Bridge is illuminated by sparkling lights as the word “Eternity” is highlighted in the middle of the bridge, symbolizing Australia as a nation that will continue to thrive and flourish for all the years to come.

- Segment Director & Designer:** Nigel Triffitt
- Tap Choreographer:** Dein Perry
- Choreographer:** Doug Jack Mandala
- Airboard Choreographer:** Jason Coleman
- Bridge Graphic Designer:** Ken Done



“A New Era and Eternity I”

At the close of the narrative performance, the Millennium Marching Band of 1000 Australian and 1000 international musicians takes center stage, performing both Australian and global classics, led by six conductors. Following the Olympic Band’s grand introduction, the Parade of Nations begins with a record 199 countries entering the stadium. Adhering to Olympic tradition, Greece enters the arena first in honor of its position as birthplace of the Olympic Games, with Australia as host nation concluding the parade.

As each participating country stands inside the arena, the Olympic Flag is carried onto stage by eight Australian Olympic champions: Bill Roycroft, Murray Rose, Liane Tooth, Gillian Rolton, Marjorie Jackson, Lorraine Crapp, Michael Wenden, and Nick Green. The opening ceremony then concludes with the lighting of the Olympic Flame. Australian runner Herb Elliot enters the arena with the torch, handing it over six former Australian Olympic champions who carry it through the stadium, finally handing off to Indigenous athlete Cathy Freeman who lights

the final flame. The ceremony thus concludes with a spectacular fireworks display as athletes and torch remain center stage.

Thus in keeping with the theme of unity, Australia, as the host nation of the Games, must present the country as not only unified in the global sphere but in the national realm as well. The narrative enacted in the opening scenes serves not only as an affirmation of national identity but also as a public display of cultural pride for Australia. As described by Maximos Malfas, here it becomes important to reiterate the dual impact of the Olympics as a global, mega-event: “First, with regard to its internal characteristics—that is, primarily its duration and its scale . . . and second, in respect of its external characteristics, which mainly take account of its media and tourism attractiveness and its impact on the host city” (210). The pageantry of Olympic spectacle invites an expectation of lavishness and extravagancy, and it is this theatricality of the ceremony that dictates both the structure and evolution of the performed narrative.

While nationalist discourses are commonly found in a variety of diverse political arenas, it is the theatrical platform that Malfas describes that allows such a stylized projection of the narrative to take place. Recalling that the opening ceremony is intended for mass viewership and circulation, it is imperative to remember that these stunning visual aesthetics remain merely a spectacle—an ornate and well-crafted production intended for public display. Such an extravagant event allows a national narrative to superficially navigate through a country’s past events or volatile relations as a type of pageantry—a cosmetic covering of deeply-rooted racial, social, and cultural tensions.

As will be discussed in depth, settler invasion on Australian frontier lands in the eighteenth century resulted in deeply-rooted consequences for Anglo-Indigenous relations. What is especially interesting, then, is how such tensions are represented in the opening ceremony (if

at all). It is precisely because of the opening ceremony's elaborate staging that the host nation can partake in an interpretative cultural performance, but of course such "interpretation" allows the host nation to knowingly deviate from an impartial retelling of national history and distort particular cultural ethics, morals, and values. Simply, the underlying politics of this globally projected performance filters what will and what will not be enacted in Australia's public narrative.

Contextualizing the Symbolic Arena

Consequently, how the performance narrates certain events in its history becomes an opportunity for the country to enact a romanticized retelling of the past. The changing of a nation's historical narrative can thus influence the willingness of its citizens to align with their country in national pride. As Neil MacKinnon and Alison Luke discuss, "Changes in identity attitudes reflect social and structural change" (300). Australia's Olympic opening ceremony, like all opening ceremonies within the Olympic arena, is an ideological platform for nationalism. More precisely, this narrative is a process whereby global meanings are constructed and through which national identities are formed. Of course how these narratives are framed and ideologically embedded is no doubt influenced by the surrounding political climate and contextualizing sociocultural factors. Australia's overarching themes of unity and modernity are reinforced by a narrative structure that enforces patriarchal racist ideals—ideals no different than that of the Australian government surrounding the time of the 2000 Games.

Specifically, the Stolen Generations of Australia's child removal policy in the 1900s drastically affected the already strained tensions in Anglo-Indigenous relations. Enacted by federal and state government agencies, the Stolen Generation were children of Aboriginal

Australians who were forcibly removed from their families between the 1910s to the 1970s. Under the guise of benevolent paternalism, the Australian government declared that Aboriginal children required government protection from familial neglect or abuse, though a close reading of the formal policy suggests that the primary goal was to integrate Indigenous children into white culture. Many were placed into institutional facilities operated by religious or nonprofit organizations, though a significant number of female children were sent to various foster care homes. Once separated from their families, children were punished if they spoke in Native languages or socialized with Aboriginal customs and rituals. The 1997 Australian Human Rights Commission Report, “Bringing them Home: The ‘Stolen Children,’” states, “[T]he physical infrastructure of missions, government institutions and children's homes was often very poor and resources were insufficient to improve them or to keep the children adequately clothed, fed and sheltered” (“Bringing Them Home”). As such, the social impact of the Stolen Children is widely felt by Indigenous populations, with most criticism grounded in the government’s lack of a formal apology or recognition of events. In fact, a July 2000 report by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination—released just months before the start of the Games—concludes that “such practices were sanctioned by law at the time and were intended to assist the people whom they affected” (“Australia’s 12th Report”).

In response to the blatant lack of action by Australian government officials, the Aboriginal community capitalizes on the Olympics’ status as a mega-event by vocally expressing their disdain for the policy and threatening to protest during the Games to publicize their plight. As protest campaign delegate, Lyall Munro, explains:

We did not want to target the Games, but we have nothing to lose now. We have racism at the highest level of government now, destroying the relationship between the whites

and the blacks . . . Aboriginal people will rise up in this country and show the world how racist Australia is. (“Aborigines Target Olympics”)

Interestingly, however, despite widespread vocal campaigns against the Australian government, protestor participation and demonstrations throughout the Olympics were severely lacking.

Andrew Cheeseman, a student at Melbourne University, explains, “Racism has led to Australia’s inability to apologize to the Aborigines . . . [but] the rally’s poor turnout reflected a lack of planning and the natural inclination of people to view the Olympics as a positive event” (qtd. in Landler). Quite simply, public opinion of the Olympics as favorable severely limits Aboriginal ability to effectively protest against the nation when that same nation is both elevated and celebrated by national and global citizens.

It is precisely this recognition of Olympic ethos that thereby enables Australia to construct a narrative encoded with utopian ideals and nationalist sentiments—one that ultimately functions as a cosmetic retelling of its past history. Sociopolitical and cultural tensions between Native and non-Native populations are swiftly replaced by images of progress and wealth. While Anglo and Indigenous performers join together in the Olympic arena, the narrative that scripts this sense of nationalism is grounded in the assumption that Aboriginal Australians are an exotic, extinct culture whose contemporary standing need not be addressed within the opening ceremony let alone by government officials.

Writing the Narrative, Writing the Memory

Research and theory addressing narrative construction and framing have already been widely circulated, but my interest resides in coupling this understanding with its subsequent political effects on citizen identity via public memory studies. The scripting of national

narratives offer particular points of insight into how nationalism is embedded within the spectacle, especially in its presentation of various characters on stage. Race and gender are two lenses by which to analyze the performance of the opening ceremony, but I wish to problematize these characterizations by looking to their political effects on the spectator-as-citizen. The construction of memory events within a national narrative begs the question of not only how populations are remembered and represented on stage but also how this affects the current act of memory-making among these minority citizens. The roles and identities of male and female Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors in the Olympic arena can be examined within narrative theory as well as the ways in which these representations entail larger effects in the political arena.

I purposefully combine elements of rhetorical theory with broader themes of communication and cultural studies in an effort to show the connective threads that reside between these two areas of scholarship. By situating the opening ceremony as an object of analysis with multiple lenses of exploration, we can begin to understand how the national narrative is a performance of political propaganda. A comprehensive analysis of the ceremony's script requires an understanding of actor as both character and citizen—an interpretation that requires elements from narrative, performance, and memory studies.

Therefore, my thesis strives to broaden these analytic frames and provide a clear point of entry for future work that aims to complicate traditional angles of rhetoric by showing how an artifact can be situated at the intersection of multiple frameworks of interpretation. I hope that my analysis is strengthened by recognizing and discussing these critical points of overlap and disjuncture by utilizing a variety of methodologies to explain the construction, enactment, and effects of the opening ceremony.

Walter Fisher, in his theory of narration as a human communication paradigm, explains that “Symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common” (271). Narration relies on a certain selection process that either emphasizes or depreciates certain qualities or elements of a subject, which undoubtedly in turn influences the subject’s implied importance and pertinence to the overall discussion. As such, the construction and interpretation of a narrative can be seen as an invention of significance. Fisher elaborates, “The materials of the narrative paradigm are symbols, signs of consubstantiation, and good reasons, the communicative expressions of social reality” (272). In a sense, narrative is a vehicle through which one can explore ‘truth,’ but this can become particularly dangerous when such truths come to define the recognizability of citizens and the margins of racial, gender, and social normativity.

Thus, the process of creating and shaping a narrative can be defined as a form of identity construction. As Erica Mukherjee explains, the idea of a national narrative takes a similar form: “Every state has created narratives which help its citizens to identify with national culture . . . [and] are the foundation on which the state is built” (Mukherjee). As both Fisher and Mukherjee suggest, the notion of identification and alignment is critical in producing a narrative intended for national circulation. It is therefore important to note that national narratives are largely political in nature, since the public platform of the Olympic arena undoubtedly affects how Australia’s narrative is constructed and enacted. As Diana Taylor posits, spectacle “engenders and controls a viewing public through the performance of national identity, traditions, and goals” (*Disappearing Acts* ix). As a result, national narratives are contextualized by cultural values, so Australia’s opening ceremony becomes a social act of performed identity.

The opening ceremony as a performance of (re)constructed national identity is thus rooted in Australia's contextualization of social and political ideologies with an emphasis on the collective. It is this hyper-appreciation of the nation state that helps to explain how the opening ceremony's narrative recirculates themes of subjugation and oppression. The Olympics, as a site of national unity, is not meant to project images of individuality but rather incite concepts of uniformity and inter/national cohesion. The symbols within the ceremony's narrative are the building blocks to construct a public national identity or a public collective, and it is within this recognition of the public that we can note how cultural values and norms are transmitted to spectators, thereby connecting the performance of the ceremony to the performance of citizenship.

Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* beckons towards this question of embodying identity through performance narratives, stating, "By taking performance seriously as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge, we can expand on what we understand by 'knowledge'" (16). Knowledge in this sense is bound to the ideological platform of the national narrative, whereby social, cultural, and political ideals can be written into the script. These ideals are then reenacted by bodies on stage, the act of performance operating as an act of memory transfer from state to citizen. Australia's national narrative as an origin story with a distinct temporal timeline works to layer together the historical memories that constitute Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, these events then coded with dominant ideologies that are produced in the performance and then reproduced by spectators. Taylor explains:

The telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the recording, the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices. Memory paths and

documented records might retain what the other “forgot.” These systems sustain and mutually produce each other (*The Archive and the Repertoire* 35-6).

The linkage between national narratives and citizen memory and identity are no doubt framed by the performance’s representations of race and gender. The juxtaposition between non-Indigenous, Indigenous, male, and female bodies presents a multitude of angles by which to analyze the construction of nationalism, but these representations entail even deeper consequences in reinforcing normative ideals for citizenship. In short, how the body is staged within the performance thus affects how the body is scripted within the state.

Structure and Organization

The organization of my thesis project demonstrates my goal to understand the opening ceremony as a type of national narrative and how the performance’s construction of nationalism relies upon particular character archetypes to reinforce dominant ideologies of the nation-state. Each chapter analyzes one segment of the performance through the lenses of race and gender, detailing how their depictions work to rewrite past histories while also projecting particular expectations for contemporary citizenship.

The first chapter looks to “Awakening” as a spectacle of cultural misappropriation, as the Indigenous population is framed onstage as an exotic and mysterious race. Looking specifically at the visual and narrative construction of Aboriginal Australians within this segment, I analyze how indigeneity is racial stereotyped, and, more specifically, how this performance complicates our understanding of agency as it relates to Indigenous actors. I also turn to Anglo and Aboriginal Australian reactions to the segment, exploring their variances in opinion.

My second chapter follows a similar structure, though this time turning to “Tin Symphony” and its construction of Australia’s colonialist history, particularly as it relates to the depiction of modernization and progress post-European settlement. A fragmented retelling of these past events beckons towards an even larger question of temporality, as the segment suggests that Indigenous culture is merely a past-tense population, irrelevant to and absent from modern society. An analysis of reactions to this particular performance continue to reinforce my earlier claim that this move towards nationalism is also a move towards white patriarchy.

Included in both chapters, I look towards scholarship pertaining to race, masculinity, and femininity as it relates to the ideal citizen within the state. These comments and analyses explore various types of nationalist discourses, including discussions of racial and gendered normativity. I explore the larger implications of the ideological norms embedded within the opening ceremony and its projection on spectators. It is at the intersection of these two chapters that I reflect on the nuanced construction of the narrative and how it in turn affects and unsettles our perception of Australian nationalism. The project closes with a conclusion in which I summarize my argument and provide a discussion on the larger implications of the ceremony as it relates to public memory within the political and public spheres, questioning how citizen identity is forged, maintained, and reproduced through the ceremony’s performed history.

Therefore, my work aims to deconstruct Australia’s performance in the opening ceremony as a narrative that produces nationalism through embedded racial and gendered discriminations. I not only analyze the spectacle’s narrative framing but also its overlapping effects on Anglo and Indigenous social, cultural, and political relations.

Juxtaposing Australia’s narrative as one that exoticizes and monopolizes the Aboriginal population with the broader context of the Olympic Games as a mega-event presents a

fascinating artifact for analysis with countless intersections and incongruities. My research attempts to complicate our previously held understandings of national narratives by examining how dominant ideologies of race and gender are maintained and reproduced through projected nationalist ideals, and consequently, what effects this narrative entails for its national citizens.

Chapter 1

“Awakening” Nationalism: How Spectacle Underwrites Hegemony

Indigenous elder, Djakapurra, awakens young actress, Nikki Webster, from a dreamlike state, ushering her to join him in hand as they travel through time to overlook the historical progression of Australia’s development. As Webster walks towards a raised platform overlooking the arena, a crowd of Aboriginal Australians covered in white paint march swiftly in harmony to the center of the stage, their bodies cast in a grey-green shadow of light (Fig. 1).³ As Webster and Djakapurra join on stage, a tribe of Indigenous women enters the arena, though this time in red and yellow paint that decoratively covers their breasts and faces. The two tribes join together in a unified dance as the performers and audience stomp and clap together in rhythm (Fig. 2). As the music slows and the dance ends, the Indigenous separate back into their respective tribes as a third group of performers enter on stage waving their clan’s flag. Also dressed in yellow and red garb, the actors form a line, waving colored rectangular cloths in the air, marching in place, and again encouraging the audience to clap along. A fourth group of blue and green clad performers quickly join on stage, dancing into the arena as other tribes sway in motion while sitting upright on the floor. Performers continue to enter on stage, each wearing an outfit traditional to their tribe and then joining together as one unified mass, dancing in a circle, rhythmic bodies in sync (Fig. 3).

As the performers light incense, dance around the circumference of a burning tree, and shake musical instruments in the air, Webster remains on stage, overseeing the spectacle with a look of bewilderment. The actors begin to separate, again dividing themselves into individual tribes as a performer on stilts takes center stage, smoke enveloping his body so it appears as

³ All images are copied from “Sydney 2000” on the official website of the Olympic Movement. Each photo caption has been defined by me as a brief descriptor of the scene.

though he is walking on clouds (Fig. 4). Djakapurra then joins the performers below, each tribe slowly merging together back into one mass as an Aboriginal symbol for sunlight is lifted towards the ceiling of the arena (Fig. 5). Each tribe, again as one group, walks towards the prop, raising their arms upward as the audience then joins in a similar motion, cellphones and glow-sticks held high in the air (Fig. 6).



Figure 1: “Webster Meets Aboriginal Australians”



Figure 2: “Indigenous Tribes Join Together”



Figure 3: “Indigenous Tribes in Dance”



Figure 4: “Man on Stilts”



Figure 5: “Aboriginal Sun”



Figure 6: “Audience Participation”

The performance, though scripted as a spectacle intended for mass viewership, is comprised of ritualized gesture, sound, and garb. The highly-stylized behaviors of each tribal performer is no doubt a presentation of culture, and encoded within this spectacle are the collective memories of each tribe. Indeed, every dance, every rhythmic movement, every song, and every beat of the drum or clap of the hands is part of a larger movement to place culture on display for consumption by the masses. Richard Schecher describes that a performance or ritual can be understood from at least four perspectives:

- 1 Structures – what rituals look and sound like, how they are performed, how they use space, and who performs them.
- 2 Functions – what rituals accomplish for individuals, groups, and cultures.
- 3 Processes – the underlying dynamic driving rituals; how rituals enact and bring about change.
- 4 Experiences – what it is like to be ‘in’ a ritual. (56)

While Schecher’s model is quite informative in understanding the traditional function and purpose of performance, here his conceptualization is complicated by the opening ceremony’s

massive scale as a mega-event. While performance and ritual are often intended to enact an “embodiment of behaviors and texts” (57) to those who share points of commonality, the opening ceremony as its own performance is scripted for the masses. What is particularly interesting is how this ceremony acts not as a sacred ritual for an individual tribe but rather becomes a clichéd spectacle featuring multiple clans whose primary purpose is that of entertainment. How then can we analyze the function of the segment when it appears to be appropriated for an entire nation?

“Awakening” as a performance of (re)constructed national identity is rooted in Australia’s role as the host nation whose stage is one of national and global scrutiny. The representation of Aboriginal culture becomes a way in which tribes must perform their nativeness to spectators. Here, the function that Schecher describes is not related to the performing group but rather to the audience who wishes to see a ‘real’ Indigenous spectacle.

Thus, the abovementioned scene cannot be accurately described by performance studies alone but rather requires an analysis of its intersections with narrative and race, especially when discussing representation of and by Aboriginal Australians. My aim in this chapter is to deconstruct the visual tropes within this performance segment to reveal how Indigenous culture is exploited and misappropriated and, even further, what these misrepresentations imply for the larger projected national narrative.

Cultural Misappropriation & Racializing the Nation-State

Such consumption of identity is already well-noted within Native American, Maori, and Aboriginal Australian communities. For example, Picard, Pocock, and Trigger detail how theatre becomes a cultural product for tourism in Australian wildlife sanctuaries. Though they

focus largely on the consumption of Australian animals in meal-time gatherings, their critique remains equally relevant in this context as well. The performance of tribal dances and chants is a human display of cultural authenticity in which Indigenous actors invite audience members to partake in live action role playing in which Native culture and indigeneity are celebrated, but only if the spectacle aligns with audience expectations. Simply, the desire to stereotype is so prevalent that nativeness can only be recognized by the inclusion of certain props, actions, or movements.

Without a doubt, the performance's inclusion of body paint, loincloths, and wooden instruments, as well as its emphasis on tribal music and ritualistic chanting, demonstrates how the representation of Aboriginal culture is pixelated. Even more, Figures 4 and 5 depict a perverted fascination with correlating Indigeneity with spirituality, and as Bertheir-Foglar recalls, "Stereotypes of Aboriginal people as noble, spiritual, and connected to nature are not new" (415). As such, a god-like man who walks amongst the clouds and a symbolic sun that rises above the heads of a dancing tribe are particularly damaging images that, at best, suggest Aboriginal Australians have a supernatural connection with nature, and, at worst, present their rituals as primitive and elementary. Julie Tommy Walker, an Innawonga leader, addresses this very struggle, stating, "Without our voices, Aboriginality will continue to be a creation for privileged opportunities and will always be about us rather than by us" ("Aboriginal Identity"). The opening ceremony as a "privileged opportunity" demonstrates how nativeness and aboriginality are defined and represented by stereotyped expectations.

Whiteness thus comes to define recognizability as it is conferred by the nation-state. It is only when indigeneity is diluted that Aboriginal Australians are recognized, though this occurs through a hegemonic system that aims to stereotype said nativeness from the outset. Even more,

the ceremony's appeal to the masses bleeds into the performance itself as the segment progresses, combining individual clans together into one unified group. Indigenous actors congregate together on stage, seen in Figures 2 and 3, participating in one mass performance rather than individual rituals specific to a singular tribe. Though each clan on stage is adorned in different garb and body paint, with no other separating factors or distinguishing rituals, the appearance of each tribe becomes yet another stereotyped visualization of Indigenous culture. Individual groups are only distinct in that their appearance is appropriated for staging purposes, but ultimately their identity is that of one mass—all of Aboriginal Australia.

The problem with this supposed assimilation is that it disregards potential internal dissention amongst individual tribes. To merely assume that all Aboriginal Australians are harmoniously integrated indicates an embedded notion that this is only so because they share a certain biological gene. Thus, to refer to the Indigenous population as one mass discredits the complexities of tribal politics and oversimplifies the intricacies of Aboriginal culture. Assuming that all customs, rituals, and practices are identical across tribes continues to institutionalize the culture even more, to the point where all brown bodies converge on stage in one scripted performance.

It is precisely because of this racialized depiction that the Indigenous are marked as 'Africanized' others—a culture whose exoticism is materialized and placed on display. As Jennifer González argues:

Race discourse, in all its historical complexity, is not reducible to visibility; visual representation is merely one of the most powerful techniques by which it operates and is maintained as evident and *self-evident*. Subjected to these techniques, the human body becomes itself a form of material evidence of social and historical events. (5)

Within this segment, race is placed on public display as an indicator of status, and as González claims, “Race discourse is never just about race; it is also always about gender, class, and geography When bodies and subjects are caught in a web of race discourse, they are also physically regulated by it” (6). Indigenous subjects, therefore, are politically relegated as ethnic ‘others,’ or necessary foils to Anglo industrialism. While white performers are represented in all six segments of the ceremony, Aboriginal Australians are only seen in “Awakening.” Clothed in garb similar to loincloths and covered in what is described by Wilkinson as “war paint,” the Indigenous are framed as a primitive, exotic race whose identity is dramatized by their skin color.

Even beyond these outwardly raced discriminations, Indigenous culture as a whole exists within a narrative that sensationalizes unintelligible chanting and the rhythmic banging of bodies and instruments, illustrated in Figures 5 and 6. As the symbolic sun rises above the performers, the Indigenous appear to partake in a quick-paced dance, hands and arms gesturing in the air and feet stomping the ground below to the beat of a tribal drum. This chanting is then mirrored by the audience, spectators raising their cellphones and flashlights in the air as the performance comes to a close. While there is no doubt that music is an integral aspect to every culture and can in fact transcend language, its role here is to depict Aboriginal Australia in stereotypical fashion: to dramatize the performative aspects of Indigenous culture and capitalize on ritual as exotic community-building.

Addressing the notion of performative authenticity, Elizabeth Povinelli, in *The Cunning of Recognition*, explores how colonialism perpetuates unequal systems of power in which racialized subjects are expected to adhere to and abide by ‘authentic’ ethnic identities. Thus, colonialism’s effects are twofold: it not only acts as a form of destructive cultural genocide but it

also dictates how those who exist outside the boundaries of normativity must perform their identity. Instead of presenting a modern image of Indigenous Australia—an image no different than that of white society—Aboriginal Australians are temporally framed as primitive, as exotic, and, most disturbingly, as extinct. Their image is cast in accordance to spectator expectations for Indigenous savagery. It is at this intersection of Povinelli and González that bodies can be understood as both racial and cultural statuses:

The body is a site where race discourse is seen to play out because it is where race is presumed to reside. As an artifact of cultural framing, the human body is the object that must always display its signs . . . the materiality of the body is understood to offer a continuous surface of legible information. (González 4).

Here indigeneity is equated to race and becomes a marker of recognizability: those whose skin matches the state are deemed legible citizens while those with outwardly raced bodies become objects of the state. The Indigenous community is depicted as the original inhabitants of the nation, but their culture becomes dramatized to suggest primitivism, or as Wilkinson claims: “rambunctiousness” (Wilkinson). The Aboriginal Australian is outwardly marked as an exotically racialized body and therefore represented as a savage citizen. Their role in the opening ceremony encompasses no more than twenty minutes of the two hour performance and suggests that their temporal setting is only relevant when reflecting Australia’s origin story.

Aboriginal Bodies & Gendering the Nation-State

While race is one lens by which to read the opening ceremony as a nationalist discourse, it is imperative to briefly note how the performance negotiates identity as gendered and raced bodies overlap and normative ideologies fold into one another. The exoticized depictions of

Indigenous men and women reveal how the narrative suggests that white industrialization is to be idealized while brown savagery is to be feared and subjugated.

“Awakening’s” depiction of Indigenous culture as ‘otherized’ has profound implications for the performers’ interactions with one another. As depicted in Figure 1 and 7 (see below), Webster is surrounded by a group of Aboriginal men whose bodies have been cast in an eerie tinted light, suggesting that ethnic communities deserve a sort of visually gothic representation.



Figure 7: “Webster and Aboriginal Australians”

As such, the child’s expressions are that of panic and apprehension—she is visibly nervous around the Indigenous actors though the storyline suggests no reason to be. These screenshots continue to perpetuate the notion that the raced male ‘other’ is a figure to be feared. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic’s *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* explores this psychology as a form of racial profiling in which “[C]ommunities of color suffer disenfranchisement simply by reason of their minority status” (116). Quite simply, normative society is conditioned to fear ethnic minorities as sites of potential violence, especially when such races and cultures extend beyond the boundaries of recognizability. While the young girl befriends the Indigenous elder, it is equally important to note that she never leaves the platform. Her presence is only noted from above while dancing tribes congregate below, as if performing under her watchful gaze.

Even further, while the narrative does feature an Indigenous male protagonist, the figure of a female Aboriginal Australian remains largely absent. In fact, the only time when a group of Indigenous women are featured is during the abovementioned scenes of ritualistic tribal dancing. This consequently renders the Indigenous male character as a tribal Elder, suggesting that Aboriginal culture is dominated by an outdated system of gendered hierarchy; one in which women must follow the command of a dominant male leader.

The ceremony's emphasis on exotic Native culture thus situates Indigenous women as mere performers—feminized actors whose dancing bodies are meant to satisfy their leader's patriarchal gaze. Just as skin tone is outwardly read, the female body also becomes a site of dispossession in which the state marks sexual inscriptions upon its women. In an insightful analysis on the political representation of minority women in Caribbean communities, M. Jacqui Alexander writes that women are “nationals; but not citizens” (5). She criticizes such patriarchal injustices, questioning, “Why has the state focused such a repressive and regressive gaze on me and people like me?” (5). Here the national narrative becomes a technology of control, or a site for the production and reproduction of state power and its embedded gendered ideals.

What complicates this scene even more is that its narrative temporal setting positions the Indigenous population as historical, while the performance itself is contemporary with an entirely different set of social and cultural norms than that what is presented. The failure to include an Indigenous female protagonist may have been in line with historical tribal politics at that time, but its implications on current spectators is tremendous. As Patricia Mann explores in *Micro-Politics: Agency in a Postfeminist Era*, women of minority populations are at increased disadvantage for representation and therefore exhibit a decrease in sociopolitical agency (Mann). This becomes particularly troublesome when thinking broadly about minority women and sexual

abuse. Women of color are already at an increased risk of domestic violence, so depictions of racialized bodies as sexual entertainers have especially damaging consequences as spectators consider what constitutes ‘normal’ gender behavior among racial populations. Native culture is thus exploited as entertainment for the state with Indigenous women constructed as sexualized masses of bodies with no given agency.

Actor Agency and “Weak Power”

As noted, this representation of Indigenous Australian culture becomes a form of metaphoric misappropriation that results in the constant perpetuation of Native stereotypes. From figures like the noble savage to the spiritual sage, the spectacle exploits clichés, constantly pigeonholing indigeneity into poorly defined archetypal models of identity. While important to analyze the symbolic effects that such images generate, it is also important to complicate this understanding by looking to actor agency and the potentiality of power for Indigenous performers.

Michelle Raheja’s “Ideologies of (In)Visibility” from *Reservation Reelism* addresses this very issue by referencing American Indian cinematic representation from the silent movie era to the most recent 2009 blockbuster *Avatar*. She effectively complicates the idea of the Hollywood Indian by discussing the role of agency in Native and non-Native actors’ portrayals of stereotyped and clichéd figures. The notion of power wielded by actors themselves is a much neglected aspect of both film and performance studies, but Raheja’s ingenuity lies in her ability to separate the stereotype from the actor. The notion of representation is already quite complicated but becomes even more so when considering the ethnicity or race of a featured actor. As she later explains, the politics of redfacing reveal a systematic bias against the hiring of

Native Americans to play Native American roles and in fact, as Edward Buscombe notes, “became necessary in the film industry as the nation rendered Native bodies invisible, vanished, and extinct. If there were no Native Americans to play these roles, the logic of redface suggests, then, white actors were required to perform American Indian characters” (118). Even more, this discursive allowance extends beyond the actor, in that non-Native scriptwriters and directors can exert their influence in how Native Americans would be represented in their films.

But how do critical audiences respond to stereotyped figures in cinema that are played by Native Americans themselves? If it entails the propagation of racist caricatures, can a Native American participate in redfacing as well? For the Olympic opening ceremony, the question can be rephrased to address the exoticized and stereotyped roles depicted by Aboriginal Australians. Raheja does well to cite Minnie Ha Ha, renowned Cheyenne actress, as a point of contestation to this issue:

Ha Ha realized that the end result of her labors as an actor would lead to films that bore little resemblance to the reality of her community, yet she still participated in the creation of the Hollywood Indian. Her statement indicates that not only were Native actors aware of the representational structures and pressures that were in place in Hollywood, governing cinematic characterizations of Indigenous peoples, but that individuals actors such as Ha Ha chose to exert their influence on films with Indian plots rather than choosing to be completely excluded from the film industry. (56)

Stuart Hall, in a post-Gramscian stance on the politics of representation, addresses this action as operating within a producing/consuming culture in which citizens become critical sites of social action and intervention but within a larger system of established power. Brian Belton draws on Hall’s insights in his analysis of Gypsy communal identity, effectively surmising,

“Paradoxically, marginality has become a powerful space. It is a space of weak power, but it is a space of power nonetheless” (287). It is within this understanding of “weak power” that communities demonstrate individual expressions “while effectively maintaining forms of social marginality and exclusion” (282). For Hall and Belton, marginalized groups are confined to larger hegemonic power structures but still exhibit agency within these boundaries.

The example of Aboriginal and Native American performances exemplifies this very concept, such that the politics of representation operate within larger structures, with meaning and ‘truth’ in constant states of re-adaptation. “Awakening” was composed and choreographed by a variety of Indigenous musicians and Aboriginal Australian dance groups including the Ngaanyatjarra and the Nunukul Yuggera. Capitalizing on the popularity of the Olympic Games, a local website for the Nunukul Yuggera describes how international students or visitors can participate in cultural workshops, “perform[ing] authentic ‘Welcome to Country’ ceremonies and promot[ing] an awareness of Indigenous culture, history and tradition” (Nunukul-Yuggera). Though “Awakening” itself can be analyzed as a site of subjectivity, the tribal recognition and eventual monetary gain via future scheduled performances are indicative of Hall’s notion of weak power. The opening ceremony becomes a way in which Indigenous actors can take part in the spectacle, creating new commentaries on the status of marginalized ethnic groups within a state of Western ideologies.

While adhering to Hall’s model of weak power, I am hesitant to assign the term “weak” to groups already outside the bounds of normativity such that it entails a troubling implication that the power of the marginalized will forever be inadequate or lesser. I thus turn to Gerald Vizenor’s notion of “survivance” as a more apt term to better describe the role of actor agency. Survivance comes to signify indigenous populations who actively resist the societal trappings of

colonialism while still operating within the overarching colonialist system itself—in this instance, the opening ceremony (Vizenor). For many Aboriginal actors, the performance provides an opportunity to “utilize Indigenous epistemologies, critique colonialization, engage with modernity, and ensure economic survival” (Raheja 61). In fact, I believe that despite the clichéd figures that these performers play, their role in the ceremony is absolutely vital: the presence of Indigenous Australian performers signals to the nation and to the world that Aboriginals have not vanished and that their role need not be filled by white actors. This argument is thus twofold: not only does the performance reveal the kinds of cultural stereotypes that emerge from Indigenous representation, but it also demonstrates how agency is, quite literally, enacted by Aboriginal performers, as they are situated in an already marginalized space.

Thus, we must rethink collective subjectivity and cultural memory in performance studies as not simply a one dimensional analysis but rather one that envelops agency as a factor in hegemonic matrixes of power. Popular culture’s obsession with recirculating Indigenous stereotypes becomes a way in which society attempts to situate Aboriginal Australians as people of the past or a culture long-forgotten; however, with progressive scholarship that advances Indigenous studies, we can continue to challenge the spectacle’s modes of homogeneity and instead produce complex, modern Indigenous characters—individual entities rather than static archetypes.

Reactions & Implications

While the recognition and analysis of these stereotyped representations rely on the visual deconstruction of “Awakening,” I also want to look to reactions from Australian community members as they analyze the spectacle and its un/intended effects. If the opening ceremony is

meant to enhance nationalist sentiments, what can be said of the Aboriginal performance as part of that larger motive? Many did find the ceremony to be captivating, awe-inspiring, and visually mesmerizing. As previously noted, the opening ceremony is often considered the most important event of the Olympic Games. Capitalizing on viewership as a sign of success, Melbourne's local newspaper, *Age*, claims that "[T]he ceremony has done Australia proud. It was a triumph, a colorful display of what Australia has been and is" (Tenenbaum). The verb tense of Tenenbaum's comment reveals that spectator reception of the segment does in fact align with the national narrative's intention: to juxtapose Aboriginal Australia as a "has been" with modern Australia as a thriving "is." Interestingly, then, the performance is situated in a delicate intersection of representation that must depict Indigenous origins and contemporary modernity but within a landscape that shows metropolitan industrialism in addition to its famed desert Outback. Recognizing the difficulty to combine all four aspects in one performance, *Radio Australia's* "Australia Now" comments on the inclusion of both settings:

I think traditionally representations of Australia include that country image and that's how we've been promoted to the rest of the world, so that had to be included in the opening ceremony. A city's a city to a lot of people I suppose but Australia is all about the outback, that's how we've been promoted to the rest of the world, and that obviously came through very strongly in the opening ceremony. ("Australia Now")

The narrative's structuring as an origin story thus allows Australia to position Indigenous peoples as an exoticized and ancient culture united with wildlife, while reserving the image of industrial success to the white urban staging of "Tin Symphony."

Recognizing the romanticization of "Awakening's" script, Sol Bellea, an Aboriginal Australian and adviser to the Sydney Olympic organizing committee (SOCOG), states, "Many

people have a false vision of Aborigines because of the way in which Australia tries to sell us. We're not all jet-black warriors with a boomerang in one hand and a spear in the other" (qtd. in Squires). For many Aboriginal communities, the opening ceremony perpetuates a false ideal of the noble savage stereotype and utilizes the "Awakening" performance as a misuse of culture and art—a spectacle that "masks the harsh realities of their lives" (Squires). Such misrepresentation was likened by Sydney reporter Nick Squires to "window-dressing" and a corrupt exploitation of traditional Indigenous culture by a marketing and tourist industry dominated by whites.

Bellefleur, in her criticism of the performance, went on to compare such clichés as similar to "the way in which Africa was romanticized by Europeans as 'the dark continent'" (Squires). The opening ceremony fails to fully contextualize Indigenous culture beyond that of loincloths and face paint. Aboriginal tradition consequently becomes marketed as exotic fetishization. Linda Burney, director-general of New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs, confirms, "The use of Aboriginal symbols shows Aboriginal culture as being quaint, and doesn't tell the whole story. There's been a great deal of misappropriation" (qtd. in Squires). Vying for acceptance by its own citizens as well as the international community, Australia significantly alters the visual construction of the ceremony's performance, superficially representing the native aspects of Aboriginal culture. In fact, John MacDonald of the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra derided "Awakening" as kitsch from start to finish: "Kitsch is crap with pretensions to sincerity. Kitsch takes all the emotions associated with great art and packages them in the most compact, user-friendly fashion; editing out anything that may be disturbing or complex. (qtd. in Tenenbaum)

Thus the insight recorded by Indigenous and non-Indigenous commentators helps to demonstrate how "Awakening" works to exploit and exoticize indigeneity as a colorful, distant

culture. The narrative entails profound implications in its depiction of Aboriginal actors, scripting them as a theatrical parade of savages to be appreciated from afar but feared or denigrated up close. This narrative framing of race and of gender works to subjugate the Aboriginal population from multiple temporal angles, but the notion of survivance presents an interesting challenge in how Indigenous actors can work to regain different forms of representation, despite a larger narrative script that misappropriates Native culture. “Awakening” essentially delivers the message that to be Indigenous is to be primitive, to be misrepresented, and ultimately, to be marginalized from modern society. How then is this analysis of race and gender complicated by alternative characters and their embedded ideologies? In Chapter two I turn to “Tin Symphony” as a case study to question how patriarchy is written into the script of its white actors, catalyzed by the narrative erasure of its Aboriginal citizens.

Chapter 2

Constructing a “Symphony” of Normative Ideologies

The blare of rock-and-roll inspired music signals a scene change into “Tin Symphony” as a group of white male performers take center stage, their costumes reminiscent of early European soldiers with battle rifles and tailored uniforms. As the men march across the stage in line, a fire-breathing steel horse floats across the floor, symbolizing the passage of European settlers to Australian lands (Fig. 8). Agricultural machinery, steel barrel oil drums, rainwater tanks, and life-sized gears glide in rhythm to the music as commentator Wilkinson remarks that the scene represents the emergence of new technologies to the land (Fig. 9): “The wheels of machinery are turning. And where would Australia be without her illuminous corrugated iron?” (Wilkinson).

As the men continue to display the machinery, a collection of white female dancers enter on stage, breaking into a lively, spontaneous step similar in style to Riverdance. As the women enclose the perimeter of the staging space, a new group of white men appear clad in uniform apparel with shiny axes and stacks of chopped lumber (Fig. 10). Adjacent to the woodsmen are farmers dressed in traditional Western-wear who throw their lassos high into the air as the women slowly tap their way off stage.

The arena, now comprised entirely of white men, features upright ladders displayed brightly in the center of the arena with performers who climb their way slowly to the top—an obvious nod to a symbolic ladder of progress (Fig. 11). Wilkinson comments that “early settlement on the coastline spread to the plains and grasslands, spreading prosperity founded on agriculture and machinery” (Wilkinson). This quote serves as a verbal prerequisite to the following scene as men continue to climb the ladders on stage and dance across life-sized gears rolling through the arena.

A swift change to yellow-tinted lights and a switch to banjo-inspired folk music signals that the following scene symbolizes the pastoral elements of Australian country life. The audience immediately joins in clapping and stomping as performers clad as farmers usher sheep and herding dogs across the stage—“rural traditions taking hold” (Wilkinson). While earlier scenes from this segment featured wheels and cogs of factory machinery, the stage is now set with tools of agriculture and farming. Ranchers opening boxes labeled “exports” gather around the circumference of the stage (Fig. 12), and as the last sheep dog exits, actress Nikki Webster enters into the spotlight, feeding the steel horse an apple (Fig. 13). A cheerful Wilkinson remarks at the conclusion of the segment, “It was prosperity that fueled the growth of Australian cities and our young Aussie dreamer shares the dream that our great Australia continue to evolve” (Wilkinson). Here, prosperity relies not just on the industrialization and invention of technology but also on the agricultural exploitation of Indigenous-occupied lands.



Figure 8: “Steel Horse of Technology”



Figure 9: "Technology and Machinery"



Figure 10: "Lumberjacks of Progress"



Figure 11: "Ladder of Progress"



Figure 12: “Agriculture Modernity”



Figure 13: “Webster and Steel Horse of Progress”

While my first chapter analyzes the spectacle of “Awakening” through the analysis of racial representation, particularly in the script of its Indigenous population, a close reading of “Tin Symphony” reveals how the narrative staging of Australia’s colonization and modernization by European settlers entails profound effects on not just racial representation but gendered representation as well, working to promote the notion that ideal Australian citizenship relies on the production of bodies, of goods, and of dominant ideologies.

The temporal aspect of this chronological narrative has dual effects in how Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors perform their citizenship within the segment in addition to how spectators apply this script as it relates to belonging within the contemporary nation-state. My analysis within this chapter delineates how Australia's national narrative within "Tin Symphony" is encoded with expectations for white masculinity, femininity, and reproduction, and particularly how these gender ideologies function as a form of embedded nationalism.

Erasure of Indigenous Pasts, Presents, and Futures

While "Awakening" features a disturbing portrayal of exoticized, racist stereotypes of the Aboriginal Australian population, "Tin Symphony" is perhaps even more troublesome, such that Indigenous culture is absent from the segment altogether. The narrative of "Tin Symphony" suggests that early settlers of Australia had no contact with the Indigenous population, as indicated by their absolute lack of representation. Europeans merely arrived with myriad favorable technologies and Aboriginal Australians became a long-forgotten culture of the past. This, of course, is a highly contested presentation of history and one that is in fact negated by both historical and contemporary recordings. To discuss this disjuncture between Australia's colonial history and the performance's projected storyline, I would first like to briefly contextualize Aboriginal Australians' forced assimilation into Western culture in the eighteenth century, specifically the Australian frontier wars.

As historian Geoffrey Blainey describes in *A Very Short History of the World*, European excursions into Australia began with James Cook's 1770 expedition, but it was the migration of the British First Fleet in 1778 that truly catalyzed the violent conflicts between settlers and Indigenous peoples. What was once classified as small settler establishments along the

Australian coastline began to expand in the 1790s, and with this development came the inevitable competition for resources and land space, often times resulting in starvation for both native and foreigner. Smaller skirmishes between settlers and Aboriginal Australians eventually led to frontier warfare in which the Indigenous resentment of white encroachment was met with British soldiers, mounted police units, and indiscriminate massacres. As expected, the technological advancements of European settlers crippled the Aboriginal population, who, without firearms, had to rely on mere flank formations and crafted spears to combat their opponents—an obvious disadvantage. Particularly, Western advancements in revolver and rifle weaponry proved to be overwhelmingly superior in defeating the Indigenous population, especially when coupled with the mobility of British soldiers on horseback. Due to the varying geographic terrain of Australia and the dispersal of Aboriginal tribes, the frontier wars represented a series of violent engagements and massacres across the continent. Moreover, this foreign presence introduced new European diseases that decimated Indigenous populations. Blainey succinctly describes the vicious conditions of the frontier wars during this colonization period as absolutely devastating:

In a thousand isolated places there were occasional shootings and spearings. Even worse, smallpox, measles, influenza and other new diseases swept from one Aboriginal camp to another. . . The main conqueror of Aborigines was to be disease and its ally, demoralization. (51)

Together these forces wholly encompass what Patrick Wolfe defines as settler colonialism: “an inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies” (7). He emphasizes that settler colonialism is not fleeting but rather a

structured invasion in which white migrants create a system of control and erasure of the native population. The resulting Australian frontier homicide not only annihilated Aboriginal tribes but also violated their most basic human rights. Since the beginning of the European incursions into Australia, the Indigenous were viewed as a “problem” by white settlers: they occupied coveted lands and they were willing to fight for them, along with their rights. Even at the height of the European colonial conquests, an anonymous 1831 letter to the *Launceston Advertiser* newspaper further delineates this notion of native resentment to foreign settlers:

We are at war with them: they look upon us as enemies – as invaders – as oppressors and persecutors – they resist our invasion. They have never been subdued, therefore they are not rebellious subjects, but an injured nation, defending in their own way, their rightful possessions which have been torn from them by force. (n.p)

Territoriality became the settlers’ specific, ultimate purpose, and in drastic efforts to secure lands, colonists destroyed existing structures and people to replace them with their own ideals. Such conscious efforts to purposefully harm a supposedly lesser race continues to emphasize the dilemma that Shari Huhndorf describes as “brutal domination” (76). The complete conquest of Aboriginal populations suggests that the white colonizers’ search for absolute authority over the Indigenous is nothing more than a disturbing racist game to reassert dominance—a game in which Native peoples become domesticated puppets and whose wellbeing is dictated by white settlers. This particular sentiment is a direct reflection of historical Aboriginal reform policies in which the Europeans’ ultimate goal was to integrate the Indigenous into normative society; they would “vanish by becoming invisible through assimilation” (Buscombe 107). Later settlers began to view themselves as paternal figures to the

savage Aboriginal Australian, believing their hegemonic policies were both inclusive and humane—“liberalism [as] a form of benevolent paternalism” (109).

Thus, in the context of a public narrative performance like the Olympic Games’ opening ceremony, such “truths” as the ones discussed above will undoubtedly be rhetorically reconstructed in order to relieve a nation of its guilt from past wrongdoings and project a modified narrative onto worldwide onlookers. The performance evades any mentioning of the historical conflicts that erupted between Aboriginal Australians and Europeans, positioning James Cook and his British settlers as famed founding fathers with coveted technologies and resources. Symbols like corrugated iron, water tanks, and wood choppers are theatrically displayed as emblems of Australia’s progressive standing, but the devastation caused by such “progressions” is absent. As Wilkinson comments, the British settlers were an “irresistible force with . . . new culture and people,” but where was the mention of the new diseases and the new weaponry that systematically destroyed masses of Indigenous populations? The Aboriginal Australians’ plight with famine, disease, and death is erased and instead replaced by a narrative that emphasizes white settlers as progressive victors—a narrative that becomes publically representative of the entire nation.

Since the opening ceremony is constructed as a chronological timeline that details the evolution of Australia from Aboriginal origins to its current context, the narrative positions the Indigenous population as nothing more than a momentary fragment in Australia’s history. Completely excluded from the remaining performance, their absence in “Tin Symphony” suggests a narrative in which Indigenous agency is completely written out of existence. Contemporary Aboriginal Australians are absent and instead replaced by the image of a population that exists solely in the past tense and remembered only in a historical setting. By

contrast, however, the arrival of British colonizers marked the beginning of a modernized era in which white settlers become situated in the present as well as future contexts.

Throughout the entirety of the performance, Wilkinson refers to Aboriginal Australians as an “ancient culture of years gone by” (Wilkinson)—a comment saturated with oppressive, exclusionary undertones. The likening of Indigenous people as prehistoric with no relevant (let alone relative) standing in contemporary society not only diminishes the value of their culture as a whole but also continues to discredit their present standing and influence. The effect of this anachronistic narrative is quite troublesome, as it suggests that the frontier wars and the forced colonization of Indigenous people can be easily disregarded because the statute of limitations has long passed. Even more, the temporal dimensions of the ceremony as a scripted narrative as well as a live performance reveal how certain colonialist modes of domination are ongoing, present struggles, as opposed to past events.

As a result of these historical inaccuracies and in an effort to challenge future misrepresentations, many Aboriginal Australians offer contemporary perspectives on their existence as citizens in current contexts. In an interview with *The Sun Herald*, Allen Madden, cultural and education officer at the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, describes his role as an Indigenous artist as one of multiple functions:

Letting people know we're still here. We might be dressed different from those 'real' blackfellas that everyone seems to think only come from up north, with a spear and a kangaroo, but we're here. We've always been here . . . We celebrate survival. We know we can't change things that happened back then but you have to know where you've been to know where you're going. Aboriginal people have never wanted sympathy. All we ever wanted was understanding. (qtd. in Smyth)

Echoing sentiments of recognition and understanding, Jens Korff describes the proliferation of Aboriginal culture in modern-day Australia: “If along the coast, in the heart of Australia or even at Circular Quay in Sydney or the Botanic Gardens of Melbourne, Aboriginal art and culture is present in the entire country” (Korff). Similarly, Melbourne-based rapper and break dancer, Georgina Chrisanthopoulos expands:

I’m inspired by my culture – being indigenous, the political issues and just everyday issues you go through . . . I hope to show people all over the world that we’re doing things . . . Let’s get rid of the stereotypes and prove people wrong. We’re strong, we’re still here, we can do things. (Dunbar-Hall 88)

Here, modern Indigenous Australians are not forgotten or written out of existence but rather demonstrate their contemporary standing and agency.

However, these voices online stand in stark contrast to the wholly missing figures of Aboriginal Australians within the ceremony’s performance. In the narrative merging of Indigenous with white colonizers, the history of oppression, genocide, and the demoralization of culture is obscured by the depiction of British settlers as saviors of the land and praised inventors. Thus any representations of Indigenous people are staged as deviations from the archetype of a white, industrialized Australia. Indigeneity symbolizes primitivism, while white male performers represent the beloved development and advancement of modern-day Australia—a constant reminder that white culture attempts to not only control the Indigenous population but also continues to enforce the hierarchical structures deeply embedded within colonization and industrialization.

White Masculinity and (Re)Producing Patriarchy

Though the performances of both “Awakening” and “Tin Symphony” present Anglo-European culture as one of modernity and progress, this is not to say that the narrative’s ‘advanced’ and ‘civilized’ society advocates for gender equality. In fact, the role of the young female protagonist suggests just the opposite: that the ideal female citizen is not only white but also childlike in innocence and purity.

Actress Nikki Webster is docile and well-mannered, navigating through the performance with grace and obedience, and, despite her role as a narrative protagonist, she does not partake in the industrialization of modern society but rather stands alongside the celebrated white males on stage. As Lauren Berlant argues, citizenship has endured a process of privatization in which the possibility of intimacy and the symbolic innocence of childhood have come to define national culture. What she calls the “infantile citizen” is a “stand-in for a complicated and contradictory set of anxieties and desires about national identity,” categorized by “innocence/illiteracy” (*The Queen of America* 27). In “The Theory of Infantile Citizenship,” she turns to a close analysis of *The Simpson*’s TV episode, “Mr. Lisa Goes to Washington,” to explicate how girlhood overlaps with political ideology, rendering the infantile citizen as the ideal citizen in the eyes of the state:

As it is, citizen adults have learned to ‘forget’ or to render as impractical, naïve, or childish their utopian political aspirations, in order to be politically happy and economically functional. Confronting the tension between utopia and history, the infantile citizen’s insistent stupidity thus gives him/her enormous power to unsettle, expose, and reframe the machinery of national life. (399)

Webster’s role as narrative protagonist is symbolic in three senses then: first, the immaturity of her voice allows the nation-state to speak on her behalf; second, the naïveté of her mentality

presents a façade for representation in politics; and lastly, the youthfulness of her body projects the promise of eventual mature citizenship.

Within the performance of “Tin Symphony,” Webster becomes a tool for not only reinforcing industrialism but also for reproducing the state, both in terms of material goods as well as citizen bodies. Her voice as that of the nation allows Australia to perpetuate a cultural script of repetitive reproduction and maturation. Since the ceremony’s national narrative unfolds chronologically, it aims to illustrate how Australia has developed and transformed from uncivilized Indigenous origins to a contemporary thriving and fertile context. The female body acts as a symbol marked for (re)production and motherhood as an icon of nationalist ideology. Lee Edelman is especially convincing in his argument on the politics of reproductive futurism, claiming that the figure of the child comes to represent the future of possibility, particularly because “[P]ublic appeals on behalf of children . . . [are] impossible to refuse” (2). Webster as a young girl serves to regulate political discourse while also physically embodying the logic of procreation. As Edelman claims, “The disciplinary image of the ‘innocent’ Child perform[s] its mandatory cultural labor of social reproduction” (19). “Tin Symphony,” as a narrative already scripted as a story of industrialism and technology, coupled with Webster as primary protagonist, reveals how nationalism becomes rooted in the cultural appreciation of progress and citizen obligation to maintain its proliferation. White men represent this progress, both past and present, with Webster symbolizing the promise of future. As Edelman warns, however, “[T]he Child as futurity’s emblem must die; the future is mere repetition and just as lethal as the past” (31). Webster as this child icon continues to reproduce hegemonic ideologies of the state that maintain dominant power structures in which the physical actors on stage become metaphoric actors for the nation.

Though Edelman warns not to perpetuate a system of hegemony through symbolic representation, we can also look to the grammatical mechanics of the performance as yet another lens by which patriarchal industrialism recirculates as nationalist ideology. Wilkinson, in his commentary on “Tin Symphony,” consistently refers to Australia through the use of personal pronouns and possessives – (“She has a rich history” and “Her corrugated iron” are just two examples) (Wilkinson). The nation as a feminine pronoun becomes an object of possession, “owned” and dominated by its male citizens. So it is through the masculinization of modernity that the state can become a site of patriarchal control. Thus, the white men of the performance are scripted as saviors of the state, with women and children as idealized products of contemporary progress—living proof that “the system works!” (Berlant).⁴ Joane Nagel, in her exploration of gender, sexuality, and nationalism, comments that this gendering of nationhood emerges from traditional expectations for masculinity and femininity. She explains, “[C]ulture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand-in-hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism. Masculinity and nationalism articulate well with one another” (249). The gendered code of male as masculine provider can thus be broadly termed something like “Man-the-Impregnator-Protector-Provider,” as David Gilmore quips (223).

Quite impressively then, Australia is able to construct a national narrative through the roles of its protagonists that deems the state as masculine in its capitalist modernization while simultaneously feminine in its (re)production. Nationalism in this sense is rooted in hegemonic gender ideologies with the white male as supreme leader of the state.

⁴ Lisa Simpson’s multiple exclamations of “the system works!” throughout “Mr. Lisa Goes to Washington” illustrates Berlant’s explication of child as state icon, promoting a national fantasy as “the patriot of tomorrow” (“The Theory of Infantile Citizenship 407).

Reactions & Implications

The political nature of the opening ceremony as a narrative of national ideologies is undoubtedly a rhetorical construct, capable of greatly impacting our understanding of citizenship and cultural scripts. Within “Tin Symphony,” gender and race fold into the politics of nationalism, as bodies become narrative marks of display by the state. As previously stated, “[S]pectacle engenders and controls a viewing public” (*Disappearing Acts* ix), so Australia capitalizes on the opportunity to project a performance that circulates themes of modernity and wealth represented by the patriarchal white male.

The effects of this nationalist propaganda are easily gauged when considering the reactions of those whose commentaries are rooted primarily in the performance’s displays of technology and progress. In short, the unifying element of national success overshadows the inconsistencies and misrepresentations embedded within the spectacle. Linda Tenenbaum raves, “It resonated with broad layers of the population . . . involv[ing] thousands of animated, ordinary young people and contained within it genuine artistry in its celebration [of] the development of technique and technology in the 20th century, the cities and the people that built them” (Tenenbaum). Of course what’s particularly damaging here is that Tenenbaum compliments those who are responsible for the “development” of the country, but the only people represented throughout the entire segment are white males.

Similarly, Catriona Elder explains that the audience “fall[s] in love with the spectacular history that is being presented for them” (Elder), but a closer analysis reveals that this history has been significantly rewritten and romanticized. Spectators are presented with a nationalist patchwork of ideals intended for mass consumption, so when the performance is mesmerizingly engaging, it becomes nearly impossible to not be impressed or swept away by a cloud of

nationalist stardust. The audience unwittingly contributes to a perpetuating cycle of hegemony, not only forgetting about those whose histories have been rewritten or forgotten entirely but also adhering to a model of citizenship that suggests the only representation of success is grounded in patriarchy. Rather than questioning why “Tin Symphony” depicts the settlement of Australian lands without including even one Indigenous actor, journalists instead praise the segment for its deliberate portrayal of Australia as a modernized and progressive nation-state whose primary accomplishment is the continued reproduction of technology.

Indeed most reactions to “Tin Symphony” are framed by an appreciation for Australia’s development from Indigenous origins to its now-thriving state—a sentiment no doubt catalyzed by the performance’s emphasis of its chronological timeline. Canadian news site, *The Globe and Mail*, claims that “Australia has evolved from an unknown continent just a little over two centuries ago to a booming confident nation” (qtd. in “Sydney 2000 Olympic Official Report”), and *Radio Australia*’s “Australia Now” comments that the segment is “very much a reliving of Australia as a very British nation and a British way of celebrating that particular event. On the 26th of January 1788 the first fleet arrived in Sydney Harbour. It was the start of Australia’s modern history” (“Australia Now”). Interestingly, “Australia Now” celebrates Cook’s expedition as marking the beginning of Australia’s state of modernization, but also admits that the performance was “British” in this very celebration.

Thus, the narrative’s hyper-appreciation of modernity suggests that the opening ceremony becomes a way in which to celebrate the progressions of Australia while also paying tribute to Britain. John Roskam, in a reflexive editorial on cultural cringe,⁵ explains that

⁵ Within the field of cultural studies and social anthropology, “cultural cringe” is defined by an internalized sentiments of inferiority and an overwhelming desire to assert the merits of one’s national culture. For a detailed reading of the theory, please see A. A. Phillips, *The Australian Tradition: Studies in a Colonial Culture*, Oxford: Oxford Press, 1958. Print.

Australia often exhibits feelings of ingrained inferiority to its European colonizer, relying on theatre, music, and the arts as a mode by which to pronounce its successes. As he explains, “The cultural cringe manifests whenever anything done by an Australian or our government is judged not according to what Australians think of it, but according to what people in other countries think of it” (Roskam). The opening ceremony thus acts as an intentional showcase of successes—successes, of course, interpreted as material goods and monetary gain. “Australia Now,” commenting on this aspect of the performance, suggests that “Tin Symphony” indicates the nation’s underlying desire to convince its citizens of its accomplishments:

In some respects Australians as a nation, not necessarily as individuals, have a relatively weak sense of self . . . There’s a phrase that we used to use about footballers, we’d talk about a football player grandstanding, he’s playing to the grandstand rather than playing to the people on the field, and grandstanding I think is a bit of an Australian characteristic. (“Australia Now”)

While true that every host nation of the Olympic Games performs a national narrative, the concept of cultural cringe becomes a lens by which to analyze “Tin Symphony” as a purposeful construction of nationalist ideals. Australia is able to utilize Nikki Webster and the white male as actors of the state—agents of Australian prosperity. Symbols of technology, progress, and wealth are boldly displayed while the internal politics of citizenship subliminally endorse normative ideologies of race and gender.

By recognizing “Tin Symphony” as a performance of civic pride framed by an underlying desire to self-promote its symbolic worth, we can understand not only *why* but also *how* the segment produces a narrative of erased Indigenous histories and gendered expectations of citizenship. The segment becomes an embodiment of relationality between actor and

spectator, each performer coded by the state: the absence of Indigenous bodies read as dispossessed in contemporary contexts; actress Nikki Webster read as a symbol of material reproductive futurity; and white males read as executors of masculinized modernity.

Conclusion

The Re/Constructions of Spectator Memory on Race and Gender

My preceding chapters discussed not only how the Olympic arena as a mega-event influences the framing of the opening ceremony but also how the visual construction of the performance can be read as a nationalist propaganda piece grounded in patriarchal ideals of race and gender. Australia's role as host-nation entails particular expectations for unity and patriotism embedded within the performance. Thus, the ceremony abides by a narrative that features a distorted retelling of colonial history and a cultural script that rewrites Aboriginal Australians as a primitive, extinct population. The ceremony as a political construct produces enormous consequences in the staging of its characters—Indigenous and non-Indigenous, male and female. As the performance unfolds, certain cultural values and norms are transferred to spectators with these ideologies embedding themselves into the audience.

This act of memory construction is to be expected from a performance that is rooted in national ideologies as it becomes a bridge between aesthetics and politics—a perpetuating cycle in which the symbolic value of the narrative is transformed to the physical act of performance which in turn is transformed to renegotiated symbolic value. Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire* explores how performance exists in the complex intersection between the distribution of political claims, the transmitting of memory, and the reproduction of cultural identity. Taylor, similar to Schechner's *Performance Studies*, delineates how ceremony as a form of ritual encourages provocative ways of understanding past and present. She explains, "Performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called twice-behaved behavior . . . It does not run continuously or seamlessly into other forms of cultural expression" (2-3). This sense of

performance as a form of cultural transmission and identity (re)creation is essential to understanding Australia's opening ceremony as a narrated origin story and a showcasing of contemporary progress. "Awakening" and "Tin Symphony" demonstrate how the performance can be read as a circulation and projection of ideals conferred by the nation-state embedded within the script of its characters.

Therefore, understanding the opening ceremony as not simply a reenactment of previous memory but also as a construct of new memories to be formed suggests that the performance functions as a kind of epistemology: "Embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural discourses, offer[ing] a way of knowing" (*The Archive and the Repertoire* 45). As I have suggested, this transferal of idea and ideal is rooted primarily in the state's depiction of its citizens with the performance largely constructed as a mode of entertainment—"something produced in order to please a public" (Schechner 48). But when the primary intention of the opening ceremony is to please the masses, certain audience expectations (i.e. those that lie outside the bounds of normativity) must be sacrificed. Nationalism becomes a façade for patriarchy, reminding spectators that there are certain raced and gendered expectations for the ideal citizen, revealing that in performance, "we do not experience the event itself but its representation" (48). The ceremony becomes a platform in which theatre, reality, and politics are complexly intertwined.

Indigenous Identity via Perceived and Performed Memory

Within the two narratives, the colonization of Indigenous peoples is absent in the sense that Aboriginal Australians are excluded from any segment of the performance following "Awakening," posing a fascinating dilemma for actors and spectators as they negotiate their

identities as citizens of the nation-state. George Morgan in an analysis of Aboriginal representation, claims that national narratives as a type of performance are symbolically oppressive in the sense that temporal aspects of the storyline challenge what we know of present-day colonialism:

In this new national historical narrative colonization appears only as an abstract force, something that happens off stage and directly involved none of us, nor any of our forbearers. The standard conservation cry in the history wars that have taken place is “I should not be made to feel guilty about the past.” (31)

Here, chronology folds into the politics of representation, presenting a unique challenge in how Indigenous identity is constructed and what this depiction implies for present-day citizens. Previous injustices are completely ignored and instead replaced with an image of Australian civic life that has been racially cleansed from its primitive Aboriginal origins.

As previously discussed, this staging has profound consequences for the performance itself as well as its larger implications as a national narrative, but these aspects are complicated even further when considering memory studies in correlation with Indigenous identity as ghosts. As Webster enters into her dream, she encounters the tribal leader, reminding spectators that while the performance is live, the Aboriginal population is very much dead. Though contemporary context suggests that Indigenous groups are thriving, the projection of the opening ceremony suggests otherwise. Djakapurra acts as a temporary visualization and representation of ancient culture. Taylor, in analyzing performance as a life-death spectrum, suggests that the memory of the performance can begin to exceed the live:

[I]t hinges on a relationship between visibility and invisibility, or appearance and disappearance, but comes at it from a different angle. For Phelan, the defining feature of

performance—is that it is live and disappears without a trace. The way I see it, performance makes visible (for an instant, live, now) that which is always already there: the ghosts, the tropes, the scenarios that structure our individual and collective life. (*The Archive and the Repertoire* 143)

While Taylor is correct in identifying that liminal traces of visibility are always present, her analysis does not address how visibilities can distort those that exist as more than a ghost or trope. The Aboriginal population while present in current settings are remembered in performance as a fleeting culture soon replaced by machinery and white capitalist industrialism. Performance can indeed make visible that which is always already there, though it is not a holistic representation but rather a partial fragmentation—a designated set of images that recirculate the underlying political ideologies of its narrator. In this case, Indigenous identity is erased for the façade of progress.

As the performance constructs the Aboriginal population as a quite literal memory in the consciousness of Australian history, there also exists a question of what exactly alternative representation would consist of. It is a precarious issue of how to depict a thriving Indigenous population while also reminding spectators of the insufferable injustices that took place on Aboriginal lands. Morgan, also addressing this issue, reveals the conflicting tensions in representational politics:

On the one hand they wished to convey the sense that they are an oppressed minority, to shatter the image of a peacefully-settled, young nation, a consensual imagined community striving to build a bright shining future. They suffer incarceration, suicide, and unemployment rates many times higher than the general Australian community. They

have life expectancy at Third World levels. Aboriginal men, for example, can expect to die some years before their fiftieth birthdays. (32)

The “National Population Inquiry” by Australia’s Department of Immigration and Citizenship confirms, “Aborigines probably have the highest growth rate, the highest birth rate, the highest death rate, and worst health and housing and the lowest educational, occupational, economic, social and legal status of any identifiable section of the Australian population” (455). To remind spectators of the historical atrocities of colonialization is an admittance of blame by the Australian government, but to remind spectators of the current socioeconomic and sociopolitical challenges that the Indigenous population faces (as a result of colonization) is an admittance of victimhood by Aboriginal Australians. Both depictions present challenging repercussions in regards to not only who is represented but also how.

The division between opinions resides primarily in a tension between collectivism and individualism and the struggle to represent both. The effects of the opening ceremony as a national narrative poses the question of how to present Aboriginal culture as striving for and achieving success despite obvious inequities. Morgan, too, questions:

Can Aboriginal people say: ‘we are both people of action and people who are oppressed. Our society both frustrates our ambitions and allows us to live out our dreams. We are international athletes and we have had our lives wrecked by alcohol, broken homes, violence and persecution?’ (32)

To represent both suggests new ways of understanding past and present forms of colonization and also indicates Australia’s responsibility for these injustices. In an effort to divert attention away from its colonial history, Australia constructs a modified narrative that not only absolves

them of previous guilt but also positions them as modern-day superiors. As such, the memory of cultural genocide is instead replaced by a performance of modernity and wealth.

We can clearly see how the opening ceremony acts as part of a broader ideological framework in which the national narrative represents not only Australian history but also Australian culture, reworked into an imagined community of racial purity and hegemonic progress. The projected image of national identity within the performance defuses social conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations by, quite simply, erasing them, rendering the ceremony a product of dominant ideologies. While Aboriginal culture is represented in “Awakening” as part of Australia’s origin story, their absence thereafter reveals the state’s attempt to evade the responsibility of addressing colonial power. The less accessible the historical event, the easier it becomes to disassociate and invent newly reimagined presents and futures. Here, the analysis of memory reveals how the brutality of history collides with the pageantry of ideology.

Gender & Memory-Making

While the absence of Indigenous bodies in “Tin Symphony” rewrites a history of racial and cultural tensions, the embedded gender ideologies within the segment project a narrative of maturation and reproduction in which the female child is both physically and symbolically controlled by the state. There is a critical link between memories of the public and memories for the public, with the opening ceremony spanning the two as a vehicle by which Australia can remind citizens of its evolving technologies and industries. Patriarchy becomes normalized as a

consequential byproduct of the narrative, suggesting that while Australia's performance may be chronological, it also projects expectations for ideal citizenship in current contexts.

Even more, these gender politics become normalized as images of homogenous white males recirculate through the narrative with Nikki Webster standing idly on stage, reminding spectators that while she is present, her agency is dependent on the production of material goods and wealth. The narrative reveals the unavoidable presence of gender in that the forces of capitalism, of technology, and of modernity are riven with the expectations of feminine reproduction and masculine competition. The performance draws upon gender tropes to articulate an idealized role of citizenship and belonging in the nation-state, projecting the notion that progress can only be achieved through these normalized, hegemonic roles.

Judy Giles, in her article on the effects of modernity in women's memories, explores the notion that women must constantly renegotiate their identity between the public and private spheres, as citizens and bodies of the state, though memory becomes a tool by which to fluctuate between the two. Her definition of memory articulates the construction of shared symbolic meaning:

My understanding of memory as a process by which people shape the past into a set of meanings that makes sense to them in the present therefore necessitates a recognition in which this process involves the individual psyche and historically specific public ideologies. The key issue here is the relation of psychic histories to social and material history and the questions this raises about the distinction between public and private that has been a central feature in the dominant stories of modernity. (23-4)

Within the opening ceremony's performance, modernity is constructed through scripts of gender expectations in which the narrative's temporality is not simply a chronological origin story but

also a projection of modern gender ideals in which men are responsible for the industrialization of product and women are responsible for the reproduction of bodies. History is composed via the national narrative but this retelling helps to comprise a sense of shared identity among spectators as well.

Thus in an effort to maintain patriarchal normativity, Australia's narrative refuses to acknowledge any Indigenous or female bodies outside of their scripted roles. The state becomes a site in which citizen identity is forged on the circulated ideals of hegemony. The intricate relationship between performance and reception reveals that the national narrative is rooted in scripted power structures. "Tin Symphony" as a segment that articulates post-colonial economic and industrial growth evokes dominant gender stereotypes particularly through the illustrated stream of progress with Webster as icon for the state. The question of gendered roles within nationalist discourse poses an ideological problem, particularly within the Olympic arena since it is viewed, internalized, and remembered by spectators-as-citizens. The ceremony is not simply a performance to watch but rather a mediation of present identity influenced by the nation's past.

We must therefore analyze the performance always keeping in mind how the discourse of nationalism integrates narratives of race, culture, and gender. Narratives produced by the state fail to address how systems outside of patriarchy can generate wealth or progress. Therefore, articulations of the gendered body continue to enforce outdated ideals of both production and protection. The relationship between normative standards of citizenship and the nation-state overlap to produce narratives that elevate the ideals of progress as attainable, but only when achieved in the prescribed manner. "Tin Symphony" reminds us of the excellence and status that Australia achieved by its male citizens and encourages spectators to recirculate that memory while working towards the continued development of the state. The segment acts as a

performance of the past and also abides by a fallacious appeal to tradition in which patriarchy is deemed the only avenue to success. The national narrative thereby becomes a platform by which men can reclaim the historical forces of industrialism and urbanism in a modern context.

Final Implications

My analysis has demonstrated how Australia's opening ceremony functions as a type of performed national narrative in which the actors on stage are scripted by the state and for the state. The performance works to construct an idealized retelling of colonial history while simultaneously projecting its own values onto spectators. While "Awakening" does depict Australia's Aboriginal origins, the depiction of Indigenous performers are wrought with racial stereotypes that continue to exoticize native culture. By contrast, "Tin Symphony" exists as a segment of normalized ideals and values: the nation exhibiting progress but only in its most dominant form. Together, the two segments reveal that Australia's national narrative is framed by the notion that modernity can only be achieved when following a model laid forth by the state.

I close my study with a reflection on memory because it is imperative to show the causal link between the event and its effects. Public attention is already drawn to the spectacle of the opening ceremony, but it is necessary to analyze how the performance is scripted as it relates to its broader implications on spectators. We must not forget that the narrative functions as a product of the state, working to marginalize those whose worth is deemed irrelevant or unnecessary to the growth of Australian industrialism. "Awakening" and "Tin Symphony," while only constituting one third of the entire performance can be analyzed together to reveal how the

national narrative works to construct normalized ideologies of race and gender through the scripting and staging of Djakapurra and Webster.

Both protagonists have prominent roles as idealized citizens of the state, with the Indigenous man representative of ancient culture and the white child representative of the potentiality of progress. Together they enact their respective roles in society, depicting the state's expectations for citizenship. By deconstructing the national narrative that's presented within this esteemed arena, we can recognize the interconnectedness of the temporal and the political and the degree to which the past, present, and future fold into one another as recorded and performed histories. As such, a reading of these two segments shows how minority figures are written within state narratives.

Recognizing the opening ceremony as an artifact valid for close analysis contributes to our understanding of national narratives as performed ideologies that work to transmit and embed knowledge and identity. As Diana Taylor reminds us, "Performance as a lens enables commentators to explore not only isolated events and limited cases, but also the scenarios that make up individual and collective imaginaries" (*The Archive and the Repertoire* 278). The opening ceremony constructs social actors through a distinct set of power relations that code how the performance unfolds. As such, a deeper understanding of this framing invites the potential for proper representation in future scenarios.

National narratives evoke the social and cultural processes of politics as a type of nation-building and memory-making. Thus the identities articulated within the opening ceremony are reflective of one's relationships with the state. Understanding how an actor-as-citizen is written within the script of the performance and why these broader representations emerge allows us to

engage with the troubling politics that come to frame this event. Realizing this, we can work to address identities and memories that extend far beyond the boundaries of a stage or arena.

Bibliography

- “Aboriginal Identity: Who is ‘Aboriginal’?” *Creative Spirits*. n.d. Web.
- Alexander, M Jacqui. “Not Just (Any) Body can be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas.” *Feminist Review* 48.1 (1994): 5-23. Print.
- “Appropriate Terminology, Indigenous Australian Peoples.” *General Information Folio* 5. Adelaide, SA: Flinders University, n.d. Print.
- “Australia’s 12th Report.” *United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*. 7 July 2000. Web.
- Belton, Brian. “‘Weak Power’: Community and Identity.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36.1 (2013): 282-297. Print.
- Berlant, Lauren. *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997. Print.
- . “The Theory of Infantile Citizenship.” *Public Culture* 5.1 (1993): 395-410. Print.
- Berthier-Foglar, Shelia Collingwood-Whittick and Sandrine Tolazzi. *Biomapping Indigenous Peoples: Towards an Understanding the Issues*. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Rodopi, 2012. Print.
- Blainey, Geoffrey. *A Very Short History of the World*. London, UK: Penguin Group, 2004. Print.
- “Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families.” Sydney, Australia: Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997. Print.
- Buscombe, Edward. *‘Injuns!’: Native Americans in the Movies*. London, UK: Reaktion Books

- LTD, 2006. Print.
- “Communicating Positively: A Guide to Appropriate Aboriginal Terminology.” North Sydney, NSW: NSW Department of Health, 2004. Print.
- Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001. Print.
- Dunbar-Hall, Peter and Chris Gibson. *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places: Contemporary Aboriginal Music in Australia*. Kensington, NSW: University of New South Wales Press, 2004. Print.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. Print.
- Elder, Catriona. “Looking Through the Spectacle, Olympic Opening Ceremonies Can Rewrite History.” *The Conversation*. 9 February 2014. Web.
- Fisher, Walter. “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument.” *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1999. 265-287. Print.
- Giles, Judy. “Narratives of Gender, Class, and Modernity in Women’s Memories of Mod-Twentieth Century Britain.” *Signs* 28.1 (2002): 21-41. Print.
- Gilmore, David. *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980. Print.
- González, Jennifer. *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008. Print.
- Klausen, Arne Martin. *Olympic Games as Performance and Public Event: The Case of the XVII Winter Olympic Games in Norway*. Oxford, NY: Berghahn Books, 1999. Print.

- Korff, Jens. "Stereotypes & Prejudice of 'Aboriginal Australia.'" *Creative Spirits*. 26 December 2014. Web.
- Landler, Mark. "Sydney 2000: Protests; Anger Doesn't Catch On." *The New York Times*. 16 September 2000. Web.
- Letter. *Launceston Advertiser*. September 1831. Print.
- MacKinnon, Neil and Alison Luke. "Changes in Identity Attitudes as Reflections of Social and Cultural Change." *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/ Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 27.3 (2002): 299-338. Print.
- Malfas, Beni Theodoraki and Barrie Houlihan. "Impacts of the Olympic Games as Mega-Events." *Municipal Engineer* 157.3 (2004): 209-220. Print.
- Mann, Patricia. *Micro-Politics: Agency in a Postfeminist Era*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994. Print.
- Morgan, George. "Aboriginal Protest and the Sydney Olympic Games." *OLYMPIKA: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 7.1 (2003): 23-38. Print.
- Mukherjee, Erica. "The Implications of National Narratives." *Perspectives on Global Issues*. n.d. Web.
- Nagel, Joane. "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21.2 (1998): 242-269. Print.
- "National Population Inquiry." *Population & Australia. A Demographic Analysis and Projection*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975. Print.
- "Nunukul Yuggera – Aboriginal Dancers." *Nunukul-Yuggera*. n.d. Web.
- "Olympic Charter." *International Olympic Committee*. n.d. Web.

- “Opening Ceremony: Beautiful Sydney.” *BBC News*. 8 August 2008. Web.
- Phillips, A. A. *The Australian Tradition: Studies in a Colonial Culture*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Press, 1958. Print.
- Picard, Celmara Pocock and David Trigger. “Tourism as Theatre: Performing and Consuming Indigeneity in an Australian Wildlife Sanctuary.” *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 12.1 (2014): 206-223. Print.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism (Politics, History, and Culture)*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. Print.
- Raheja, Michelle H. *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. Print.
- Roche, Maurice. *Mega-Events & Modernity*. London, UK: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Roskam, John. “Why We Can’t Shake Off the Cultural Cringe.” *AFR Weekend*. 21 November 2014. Web.
- Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Silvestre, Gabriel. “The Social Impacts of Mega-events: Towards a Framework.” *Esporte e Sociedade*, 9:4 (2008): 1-26. Print.
- Smyth, Terry. “First Contact: A Contemporary Aboriginal Perspective.” *The Sun Herald*. 15 February 2009. Web.
- Squires, Nick. “Aborigine Fury as ‘False Image’ Sells Olympics.” *The Telegraph*. 17 September 2000. Web.
- “Sydney 2000.” *Olympic.org*. n.d. Web.

“Sydney 2000 Olympic Official Report.” Sydney, Australia: Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, n.d. Print.

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. Print.

---. *Disappearing Acts: Spectacle of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina’s ‘Dirty War.’* Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. Print.

Tenenbaum, Linda. “Image and Reality in Sydney’s Olympic Opening Ceremony.” *World Socialist Web Site*. 22 September 2000. Web.

“The Modern Olympic Games.” *The Olympic Museum*. n.d. Web.

Tomilson, Alan and Christopher Young. *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympic and the Football World Cup*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006. Print.

Traganou, Jilly. *Designing the Olympics: (Post)national Identity in the Age of Globalization*. London, UK: Routledge, 2007. Print.

Vizenor, Gerald. *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Print.

White, Leanne. “The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Bid: Marketing Indigenous Australia for the Millennium Games.” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28.1 (2011): 1447-1462. Print.

Wilkinson, Gary. *Sydney 2000 Opening Ceremony*. NBC. 15 September 2000. Television.

Wolfe, Patrick. “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006): 387-409. Print.

Vita

Name of Author: Rachel Elizabeth Presley

Place of Birth: Charlotte, North Carolina

Date of Birth: January 29, 1991

Undergraduate School Attended: Washington & Jefferson College

Degrees Awarded: B.A. English; Minor in Communication Arts; Concentration in Rhetoric;

summa cum laude