The Sympathetic Imagination: Recognition, Reciprocity, and Difference.

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Abstract

In light of the limitations of top-down measures to adequately address the injustices that are suffered by devalued social identities, this thesis examines the sympathetic imagination as a resource for achieving recognition of racial and sexual difference.

Adam Smith's rich and sophisticated account of sympathy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) is central to this project. Smith claims that our capacity to imaginatively adopt others' standpoints and to be emotionally affected by their experiences is what binds individuals together as moral agents.

Smith acknowledges that the extent to which identify with others' experiences is often influenced by a lack of understanding, bias and prejudice. Hence, if sympathy is to produce moral behaviour, it must be harnessed to an informed and reflective imaginative exercise. Harmonious social communities in Smith's view are underpinned by reciprocal exercises of imaginative perspective-taking between individuals, wherein each person strives to grasp the other's point of view, and to critically scrutinise their response to the other's feelings.

Given the general plausibility of Smith's naturalistic moral theory, this thesis analyses the massive failures of sympathy that mark contemporary societies, with reference to the concept of the social imaginary. I suggest that the dominant social imaginary of a society has the capacity to systematically undercut fellow-feeling with the experiences of identities that are prevented from shaping prevailing values, norms and meanings, owing to their membership within a marginalised and devalued group. It achieves this by structuring implicit and widely held assumptions about different social identities that exclusively reflect the perspectives of privileged groups, and which render certain possibilities inconceivable or implausible.

This research discusses the value and limitations of Smith's appeal to a form of critical self-regulation as a means of repairing the failures of sympathy engendered by dominant imaginings of sexual and racial difference. This discussion draws attention to the important role played by informal, everyday embodied encounters with others, in addition to institutional structures and bottom up initiatives in facilitating sympathetic identification between privileged and devalued identities.

Preface

I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Some of the material in Chapter Five of this thesis forms the basis of my article, 'Transformative Imaginings: When Adam met Sally' (forthcoming in *Social Epistemology*).

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The unwavering support and kindness of my family and friends was also central to the completion of this thesis. I am particularly grateful to my parents, Ione and Richard Churcher, for their incredible generosity and (well-tested!) patience.

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enjoyable and memorable. Gatens' influential work on imagination and recognition of difference continues to inspire, challenge and enrich my own ideas. It is to her I dedicate this effort.

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Introduction

I must try to enter imaginatively into the worlds of others. *Imagination isn't enough, but it is necessary.* Indeed, it is a crucial starting point: because I have not experienced what the other has, so unless I can imagine her having pain or her having pleasure I can't be moved to try to help put an end to her pain or to understand what her pleasures are. *Against the odds I must try to think and feel my way into her world* (Spelman, 1988, p. 179. My emphasis).

In June 2007, the Australian Federal Government introduced the *Northern Territory Emergency Response*, commonly known as the Northern Territory Intervention. The Intervention comprised a legislative package implemented under the leadership of the then Prime Minister John Howard, which was intended to address the high levels of violence and the sexual abuse of children occurring in remote Indigenous Australian communities.[1] The government judged that the degree of violence and abuse occurring in these communities was so severe as to warrant immediate federal intervention. The legislation followed on the heels of an official report that investigated the various problems affecting these communities over a period of nine months. The report's authors found that the high levels of violence and abuse were attributable to an array of factors, including alcoholism and drug abuse, under-resourced health and social services, and inadequate housing. They pointed out that many of these issues were the legacy of colonialism and failed government policies, and had been sustained in large part by the recurring failure of government agencies to work collaboratively with Aboriginal people in designing initiatives to address the problems facing their communities. The report was emphatic that reducing the levels of violence and abuse in these remote areas would

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[1] In this thesis I use the terms 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal' to refer to Australia's native inhabitants. I acknowledge, however, that such language is contentious, especially given that these terms were not developed by Australia's First Peoples, and do not adequately reflect the enormous diversity of Indigenous groups within Australia. Where possible, I have endeavoured to acknowledge this diversity.

necessitate ongoing co-operation between governments and Indigenous groups, and a

concerted effort to empower local Indigenous communities to address the issue.

Furthermore, it stressed that there were no simple or quick solutions, and that it would

take a minimum of fifteen years to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people living in

these communities. Following the release of the report, the Howard government

declared a national state of emergency, and immediately drafted up a raft of measures in

the name of protecting Aboriginal children from further abuse. In defiance of one of the

report's central recommendations, the government made no attempt to consult with

Indigenous groups in the drafting of the legislation. The measures were imposed

indiscriminately on five hundred different Indigenous communities, and effectively

nullified the existing rights of Indigenous persons, including their right to privacy and

their right to control their land and financial resources. These restrictions have had the

effect of preventing Indigenous persons from carrying out important cultural practices

and rituals, and from meeting responsibilities to land and obligations to family.[2]

How might one analyse the Intervention from the perspective of social justice?

From the standpoint of mainstream theories of justice, the Intervention represents a

violation of the principle of equality: a failure to respect the legal rights and entitlements

of Indigenous Australians, and a failure to treat Indigenous communities in accordance

with the legal standards and procedures that are applied to the Anglo-Australian

community. To cite a national colloquialism, it marks a failure to give Indigenous

Australians 'a fair go.' This reading of the Intervention is, however, overly simplistic. The

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[2] An integral feature of Aboriginal culture is a strong connection to country. Caring for land and sea is a fundamental part of Aboriginal identity, spirituality, law and history. Complex kinship systems determine the particular responsibilities that Aboriginal people have towards the natural environment. Aboriginal people not only have responsibilities towards land and sea, it is expected that they meet certain obligations to kin. In contrast to non-indigenous culture, Aboriginal people have wider and more binding kinship responsibilities that extend beyond their immediate blood relations to encompass their extended kin.

connection between the Intervention and social injustice is much more complicated, and is inextricably bound up with the way in which Anglo-Australians imagine themselves in relation to Indigenous Australian communities.

On a distributive model of social justice, the solution to the injustices suffered by Indigenous Australians is to remedy the gross inequalities (economic, social, legal and political) that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and to ensure that the former are accorded the same fundamental rights, benefits and opportunities as the latter. However, this represents only a partial solution, since the Intervention marks an injustice that is tied not only to the diminished political and socio-economic status of Indigenous people, but also to the diminished social value conferred upon Indigenous identity. In other words, the Intervention not only constitutes a distributive injustice that demands redistribution of social and economic goods and greater equality for Indigenous Australians; it also represents an injustice of misrecognition that calls for recognition of Indigenous identity and culture.

Many prevailing theories of justice are underpinned by principles of equality and sameness, which view racial, sexual and other differences as irrelevant to deliberations over how societies should be structured, as well as to the scope of obligations that people have towards others. In Chapter Three I draw on the event of the Intervention to explore the broader implications that sexual and racial difference have for prevailing conceptions of social justice, and argue that any plausible theory of justice must recognise and seek to address the injustices suffered by those who occupy a devalued place in the dominant culture.[3]

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[3] Following theorists such as Onora O'Neill (1987), Charles Mills (2005) and Miranda Fricker (2007), I adopt a non-idealised approach to issues of social justice. Broadly conceived, this approach takes injustice rather than justice as a theoretical starting point, and is committed to the view that formulating any kind of ideal social and/or political states of affairs requires us to first pay attention to concrete, non-ideal states of affairs.

Iris Marion Young (1990) and Nancy Fraser (1997) are among those theorists who have drawn attention to the injustices suffered by individuals in virtue of their membership within a culturally devalued group. Fraser points out that the traditional paradigm of justice as redistribution fails to fully capture and address the injustices suffered by individuals in virtue of the way in which their group identity is represented in the dominant culture. Owing to structural inequalities of power, certain group identities are able to exclusively establish their values, experiences and perspectives as the norm, with the result that those identities that depart from this norm are marked out as different, and devalued in their difference. Those individuals who belong to a social group that is systematically denigrated by the dominant representative, interpretative and communicative practices of a culture suffer what I will refer to as 'misrecognition.' Fraser highlights the fact that those who suffer misrecognition (or what she refers to as 'symbolic injustice') tend to be exposed to an array of harms, including physical and verbal abuse, exclusion from various areas of the public sector and from important deliberative bodies, and the denial of their equal rights and protections (1997, p. 81). More recently, Miranda Fricker (2007) and José Medina (2013) have contributed to Fraser's account of the harm of misrecognition by detailing the systematic epistemic injustices that are suffered by culturally devalued identities; a theme to which I will return in Chapter Two.

Underpinning these accounts is the view that injustices of misrecognition are not simply a matter of failing to have adequate access to material resources; rather, they constitute a harm done to someone in their very being. Following Hegel (1806/1977, 1821/1991), the thought is that failing to receive social recognition disrupts and undermines an individual's relation to her own self. However, as Fraser points out, misrecognition is closely intertwined with material deprivation (1997, pp. 72-73). On the one hand, cultural misrecognition feeds into economic disadvantage by structuring

shared perceptions of particular social identities as unfit for participation in certain fields. On the other hand, economic disadvantage sustains misrecognition by preventing non-normative identities from enjoying equal participation in those fields which structure dominant cultural meanings and values. Despite the close connection between misrecognition and economic disadvantage, this thesis argues in line with Fraser that the harms associated with misrecognition cannot be adequately addressed only by targeting economic inequality, and by ensuring that material resources are distributed more fairly. This is primarily because redistributive measures are underpinned by a principle of strict equality; of treating everyone as if they were the same. What is also required, as Fraser rightly argues, is for societies to cultivate positive recognition of and respect for group differences. Put simply, social justice requires the recognition of difference as well as the redistribution of wealth and other social goods.

This thesis aims to build on the work of theorists such as Fraser, Fricker and Medina by considering what the recognition of difference requires from individuals and institutions. To date there appears an overriding emphasis on top-down initiatives to address harms of misrecognition.[4] Elaine Scarry (1998) has argued that an emphasis on top-down reforms (for instance, establishing special constitutional protections for oppressed groups) is necessary, since our capacity to identify with the needs and experiences of others – especially entire groups of people to whom we bear little relation – is simply too limited to support the existence of ethical communities in which people's rights and freedoms are universally upheld.

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[4] Practical examples of these top-down initiatives include Australia's *Commonwealth Affirmative Action (Equal Employment for Women) Act 1986* and Australia's *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. Taken together, these pieces of legislation aim to promote sexual and racial equality, and to eliminate discrimination in the workplace and in other sectors on the basis of sex and race. In addition, the recent push by Aboriginal Australians for constitutional recognition – which has called upon the abolishment of all the remaining racially discriminatory clauses in Australia's constitution – can be seen as part of the trend of promoting top-down reforms to address the symbolic and practical harms suffered by culturally devalued identities.

The problem is that these top-down measures have had limited success in curbing the harms suffered by culturally devalued identities. One of the reasons for this is that such measures do not target the influence that dominant cultural patterns of representation have on the way in which individuals perceive and feel towards members of different social groups, with the result that many of the harms suffered by culturally devalued identities (verbal abuse, discriminatory treatment, violence, exclusion and so on) persist. Furthermore, as this thesis is concerned to examine, the representational and communicative practices of a culture have the capacity to structure widely- shared assumptions about different social groups and the relation between them that render invisible or which justify the harms that are systematically suffered by devalued social identities. This has the effect of undercutting widespread ethical concern for the suffering of these identities under the weight of such harms. I argue that the capacity for such practices to have this effect is manifest in the Intervention policy, which continues to draw support from successive governments despite having generated strong feelings of anger, humiliation, shock, and betrayal among Indigenous communities, and despite having largely failed to improve Indigenous outcomes.[5]

In light of the recurring injustices and harms suffered by particular social identities despite significant legal and distributive reforms, increasing attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which patterns of sociability between different social groups may be positively transformed.[6] At the level of individual practice, theorists have

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[5] The Intervention legislation has been replaced by the *Stronger Futures* legislation, which was introduced by the Labor government in 2011 and has been upheld by the current Liberal government. A six-monthly progress report on changes to Indigenous outcomes under *Stronger Futures* covering the period from January to June 2013 revealed that school attendance for Indigenous children had failed to improve, and that the Indigenous unemployment rate had increased. Furthermore, the rate of violence and assault within the targeted communities failed to show a marked decrease (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014).

[6] One of Scarry's central concerns is that there has been too much of a swing towards remedies that focus on cultivating concern for the experiences and circumstances of different social groups. This thesis does not seek to prioritise bottom-up remedies at the expense of top-down

argued that subverting negative attitudes towards devalued social identities and generating concern for their lived experiences cannot be achieved through purely cognitive remedies alone (for example, through offering racists better information and more reliable facts about racial differences), and that we ought to pay attention to practices which implicate our capacity for imagination and feeling (Bartky, 2002; Lennon, 2004; Medina, 2013; Nussbaum, 2010). Among these practices, the exercise of imagining oneself in another person's shoes is thought to be key to subverting harmful social attitudes and motivating ethical behaviour. Martha Nussbaum (2010) is a particularly strong proponent of imaginative perspective-taking as a means of disrupting and transforming patterns of sociability between members of culturally privileged and devalued social groups.[7] In her view, imaginative perspective-taking attunes us to others' experiences in a way that engages our compassion and breaks down prejudice, and,

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initiatives as a means of addressing the injustices suffered by devalued identities. Rather, it argues that we must concentrate our efforts at both levels: finding ways to cultivate ethical concern for others and to transform dominant patterns of sociability is equally as important as developing and implementing constitutional reforms and other top-down measures. This is because, on the one hand, affirmative action policies, legislative change, equal opportunity initiatives (and so on) will be unable to achieve their aims if negative social attitudes remain unchanged. On the other hand, the difficulty of expanding the scope of our sympathies to encompass radically different groups of people implies the need for structures that will compel us to fulfil our duties and obligations to others, regardless of how we feel towards them. In this thesis I discuss the ways in which particular institutional practices and arrangements can assist individuals to expand their capacity to identify with the lived experiences of identities that occupy a devalued place in the dominant culture.

[7] In broad terms, I understand the phenomenon of imaginative perspective-taking to refer to the capacity to imagine oneself in another person's place, and to experience the world from that person's particular standpoint. This thesis stresses the importance of clarifying the different ways in which an individual might attempt to step outside her own perspective in order to engage with an alternative standpoint. Imaginative perspective-taking may, for example, involve projecting *oneself* (with one's particular history, beliefs, values and so forth) into another person's circumstances, or it may involve a more complicated manoeuvre in which one attempts to imagine oneself *as that person* (with his or her particular history, beliefs, and values) and to see the world from his or her distinct perspective. As Chapter One will outline, Scottish Enlightenment figure Adam Smith draws this distinction in his work on sympathy and morality, and offers a rich account of the role played by both types of imaginative exercise in supporting the existence of moral communities.

ultimately, enables us to see people in their full humanity.[8] More recently, Chiara Bottici (2014) has drawn attention to the close intertwinement between image, affect and moral action, and has convincingly argued that imaginatively entering into the circumstances and lived experiences of others has the capacity to engage our compassion for suffering and injustice, and constitutes a significant source of motivation for the enforcement of human rights.

The appeal among contemporary social philosophers to imaginative perspective-taking as a means of engaging affect and generating ethical responsiveness to the lived experiences of others resonates with the early modern sentimentalist philosophy of Adam Smith and his contemporary David Hume. Smith and Hume were key figures of the Scottish Enlightenment period. Both philosophers argued that the imagination and the passions played a central role in our moral lives. In their respective works, Smith and Hume offer a naturalistic account of the processes that establish and sustain moral communities, which focuses on the role played by the phenomena of 'sympathy' in informing our moral judgments and motivating moral behaviour.[9] In contemporary usage, sympathy refers to a feeling of compassion, or more commonly to a feeling of pity for others' suffering. Conceived as such, sympathy has largely dropped out of favour

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[8] Nussbaum's defence of the ethical import of imaginative perspective-taking has been echoed by many theorists across various disciplines. For social theorists, imaginative perspective-taking (or what some have referred to as 'empathy') is highly valuable as a means of generating an understanding of others' experiences that implicates one's feelings and will to act, which in turn may generate "politically effective solidarities" between different groups and stimulate socio-political action (Gray 2011, p. 208. See Chabot Davis (2004) and Pedwell (2012) for similar arguments). Imaginative perspective-taking has also been of interest to moral psychologists and care ethicists, who recognise its ability to motivate altruistic and caring behaviour (See Batson 1991, 2011; Halpern, 2001, Piper, 1991). However there are theorists such as Jesse Prinz (2011a, 2011b) who have argued strongly against appeals to empathy as a moral resource. Chapter Five of this thesis will address Prinz's critique of empathy, and in particular his criticisms of Humean and Smithean moral sentimentalism.

[9] See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). All references to this work derive from Smith's substantially revised 6th edition published in 1790, edited by D.D Raphael and A.L. Macfie in 1982. See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738). All references to this work derive from the L.A Selby-Bigge edition published in 1888, revised by P.H. Nidditch in 1978.

with social theorists, concerned with its potential to be "misplaced and patronizing," and to reinforce oppressive social structures "by locking marginalised persons in the position of the victim" (Chabot Davis, 2004, p. 405. See also Berlant, 2004).

Hume and Smith's definition of sympathy does not refer to a feeling of pity or compassion; rather, it refers to the capacity to enter into the broad spectrum of feelings displayed by others. As such, contemporary theorists often run together Smithean-Humean sympathy with the more popular concept of empathy, conceived as a form of emotional contagion or mimicry wherein we experience another person's emotional state through an exercise of perspective-taking. However, as this thesis will show, Smith in particular promotes the view that the mode of sympathy which is best placed to support moral agency and human sociability is much more sophisticated than a rudimentary form of emotional mimicry. This mode of sympathy involves affectively grasping another person's lived experience in its particular meaning for her, and identifying with this experience upon reflection. Our ability to identify with the other's experience manifests in, say, joy for her happiness, or compassion for her suffering. Smith refers to this kind of emotional correspondence as 'fellow-feeling,' and takes the latter to be the glue that binds individuals together in a moral community.

For the Scottish sentimentalists, our capacity to be affected by and to identify with the feelings of others forms the basis of our moral judgments. Moral judgments are grounded in moral sentiments of approval or disapproval that arise through sympathising with others' feelings. On their view this explains why our moral judgments are strong motivators for us to act. According to Hume and Smith, reason alone cannot form the basis of our moral judgments, for if it did, our judgments would possess none of their characteristic motivational force. While morality is ultimately grounded in sentiment rather than in reason, this does not mean that reason has no role to play in moral judgment: instrumental reasoning and critical reflection are important components of

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moral deliberation in their view. Indeed as this thesis is concerned to highlight, both

Hume and Smith offer a much more nuanced account of the sentimental basis of our

moral lives than is often recognized. Morality is not solely grounded in our 'bare,'

instinctive sympathetic responses to others, though responses of these kind may serve an

important moral function in certain contexts. Smith in particular emphasised that often

as individuals we are confronted with complex scenarios that demand more than just a

knee-jerk emotional reaction, and which require attention to the facts of the situation,

careful judgment, and reflection upon our own sentiments and those of others. The key

idea that emerges out of Hume and Smith's moral sentimentalism is that if sympathy is to

be a genuine resource for morality rather than a potential liability, it must be 'worked at.'

Their accounts inspire the view that uneducated, undisciplined and unregulated sympathy

cannot provide a suitable foundation for ethical communities, and that our sympathetic

responses to others must often be harnessed to an informed, restrained and critically

reflective exercise of imagination if they are to support a viable sociability.[10] In this sense,

their sentimentalist philosophy offers a valuable contribution to debates among

contemporary theorists surrounding the moral value of imaginative perspective-taking or

empathy.

     While the work of Hume and Smith shares numerous common themes, Smith

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[10] Some may argue that this reading of Hume and Smith introduces a normative component into
their theories, which appears at odds with their explicit aim of developing a purely descriptive
account of morality. As Fonna Forman-Barzilai points out, from the point of view of
contemporary philosophers who are well-acquainted with the distinction between facts and
values, Smith's account of how human beings conduct themselves morally may present as "a
thoroughly empirical, scientific endeavour and not a philosophical one in the least" (2013, p. 61).
However she rightly urges us to keep in mind that the fact/value distinction was not a part of
Smith's thinking, and that approaching Smith's work through the lens of this distinction would
be misplaced, for the reason that Smith's empirical account of morality "moved quite freely
between fact and value, between the actual and the ideal" and "was inescapably guided by a
variety of normative impulses, acknowledged or not" (2013, pp. 61-62). To the extent that Smith
and Hume emphasise the centrality of judgment, reflection and virtue along with sentiment to
moral life, I take them to present a naturalistic account of morality that aspires to be normative.

will play a larger role in this thesis. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (hereafter, *TMS*),
Smith offers a nuanced and sophisticated account of the role played by sympathy in
guiding moral behaviour and supporting human sociability that pays close attention to
the importance of imaginative perspective-taking in generating fellow-feeling. Smith
claims that harmonious social communities are underpinned by reciprocal exercises of
imaginative perspective-taking between those individuals who are affected by some
action or circumstances ('actors' or 'agents'), and those individuals who bear witness to
the latter's experience ('spectators'). I refer to imaginative perspective-taking of this kind
as an exercise of the 'sympathetic imagination.' As this thesis will show, such exercises
for Smith do not involve a mere projection of oneself into another person's
circumstances. They are characterised by a more demanding imaginative manoeuvre,
which involves stepping outside of oneself to 'become' the other (to some degree), and
to see and feel things from his or her point of view. One does not thereby come to
replicate the other's feelings, however. On Smith's account, while the spectator makes
her best attempt to see and feel things as the agent does, she retains a degree of critical
distance from the agent's perspective, and exercises her judgment as to whether or not
she finds the agent's response to be warranted by his circumstances. If the spectator
finds the agent's feelings to be appropriate to the situation, she will approve of his
response and entirely sympathise with him. The sentiments she experiences through
sympathy subsequently inform her moral evaluation of the agent's circumstances and the
parties involved. In this sense, fellow-feeling may signal a level of identification that a
spontaneous feeling of compassion or pity lacks.

  Receiving the fellow-feeling of others is vital for individual flourishing on Smith's
view: as pre-eminently social beings, individuals are unable to maintain a positive self-
conception and a sense of belonging within their communities without having their
feelings recognised by others. The pleasure of having one's perspective acknowledged

and affirmed by others motivates an agent to imagine the standpoint of the spectator, who, as someone with her own personal interests, needs and concerns, cannot help but be less affected by the agent's circumstances and feelings. This imaginative shift in perspective leads the agent to moderate his feelings such that the spectator can enter into them. If the agent fails to acknowledge the spectator's perspective in this way, he risks failing to win the spectator's fellow-feeling and approval. In this way, reciprocal exercises of sympathetic imagination on behalf of spectators and agents have a deeply recognitive aspect: by imaginatively entering into the agent's circumstances and mirroring back his feelings, the spectator expresses her recognition of the agent as a locus of dignity and as an object of concern. On the other hand, the agent's emotional self-restraint expresses his acknowledgment of, and respect for the natural constraints on a spectator's ability to sympathise with his feelings. This kind of reciprocity ensures that the sentiments of the spectator and agent balance or harmonize with one another. In Smith's view, it is this harmonization of sentiments that plays a central role in establishing and sustaining social concord. The recognitive aspect of sympathy and its role in supporting harmonious social communities is further reinforced when we consider that for Smith, our feelings are not mere affects, devoid of intentional content. Rather, they embody a particular way of perceiving and appraising the world and our experiences within it. Hence, an expression of fellow-feeling may signal something deeper and more meaningful than an attitude of care or concern for the other's lived experience; it may reflect a capacity and willingness to enter into the other's worldview, which may be in many ways distinct from one's own.

Smith notes that in many instances, our sympathetic responses to others will be inflected by our situated biases and prejudices. Like Hume, Smith claimed that we are inclined to feel more for those people with whom we share important associative ties than for distant, unfamiliar strangers. Despite the partiality and variability exhibited by

our sympathetic responses, Smith and Hume observed that our moral judgments exhibit

a characteristic degree of stability; that our sympathy fluctuates in ways that our moral

judgments tend not to. In their view, this stability is not attributable to the work of

reason alone; rather, they attribute it to the capacity for individuals to regulate their

feelings through exercising judgment and critical reflection. Critical reflection for both

theorists involves adopting an imagined impartial viewpoint: for Hume, this viewpoint is

embodied in (what is referred to as) the 'General Point of View'; for Smith, it is

embodied in the 'Impartial Spectator.' In this thesis I focus on Smith's regulative device

of the Impartial Spectator to the extent that it furnishes us with a more detailed and

sophisticated account of reflective sympathy than Hume's own. Like Hume, Smith's

account emphasises the need for impartial judgment of the relevant circumstances,

however Smith goes a step further than Hume in emphasising the importance of critical

self-assessment, and the role played by imaginative perspective-taking in scrutinising

one's own standpoint.

On Smith's view, our feelings come to express a moral viewpoint through the

process of imagining whether and to what extent an impartial spectator would go along

with our response. The pleasure of receiving the sympathetic approval of this

hypothetical figure motivates us to take his or her perspective, and to regulate our

feelings by this standpoint. Doing so ensures that our moral judgments come to reflect

an impartial response. As this thesis will outline, Smith's account of impartial

spectatorship is distinguishable from mainstream Ideal Observer theories that posit a

highly abstract, omniscient and dispassionate standpoint as a regulative ideal for ensuring

that our judgments are perfectly impartial.[11] Furthermore, adopting the perspective of an

impartial spectator does not require individuals to do the impossible and take up a purely

[11] I have in mind here Roderick Firth's Ideal Observer theory (1952), which defines the ideal
observer as a disinterested, dispassionate and omnipercipient figure that possesses omniscience
with respect to non-moral facts. See D.D. Raphael (2007) for a useful critical comparison of
Smith's Impartial Spectator and Firth's Ideal Observer.

objective, disembodied standpoint. As a product of the individual's imagination, Smith is clear that the impartial standpoint does not exist outside the self. Yet it stands at enough of a remove from our situated perspective so as to allow us to recognise and correct for the influence of bias upon our feelings.

Smith acknowledges that our perspective is shaped through and through by our socio-historical and cultural context, and that members of different communities will judge certain bodies, practices and behaviours in different and even starkly opposing ways. He points out that although we are prone to believe our judgments reflect an entirely objective viewpoint, no such standpoint exists; the way in which we appraise others and their behaviour will always bear the influence of our social environment. In Smith's view, our particular social and cultural upbringing will always bear on how we understand and how we appraise others and their circumstances, and the extent to which we are able to identify with their feelings. The constraints that our situatedness impose on our ability to grasp and identify with others' experiences and perspectives raises the question of whether the brute fact of social and cultural difference prevents a genuine understanding of how differently-situated others perceive and experience the world, and whether it renders an impartial assessment of their feelings impossible. Smith's remarks in *TMS* suggest that this is not the case. Sympathetic identification is always possible in his view, even between individuals who are differently embodied and who each confront situations and experiences that the other does not and perhaps never will. Smith is clear that there is no need for an individual to exactly replicate another person's experience in order to be able to identify with her feelings. Given the fact we cannot literally inhabit others' bodies, our attempts to grasp others' lived experiences through an exercise of sympathetic imagination will always be imperfect from an epistemological standpoint; nevertheless such attempts are enough to generate fellow-feeling. With regard to the possibility of assessing the feelings of others in an impartial manner, Smith is clear that

we always retain the capacity to critically reflect on our socially inculcated values and beliefs, and to revise these upon reflection. In his view, it is through continually engaging with the circumstances and perspectives of differently-situated others in an attentive and reflective manner, and through carefully comparing and reflecting on our past judgments and behaviour (including any errors or biases that our feelings were subject to) that we may come to shift our perspective and identify with alternative ways of conceptualising practices and behaviours that we could not previously.

If we accept Smith's view that sympathetic identification is always possible between differently situated individuals, how might one account for the massive failures of sympathy that mark contemporary societies? This thesis will offer a theoretical analysis of what establishes and sustains failures of sympathy between different social identities in contemporary contexts, with reference to the concept of the social imaginary.[12] As part of this analysis I will outline the various obstacles that are thrown up by dominant and oppressive imaginings of embodied difference to sympathetic understanding and identification between different social identities. I note that the influence of these imaginings upon our capacity to sympathise with particular social identities problematizes Smith's appeal to an informed and critically self-reflective exercise of the sympathetic imagination as a potential corrective measure.[13] This discussion raises the question of whether Smithean sympathy represents a genuine resource for addressing harms of

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[12] The concept of the social imaginary refers to the stock of linguistic and non-linguistic significations that are particular to a culture and which confer meaning and value on particular bodies, practices and behaviours. I focus on the concept of the social imaginary rather than the concept of ideology, insofar as the former may not only comprise explicit theories or doctrines, but also significations such as narratives, images and symbols that appeal to the imagination and structure attitudes and beliefs which operate below the level of doxastic awareness.

[13] When presenting aspects of this idea at the 2015 Australasian Association of Philosophy Conference, it was put to me that in our encounters with others who differ radically from ourselves, our separate histories, values and beliefs may be so incommensurable that Smith's moral theory cannot help but fail to provide sufficient moral guidance. This is a thorny issue, and presents a significant problem for any moral theory. Nevertheless, I take it that Smith's emphasis on communication, reciprocity and mutual adjustments of perspective offers a more appealing way of approaching the problem of radical difference than mainstream deontological theories.

misrecognition in addition to socio-economic harms. I claim that while there may be significant barriers to fostering sympathetic identification between members of different social groups, these barriers can (and must) be overcome. In the same spirit as Smith's project, this thesis seeks to offer an account of the various difficulties that individuals may encounter in attempting to imaginatively inhabit the perspectives of those who occupy a different social location, and to illuminate how the limitations of the sympathetic imagination may be surmounted.

This thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter One outlines some key aspects of Smith's moral sentimentalism, focusing particularly on his concept of sympathy and its role in supporting moral agency. This chapter draws attention to Smith's pluralist account of sympathy, and his suggestion that the mode of sympathy that is best placed to support moral communities does not amount to a form of spontaneous emotional mimicry, nor does it merely involve an attempt to imagine what we ourselves would feel in another person's situation. Rather, it involves a complicated imaginative and reflective exercise in which we imagine ourselves as that person (with her particular history, character, values, needs and so forth). Engaging in such an exercise enables us to better grasp the other's situation in the particular meaning it has for her, and to more fully appreciate the reasons for her feelings and actions. While we are capable of imaginatively immersing ourselves in another person's experience, Smith's remarks suggest that if sympathy of this kind is to provide the basis for ethical communities, we must retain a degree of critical detachment and evaluate whether or not we find the other's response to be warranted by her situation. If our judgments are to reflect a moral response, Smith is clear that we must exercise our capacity for critical self-awareness, and correct for the influence of any bias or prejudice in our appraisal of others' feelings by reflecting on what an impartial spectator would feel in response to the circumstances. I claim that the vivid, informed and reflective exercises of the sympathetic imagination that Smith

promotes in his moral theory are valuable not only because such exercises have the capacity to generate 'social passions' such as beneficence and compassion, but also because they have a deeply recognitive aspect that enables such passions to support a viable sociability between differently-situated persons. In Chapter One, therefore, I argue in line with Smith that harmonious social communities are maintained in part when spectators and agents engage in reciprocal exercises of imaginative perspective-taking that involve a genuine attempt to see the world from one another's perspectives, and an effort to critically reflect on and revise aspects of one's own perspective.

Given the general plausibility of Smith's account of what binds individuals together in a moral community, Chapter Two sets out to analyse the massive failures of sympathy that mark the relations between culturally privileged and devalued identities in contemporary contexts. In this chapter I draw on the concept of the social imaginary (Castoriadis 1975, 1994; Gatens 1996, 2004; Lennon 2004, 2007; Taylor, 2004. See also Bottici, 2014) and the phenomenon of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013) to suggest that such failures may be traced to the lack of visibility and authority that the experiences and perspectives of marginalised and devalued identities possess in comparison to the experiences and perspectives of privileged identities. This issue can be attributed to structural inequalities of power between different social groups, which prevent less powerful identities from having their perspectives and experiences fairly represented in the dominant social imaginary of a society. Insofar as the narratives, images and symbols that comprise the dominant social imaginary appeal to the imagination, they have the capacity to structure beliefs and attitudes that operate without the conscious awareness of individuals, and which may cause them to appraise other groups and their circumstances in ways that conflict with their explicitly-held beliefs and ideals. In this chapter I offer a theoretical account of how dominant social imaginings of racial and sexual difference may undermine sympathetic identification with the

experiences of marginalised and devalued identities by structuring implicit, collectively-shared beliefs and assumptions among privileged identities that systematically strip the former's feelings of legitimacy and credibility. For example, criticisms of the Australian government's top-down, non-consultative approach to managing indigenous affairs may fail to carry sufficient credibility against competing justifications that resonate with dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of Indigenous Australians as irresponsible, dysfunctional and incapable of managing their own affairs. I suggest that such failures of sympathy are sustained by a particular set of epistemic habits and attitudes that prevail among identities that find their perspectives and experiences represented in the dominant social imaginary of a culture and validated by the community at large. As part of this discussion I claim that the characteristic failure among these identities to engage meaningfully and reflectively with the circumstances and perspectives of marginalised groups may stem from the attitude that there is no need for them to do so, owing to the misguided, socially-inculcated belief that their standpoint is sufficiently informed and objective. Additionally, I suggest, this failure may stem from the fact that to imaginatively enter into the experiences of marginalised social identities in an open-minded and critically self-reflective manner would be inimical to the interests of privileged identities, insofar as it may compel them to scrutinise the norms, values and meanings that allow them to retain various psychological, social and material benefits. For example, imaginatively and reflectively engaging with the point of view of indigenous Australians may compel members of the Anglo-Australian community to confront an unwelcome image of themselves as benefactors of Indigenous dispossession and colonisation, and to interrogate the way in which they perceive themselves and their social responsibilities in relation to Indigenous Australians. The unwelcome destabilising effect that engaging with marginalised perspectives may have for privileged identities may even lead them to actively dismiss, trivialise or distort the feelings of marginalised and devalued groups. I

describe this kind of behaviour as a form of 'wilful ignorance.'[14] This chapter argues that the phenomenon of wilful ignorance helps to explain why the kind of imaginative reciprocity that Smith saw as being central to ethical life is noticeably lacking in contexts that involve the negotiation of racial and sexual difference. I claim that wilful ignorance also underwrites the destructive potential of sympathy by ensuring that strong feelings of compassion, pity and concern remain unaccompanied by a genuine understanding of others' perspectives and circumstances, and an attempt to critically interrogate one's situated perspective.

Chapter Three offers an empirical illustration of what can happen when sympathy breaks down between culturally devalued and privileged identities. In this chapter I present a reading of the Australian federal government's *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007* as a colossal failure of sympathetic imagination among non-Indigenous Australians in their encounters with Indigenous Australians, under the weight of dominant social imaginings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities. I suggest that this piece of legislation can be compared to Australia's nineteenth and twentieth century assimilation policies, on the basis that both practices reflect a gross failure among the non-Indigenous community to recognise and respect Indigenous lifestyles and culture, and on the basis that both represent a practical manifestation of the kind of pre-reflective, 'knee-jerk' sympathy that Smith identified as playing a marginal role in binding individuals together as moral agents. The negative and often devastating impact that these top-down policies have had on Indigenous communities illuminates the damaging effects that sympathy can have when it fails to be underpinned by an educated, restrained and critically self-reflective exercise of imagination. By detailing the recurring injustices and harms suffered by Indigenous

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[14] This concept has been developed by theorists interested in the connection between ignorance and issues of race, racism and racial privilege. See Sullivan and Tuana (2007) for a useful collection of essays on the subject.

Australians under successive government policies despite significant top-down reforms, Chapter Three aims to starkly illustrate why failures of sympathy between devalued and privileged identities are important, and merit address. This chapter also flags the importance of recognising that while Anglo-Australian imaginings of Aboriginal difference continue to exert authority over the way in which non-Indigenous Australians imagine themselves in relation to Indigenous Australians, the Anglo-Australian imaginary – like any dominant social imaginary – is not all-encompassing, nor is it impervious to change. As Chapter Five explores at length, even in the most oppressive societies there always exists alternative imaginaries that may offer a counterpoint to the assumptions and beliefs generated by dominant imaginings, and which have the capacity to disrupt and transform prevailing social norms and meanings.

Given the various obstacles presented by dominant social imaginings to sympathetic understanding and identification between members of devalued and privileged groups, Chapter Four discusses whether and to what extent Smith's appeal to impartial spectatorship may function as a means of correcting for the effects that dominant social imaginings have on our sympathies. Smith, as we have seen, relies heavily on an appeal to a volitional exercise of critical self-regulation to ensure that an individual's feelings reflect a moral response. However, this chapter points out that since privileged identities may lack awareness of the fact that their feelings embody judgments that are grounded in a limited and inevitably partial understanding of the world and those in it, it is not immediately obvious as to what would prompt them to reflect on and adjust their sentiments of their own volition. My suggestion is that Smithean impartial spectatorship presents a viable corrective mechanism only when it takes the form of a dialogical, social activity rather than an individualistic and introspective exercise. This chapter then offers an account of the difficulties that privileged identities may encounter in the process of imaginatively entering into the perspectives of marginalised and

devalued identities, and in subjecting their standpoint to critical scrutiny. I suggest that the combined work of Smith and Medina offers valuable insights into how such difficulties may be worked through. Medina rightly points out that exercises of imaginative perspective-taking are likely to pose a greater challenge for privileged identities than more detached, intellectual forms of engagement with marginalised perspectives. This is because the activity of imagining the world otherwise implicates our affective attachments to certain people, behaviours and practices in a way that abstract theorizing does not, and thereby has unique potential to generate a form of visceral resistance. Like Medina, I argue that the imagination is flexible and capacious enough to surmount this resistance, and to accommodate or embrace new ideas and possibilities that it could not previously. However, to surmount this resistance and to engage in the kind of imaginative exercises that support moral communities is challenging, and requires the cultivation of an array of skills and virtues, including humility, open-mindedness, and courage. I suggest that Smith's account of virtuous conduct as an 'art' that requires practice and discipline offers a useful framework for conceptualising how everyday individuals may come to expand their capacity for moral perception, understanding and sensitivity. This chapter then addresses further concerns that have been raised by Jesse Prinz (2011a, 2011b) regarding the practicability of Smithean sympathy, including the argument that it represents too robust a capacity to play a substantive role in guiding ethical conduct. I conclude that such concerns are unconvincing, or at the very least fail to conclusively undermine an appeal to sympathy as a social resource.

Chapter Five addresses a further objection to relying on the sympathetic imagination as a social resource, which is that our fellow-feeling tends to be confined to specific individuals, and fails to extend more broadly to marginalised and devalued identities. Indeed, the proposal that exercises of the sympathetic imagination have the capacity to disrupt and transform patterns of sociability between marginalised and

privileged social groups begs the question as to whether, and if so, how our fellow-feeling is capable of extending from the one to the many. This chapter claims that Sally Haslanger's account of her experience as a transracial parent furnishes us with valuable resources for responding to this question in a way that illuminates the potential for sympathetic identification with the lived experiences of differently racialized individuals to change the way in which one relates to entire racial groups. Haslanger's account demonstrates how sympathetic identification with an individual whose body is marked out and devalued as different in the dominant culture may have the effect of altering one's experience of her own embodiment (or what some have referred to as the 'imaginary body'), which in turn has the effect of expanding the scope of one's fellow-feeling to embrace entire racial groups that are radically different to one's own. However, while sympathy in the context of intimate relationships may have deep transformative potential for how one relates to different social groups, questions remain with regards to facilitating sympathetic identification in wider social contexts that are permeated with implicit racial biases and prejudices. Such biases and prejudices may see individuals avoid the kind of embodied contact and dialogue with differently racialized others that, as Chapter Four acknowledges, is often crucial for prompting exercises of the sympathetic imagination, and for making individuals aware of the need to critically reflect on and adjust their perspective. A further issue is that since privileged identities in wider social contexts are likely to have an investment in remaining ignorant about the lives and experiences of marginalised others, it is unclear what would prompt them to imaginatively engage with marginalised experiences of their own volition. As a response to these concerns, I draw on Smith's appeal to institutional design as a means of cultivating civic virtue. Smith appeared to be aware of the fact that our shortcomings as moral agents cannot be overcome solely through working on ourselves; rather, virtuous social conduct requires institutional support. Smith's account of the civilizing effects of

commercial society in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (hereafter, *WN*) inspires the view that modern day integrative measures may represent a valuable resource for facilitating sympathetic understanding and identification by establishing relations of interdependence and co-operation between different social identities.[15] This chapter then considers the limitations of integrative measures as a means of facilitating sympathy owing to the depth and pervasiveness of social biases and prejudices that have their roots in prevailing social imaginings. I argue that breaking down these biases and prejudices calls for large-scale cultural and symbolic shifts. Despite the fact that top-down changes such as legislative reform may have great symbolic significance, on their own such measures are insufficient to generate deep shifts in dominant social imaginaries. In line with Smith's account of the Arts as an important source of moral education, I suggest that a key source of social and cultural change may be located in films and literary works, as well as in bottom-up initiatives such as grassroots social movements, especially those that promote narratives and images which aim to disrupt and subvert dominant social imaginings of embodied difference. By offering some empirical examples of initiatives that have been developed by marginalised groups and which have affected significant social and cultural shifts, I seek not only to demonstrate the importance of allowing difference to speak, but also the potential for counter-narratives and images that appeal to the sympathetic imagination to present a particularly forceful challenge to dominant imaginaries that have functioned to mask the shared humanity of different social identities. I conclude this chapter by discussing the potential for challenges to dominant social imaginaries to establish or reinforce oppressive structures in spite of their emancipatory aims. In concert with Bottici (2014) and Medina (2013), I argue that the images, narratives and other significations through which a

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[15] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). All references to this work derive from the R.H. Campbell & W.B. Todd edition, published in 1976.

society imagines itself ought to be subject to ongoing interrogation and revision from a plurality of social perspectives, and that any challenge to dominant social imaginings must critically attend to all forms of hierarchy if it is to avoid entrenching patterns of domination and subordination.

By foregrounding the harms and injustices suffered by those who occupy a devalued place in the social imaginary, this thesis seeks to highlight the need for theories of social justice to incorporate a commitment to achieving recognition of difference, and not simply to the fair distribution of material goods. I offer the sympathetic imagination as a valuable resource for the negotiation and recognition of difference, while acknowledging the various ways in which the sympathetic imagination may function as a liability in our social encounters. Enacting the kind of reciprocity that Smith envisioned as a basis for social life by imaginatively and reflectively entering into the experiences of marginalised and devalued identities may be fraught with difficulty and resistance, as Smith himself pointed out. Yet, while expanding the bounds of the sympathetic imagination may be challenging, it is always potentially achievable. With ongoing effort, practice and discipline, it is always possible to transform the way in which we imagine our social context, and to recognise others in their difference.

Chapter One

'The Secret Chain':

Adam Smith on the Sympathetic Imagination

The traditional paradigm of social justice as distributive justice has provided useful

tools for conceptualising and addressing the injustices that are systematically suffered by

particular groups in society. However, in recent times, theorists have signalled the need

to expand on the distributive model of justice, on the grounds that it fails to adequately

account for the injustices suffered by individuals whose group identity is culturally

devalued. These injustices are captured under the concept of 'misrecognition.' This

concept has a long and complex history, traceable to the work of Georg Wilhelm

Friedrich Hegel. From a Hegelian standpoint, recognition from others is essential to self-

understanding and self-development. On this intersubjective model of selfhood, being

denied recognition from others serves to undermine one's sense of self, and one's

conception of herself as an ethical and political subject. Deploying Hegel's concept of

recognition within a cultural and political context, we say that an individual suffers

misrecognition when he or she belongs to a group that is marked out and devalued as

different by prevailing cultural patterns of representation, interpretation and

communication.[16] Iris Marion Young's account of 'cultural imperialism' (1990) is helpful

for making sense of what it means to occupy a devalued place within the dominant

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[16] In the context of critical theory, Hegel's theory of recognition (1806/1977, 1821/1991) influenced Jürgen Habermas (1981/1984, 1985/1987), whose work has shaped the thought of Axel Honneth (1995), Charles Taylor (1994), and Nancy Fraser (1997). Habermas, Honneth, Taylor, and Fraser are among those who have deployed Hegel's concept of recognition in the cultural and political domain. I do not engage with the vast field of recognition studies in this thesis. I am interested in the concept of misrecognition only insofar as it captures the personal, social and material harms suffered by individuals in virtue of how their group identity is culturally constructed. I do so with the aim of developing an account of how injustices of misrecognition may be addressed, which focuses on the potential for reciprocal exercises of imaginative perspective-taking to be a valuable resource for establishing and sustaining ethical communities.

culture. As Young describes it, "to experience cultural imperialism means to experience how dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as Other" (1990, p. 58). Owing to structural inequalities of power, prevailing social meanings tend to reflect the values, norms, achievements and ideals of powerful groups. The ability of powerful groups to establish their perspectives and experiences as the norm – as "representative of humanity as such" – has the consequence that the perspectives and experiences of less powerful group identities are marginalised, overlooked and distorted, and that their bodies are marked out as deviant and inferior (1990, p. 58). This is especially true for those identities that depart from the norm of White, heterosexual maleness. Young's account of cultural imperialism resonates with Nancy Fraser's account of symbolic injustice, which sheds further light on the issue of cultural misrecognition (1997). Rooted in "social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication," symbolic injustice incorporates:

> …*cultural domination* ("being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own") *non-recognition* ("being rendered invisible by the authoritative representational, communicative and interpretive practices of one's culture") and *disrespect* ("being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representation and/or in everyday life interactions") (1997, p. 71).

Those who suffer misrecognition of this kind are rendered vulnerable to a range of harms in everyday social interactions, including harassment, verbal slurs, and assault. When dominant cultural meanings and norms are institutionalised, those who belong to culturally marginalised and devalued groups may suffer structural harms such as the denial of equal rights and protections. Gay and lesbian persons, for example, continue to be denied basic legal rights that are granted to heterosexual persons such as the right to marry, owing to the institutionalisation of

heterocentric norms. To offer a further example, from the late nineteenth century until the late twentieth century, Indigenous Australians suffered numerous human rights abuses owing to the inscription of Eurocentric values and standards into laws that removed Indigenous children from their families, for the purpose of assimilating them into European society. Importantly, these injustices are not the product of – or at least are not *alone* the product of – occupying a disadvantaged socio-economic position. They are also the product of belonging to a social group that is devalued within the dominant culture. This is particularly clear when we consider that homosexual men and women continue to suffer harms and disadvantages even when they enjoy a relatively privileged socio-economic position compared to other social identities, and do not suffer an overwhelmingly disproportionate degree of economic marginalisation and deprivation. Many of the injustices suffered by gays, lesbians, Indigenous Australians and other culturally devalued groups cannot be remedied solely through the redistribution of wealth and other social goods such as legal rights. This is evident for two main reasons. The first is that affirmative action policies have often served to reinforce stigmatising pictures of culturally devalued groups (Fraser, 1997, p. 85). The second, more fundamental reason is that the distributive model is underpinned by a principle of strict egalitarianism; of 'levelling the playing field' and treating everyone as if they were the same. Racial, sexual and other kinds of difference are disregarded in the distribution of social resources to ensure fairness.[17] However, as Fraser and others have argued, injustices grounded in the

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[17] There are those who argue that the distributive model of justice provides an appropriate framework for addressing injustices rooted in the cultural devaluation of one's group identity. John Rawls and Amartya Sen are among those who have extended their model of distributive justice to incorporate goods like social respect. However, the distributive model of justice is primarily an economic model: it is well-suited for working out the fair distribution of tangible goods such as income, food and shelter, yet its suitability is much more questionable when it comes to dealing with intangible social goods like respect. How would one distribute respect

cultural devaluation of particular group identities can only be remedied through proper acknowledgment of, and respect for group differences. This is particularly clear when we consider that merely granting citizenship rights to historically oppressed groups and allowing them access to institutional settings from which they were previously excluded does not guarantee that they will not experience discrimination and various disadvantages within these settings.[18] Often it is the case that individuals belonging to oppressed groups are systematically thwarted from having full access to, or from taking full advantage of, the opportunities and other goods that are formally granted to them. Furthermore, their purchase on formal rights and entitlements is often precarious. As Chapter Three will demonstrate, present generations of Indigenous Australians continue to suffer repeated denials of their basic human rights and entitlements, which are justified on the basis of arguments that privilege Eurocentric norms and values.

The cultural devaluation of social identities that depart from the benchmark of White, heterosexual maleness, and the privileging of Eurocentric, heterocentric, and androcentric norms, render those who occupy a devalued place in the dominant culture vulnerable to various harms and injustices. More than this, it means that their suffering under the weight of such harms tends to be more frequently overlooked or dismissed. Dominant cultural meanings that attach to particular bodies have the capacity to establish and sustain what Medina (2013)

'equally'? And what would it take to respect specific social identities? Achieving social respect for gay and lesbian persons, for example, may entail something very different to achieving respect for Aboriginal Australians. These are complicated questions and issues that demand a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach than a distributive model of justice is able to provide.

[18] As Moira Gatens has argued:

> …extending equal citizenship rights to previously excluded groups fails to take account of the continuing presence of the past. Our social and political institutions, the norms and "rules of the game," have developed historically in ways which take for granted a range of characteristics, in short, the embodiment of the individuals that those institutions were designed (or have "evolved") to serve (2002, p. 162).

refs to as a "collectively-shared insensitivity" among privileged identities towards the suffering of devalued identities. As I will outline in this chapter and in subsequent chapters, these meanings do so in part by stripping the latter of their humanity, and by structuring shared normative understandings that render certain practices and behaviours legitimate. By undercutting widespread feelings of ethical concern for the circumstances and experiences of those groups that suffer misrecognition, such norms and meanings inhibit collective acts of resistance in response to the injustices that are systematically suffered by misrecognised identities. These issues foreground that a commitment to social justice requires a commitment to the redistribution of social goods in addition to achieving recognition of difference; it requires changes to the political economy as well as cultural or symbolic change. In short, social justice requires both redistribution and recognition.[19]   What does the recognition of difference require from individuals and from institutions?[20] In response to this question, theorists such as Martha Nussbaum (1997, 2010) and José Medina (2013) have emphasised the need for remedies that target the noxious affective attitudes (of contempt, fear, disgust etc.) and lack of ethical concern that culturally privileged

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[19] It is worth noting that economic disadvantage and misrecognition are closely intertwined. As Fraser notes, "biased cultural norms become institutionalized in state and economy, and economic disadvantage impedes equal participation in the making of culture, in public spheres and everyday life" (1997, pp. 72-73). Nevertheless she cautions against seeing maldistribution as a secondary effect of misrecognition that can be resolved solely through cultural or symbolic shifts, resolvable through political-economic restructuring alone. Fraser rightly argues that we should not promote one injustice as being more primary than the other; maldistribution is not reducible to misrecognition, and vice-versa.

[20] Fraser offers a schematic account of what recognition of difference requires, which centres on alleviating the tension between the underlying principles and goals of redistribution and recognition by conceptualising a way in which redistributive and recognitive measures may support rather than undercut one another. In this thesis I build on Fraser's project by identifying and discussing practices and measures that I take to be valuable for the negotiation and recognition of difference, and which shed light on the importance of the sympathetic imagination and the social imaginary as resources for affecting meaningful social change.

identities evince in their relations with culturally devalued identities.[21] It is this lack of affective identification, they argue, which generates and sustains patterns of aversive behaviour and inhibits collective socio-political action in response to the harms inflicted upon those who suffer misrecognition.[22] Central to Nussbaum's and Medina's accounts is their appeal to the faculty of the imagination as an important tool for changing the way in which privileged identities relate to marginalised and devalued identities. For example, Medina claims that social recognition requires individuals to imaginatively engage with the experiences of socially despised identities as part of overcoming their insensitivity towards them, which in turn is conductive to the formation of "relations of solidarity" (2013, p. 252). Nussbaum suggests that in order to transform negative social attitudes towards stigmatised identities and transform patterns of social behaviour, we need to go beyond the "cold and abstract categories of morality and law" and imaginatively attune ourselves to others' lived experiences (2010, xix). In her view, attitudes such as disgust are sustained by failures of imaginative perspective-taking (2010, xvii).

The ability of the imagination to have these transformative effects has been attributed to the fact that imagination is deeply intertwined with affect. As Hume observed, "It is remarkable, that the imagination and affections have close union

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[21] As this thesis will argue, the aim of such remedies should not simply be to stimulate feelings of compassion and concern for the plight of those identities that fail to be recognised in their difference. This is because such feelings may give rise to harmful or unethical actions if they fail to be accompanied by a concerted attempt on the part of privileged identities to critically reflect on the norms, values and meanings that structure their understanding of different social groups and their relation to these groups. As Chapter Three will highlight, feelings of compassion that fail to be hinged to an exercise of critical self-reflection may be as equally problematic as an absence of compassion, particularly in the context of cross-cultural interactions.

[22] This view is also shared by Young, who claims that it is primarily one's affective disposition towards others – rather than any rational motive – that typically manifests in bodily expressions of aversion (lack of eye contact, maintaining one's distance and so forth) and systemic violence such as xenophobic or homophobic violence (1990, p. 62).

together, and that nothing, which affects the former, can be entirely indifferent to the latter."[23] The mental activity of vividly imagining the other's perspective and experience is different from merely *contemplating* or *supposing* what he or she is thinking and feeling. As Medina points out, unlike purely intellectual ("cold") modes of engagement, ("hot") exercises of the imagination implicate "our emotions and our will, and ultimately affect[ ] our capacity for action" (2013, p. 254).[24] With respect to social recognition, exercises of imaginative perspective-taking are thought to produce an understanding of others' lived experiences that implicates our feelings and moves us to respond ethically to others.   The appeal to imagination and affect by these contemporary social theorists resonates with the sentimentalist philosophy of Adam Smith. Smith offers one of the most appealing and rigorous philosophical accounts of the role played by exercises of imaginative perspective-taking in producing feelings that motivate moral behaviour and support human sociability. His work contributes to our understanding of the ethical importance of such exercises, and why it is that failures of affective identification matter to such a significant degree. As this chapter will show, Smith's moral theory offers a valuable supplement to the important work carried out by Nussbaum and Medina on imaginative perspective-taking and its ethical import. Smith develops a rich account of the role played by this imaginative activity in establishing and sustaining harmonious social communities, and helpfully clarifies the regulative constraints that such an activity must have upon it if it is to support a

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[23] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738/1978), p. 424 (hereafter T 424).

[24] Medina uses the terms "cold" and "hot" to refer to different forms of counterfactual reasoning, where the latter involves a vivid exercise of imagination that implicates affect, and the former refers to a more detached, purely intellectual mode of hypothetical reasoning that does not engage our feelings (2013, pp. 255-256). As this thesis will demonstrate, the affective dimension of imaginative forms of engagement explains why the imagination is so crucial to the recognition of difference and to preventing the various harms that are rooted in misrecognition.

viable sociability between different social groups. *TMS* offers a thoughtful

exposition of the kind of imaginative exercises that are best able to support ethical

communities, and inspires the view that such exercises must be accompanied by an

act of critical self-reflection if they are to be a genuine resource for the negotiation

and recognition of difference. As we will see, in Smith's work lies a distinctive

conception of the imagination as being both a resource and a liability for morality.

From the standpoint of social recognition theory, his work gives rise to the idea

that overcoming one's insensitivity towards the suffering of marginalised and

culturally devalued identities is not enough. This is because feelings of compassion

and beneficence will fail to support moral communities if they remain

unaccompanied by an attempt to genuinely understand the perspectives of

different others, and an attempt to critically reflect on one's own situated

perspective.

i. Hume and Smith on Sympathy

Smith and his contemporary David Hume were key figures within the moral

sentimentalist tradition, which sought to ground morality in sense and feeling. Both

philosophers rejected theistic and rationalist accounts of morality, and sought to develop

a freestanding empirical alternative to these *a priori* approaches.[25] For Smith and Hume

our capacity to identify with the feelings of others is what binds us together as moral

agents and motivates us to act ethically towards others. Reason, as Hume famously

argued, "is utterly impotent in this particular" (T 457). On its own, reason cannot supply

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[25] The sentimentalist predecessors of Hume and Smith - Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Bishop Joseph Butler and Francis Hutcheson - offered an account of morality as being grounded in our benevolent desires for the good of others. Hutcheson acknowledged that such desires are largely rooted in our ability to share in others' feelings. As this chapter outlines, Hume and Smith resorted to the language of sympathy to describe this capacity, and were the first among the sentimentalists to offer a rigorous account of its role in supporting moral agency and human sociability.

us with the motivation to respond morally to others; this motivation can only come from being emotionally affected by the other's circumstances and feelings.

Hume and Smith refer to our capacity to grasp and identify with the feelings of others as 'sympathy.' Sympathy on their account is not akin to a feeling of compassion or pity. Rather it refers to the psychological *mechanism* through which we enter into another person's feelings. Hume writes that sympathy is the "propensity we have […] to receive by communication [the] inclinations and sentiments of others […] however different from, or even contrary to our own" (T 316).[26] Smith reserves the terms pity and compassion to refer to the emotional response we experience upon sympathising with another's suffering. "Pity and compassion," Smith writes,

> are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote *our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.*[27]

The Humean-Smithean definition of sympathy as the capacity through which we identify not only with the painful but also pleasurable feelings of others departs from the Greek *sumpatheia* (to 'suffer with') and the German *mitleid (mit -* 'with' *leid -* 'pain, sorrow'). Sympathy on their definition has wider scope: it refers to our capacity to share in a broad array of human experiences (e.g. feelings of sorrow, pride, resentment, joy and so forth).

According to Hume and Smith, our sympathetic responses to others form the

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[26] Insofar as Hume and Smith define sympathy as a capacity through which we share in the feelings of others rather than a feeling *sui generis*, contemporary theorists often run the Humean-Smithean definition of sympathy together with the concept of empathy, conceived as a form of emotional mimicry or contagion (see for example Prinz, 2011a, 2011b). However in Chapter Four I argue that this description of Humean-Smithean sympathy is highly reductive, and fails to capture the full depth and complexity of their accounts of sympathy and its relation to moral agency. As this chapter illustrates, Smith's account of sympathy as a moral resource presents sympathy as a much more complicated and sophisticated capacity than empathy *qua* spontaneous vicarious arousal.

[27] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759/1790), Part 1, Sect. 1, Chap. 1, Par.3. My emphasis (hereafter, TMS I.i.1.3. My emphasis).

basis of our moral judgments, and underpin moral motivation. Our moral judgments are grounded in 'moral sentiments' of approval ('approbation') or disapproval ('disapprobation') that arise through sympathy with others' feelings. On Smith's view, for example, our 'fellow-feeling' with the resentment of someone who has been wilfully harmed by another underpins our judgment of the actor as morally blameworthy. For Hume and Smith, the fact that our moral judgments are rooted in sympathy explains why they are strong motivators for us to act. Reason alone cannot form the basis of our moral judgments, they argue, for if it did, our judgments would possess none of their characteristic motivational force.[28] In their view, reason has a role to play in morality, albeit a minor one: instrumental reason is needed to discover the facts of a situation and to discern the means to satisfy a particular desire or passion (T 416-417). However, it remains the case that reason alone is unable to discover moral distinctions and to generate feelings that move us to action.[29] For Hume and Smith, it is feeling or sentiment rather than reason that provides the foundation for morality: in Hume's immortal phrase, "[r]eason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (T 415). Not only were Smith and Hume opposed to rationalist approaches to morality, they were also opposed to moral theories that sought to ground all human behaviour in self-interest. Against the egoism of

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[28] Hume and Smith opposed the moral rationalist position of Ralph Cudworth (1731), Samuel Clarke (1706) and John Balguy (1728-9) by maintaining that abstract rules and maxims derived from reason alone cannot form the basis for morality, insofar as they produce moral judgments that fail to have motivational force.

[29] Hume claims that when we restrain our immoral inclinations, the contrary impulse comes from a distinctly calm passion (T 417). This calm passion (or 'moral sentiment') is the product of critical reflection, which is importantly distinct from an exercise of pure reason. As the latter half of this chapter explains, reflection for both Smith and Hume involves regulating our situated feelings from an imagined impartial standpoint. It is from this standpoint that we moderate our immediate and pre-reflective passions.

Bernard Mandeville, Samuel Pufendorf and Thomas Hobbes,[30] Smith and Hume argued that human beings are not entirely self-interested creatures, and have a natural disposition to enter into and act upon the circumstances and feelings of others without regard to themselves:

> However selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it (TMS I.i.1.1).

This thought can be traced back to the work of Scottish Enlightenment figure Francis Hutcheson. Hume and Smith drew inspiration from Hutcheson in taking sympathy to be a crucial binding force – "the secret chain" – between individuals who have no particular connection to one another:

> But whence this secret chain between each person and mankind? How is my interest connected with the most distant parts of it? And yet I must admire actions which show good-will toward them, and love the author. Whence this love, compassion, indignation and hatred toward even feigned characters, in the most distant ages, and nations, according as they appear kind, faithful, compassionate, or of the opposite dispositions, toward their imaginary contemporaries? (Hutcheson, 1725, p. 121).[31]

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[30] Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714); Pufendorf *De Jure Naturae et Gentium Libri Octo* (1672); Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (1651). Mandeville argued that individuals always seek their own interest, and furthermore that they ought to do so. He regards all social virtues as having evolved from the instinct for self-preservation, thereby collapsing the distinction between virtue and vice. Pufendorf maintained that people would not behave virtuously unless they believed in divine punishment and reward. This is similar to Hobbes' position in the *Leviathan*, in which he claimed that without civil authority and the threat of retributive justice, life for humankind would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (1651, 13.8). For Smith's critique of Mandeville, see TMS VII.ii.4.6. For his critique of Hobbes, see TMS VII.iii.1.1.

[31] For Hutcheson, however, the 'secret chain' refers to the operations of what he calls the 'moral sense,' which is implanted in us by God. The moral sense refers to innate and disinterested feelings of approval and disapproval that arise spontaneously within our breast, and which inform our moral judgments. It is also the source of innate and disinterested feelings of benevolence that motivate moral action. For Smith and Hume, moral agency is underpinned not by a moral sense but by the mechanism of sympathy. For Smith in particular as we will see, moral actions stem less from an innate feeling of benevolence than from a form of sympathy that involves careful judgment, critical self-reflection and self-restraint. See TMS VII.iii.3.6-16 for Smith's critique of Hutcheson.

It is our capacity to enter into others' circumstances and feelings through sympathy that gives rise to altruistic gestures and leads to the formation of friendships. As Hume remarks:

> No qualities are more entitled to the general good-will and approbation of mankind than beneficence and humanity, friendship and gratitude, natural affection and public spirit, *or whatever proceeds from a tender sympathy with others...*[32]

As we will see, Hume and Smith paint a picture of human beings as both egoistic and benevolent; as conflicted, passionate creatures who are forced to continually negotiate and balance others' feelings and needs with their own.

ii. Smith on the Sympathetic Imagination

Hume notes that all human beings share a similar physical and psychological make-up, and so will have common reactions in response to particular circumstances (e.g. pleasure in response to beneficent actions, pain in response to malicious actions). These reactions are contagious:

> The minds of all men are similar in their feelings and operations; nor can any one be actuated by any affection, of which all others are not, in some degree, susceptible. As in strings equally wound up, the motion of one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another, and beget correspondent movements in every human creature (T 576).[33]

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[32] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751/1998), Section 2, p. 25. My emphasis (hereafter EPM II.25. My emphasis).

[33] I recognise that the androcentric bias reflected in Hume and Smith's use of 'men' and 'man' through their works may appear to be in tension with promoting Humean-Smithean sympathy as a valuable resource for the recognition of sexual difference. The fact that Hume and Smith failed to see such language as discriminatory is consistent with the story offered by both theorists with regards to the power of 'custom' and 'habit' to hinder individuals from independently recognising the particular biases and prejudices that permeate their particular social community. That said, there is nothing in either of their moral theories that would justify this convention (and sexist attitudes more broadly), and which would prevent such practices and perspectives from being subject to critical reflection and change. As Annette Baier (1991) has argued in relation to Hume's work, Hume's emphasis on reflection or reflexivity – the capacity for the mind to critically survey its own operations – is part of what makes his moral theory a valuable resource

On Hume's view, it is through the mechanism of sympathy that we come to mirror others' feelings. For Smith, sympathy as a mirroring or contagion of feeling between persons is but one form it may take. He acknowledges that often the mere sight of a passion such as immense grief or joy is enough for us to be automatically infected by it. He observes that "upon some occasions" feelings may be "transfused" between individuals "instantaneously" and "antecedent to any knowledge of what excited them in the person principally concerned" (TMS I.i.1.6). However, Smith is much less interested in sympathy as a form of spontaneous vicarious arousal than in sympathy as a form of imaginative projection into another's circumstances. While Smith observes that on some occasions individuals may spontaneously 'catch' or become infected by the feelings of others, he claims that everyday life provides us with ample evidence to believe that our fellow-feeling arises more often than not from an "imaginary change of situations" with others: "sympathy does not arise so much from the view of the passion as from that of the situation which excites it" (TMS 1.i.1.10). Given the insurmountable physical barrier between individuals – we cannot literally inhabit the body of another – it is through an exercise of the imagination that we arrive at a conception of his or her feelings. Smith writes that:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and *it is by the imagination only* that we can form any conception of what are his sensations (TMS I.i.1.2. My emphasis).

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for feminist theorists (see also Baier, 'Hume, The Women's Moral Theorist?' (1987)). Going forward, I do not modify Hume and Smith's use of the male pronoun, insofar as I wish to offer a faithful rendering of their texts.

Smith maintains that his conception of sympathy *qua* imaginative projection accounts for a wide range of familiar phenomena. Our tendency to project ourselves into others' situations explains why we feel embarrassed on behalf of another individual for his rude behaviour, even though he himself fails to display any such feeling (TMS I.i.1.10). It also explains our sorrow and pity for the dead. We feel pained by their circumstances ("deprived of sunlight"), and yet they themselves do not experience any such misery (TMS I.i.1.13). As this chapter will show, our capacity to imaginatively project ourselves into the shoes of others is central to moral agency and human sociability on Smith's view. Going forward, I refer to such an imaginative exercise as an exercise of 'sympathetic imagination.'[34] Exercises of the sympathetic imagination take a much more central place in Smith's theory than in Hume's, where sympathy is frequently described in terms of emotional contagion.

In the examples from *TMS* offered above, it is by imaginatively transporting ourselves into the other's place that we grasp his feelings and experience fellow-feeling with his joy or suffering. However, Smith draws a distinction between exercises of the sympathetic imagination that involve merely projecting oneself into the other's circumstances, and those that involve a deeper, more complicated imaginative manoeuvre in which one attempts to become the other and experience his situation as he does. Smith offers an example of the latter in the following passage:

> When I console you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief I do not consider what I, a person of such character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son were unfortunately to die: but I consider what I should suffer *if I was*

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[34] I borrow this term from Charles Griswold (1999, 2006), who distinguishes between the imagination as it figures in Smith's account of sympathy, and the "nonsympathetic" imagination as it figures in the theoretical realm (2006, p. 23). Griswold notes that on Smith's view, "Sympathy is an act of the imagination, but not every act of imagination is an instance of sympathy." Griswold notes that this is evident in Smith's essay 'History of Astronomy,' where he describes philosophical systems as "mere inventions of the imagination" (1999, p. 85). Griswold notes that with regards to sympathy, "the imagination is key to sociability, common life, and morality." By contrast, with regards to "intellectual endeavour" the "imagination is key to our ability to create illuminating and unifying accounts of the phenomena" (2006, p. 23).

really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but *I change persons and characters.* (TMS VII.iii.1.4. My emphasis).

In this case, when I sympathise with your grief over the loss of your son, I do not consider what *I* would feel in the like circumstances, I change "persons and characters" with you; I imagine myself not merely in your situation but *as you*, with your particular character, beliefs, values and personal history. For Smith, there is a divide between imaginative self-projection, whereby we simply imagine what we *ourselves* (with our particular set of beliefs, values, desires and so on) would feel in the other's situation, and a more immersed, transformative mode of imaginative identification, where we grasp another's situation in its particular meaning for *him*.[35] When we engage in the more straightforward exercise of imagining how *we* would feel in another's situation, as opposed to the more complicated exercise of imagining how another person experiences his situation, Smith claims that we enact a form of "selfish" sympathy (TMS VII.iii.1.4). Selfish sympathy serves an important moral function on his view. The feelings of dread and horror that arise from imagining oneself in the place of the dead, for example, instil a strong fear of death among members of a society. It is this fear that ensures individuals refrain from harming others, so as to avoid being subject to lethal acts of punishment and retaliation:

> It is from this very illusion of the imagination, that the foresight of our own dissolution is so terrible to us, and that the idea of those circumstances, which undoubtedly can give us no pain when we are dead, makes us miserable when we are alive. *And from thence arises one of the most important principles in human nature, the dread of death, the great poison to happiness, but the great restraint upon the injustice of mankind, which, while it afflicts and mortifies the individual, guards and protects society* (TMS I.i.2.1. My emphasis).

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[35] Nancy Sherman also makes this observation. She notes that several passages from *TMS* indicate that "it is not simply the external perspective or situation that is key to an imaginative transport, but the taking on of another's internal dispositions and attitudes. 'We change places in fancy' both situationally and dispositionally" (1998, p. 89).

However, if "selfish" sympathy of this kind were to form the basis for morality, then our motivation to refrain from wrongdoing and to act morally towards others would always be grounded in self-interest. This is because if sympathy involves imagining what *I* would feel in another person's circumstances, then clearly any feelings of sorrow or joy that I experience will be self-directed, and will inspire purely self-regarding actions. This runs contrary to Smith's rejection of moral egoism. For Smith, sympathy that is non-selfish occurs when we imagine ourselves *as if we were* the other person, and not merely imagining what *we* (in our own person) would feel in their position. Smith writes that sympathy founded upon an imaginative move of this kind can never be selfish. In this instance my fellow-feeling is "entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own" (TMS VII.iii.1.4).

Selfish sympathy on Smith's view can be read as a failure to see or understand things from the other's perspective; a failure to "genuinely step[ ] outside the circle of our own selves and our own experiences" and imaginatively enter her world (Griswold 1998, p. 93). Overcoming one's 'selfishness' and stepping into another's shoes does not require the spectator to have had an analogous experience with that of the agent's. This is clear where Smith defends the possibility of a man's sympathy with the pain of a woman in childbirth: "A man may sympathize with the pain of a woman in child-bed; though it is impossible that he should conceive himself as suffering her pains in his own proper person and character" (TMS VII.iii.1.4). This example illustrates the radically creative capacity of the sympathetic imagination. The imaginative exercise that underpins Smithean sympathy is not captured by a conception of the imagination as a reproductive faculty that calls to mind events that we have previously experienced.[36] Rather it enables

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[36] The notion of the imagination as a reproductive faculty appears in Hume's work on the subject. In the *Treatise*, Hume claims that among its various functions, the imagination copies a

us to 'get inside' the world of others whose perspectives and experiences may be dramatically different to our own, and of whose circumstances we have not, and may never have, direct experience. [37]

iii. Sympathy, Moral Judgment, and Recognition

Even though Smith takes us to be capable of transformative acts of imagination when sympathizing with others, he observes that what we come to feel in response typically fails to exactly mirror what the other feels. Smith remarks:

> …when we condole with our friends in their afflictions, how little do we feel, in comparison of what they feel? We sit down by them, we look at them, and while they relate to us the circumstances of their misfortune, we listen to them with gravity and attention. But while their narration is every moment interrupted by those natural bursts of passion which often seem almost to choak them in the midst of it; how far are the languid emotions of our hearts from keeping time to the transports of theirs? (TMS I.iii.1.12).

Smith thinks that this failure to experience the intensity of what the other feels can be attributed to the fact that we retain a "secret consciousness" that we are not the

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direct sensory experience (or 'impression') and later revives the idea of that experience or impression (T 4).

[37] Smith uses the example of male sympathy with the pain of a woman giving birth to refute the claim advanced by Hobbes and Mandeville that sympathy is always a selfish principle, since it involves imagining what we the spectator would feel in the other's place, rather than what the other himself feels. Smith refutes this claim on the basis that it cannot explain the sympathy that individuals have with those whose situations they could never in principle experience. Smith writes:

> Sympathy…cannot, in any sense, be regarded as a selfish principle. When I sympathize with your sorrow or your indignation, it may be pretended, indeed, that my emotion is founded in self-love, because it arises from bringing your case home to myself, from putting myself in your situation, and thence conceiving what I should feel in the like circumstances. But though sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize […] How can that be regarded as a selfish passion, which does not arise even from the imagination of any thing that has befallen, or that relates to myself, in my own proper person and character, but which is entirely occupied about what relates to you? (TMS VII.iii.1.4).

other (TMS I.i.iv.8).[38] Yet he also attributes it to the fact that we, as spectators, always retain a degree of critical distance from the agent's feelings, which enables us space in which to make a judgment about whether or not we would be so motivated, or whether or not we would feel the same way. If after having projected herself into the agent's situation the spectator "feels no such emotion" as that which the agent feels, or "none that bears any proportion" to his own, she will not second his response through a full-blooded display of fellow-feeling:

> To *approve* of the passions of another, therefore, is to observe that we *entirely sympathise* with them; and not to approve of them as such, is the same thing as to observe that we do not entirely sympathise with them (TMS I.i.3.1. My emphasis).

Actions and the motives that produce them are judged right or wrong ("proper" or "improper") on the basis of sentiments of approval or disapproval that arise from imaginatively "bringing home" the other's case "with all its minutest incidents," and critically evaluating the other's response to her circumstances (TMS I.i.iv.6).[39] Thus, for Smith, imaginatively entering into another's perspective does not necessarily entail whole-hearted identification with that perspective; sympathetic *understanding* is not

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[38] Witness Smith:

> What they [spectators] feel will, indeed, always be, in some respects, different from what he feels, and compassion can never be exactly the same with original sorrow; because the secret consciousness in that change of situations, from which the sympathetic sentiment arises, is but imaginary, not only lowers it in degree, but in some measure, varies it in kind, and gives it quite different modification (TMS I.i.4.8).

[39] Smith recognises that often we will be forced to respond to cases in which one individual or group is harmed by another individual or group. In these instances we "divide" our sympathy between the feelings of the sufferer and the motives of the agent. If we find ourselves more able to sympathise with the feelings of the sufferer than with the motives of the agent, we pronounce the agent's action to be morally blameworthy. Smith claims that we are immediately "averse" to displays of feelings such as resentment or anger (or what he refers to as the 'unsocial passions') and will be disposed to "take part against" such feelings until we are fully "informed" of their "cause" (TMS I.ii.i.8).

synonymous with sympathetic *identification*.[40] As Griswold notes, "the sympathetic imagination is not [...] confined to reproducing in the spectator the sentiments of the actor" (2006, p. 27). On Smith's view we maintain a degree of critical distance from the other while making our best efforts to understand her situation from her perspective. If we fail to reach an informed understanding of the other's situation and perspective, Smith notes that our sympathy will be "extremely imperfect," and liable to generate distorted and inaccurate moral judgments (TMS I.i.1.9 & I.i.4.6).

Smith claims that the standards by which we judge of others' behavior, motives and character are highly influenced by our particular social community, and that we come to internalize and discipline ourselves by such standards primarily through participating in sympathetic exchanges across time. During these exchanges, our motives and feelings are reflected back to us by those around us, in ways that either validate or invalidate our perspective:

> Were it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. All these are objects which he cannot easily see, which naturally he does not look at, and with regard to which he is provided with no mirror which can present them to his view. *Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before.* It is placed in the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with, which always mark when they enter into, and when they disapprove of his sentiments; and *it is here that he first views the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind*

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[40] Smith does not commit himself to the view that being in sympathy with another (in terms of emotionally resonating with their feelings) necessarily requires that one also be approving. His view leaves room for the fact that while sympathy often incorporates a judgment of approval, it may not always do so. A judgment of approval serves to intensify our fellow-feeling with the agent, evidenced by Smith's qualification that when we approve of another's response we 'entirely' sympathise with her. As this chapter will explain, Smith's distinction between instances of sympathy that involve a judgment of approval and those that do not is important for understanding his claim that fellow-feeling is able to support a viable sociability, even between people with conflicting sets of values and beliefs.

(TMS III.1.3. My emphasis).[41]

Sympathy not only has a role to play in shaping our judgments of others, it also has a deeply recognitive aspect. Smith claims that we are fundamentally dependent on others for our self-conception; our sense of self is shaped through and through by our interactions with others. Recall Smith's remarks that it is in the "mirror" provided by society that an individual "first views the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind" (TMS III.1.3). On his view, we can only form and maintain a positive self-conception through gaining social recognition, which occurs when we receive others' fellow-feeling. Having others acknowledge and second our feelings constitutes a form of affective recognition that is crucial to our happiness and self-esteem. As Hume notes:

> *Every pleasure languishes when enjoy'd apart from company, and every pain becomes more cruel and intolerable.* Whatever other passions we may be actuated by; pride, ambition, avarice, curiosity, revenge or lust; the soul or animating principle of them all is sympathy; nor would they have any force, were we to abstract entirely from the thoughts and sentiments of others. Let all the powers and elements of nature conspire to obey one man; Let the sun rise and set at his command; The sea and rivers roll as he pleases, and the earth furnish spontaneously whatever may be useful or agreeable to him: *He will still be miserable, till you give him some one person at least, with whom he may share his happiness, and whose esteem and friendship he may enjoy* (T 363. My emphasis).

We cannot readily maintain pride and esteem in our character and conduct if this is not seconded by others. As Henry Aiken observes, what emerges with Hume, and is reinforced by Smith, is a picture of ourselves as "preeminently social beings," in the sense that others' passions will have "an immediate and continuous impact on our own

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[41] Smith's use of the metaphor of men as mirrors to one another echoes Hume's own. According to Hume, "the minds of men are mirrors to one another not only because they reflect each other's emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions, may often be reverberated" (T 365). That is, others reflect our sentiments back to us in ways that enhance them, or weaken them.

sentiments, as will ours on theirs. It is this capacity for reciprocity of feeling which renders possible a common moral life" (1972, xxiii).

The recognitive aspect of sympathy comes through most clearly in Smith's account. Smith notes that for the agent, observing others' hearts "beat time" with his own not only has the cathartic effect of alleviating his suffering, but also satiates his natural and intense desire for others' approval (TMS I.i.4.7). This has a strong disciplinary effect on the agent's behaviour: the pleasure of receiving others' sympathy motivates the agent to flatten the intensity of his response to a level that a spectator is able to enter into. From his own experience as a spectator, the agent is aware that his feelings will never affect the other as much as they do from his particular standpoint. Smith writes that:

> …the emotions of the spectator will still be very apt to fall short of the violence of what is felt by the sufferer. Mankind, though naturally sympathetic, never conceive, for what has befallen another, that degree of passion which naturally animates the person principally concerned. That imaginary change of situation, upon which their sympathy is founded, is but momentary. The thought of their own safety, the thought that they themselves are not really the sufferers, continually intrudes itself upon them; and though it does not hinder them from conceiving a passion somewhat analogous to what is felt by the sufferer, hinders them from conceiving anything that approaches to the same degree of violence (TMS I.i.4.7).

Therefore, just as the spectator projects herself into the agent's situation, so too the agent reflects on his situation from the perspective of the spectator. This causes the agent to view his situation in a "candid and impartial light" and moderate the "tone" and "pitch" of his response:

> He can only hope to obtain this [sympathy] by lowering his passion to that pitch, in which the spectators are capable of going along with him. He must flatten... the sharpness of its natural tone, in order to reduce it to harmony and concord with the emotions of those who are about him (TMS I.i.4.7).

As Karen Valihora (2001, p. 146) puts it, Smithean sympathy involves "a complex activity of reciprocal perspective taking" wherein the agent imaginatively adopts the point of view of the spectator, who is also considering the agent's point of view:

> As they [the spectators] are constantly considering what they themselves would feel if they actually were the sufferers, so he [the agent] is as constantly led to imagine in what manner he would be affected if he was only one of the spectators of his own situation. As their sympathy makes them look at it, in some measure, with his eyes, so his sympathy makes him look at it, in some measures, with theirs, especially when in their presence and acting under their observation (TMS I.i.4.8).

It is through exercises of the sympathetic imagination that we escape our egocentric perspective and the grip of what Smith refers to as 'self-love' in order that we may experience the world as others do. By imaginatively entering into the circumstances of the agent, the spectator exhibits the "gentle" and "amiable" virtue of "indulgent humanity" (TMS I.i.5.1). Smith writes that we obey the "great law of Christianity" of loving our neighbor as we love ourselves when we, as spectators, attempt to "bring home" the agent's circumstances and feelings through an exercise of imagination. In restraining his passions before a spectator, the agent exercises Smith's prized virtue of Stoic self-command (TMS I.i.4.9 & I.i.5.1). In doing so he obeys the "great precept of nature," which consists in "lov[ing] ourselves only as we love our neighbour, or what comes to the same thing, as our neighbour is capable of loving us" (TMS I.i.5.5). That is, the agent tempers his concern for himself and his feelings to a pitch that is commensurable with his naturally weak(er) concern for others. It follows, for Smith, that an agent must exercise greater emotional restraint before strangers than friends if he is to win their sympathetic approval, but also their admiration and respect (TMS I.i.4.10). In restraining his passions the agent exercises Smith's prized virtue of self-command. The agent is aware from personal experience that some emotions (e.g. anger) are more

immediately disagreeable to spectators than others, and so require greater 'lowering.'[42]
Even in those cases of justified anger and resentment, the more restraint an individual is
able to exercise, the more admiration he will receive from others (TMS I.i.5.3-4).

Reciprocal exercises of sympathetic imagination on behalf of spectators and
agents are conducive to the emergence of what Smith refers to as "mutual sympathy"
(TMS I.iv.7). In instances of mutual sympathy, the spectator identifies with the agent's
feelings, and the agent sees her (tempered or moderated) feelings reflected in and
acknowledged by the spectator's display of fellow-feeling. The reciprocal exercises of
sympathetic imagination enacted by the spectator and agent have a deeply recognitive
aspect: by imaginatively entering into the agent's circumstances and mirroring back his or
her feelings, the spectator expresses her recognition of the agent as a locus of dignity and
as an object of concern. On the other hand, the agent's emotional self-restraint expresses
her acknowledgment of, and respect for the natural constraints on a spectator's ability to
sympathise with her feelings. The relationship between the spectator and agent is
characterised by a mutual acknowledgement of the authority of the other's standpoint.
As Stephen Darwall puts it, Smithean sympathy "invariably involves or commits itself to
the recognition of the other's authority and to the mutual answerability of addresser and
addressee" (1999, pp. 158-159). The recognitive aspect of the sympathetic imagination
again comes to the fore in Smith's discussion of justice. Smith writes that when someone
unjustly takes advantage of us, what most "enrages us against the man who injures or
insults us, is the little account which he seems to make of us" owing to his "absurd self-
love, by which he seems to imagine, that other people may be sacrificed at any time, to

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[42] While some passions require 'lowering,' Smith points out that other passions will require
'raising'. According to Smith an excess of what he refers to as the "social" passions (love,
generosity and so forth) is never regarded with the same degree of aversion as an excess of the
"unsocial" passions (anger, hatred, envy and so forth). Nevertheless, while certain excesses are
more natural and proper than others, for Smith our passions always require some degree of
restraint and moderation so that they do not exceed the spectator's ability to enter into them
(TMS I.ii.3 & I.ii.4).

his conveniency." What our resentment is "chiefly intent upon, is not so much to make our enemy feel pain in his turn, as […] to make him sensible that the person whom he injured did not deserve to be treated in that manner" (TMS II.iii.1.5). In this case, punishment replaces the function of sympathy in making the perpetrator "sensible" of our dignity. This example suggests that in Smith's view, genuine recognition of another person's dignity involves a distinct affective component.[43]

The reciprocal exercises of sympathetic imagination that characterise mutual sympathy ensure a "concordance" of sentiments between spectator and agent (TMS I.i.4.8). This harmonization of feeling is a source of pleasure for both parties, even in instances where the feeling that is being sympathised with is painful (TMS I.i.2.6).[44] The "second-order pleasure" of mutual sympathy is part of what motivates the spectator and actor to make their best effort to grasp each other's perspectives through an exercise of sympathetic imagination (Griswold, 1999, p. 121). For Smith it is this concordance – this balancing or harmonising of our passions with those of others – that underpins the formation and preservation of harmonious social communities. Reciprocal exercises of imaginative perspective-taking generate and sustain a "happy commerce" of the "social and benevolent affectations" (TMS I.ii.4.1-2) such as generosity, kindness, compassion and esteem that provide the glue for moral communities. Importantly, the social significance of sympathy cannot be fully understood if emotions are to be understood as mere affects or impulses, without intentional content. With Smith's work emerges a

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[43] This resonates with Nussbaum's view that achieving "full-blooded" respect for others in their difference must involve some kind of imaginative and affective attunement to their humanity (2010, xix). She writes that "the capacity for imaginative and emotional participation in the lives of others is an essential ingredient of any respect worthy of the name" (2010, xix). In her view, having an abstract appreciation of the equal moral worth of others will not be sufficient to alter the way in which one relates to devalued social groups. Smith and Hume acknowledge as much with their claim that it is not reason but affect that binds individuals together as moral agents.
[44] Smith advances this claim in reply to Hume's objection that sympathy with an agent's pain or sorrow is painful for the spectator, and that in such instances sympathy cannot be a source of pleasure (See *The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, Letter 36, 28 July 1759, Hume).

picture of the emotions as having a cognitive and evaluative dimension; as embodying or expressing a particular way of perceiving and appraising the world and one's experiences within it.[45] This allows us to better understand why the experience and expression of fellow-feeling is central to establishing and sustaining social concord: it reflects an attempt to enter into a particular worldview that may be very different to one's own. While our sympathy with an agent may produce a judgment of approval that affirms the agent's appraisal of his circumstances as, say, unjust, Smith's account implies that substantive disagreement need not be a bar to fellow-feeling.[46] We can share in the worlds of others through an exercise of sympathy, without necessarily coming to a shared judgment about the precise content of justice.[47] Our imaginative and emotional engagement with others' perspectives is sufficient to give rise to expressions of fellow-feeling that are able to support a viable sociability, even when our beliefs and values contrast significantly with those of others.[48] Smith's work gives rise to the important notion that when people's lived experiences fail to be properly acknowledged by others through a display of genuine understanding and fellow-feeling, they not only remain excluded from the circulation of 'social and benevolent' passions (and from the beneficent acts that such passions inspire), they are also denied the opportunity to

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[45] Griswold offers a useful discussion of Smith's 'cognitivist' account of the passions, and the significance of such an account for Smith's moral theory (1999, pp. 114-115 & pp. 137-138).

[46] Recall from earlier Smith's suggestion that as spectators we 'entirely sympathise' with an agent's reaction to her circumstances when we not only understand the reasons for her reaction, but also find her feelings to be warranted by the circumstances. Smith's distinction between sympathising with others and 'entirely' sympathising with them implies that we can understand and appreciate others' feelings without necessarily fully endorsing them. In short, fellow-feeling is possible in the absence of shared judgment.

[47] I am grateful to Yarran Hominh for urging me to clarify this point.

[48] Establishing a viable sociability between persons does not refer to the achievement of a utopian, conflict-free state of social existence. Rather, it broadly refers to a concordance or harmony between different parts, which is created and sustained when differences are acknowledged and negotiated in a considerate and attentive manner.

experience themselves as a source of value, dignity and concern.

iv. Reflective Sympathy

For Hume and Smith sympathetic identification with others' feelings is central to human sociability and moral agency, however, both were keenly aware that our sympathy with others is precarious and liable to fail upon many occasions. Hume and Smith point to an array of factors that bear on our capacity to sympathise with others. First, our sympathy for those who are spatially and temporally contiguous with us will be stronger than for those who are spatially and temporally distant. As Hume observes, our "sympathy with persons remote from us" is "much fainter than with persons near and contiguous" (EPM V.99). Second, the experiences of our loved ones (friends, family, romantic partners) always present themselves to our imagination more vividly than do the experiences of those with whom we have no particular connection. We are naturally inclined to form a livelier idea of the passions of our loved ones, which gives way to a stronger degree of fellow-feeling for their plight. Above all we sympathise most readily with our own experiences and concerns (TMS I.i.4.8 & II.ii.2.1). Our sympathy radiates outwards from the self in concentric circles of diminishing intensity.[49] For Smith, it is this diminished sympathy for others and acute sympathy for our own needs and concerns that typically distorts our moral judgments as spectators, and results in our ability to harm others:

> Men, though naturally sympathetic, feel so little for another, with whom they have no particular connexion, in comparison with what they feel for themselves; the misery of one, who is merely their fellow-creature, is of so little importance to them in comparison even of a small inconveniency of their own; they have it so much in their power to hurt him, and may have so many temptations to do so (TMS II.ii.3.4).

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[49] Fonna Forman-Barzilai observes that Smith's account of the depth and scope of our fellow-feeling recalls the ancient Stoic concept of *oikeiõsis:* the idea that our affections are "ordered spatially around the self in a concentric pattern" (2013, p. 8).

Smith and Hume emphasised that our fellow-feeling hinges greatly on the extent to which we perceive the other to be 'like us.' Hume writes that where there is:

> …any peculiar similarity in our manners, or character, or country, or language, it facilitates sympathy. The stronger the relation is betwixt ourselves and any object, the more easily does the imagination make the transition, and convey to the related idea the vivacity of conception, with which we always form the idea of our own person (T 318).

In his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Smith claims that a nobleman is less able to sympathise with his servant, despite the two of them being in regular close contact. The farmer who works in the fields "is more capable of feeling with" the servant than is the nobleman, insofar as the farmer considers the servant his equal.[50] This example illustrates that physical proximity need not guarantee sympathetic identification; instead, perceptions of shared social status may generate a stronger sympathetic response. Indeed, both Hume and Smith recognised that social or cultural similarities have a particularly significant bearing on sympathy. As Chapter Two explains, Smith emphasised that the customs, values, experiences, lifestyles or habits that are shared among individuals within a particular cultural community will give way to common ways of understanding and appraising the world that are not shared by those with a different cultural upbringing. This has the consequence that those who belong to the same social community may completely sympathise with sentiments that differently-situated persons cannot identify with at all.

In contemporary contexts, one need not look too far to find confirmation of the Smithean-Humean thesis that we sympathise more readily with those who we perceive to

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[50] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* vol. iii par. 109. These lectures were given by Smith at the University of Glasgow over two academic sessions: the 1762-3 session, and the 1763-4 session. They are compiled under the Report of 1762-3 (LJ(A)) and the Report of 1766 (LJ(B)) respectively. All references to this work derive from the R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael & P.G. Stein edition, published in 1978 (hereafter LJ(A) iii.109).

be 'like us,' especially those with whom we share a cultural or racial identity. Everyday life provides us with numerous instances of Caucasians sympathising more with other Caucasians than with non-Caucasians (and vice-versa), Westerners more with other Westerners than with non-Westerners (and vice-versa), and so on. Moreover, as Medina and Nussbaum have pointed out, failures of sympathy are particularly pronounced between culturally privileged and devalued social identities, owing to the influence of objectifying stereotypes that undermine the former's ability to perceive a common humanity.[51]

The fragility of sympathy and its potential to fail in encounters with those who are different from us raises the question of whether the constraints on our sympathy may be overcome. As we have seen, what emerges from the Scottish sentimentalist view is a picture of sympathy as partial and parochial, and invariably susceptible to bias. Yet despite this fact, Hume and Smith maintained that our sympathetic responses are able to ground impartial and stable moral judgments. Both philosophers claim that our ability to arrive at unbiased moral judgments through sympathy is explained by our capacity for reflective judgment. This capacity finds expression in Hume's account of the 'General Point of View' and Smith's account of the 'Impartial Spectator.' On Hume's account, to arrive at objective and unbiased moral judgments, we survey the character or actions of an agent from a "steady" and "general" perspective (T 582). This involves abstracting from our particular situation and interests, and as far as possible overcoming the spatio-temporal distance between ourselves and the agents concerned. It is from this

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[51] As Medina notes, the "exoticization" of non-Western cultures by the Western media – "the obsessive focus on the most unfamiliar and strange aspects of a culture"– manifests in a collective inability among Westerners to feel for non-Westerners:

> By capitalizing on differences and hiding similarities and connections with the West, it becomes difficult for Westerners to recognise themselves in these exoticized others, to see their humanity, and to sympathize with their suffering (2013, p. 169).

perspective that we experience a 'distinct' pain or pleasure – what Hume calls the moral sentiment of 'disapprobation' and 'approbation' respectively. Any action – or more specifically, any character trait – that produces the moral sentiment of disapprobation when surveyed from the General Point of View we call 'vicious,' and anything which gives rise to the moral sentiment of approbation we call 'virtuous.' In some instances this means that we may harbour two very different feelings towards an agent whose actions conflict with our personal interests. We may experience violent hatred from our situated perspective, but also the calm sentiment of approbation upon adopting an impartial perspective.[52]

Smith complicates and builds on Hume's model. Unlike the General Point of View, Smith's device of the Impartial Spectator is primarily designed to assist with self-assessment. On Smith's account, exercising impartial spectatorship presents as an activity of critical self-reflection, which strongly emphasises the role played by imaginative-perspective taking in countering the effects of bias on our feelings and generating impartial judgments. On this basis, his account will be of particular interest in relation to the issues of concern here.

Like Hume, Smith believes that we are capable of adopting an impartial perspective free from the distorting influences of bias, prejudice and self-love through imaginatively abstracting from our particular standpoint. This perspective is represented in the figure of the 'Impartial Spectator.' On Smith's account, impartial spectatorship relies on an individual's capacity to imagine into existence a "fair and judicious" spectator

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[52] Some of Hume's remarks throughout the *Treatise* appear to support a conception of the General Point of View (hereafter GPV) as the perspective of those within the agent's narrow circle of acquaintances, who are presumably more well-informed about her character. However, in Hume's later essay, 'Of the Standard of Taste' (1757), his remarks imply that the GPV represents the perspective of an abstract and ideal spectator. I do not engage in debates over the correct reading of Hume's GPV. For reasons this chapter will make clear, I am more interested in Smith's Impartial Spectator as a way of thinking through the concept of reflective sympathy. See Elizabeth Radcliffe (1994) for an interpretive analysis of Hume's GPV.

(TMS III.iii.38) who has no particular connection to, or interest in, the parties or the circumstances involved. The individual then regulates her feelings by the extent to which such a spectator could hypothetically go along with her perspective.[53]

In a well-known passage from *TMS*, Smith notes that an individual ('a man of Humanity') will feel much more deeply about losing his little finger than about the deaths of millions of Chinese citizens brought about by an earthquake:

> If he was to lose his little finger tomorrow, he would not sleep to-night; but, provided he never saw them, he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren, and the destruction of that immense multitude seems plainly an object less interesting to him, than this paltry misfortune of his own (TMS III.iii.4).

Despite this, Smith claims that such a person would not judge the loss of his little finger to be a greater misfortune than the misfortune suffered by his brethren. Nor would he sacrifice the lives of others in order to save his little finger, were he presented with such an opportunity. Smith claims that the individual's behaviour in this instance cannot be attributed to some natural or innate feeling of benevolence for others; our concern for distant strangers is already weak, let alone when our own interests are at stake. Rather, Smith thinks that it can be attributed to the work of the Impartial Spectator:

> It is not the soft power of humanity, it is not that feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lighted up in the human heart, that is thus capable of counteracting the strongest impulses of self love. It is a stronger power, a more forcible motive, which

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[53] Feminists have argued that appeals to an impartial, idealised standpoint in the process of moral deliberation promote a standpoint that is neither gender neutral nor universally attainable, and aligns with the experience of White, bourgeois males. This critique bears on Smith's writings to some extent. Smith uses masculine pronouns to refer to all generic figures (actors, spectators and so forth). Furthermore, he prizes the virtues associated with masculinity such as self-command and emotional composure above the amiable virtues of kindness and compassion, the latter of which have often been associated with the feminine. As it will become clear in this chapter and in Chapter Four, Smith's account of impartial spectatorship avoids many of the criticisms that feminists have levelled against mainstream theories of impartiality. While I concede that other aspects of his account may prove to be problematic from a feminist perspective, I do not consider this issue in further detail here. For an illuminating and convincing defence of Smithean stoic impartiality as a feminist resource, see John Durham Peters (1995).

exerts itself upon such occasions. It is *reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct*. It is he who, whenever we are about to act so as to affect the happiness of others, calls to us, with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions, that we are but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it; and that when we prefer ourselves so shamefully and so blindly to others, we become the proper objects of resentment, abhorrence, and execration. *It is from him only that we learn the real littleness of ourselves, and of whatever relates to ourselves, and the natural misrepresentations of self-love can be corrected only by the eye of this impartial spectator* (TMS III.iii.4. My emphasis).

On Smith's view, the process of reflecting on and correcting for our biased sympathetic responses involves a sympathetic exchange with this hypothetical 'man within'; one that mirrors the exchange that takes place between actual spectators and agents. Critical self-regulation involves taking the perspective of an impartial spectator and viewing ourselves through his or her eyes, and subsequently adjusting our feelings to a level that we imagine this "great judge and arbiter" could go along with. Just like the agent who is motivated to adjust her feelings in order to receive the sympathetic approval of spectators, so too Smith supposed that the pleasure of winning the approval of the impartial spectator within motivates us to adjust the 'tone' and 'pitch' of our sentiments so that they come to be expressive of an impartial viewpoint. It is these corrected sentiments that manifest in unbiased and stable moral judgments, and which motivate moral behaviour.

In sum, Smith's device of the impartial spectator represents, in Valihora's words, "a means of judging judgement [...] of impartially judging the self so as to make one's judgments expressive of a distinctly moral point of view" (2001, p. 145).[54] On this account, ensuring that our judgments are adequately informed and impartial does not

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[54]Jesse Prinz (2011a, 2011b) has argued that the Humean-Smithean appeal to an imagined impartial viewpoint is deeply flawed as a means of ensuring that our feelings come to reflect a moral viewpoint. I offer a critique of his argument in Chapter Four.

require us to adopt the kind of highly abstract and idealised standpoint that is characteristic of contemporary Ideal Observer theories, which posit a purely disinterested, dispassionate and omnipercipient standpoint from which to formulate reliable and unbiased moral judgments.[55] The perspective of the impartial spectator is not equivalent to a God's Eye perspective: adopting the impartial standpoint produces moral judgments that are well-informed and responsive to all of the relevant facts of the situation, but which are not necessarily perfectly informed. While Smith refers to the impartial spectator as the "indifferent" or "cool" spectator (I.ii.3.8 & I.ii.4.1), this figure is not indifferent or disinterested in the sense of being wholly unemotional; the impartial spectator may not have the same degree of emotional investment as situated spectators in the relevant circumstances, but this kind of emotional detachment or distance is precisely what is required for impartial judgment. The feelings of the impartial spectator are engaged, yet are free from the overwhelming and corrupting influence of self-regarding emotions (such as envy or jealousy) that may stem from being too close to the circumstances and parties involved (See Griswold, 1999, p. 136).

Adopting the perspective of Smith's impartial spectator does not require individuals to do what is essentially impossible; that is, to adopt a purely objective, disembodied standpoint that exists outside the self (or what Thomas Nagel (1986) aptly describes as a 'view from nowhere'). The standpoint that spectators and agents employ in the process of moral deliberation is "self-referential" (Forman-Barzilai, 2013, p. 70). As Smith writes:

> I judge of your sight by my sight, of your ear by my ear, of your reason by my reason, of your resentment by my resentment, of your love by my love. I never have, nor can have, any other way of judging about them (TMS I.iii.10).

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[55] Roderick Firth (1952), for example, defines the ideal observer position in terms of disinterestedness, impassivity and omnipercipience with regards to non-moral facts.

For Smith, we 'never have, nor can have,' any other means of judging the feelings and conduct of another than bringing her case 'home' to ourselves, and judging by our own lights as to whether or not her response is appropriate to her circumstances. Since, as we have seen, Smith was well aware that our situated judgments risk being inflected with bias or prejudice, we engage in a process of self-division and self-examination, and reflect on whether and to what extent an impartial observer ('the examiner and judge') could sympathise with our response:

> When I endeavor to examine my own conduct, when I endeavor to pass sentence upon it, and either to approve or condemn it, it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons: and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of (TMS III.i.6).

This kind of self-division allows us to gain a degree of critical distance from ourselves as it were, and to see our feelings in a more detached, candid, and impartial light.

In *TMS*, Smith describes impartial spectatorship in terms of achieving emotional distance from one's own immediate desires, interests and concerns. Smith claims that should our situated feelings be "too vehement" (as is often the case), the impartial spectator "is always at hand to overawe them into the proper tone and temper of moderation" (TMS VII.ii.1.44). In other cases, impartial spectatorship may involve abstracting from the norms and prejudices that one has internalised through gazing into the 'mirror' provided by one's particular society and participating in sympathetic exchanges across time. Recall that in Smith's view, we develop the capacity to critically judge and regulate our feelings and actions by coming to see ourselves through the eyes of those in our social community:

We can never survey our own sentiments and motives, we can never form any judgment concerning them; unless we remove ourselves, as it were, from our own natural station, and endeavour to view them as at a certain distance from us. But we can do this in no other way than by endeavouring *to view them with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them* (TMS III.i.2. My emphasis).[56]

Being exposed to others' disapproval prompts us to critically reflect on our conduct, and to act in accordance with prevailing 'standards of propriety' so as to elicit the approval of those around us. Over time, we come to regulate our feelings and conduct by these standards in the absence of others. As Fonna Forman-Barzilai puts it:

The "eyes of other people" become embedded in his [the agent's] soul, capable of guiding him without their actual, physical presence. The practice of sympathy is driven inside and we become capable of self-judgment (2013, p. 86).

Despite its social origins, Smith maintained that the perspective of the impartial spectator need not reproduce prevailing social sentiments. Indeed, he recognised that it may often be necessary for individuals to consult a different standpoint to the one provided by their social community, insofar as the latter may reflect bias and a lack of understanding. As Griswold points out, Smith was aware that "the social 'mirror' often reflects badly" (1999, p. 132). This is why Smith often refers to the impartial spectator as representing a "higher tribunal"; a superior standard of judgment against which to evaluate our conduct than the standard that is provided by the sentiments of actual spectators (TMS III.2.32). With Smith's work emerges a picture of the impartial standpoint as being shaped, but not wholly determined by, prevailing social convention. The perspective of the impartial spectator may be grounded in the social, but need not be reducible to it. Since the

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[56] Witness also:

We examine our persons limb by limb, and by placing ourselves before a looking glass, or by some such expedient, endeavour, as much as possible, *to view ourselves at the distance and with the eyes of other people* (TMS III.i.4. My emphasis).

impartial standpoint does not (and cannot) exist outside the self according to Smith,

exercising impartial spectatorship implies the capacity to critically reflect on the particular

habits, customs and norms that condition our judgments and behaviour.[57]

Several theorists have debated the extent to which Smith's account of the

impartial spectator is capable of furnishing individuals with a foundation for moral

agency that does not simply replicate prevailing social attitudes.[58] The question of

whether individuals have the capacity to counter the influence of prevailing social biases

and prejudices on their sentiments through exercising impartial spectatorship is pertinent

to this thesis: if Smithean sympathy is to be a genuine resource for the negotiation and

recognition of difference, individuals must be capable of practicing the kind of reflective

sympathy that Smith envisioned as a basis for ethical communities, which requires that

individuals achieve a degree of critical distance from the social context that shapes their

perspective. Chapter Four will assess the viability of Smith's appeal to impartial

spectatorship as a corrective to the effects that dominant social meanings and norms

have on the capacity of privileged groups to identify with the sentiments of those

identities that occupy a devalued place in the dominant culture.

Smith's emphasis on impartial spectatorship (or what I have been referring to as

'reflective sympathy') as a means of supporting moral behaviour is explained in part by

his dissatisfaction with approaches to morality that attempt to "prescribe a set of rules

for the conduct of a good man" (TMS VII.iv.8). In his view, such rules are unable

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[57] This aspect of Smith's view is extremely complex, and is far more detailed and nuanced than what I present of it here. I elaborate on the issue of socialisation for impartial spectatorship in later chapters, and critically analyse Smith's attempt to address this issue through his account of 'wise and virtuous' persons.

[58] For a useful summary of the main voices within these debates, see Forman-Barzilai (2013, pp. 91-92).

> to accommodate to all the different shades and gradations of circumstance, character and situation, to differences and distinctions which, though not imperceptible, are, by their nicety and delicacy, often altogether undefinable (TMS VI.ii.1.22).[59]

Smith's account inspires the thought that rigid adherence to a set of rules or principles is not adequate to the task of negotiating the various complexities of moral scenarios; those "different shades and gradations of circumstance, character and situation" that we confront as spectators. Smith was well aware of the difficulties involved in properly acknowledging and weighing up these particulars in a fair and open-minded manner, as we will see. Nevertheless, he assumed that doing so was within the reach of everyday individuals. As Chapter Four will explain, Smith's concept of virtuous conduct as an 'art' inspires the thought that our capacity to recognise the various complex aspects of a situation and to appreciate their relevant moral salience is developed and refined with ongoing effort and practice.

While Smith promoted sympathy as a foundation for moral communities, he was at pains to point out the ways in which it may produce socially undesirable outcomes, and undermine a sense of community and solidarity between members of a society. As an example of a case where sympathy functions as a social liability, Smith points to the sympathetic pleasure that spectators derive from (what they imagine to be) the happiness

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[59] This is not to say that rule-following has no role to play on Smith's theory. For Smith, moral deliberation not only relies on reflective exercises of the sympathetic imagination, but is also conducted in light of the 'general rules of morality.' These rules are those that we form by extrapolation from our experiences in particular instances. For example, when we repeatedly experience a particular act (e.g. theft) as reprehensible, and witness that those around us are affected in the same way, we come to form the general rule that "it is unjust to deprive someone of his property." Rules like this tell us "what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided" (TMS III.iv.7). They sustain harmonious social communities, and prevent individuals from making themselves the exception to the rule, which occurs when the voice of the impartial spectator within fails to be strong enough to discipline their behaviour (TMS III.4.2-11 & III.5.1-2). However, Smith's account implies that the rules of morality should only be perceived as rules of thumb, and should not be privileged over those judgments that issue from informed and reflective exercises of imaginative perspective-taking with the parties involved. He claims that if we, as moral agents, "place ourselves completely in his [the impartial spectator's] situation, if we really view ourselves with his eyes, and as he views us, and listen with diligent and reverential attention to what he suggests to us, his voice will never deceive us" (TMS VI.ii.2.22).

of the rich; a happiness that has its roots primarily in being noticed or "attended to" by others on account of their material wealth (TMS I.iii.2.1). In his view, sympathy of this kind leads individuals to strive to emulate the rich and powerful. This emulation has a significant social cost, however: the desire for wealth often comes at the expense of the cultivation of virtue by constantly driving us to consider our private, selfish interests over the interests of others, and has the effect of curtailing those social passions that inspire beneficence towards those who are much worse-off than ourselves (TMS I.iii.3.8 & I.iii.2.2). If our sympathy for others is to remain undistorted by our self-regarding and selfish passions, it must always be regulated by the gaze of an impartial spectator.

Despite sympathy's potential to produce biased judgments and to produce patterns of collective behaviour that establish and reinforce social divisions, Smith maintained that sympathy is, and ought to be, the chief foundation for morality. Moral judgments grounded in reason alone fail to have the requisite motivational force, and rigid adherence to abstract rules tends towards obtuseness. Smith maintains that despite the apparent limits of our fellow-feeing for others – particularly for those whom we perceive as different and inferior to ourselves – these limits can be surmounted, thanks to the capaciousness of the sympathetic imagination:

> …*our good-will is circumscribed by no boundary; but may embrace the entirety of the universe.* We can not form the idea of any innocent and sensible being, whose happiness we should not desire, or to whose misery, when distinctly brought home to the imagination, we should not have some degree of aversion (TMS VI.ii.3. My emphasis).

The key idea that emerges with Smith's work is that sympathy must often be 'worked at' if it is to be a genuine moral resource: it is not 'bare,' instinctual or unregulated sympathy that provides the most suitable foundation for our moral relations, but sympathy harnessed to a vivid, informed and reflective imaginative effort. Sympathy is not inherently biased and parochial: such limitations can – and must be – overcome. Often

moral scenarios will demand a level of imaginative and emotional engagement from spectators that goes beyond a 'knee-jerk' sympathetic response; certain scenarios will involve particulars that demand one's full and careful consideration, which is only achieved when one engages in an exercise of imaginative perspective-taking that vividly brings home the other's situation 'in all its minutest incidents.' For Smith, it is only when we achieve this level of understanding that we are in a position to then pass judgment on the other. Smith's view inspires the thought that those sentiments which are best placed to support moral communities are generated through a genuine attempt to grasp the other's perspective in imagination, as well as an attempt to critically scrutinise one's own perspective. In light of this unique and compelling aspect of Smith's thought, I have argued that his account offers a valuable contribution to the work of contemporary theorists interested in the role played by imaginative perspective-taking in the recognition of difference.

Given the general plausibility of Smith's account of reciprocal and reflective exercises of sympathetic imagination as grounding a sense of fellowship and community among individuals with different worldviews, what explains the massive failures of sympathy to which Nussbaum and Medina have drawn attention? Smith, as we have seen, recognised that social differences have an important bearing on fellow-feeling. His example of the limited sympathy between the nobleman and his servant is illustrative of the impact that class distinctions can have on people's capacity to identify with others, even those with whom they have regular contact. In the following chapter I consider how the complex social distinctions that mark contemporary societies produce significant perspectival differences, which in turn bear on the possibility of sympathetic understanding and identification between members of different social groups. I then return to the issue of cultural misrecognition, and take up the task of analysing how dominant cultural constructions of sexual and racial difference systematically undermine

fellow-feeling with the suffering of those identities that occupy a subordinate place in the dominant culture. Finally, I develop the claim that failures of sympathetic understanding and identification between dominant and marginalised social identities are sustained by the tendency among privileged identities to unconsciously refrain from gaining a better understanding of marginalised perspectives, and from engaging in the kind of informed and reflective exercises that Smith promotes as a basis for ethical communities.

Chapter Two
The Social Dimensions of Sympathy:
The Social Imaginary and Wilful Ignorance

We have seen that in Smith's view, the existence of ethical communities depends on individuals stepping outside the sphere of their own concerns, interests, and values in order to imagine the perspectives of others. Human sociability and moral agency are underpinned by reciprocal exercises of imaginative perspective-taking between individuals who attempt to see and feel things as their interlocutor does, and who temper their judgments and behaviour accordingly. For Smith, the recognitive element of such exercises is not only crucial to the establishment and maintenance of harmonious social communities, but also to individual flourishing: it is through having our feelings and the judgments they embody recognised and seconded by those around us that we are able to sustain a positive self-conception. Smith was aware that various factors may bear on our capacity to sympathetically identify with the feelings of others, including differences in cultural upbringing and differences in social rank. In his view, cultural and social

differences have a particularly significant impact on the way in which we judge others

and their circumstances, and have the potential to limit the degree of our fellow-feeling

with their joy, resentment, grief, indignation and so forth. As we have seen, Smith drew

on the figure of the impartial spectator to explain how it is that individuals are able to

expand the scope of their fellow-feeling, and make impartial moral judgments with

respect to others whose circumstances and experiences they know little – and care little –

about. By submitting their immediate feelings to reflective scrutiny and correcting for the

influence of any bias or prejudice, individuals ensure that their sentiments come to

express a moral viewpoint. Smith plausibly suggests that exercises of the sympathetic

imagination in which individuals engage thoughtfully and reflectively with others'

circumstances and distinct perspectives form the basis for a flourishing social

community.

In this chapter I develop Smith's account of sympathy by offering a more

detailed account of the complex social dimensions of sympathetic understanding and

identification. As part of this discussion I consider the massive failures of fellow-feeling

that mark the relations between privileged and devalued social identities in contemporary

contexts. I suggest that the systematic failure among privileged identities to

sympathetically identify with the lived experiences of devalued identities can be traced to

structural inequalities of power that prevent the perspectives and experiences of less

powerful identities from being fairly represented in prevailing social norms, values and

meanings. The latter structure widely-shared understandings and expectations that render

certain possibilities more conceivable or plausible than others, which in turn has the

effect of systematically undercutting sympathetic identification with the lived experiences

of marginalised and devalued groups. This chapter argues that the collective and

recurring failure among privileged identities to properly acknowledge and identify with

the experiences of devalued identities under the weight of dominant social meanings and

norms is sustained at the level of individual practice by a resistance on their part to engage meaningfully and reflectively with alternative perspectives. This resistance is explained by the fact that doing so may be inimical to their perceived self-interest. By offering a theoretical analysis of the characteristic failure among privileged identities to imagine the point of view of marginalised and devalued identities, as well as their failure to subject their own perspective to critical scrutiny, this chapter aims to lay the groundwork for a constructive account of both the limitations and benefits of appealing to the sympathetic imagination as a resource for negotiating difference.

i. Sympathy and the Social Imaginary

The significance of social identity to sympathetic understanding and identification can be better understood by considering the relation between our social identity and our epistemic perspective. Feminist standpoint epistemology has drawn attention to the way in which our beliefs and judgments are shaped by our social positioning.[60] On this theory, what we know will be in large part a reflection of one's socio-historical location and the experiences commonly associated with that location: our gender, class, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality and other aspects of our identity will place us in a certain relation to the world and those in it, which in turn shapes what we understand about ourselves and our social environment.[61] The claim that knowledge is situated stands

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[60] Lorraine Code, Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka were among the first to highlight the gendered dimensions of knowing. See Code (1981) and Harding & Hintikka (1983). There is significant debate over whether social positioning has a bearing on all kinds of knowledge, including (and especially) scientific knowledge. I do not engage with this debate in this thesis. I claim that sociological knowledge is invariably tied to one's social location, without committing to the stronger claim that all forms of knowledge have a social basis.

[61] While there are social dimensions to knowing, many standpoint theorists are quick to point out that there is no such thing as *the* female, male, Black, White, working class (and so on) perspective. Knowledge, in their view, is not reducible "to a simple reflection of its social basis" (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002, pp. 315-316). Standpoint theorists acknowledge that epistemic positioning is influenced by one's social positioning but not wholly determined by it. This is because one's individual lived history and relationships with significant others produce perspectival differences among those who occupy a similar social location. Hence, while those

opposed to the view of objective or absolute knowledge, which assumes there exists a neutral and universally accessible epistemic standpoint from which we formulate beliefs about the world. Feminist standpoint theory also rejects an atomistic model of knowers, which assumes that knowing subjects are generic or interchangeable, and that they attain knowledge through exercising their capacity for reason in isolation. In contrast with this model, feminist standpoint theorists argue that knowers are differentiated across social lines, and that they largely rely on others to obtain knowledge.[62]

How exactly does our social identity and our location within a particular socio-historical and cultural community influence what we can understand about others' circumstances, and the extent to which we can sympathetically identify with their lived experiences? Smith offers us a useful starting point for addressing this question. In his view, the standpoint from which we understand and appraise the world is shaped through and through by our socio-historical and cultural context. It is primarily through gazing into the 'mirror' held up by those in our social community that we come to an understanding of ourselves in relation to others, and come to form an idea of what constitutes just and unjust, appropriate or inappropriate behaviour for particular persons in a given set of circumstances. Smith further observed that members of different cultural groups may interpret and judge certain bodies, practices, and behaviours in different – even diametrically opposed – ways: he remarks that "the degree of politeness" that is "highly esteemed" in Russia would be "regarded as rudeness and barbarism" among the French (TMS V.2.7), and that "a fair complexion" would be perceived as a "shocking deformity" on the coast of Guinea (TMS V.1.9). Smith claims that "few men"

who are similarly situated will share common ways of understanding the world, there will also be differences among them.

[62] One might plausibly argue that we need not rely on others to acquire simple forms of knowledge (e.g. the belief that my pen is on my desk). Yet when it comes to acquiring more complex forms of knowledge, such as the belief that 'women are nurturing,' our reliance on others is particularly apparent.

are capable of recognising, and moreover willing to accept that social custom informs many of their judgments, and are instead inclined to believe that the latter are "founded upon reason and nature, not upon habit and prejudice" (TMS V.1.4).

Contemporary theorists have followed Smith in pointing out that people's exposure to, and internalisation of the norms, meanings and values that are specific to their community shapes the way in which they interpret and respond to particular bodies, practices and behaviours, to the exclusion of alternative interpretations. The grasp that people have of their social context is thought to form a permanent and implicit 'background understanding' against which certain things appear conceivable or inconceivable, plausible or implausible. This background understanding may consist in a set of assumptions, attitudes and beliefs that run counter to our consciously-held beliefs and judgments, but which may nevertheless determine what we find conceivable or plausible about another's reaction to her circumstances, and the extent to which we identify with her feelings.

Theorists have made use of the concept of the 'social imaginary' as that which shapes implicit and widely-shared assumptions among members of a society. The 'imaginary' is a familiar concept within psychoanalytical, phenomenological, anthropological and philosophical circles, and has been appropriated and developed in various ways by contemporary theorists. Existing scholarship on the imaginary is divided into two main camps: those who view it as an "individual psychic phenomenon which can be enhanced or damaged by the social environment," and those who take it to be "a social phenomenon which plays a role in the construction of individual subjectivity" (James, 2002, p. 175). Those who fall within the former camp include Jacques Lacan and more recently Drucilla Cornell, and those belonging to the latter include Cornelius Castoriadas, Michèle Le Doeuff, Charles Taylor, and Moira Gatens. In this thesis I adopt the latter view of the imaginary: I take it that we always understand ourselves, others, and

the world against a given social background. There is no subject (no 'you' or 'me' or 'us') that exists independently or outside of a certain social imaginary. As Susan James rightly points out, "the existence of social imaginary significations is a condition of the existence of subjects," and that to "explain the social imaginary as an effect of the thoughts of subjects is to put effect before cause" (2002, p. 181).[63]

Unlike the concept of ideology, the social imaginary emphasises the imaginative and affective roots of many of our beliefs and judgments. Theorists of the social imaginary claim that the prevailing norms, meanings and values within a community are largely structured by images, narratives, symbols and metaphors, rather than theories, doctrines and concepts. These significations appeal to the imaginations of individuals, and generate strong affective responses. It is through their appeal to imagination and affect that these significations are thought to shape collectively-shared perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that influence our judgments and behaviour in a particular context

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[63] In this thesis I use the term 'imagination' and 'sympathetic imagination' to refer to an individual faculty, and the term 'social imaginary' to refer to the stock of significations that shape the way in which an individual imagines herself and her social context. Importantly, Bottici observes that adopting a view of the imagination as being intrinsically social in nature raises the question of how individuals are able to break away from the overwhelming influence of social imaginaries (particularly those which are damaging and oppressive), and engage in radically creative or 'free' acts of imagination whereby they come to envisage the world otherwise (2014, p. 39 & p. 41). To account for such a possibility, Bottici suggests employing the concept of the 'imaginal,' defined as that which is made up of images, and can therefore be "both the product of an individual faculty and of a social context, as well the result of a complex, yet-to-be-determined interaction between the two" (2014, p. 54). In Bottici's view, the imaginal "signal[s] the fact that there are different possibilities that go from the freedom of individuals to its erosion in oppressive social imaginaries" (2014, p. 7). For the sake of consistency I do not employ Bottici's concept of the imaginal, though I agree it may function as a valuable resource for addressing the "impasse" (2014, p. 5) that exists between those who treat the imagination as an autonomous individual faculty (and who are left with the problem of accounting for the significant influence that one's social environment exerts over how one imagines the world) and those who highlight the intrinsically social nature of imagination (and who are left with the task of explaining how individuals might imagine the world in ways that run counter to those social imaginaries they are immersed in). In place of resorting to the language of the imaginal, I explain the 'complex interaction' between the faculty of imagination and the social imaginary with reference to the dialectic that exists between an individual's lived experiences and the social imaginary in which she is immersed. Just as the social imaginary structures an individual's lived experiences, so too may an individual's lived experiences - especially the experiences afforded through exercising one's capacity for sympathetic imagination with differently embodied others - spark critical reflection on the imaginaries that influence how she imagines herself and her social context.

without our explicit awareness, and in ways that run up against our standing beliefs. Before I explain this point in further detail, a more detailed account of the social imaginary is required.

Following Gatens, I define the social imaginary as that stock of narratives, images, metaphors and symbols which structure the prevailing norms, values and meanings of a culture (1996, 2004). The social imaginary is not a single, unified phenomenon: rather it is "always plural," consisting of "religious, political, economic, sexual, racial, ethnic, moral, national and international imaginaries" (Gatens, 2004, p. 282). These imaginaries vary cross-culturally and historically. As outlined earlier, theorists who employ the concept of the social imaginary point out that our grasp of our social environment (who we are, how we stand in relation to others, what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and so forth) is not captured in the form of explicit doctrines or theories. As Charles Taylor puts it, the way in which people understand their social context "is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends" (2004, p. 23).[64] These significations structure an implicit and widely-shared background understanding among members of a society that "enables and legitimizes communal practices" (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). They are also central in structuring individuals' conceptions of themselves and where they stand in relation others. James notes that it is through our exposure to narratives and images which construct different social identities in various ways that we form tacit understandings of ourselves "as men and women, and as men and women of particular kinds" (2002, p. 187). Significantly, the social imaginary generates *shared* forms of self-understanding (We are Australians, Americans, Germans; We are Christians, Catholics, Jewish…). Our

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[64] On this basis it may be assumed that the imaginary is something akin to fantasy or folklore. However, this way of thinking about the social imaginary risks trivialising its capacity to structure prevailing social norms and meanings, which in turn establish and sustain patterns of human sociability across time (Gatens, 2004, pp. 281-282. See also Gatens, 1996, xii-xiii).

recognition of ourselves as sharing in a common identity with others produces affective

bonds and attachments between individuals that transcend spatial and temporal

borders.[65] Importantly, the social imaginary is not some free-floating entity for which

individuals are not responsible and over which they have little to no control. Castoriadas

reminds us that the social imaginary is both 'instituting' in the sense that it constructs our

sense of self and gives meaning to our social practices and institutions, and is 'instituted'

in the sense that it is created, sustained and transformed by individuals (1994, 1975). As

Bottici aptly sums it up, "the instituting imaginary is at the same time always also

instituted by individuals. There are no individuals outside it, but likewise, no social

imaginary can exist without the individuals that create, re-create and sustain it" (2014, p.

146).

As outlined earlier, the social imaginary structures widely-shared beliefs and

assumptions among members of a culture that are permeated with affect. This is because

the narratives, images and symbols which comprise the social imaginary captivate the

imaginations of individuals, thereby attracting "strong affective investments" (Gatens,

2004, p. 283).[66] As such, people who belong to the same culture and have been exposed

to a particular range of metaphors, narratives and images tend to "have attitudes and

affects in common" (James, 2002, p. 186). Such attitudes and affects have a significant

influence on patterns of human sociability. The social imaginary plays an influential role

in how we interpret and experience our own bodies and those of others: as desirable; as

grotesque; as untrustworthy and so forth. Social imaginings structure collectively-shared

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[65] This insight comes from Benedict Anderson. In his well-known work on imagined
communities, Anderson observes that "members of even the smallest nation will never know
most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them," yet thanks to the emergence of
print capitalism, "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1983/1991, pp. 6-
7). In his view, the fraternal bonds that arise from such imaginings helps to explain why so many
people have willingly sacrificed their lives for the sake of the nation.
[66] See Eva Brann (1992) for a detailed account of the relation of reciprocal incitement that exists
between images and affects. See also Bottici (2014).

perceptions of particular social identities that give rise to affective attitudes of pride, fear, contempt, disgust, (and so forth). These affect-laden perceptions of others have the capacity to generate ways of judging and responding to others that are in tension with one's explicitly-held beliefs and opinions about others and their circumstances. Indeed, the social meaning and value that is conferred upon particular bodies by the social imaginary need not be consciously endorsed by individuals for them to influence the latter's judgments and behaviour: by structuring affectively-charged perceptions of different social identities, these meanings have the capacity to influence people's judgments and behaviour without their explicit awareness.

Of course the way in which a particular individual imagines and responds to her social environment will not only be shaped by the social imaginary, but also by her personal history and relations with significant others. The meanings, understandings, and norms structured by public images and narratives may run up against an individual's lived experience, with the result that she allows some narratives to enter into her understanding of others and of herself and not others. As James puts it, "our embodied selves work on social imaginaries just as imaginaries work on our embodied selves" (2002, p. 194). Kathleen Lennon echoes this claim, remarking that:

> …the individual and the social are mutually interdependent, neither reducible to the other. In the process of introjecting shared imaginaries, the psyche also re-interprets them. Therefore how an individual imagines the world will reflect both shared social imaginaries and individual life histories (Lennon, 2004, p. 112).[67]

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[67] This dialectic becomes important when considering the question of how individuals who are immersed in a particular social imaginary are able to arrive at new and alternative ways of imagining the world that run counter to conventional meanings and norms. As Chapter Five will demonstrate, the experiences afforded through sympathetic identification with differently-situated others may mark a significant disruption to our habitual ways of understanding ourselves and our social context, and the way in which we relate to others.

In sum, the dialectic between an individual's lived experience and the social imaginary will mean that while we may observe commonly-shared attitudes and behaviour among individuals who belong to a particular group or community, we will also observe differences between them.

I have said that the social meaning and value which is conferred upon raced and sexed bodies by the social imaginary shapes collectively-shared perceptions of, and attitudes towards particular social identities. The consequence of this is that those who are similarly located will be exposed to commonly-shared experiences and situations that are not shared by those who are differently located: Women will confront situations that men tend not to experience (for example, being 'cat-called' by strangers) and vice-versa. Black people will be confronted with situations that White people rarely tend to experience (for example, being watched especially closely by retail security), and vice-versa.[68] The situations and experiences that people confront in virtue of their social identity will influence how they understand, appraise and react to their social environment. As Gaile Pohlhaus writes, these situations and experiences:

> …create "common challenges" that constitute part of the knower's lived experience and so contribute to the context from which she approaches the world. Repeated over time, these challenges can lead to habits of expectation, attention, and concern, thereby contributing to what one is more or less likely to notice and pursue as an object of knowledge in the experienced world (2012, p. 717).[69]

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[68] My use of the terms 'White' and 'Black' in this paper corresponds with Sally Haslanger's definition of these terms (2012, pp. 275-281). Haslanger understands race to be the social meaning of colour (just as gender is commonly taken to be the social meaning of sex). She uses 'Black' and 'White' as technical terms to describe distinct social classes of individuals, which emerge from the dominant cultural meanings ascribed to one's (real or imagined) bodily features (skin colour, eyes, nose and lip shape, hair texture, physique etc.). These features are taken to be the physical markers of race, which are "inherited through an ancestry traceable to a particular geographical region" (2012, p. 277).

[69] Of course, given the complexity of social identity, those who belong to the same social group (e.g. 'women') may have vastly different experiences of the same situation, owing to differences in class, race, age and so forth. For example, Black women's lived experience of sexual objectification and harassment may differ significantly from White women's experience of this behaviour, in terms of the nature and degree of harassment, and its implications.

One's exposure to a set of culturally-specific social meanings, norms and values that structure implicit, collectively-shared understandings and group-based experiences will determine in large part whether and to what extent one can sympathise with the lived experiences of others. Indeed, one of Smith's main insights was that in sympathising with others, we do not come upon the scene as disembodied, ahistorical individuals. We come upon the scene as embodied individuals with a particular history and set of beliefs about ourselves, others and the world that are shaped by our embeddedness within a particular socio-historical and cultural community. The wider grasp that we have of our social context is always brought to bear on our understanding and appraisal of the motives and feelings of others. From a contemporary standpoint, the meaning and value that is attributed to certain practices and various raced and sexed bodies by the social imaginary structures implicit normative understandings among members of a community with respect to what is appropriate or inappropriate for a particular person (or group of persons) to do or to feel in a specific context. For instance, the differential social meaning that is conferred on male and female bodies, and the distinct normative expectations to which this meaning gives rise, has the consequence that one may readily identify with the anger and indignation of a man who discovers that his salary is substantially lower than that of his work colleagues, but fail to sympathise with a woman who makes the same discovery. This lack of identification may be attributable to dominant gender norms that structure a perception of women as less competent than men within the professional sector, and therefore less deserving of equal salaries. Furthermore, one may be unaware that the extent of one's sympathy in each of these cases is being determined by a set of unconscious prejudicial assumptions about female and male capabilities that are in tension with one's explicitly egalitarian and non-sexist

beliefs and judgments. Chapter Three will offer a more concrete illustration of the capacity for dominant social meanings and norms to shape implicit assumptions and expectations amongst well-intentioned, liberal-minded individuals that make discriminatory practices appear legitimate, and which undercut fellow-feeling with the suffering of those who are subjected to them.

We have also seen that the social meaning and value that is conferred upon particular bodies means that those persons who share a similar embodiment will tend to have experiences in common. Such experiences draw their attention and concern to parts of the world that are not readily salient or visible to those who do not partake in the relevant experience. This has the consequence that what is immediately obvious to, or what is expected by some individuals will not be obvious to, or expected by others who do not share in their same experiences. In the context of sympathy, spectators who are similarly placed to the agent may be able to more readily see or understand certain aspects of the agent's situation and perspective that spectators who are differently situated do not see or understand, with the result that the former are more readily able to enter into the agent's feelings (of resentment, anger, humiliation and so forth).

If people's understanding of their social context is tied up so closely with their social identity, is it impossible for us to understand and experience the world in the same way that differently-situated others do?[70] Feminist standpoint theorists maintain that we need not think of ourselves as being doomed to epistemic solipsism: despite its social basis, knowledge is capable of being shared across different social locations. As we have

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[70] It has been argued that by linking one's epistemic perspective so closely with one's social location, feminist standpoint theories necessarily entail that knowledge cannot be shared among those who are differently located. For this critique, see Hankinson (1990) and Walby (2001). This is not the position adopted in this thesis. I assume that while individuals always perceive the world from a particular standpoint, they can nevertheless reach some understanding of how differently-situated others experience the world through exercising their capacity for imaginative perspective-taking, in a manner that is carefully attuned to the other's account of her lived experience.

seen, Smith assumed that it is always possible for individuals to enter into the worlds of others and to see and feel things as they do, even those with a radically different embodiment and with vastly different lived experiences. Smith acknowledged that the exercise of imaginatively adopting the other's perspective will always be very 'inexact' or 'imperfect' owing to the fact that we cannot literally inhabit the other's body; however he maintained that individuals are able to gain enough of a feel for the other's experience that they come to experience feelings that are 'not altogether unlike' the feelings of the other.

Theorists such as Medina (2013) and Miranda Fricker (2007) have identified important factors that diminish one's capacity and willingness to communicate and justify her particular standpoint to others, as well as her capacity and willingness to genuinely engage with different standpoints, where these factors are rooted in the oppression of particular group identities. These theorists highlight that the degree of power and authority that individuals command in virtue of the dominant social meaning and value conferred on their particular social identity will determine their ability to have their perspectives represented in collective epistemic resources, and hence their ability to make proper sense of their lived experiences to themselves and to others. This issue impacts on sympathy in important and meaningful ways, as this chapter will explain. By hindering the capacity of differently-situated individuals to reach a degree of mutual understanding and identification, these obstacles undermine sympathy of the sort that Smith identified as being so crucial to establishing and maintaining ethical communities. In doing so, they undercut a crucial foundation for human sociability and inhibit the formation of solidarities across difference.

ii. Sympathy and Hermeneutical Injustice

We have seen that for Smith, our fellow-feeling often hinges on our understanding of the other's perspective and our ability to identify with this perspective. Reaching a genuine and informed understanding of the other's perspective relies on listening carefully to her point of view. Yet for the other to be able to effectively communicate her point of view, she must first be able to make sense of her situation and the way in which she experiences it (as traumatic, humiliating, or empowering and so on). To make sense of one's lived experiences, one requires epistemic resources. None of our experiences are immediate; they are always mediated or filtered through the linguistic and conceptual schemas that we have at our disposal. As Pohlhaus notes, making sense of our experiences requires "language to formulate propositions, concepts to make sense of experiences, and standards to judge particular accounts of experiences" (2012, p. 718). We automatically categorise or classify our experiences (e.g. as harassment or bullying), appraise them according to certain standards (e.g. of fairness and justice), and react in ways that are consistent with our understanding and appraisal of our circumstances. Importantly, the epistemic resources we have at our disposal to make sense of our experiences "are by nature collective": "language, concepts and criteria exist in use *among* agents" and "stand outside or beyond any one individual" (Pohlhaus, 2012, p. 716 & 718). In other words, individuals cannot simply make up and employ their own language if they are to be understood by others. They must draw on the language, concepts and standards that are available within their community and which others are capable of recognising.

The function of communal epistemic resources is to help us make good sense of our lived experiences (Pohlhaus, 2012, p. 719). However the resources that are available within a community may fail at times to adequately capture an individual's experience in its meaning for her, with the result that she is prevented from making sense of her situation both to herself and to others. In *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*

(2007), Fricker draws attention to this issue and its underlying causes. In some cases, Fricker notes that an absence of appropriate epistemic resources may be attributed to unequal relations of power between different social identities, which serve to exclude less powerful identities from contributing to the pool of communal epistemic resources. This has the result that entire groups of people may be systematically deprived of the resources to make good sense of their lived experiences and to articulate their perspective to others.

Fricker begins by describing a case where an absence of appropriate epistemic resources cannot be attributed to any kind of group-based exclusion. She offers the example of an individual who suffers from a medical condition that negatively affects his behaviour, where this condition has not been properly diagnosed by medical professionals and is widely misunderstood. This person "is unable to render their experiences intelligible [either to themselves or to others] by reference to the idea that they have a disorder" and may suffer the negative consequences of repeat misdiagnoses. Fricker notes that the person in this case suffers a "serious hermeneutical disadvantage" and is harmed as a result. However, this disadvantage in her view is a matter of "circumstantial epistemic bad luck" rather than an injustice, since it cannot be linked to any kind of identity-based oppression (2007, p. 152).

However there exist other cases where certain experiences are not captured by available interpretive resources – and so remain inconceivable to large sectors of society – owing to the systematic oppression of particular group identities. Fricker's discussion of 'hermeneutical marginalization' is helpful for understanding the connection between identity-based oppression and an absence of appropriate interpretive or hermeneutical resources. Resonant with Young's account of cultural imperialism outlined in Chapter One, Fricker describes hermeneutical marginalization as a form of socially-coerced, systematic exclusion of particular groups of people from fields that generate prevailing

social meanings, norms, values, ideals, concepts and theories (e.g. law, medicine, religion, journalism and so forth). The groups of people that suffer marginalization of this kind do so not only because of a lack of material power, but also because of their diminished socio-cultural standing (or what Fricker refers to as a lack of 'identity power'). The latter is the consequence of being subject to prejudicial social stereotypes that undermine the epistemic authority and credibility one possesses simply in virtue of who they are (2007, pp. 153-154). As several theorists have pointed out, in mainstream Western culture those that suffer diminished identity power (and hence diminished epistemic authority) tend to be those identities who depart from the dominant cultural ideal of White bourgeois masculinity (e.g. Women, Black people, the working class and so on).[71]

In Fricker's view, structural inequalities of material and identity power between different social groups allow powerful social identities increased access to and authority within hermeneutically-privileged fields, with the result that prevailing social meanings and interpretive resources will tend to answer to the experiences and perspectives of privileged social groups at the expense of others.[72] For example, the fact that the

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[71] Theorists like Young (1990), Nancy Tuana (1993) and Genevieve Lloyd (1984/1993) offer detailed analyses of the emergence and development of dominant conceptions of knowledge and knowing subjects. They outline how the discursive construction of knowledge, as that which is attained through the exercise of pure reason by disembodied subjects, meant that genuine knowledge of the world was unattainable for those identities associated with the affective and embodied dimensions of experience (for example, women). Constructed as a "neutral" and "abstract" subject "purified of particularity," the White bourgeois male set - and continues to set - the standard for how knowers ought to be (Young, 1990, p. 125). Conversely, those identities associated with the bodily, the particular, and the material continue to be denied the status of rational, knowing subjects.

[72] Fricker is most interested in cases of hermeneutical marginalization that stem from a structural form of powerlessness, which has the consequence that those who suffer structural powerlessness are systematically denied equal hermeneutical participation with respect to a broad array of their social experiences. This renders them unable to make proper sense of several aspects of their social experience. Fricker also recognises that one may suffer a hermeneutical disadvantage with respect to a "highly localised patch of their experience", which stems from a "one-off" moment of powerlessness (2007, p. 153). She offers the example of a White, educated, heterosexual male who cannot have his experience of being stalked and harassed by another man taken seriously by his female partner and by the police, and so suffers from a hermeneutical disadvantage (2007, pp. 156-158). However she notes that this disadvantage "has nothing to do with any general social powerlessness or any general subordination as a generator of social

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concepts of sexual harassment, conjugal rape and domestic violence failed to be represented in collective interpretive resources was not, as Fricker points out, a matter of 'circumstantial epistemic bad luck.' Rather this absence reflects women's traditional, socially coerced exclusion from hermeneutically privileged fields that structure prevailing social meanings and concepts which prevents them from having their experiences and perspectives reflected in communal epistemic resources (2007, pp. 152-153). Fricker notes that prior to the emergence and widespread recognition of the concept of sexual harassment, many women were prevented from making sense of their experience as a kind of moral and legal wrong, either to themselves or to others. She offers the real life case of a woman named Carmita Wood, who as a woman living in the nineteen sixties was neither able to make sense of her boss's sexual advances as a form of harassment, nor was she able to articulate his advances as such to others, owing to the absence of appropriate resources and the predominance of ill-fitting interpretations that trivialised her experience as 'unwelcome flirting' (2007, pp. 149-150). In Fricker's view, the fact that the concept of sexual harassment was missing from collective epistemic resources meant that neither Carmita nor her boss had a proper understanding of the nature of his behaviour. Nevertheless, this shared "cognitive handicap" was only disadvantageous for Carmita (2997, p.151), who not only suffered an epistemic harm but also numerous secondary harms: since Carmita lacked the critical concept to make sense of her experience as a wrong that merited compensation, she was unable to provide sufficient reason (other than 'personal') to have her claim for unemployment benefits accepted when – traumatised and humiliated by the ongoing harassment – she finally quit her job.

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meaning." The male in question suffers a hermeneutical disadvantage "not because of, but rather in spite of, the social type he is." (2007, p. 158). Fricker also recognises that the complexity of social identity means that while a hermeneutically marginalised subject is prevented from generating meanings pertaining to some areas of the social world (e.g. because she is a woman), in other areas she may enjoy increased participation (e.g. because she belongs to the upper middle class) (2007, pp. 153-154).

Those who suffer epistemic and other practical disadvantages owing to their systematic and socially-coerced exclusion from hermeneutically privileged fields are subject to what Fricker refers to as a 'hermeneutical injustice' (2007, p. 154). On Fricker's definition, those who suffer a hermeneutical injustice are prevented from making sense of some significant aspect of their social experience, thereby preventing them from being able to convey the full meaning of their experience to others, with the result that they suffer numerous harms and disadvantages.

Hermeneutical injustice so conceived has clear implications for sympathy. Those who suffer this injustice are deprived of the resources to effectively communicate their point of view to others, with the result that others may fail to fully understand and identify with their reaction to their circumstances. If, for example, a woman who is groped on a daily basis by her male co-workers cannot coherently articulate this experience to others in a way that captures its lived meaning for her, and who furthermore must contend with dominant interpretive resources that trivialize such behaviour as flirtation or flattery, this undermines the likelihood that those with whom she attempts to communicate will sympathetically identify with her feelings of anxiety, trauma and humiliation. Indeed, observers in this context will be likely to judge her feelings as entirely unwarranted by the circumstances; a product of an individual failing to appraise her circumstances in the appropriate manner (e.g. "It's your problem if you're offended by your co-workers behaviour. Lighten up! You're being overly sensitive! Besides, you should be flattered!"), rather than as something which is part of a wider structural problem, rooted in the oppression of women and the privileging of patriarchal, sexist norms.

If a certain issue like sexual harassment falls outside of collective understanding – if neither the victim, nor the harasser, nor other observers have a proper understanding of this type of behaviour as a serious wrong – this collective lack of understanding has

the potential to elicit collective failures of sympathy. The potential for such gaps in collective understanding to block sympathetic identification with the experiences of marginalised and oppressed social identities has the consequence that these identities are denied the quasi-therapeutic and self-affirming mode of recognition that Smith associated with having others see and feel as we do. It also risks a breakdown of sociability by generating inter-group and intra-group fragmentation: female victims of harassment may be led by feelings of frustration or low self-worth to isolate themselves from their male colleagues as well as their female colleagues, who in turn may distance themselves from the victims out of a loss of trust and respect for the latter.

The phenomenon of hermeneutical injustice as Fricker describes it refers to the incapacity of marginalised social identities to make sense of and justify their reaction to their circumstances, owing to a gap in collective interpretive resources that prevents an understanding of their circumstances as wrongful or harmful. However as Fricker's interlocutors have pointed out, we must not overlook cases where marginalised identities possess adequate resources to make sense of their experiences and yet nevertheless continue to have their feelings overlooked or dismissed as unwarranted by privileged identities, owing to the fact that their standpoint reflects values, beliefs and assumptions that run counter to the way in which privileged identities understand and evaluate their social context (See Mason, 2011; Medina, 2011, 2012, 2013; Pohlhaus, 2012). To account for such cases, Medina suggests situating the concept of hermeneutical injustice in the framework of the social imaginary (2011, 2013). Fricker avoids drawing on the concept of the social imaginary in her discussion of hermeneutical marginalization and hermeneutical injustice; however, in her account of identity prejudice, she defines this type of prejudice in terms of "shared conceptions of social identity" embedded in the "collective social imagination." Fricker explains that she chose to refrain from using the term 'imaginary' or 'social imaginary' in this context, because of its association with

particular psychoanalytic theories that she did not wish to commit to (2007, fn. 9, p. 59). As we will see in Chapter Four, Fricker's omission of a more detailed account of her concept of the collective social imagination illuminates the shortcomings embedded in her account of epistemic justice.

In the same vein as Gatens, James, and Taylor, Medina claims that the social imaginary of a society structures the way in which people perceive the relations between various social identities, and how they understand and appraise certain behaviours and practices. As outlined earlier in the chapter, this implicit background understanding imposes limits on what people find plausible about others' reactions to their circumstances, and on the extent to which they can identify with their feelings. As Medina notes, the social imaginary in which one is immersed can make some possibilities "highly visible and plausible" while rendering others "highly implausible and nearly invisible" (2011, p. 27).Within any given culture, there will be dominant and marginalised imaginaries. In line with Fricker's account of hermeneutical marginalization, Gatens highlights that the dominant social imaginary of a culture will tend to reflect the experiences and perspectives of privileged group identities, insofar as the positive social meaning conferred on their identity enables them greater access to those fields which play an influential role in structuring dominant social norms, meanings and values (Gatens, 2004, p. 283). Accordingly, dominant social imaginings of various group identities and the normative relation between them have the potential to structure and confer visibility and legitimacy on interpretations of a given action or practice that resonate with the perspectives and experiences of powerful identities, at the expense of alternative interpretations that resonate with the experiences and perspectives of marginalised identities. Consequently, dominant social norms, values and meanings may have the effect of undercutting sympathetic identification with the feelings of those who are excluded from shaping them. This problem is made apparent by the experiences of

some women who attempt to advance sexual harassment claims or formal charges of rape against men. Despite the fact that 'rape' and 'sexual harassment' are now widely recognized concepts and have helped to shift norms of sexual behaviour, the following clichés continue to exert influence and authority: "she was leading him on"; "asking for it in the way she behaved"; "men are just 'like that'" and so forth.[73] Resonant with the norms and meanings that are structured by the dominant patriarchal imaginary of Western culture, these discourses enjoy a level of legitimacy and authority that enables them to constrain what those in the wider social community can feel for female victims of harassment. Similarly, as Chapter Three will highlight, despite wide social acknowledgment of the fact that Indigenous Australians can suffer (and have suffered) gross human rights abuses and infringements of civil liberties, the employment of such discourses to describe their present treatment under successive Labor and Liberal governments often fails to carry sufficient weight or credibility against competing discourses that resonate with dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of Indigenous Australians as irresponsible, dysfunctional and incapable of managing their own affairs, and which justify such infringements as unavoidable and moreover necessary.

Insofar as the dominant social imaginary will often fail to reflect a plurality of social perspectives, it risks generating an understanding of the world and those in it that is narrow, limited, distorted and unreliable. By rendering the achievements and histories of particular groups invisible while making the histories and achievements of other groups highly visible, dominant social imaginaries play a key role in generating and sustaining distorted scripts about various social identities that are uncharitable towards those groups that are denied the capacity to influence dominant social norms and

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[73] The continuing influence of such discourses on perceptions of, and attitudes towards female victims of sexual harassment and rape is confirmed by empirical studies. See, for example, Emily Finch & Vanessa Munro (2005).

meanings, and which are overly generous in their representation of powerful social identities. While members of various social groups will be exposed to and influenced by the dominant imaginary of a society to some degree, its influence upon the beliefs and attitudes of privileged identities will be particularly pronounced, owing in part to the latter's lack of exposure to alternative perspectives and imaginaries. As such, the sentiments of dominant identities in situated contexts are more likely to reflect judgments that are grounded in a highly one-sided and less reliable understanding of the world and those in it. In what follows I consider why it is that privileged identities may actively refrain from countering the influence that dominant social imaginaries have on their sympathetic responses to others by engaging in the kind of educated, informed and critically self-reflective exercises of sympathetic imagination that Smith presents as an antidote to the effects of uninformed, 'imperfect,' and partial sympathy.

iii. Sympathy and Wilful Ignorance

The failure of privileged identities to seek out further information about the circumstances of marginalised identities and to critically reflect on their appraisals of the latter's sentiments may be traced to the attitude among privileged identities that there is no need to do so because of the (often implicit) shared belief that their standpoint is sufficiently informed and objective. White persons, for example, may feel that they know what they need to know about the lives and circumstances of Black persons, obviating the need to make further enquiries and to attend carefully to the latter's perspective. In short: there is no need to ask, and no need to listen. Medina refers to this attitude as one of 'epistemic arrogance.'[74] The kind of epistemic arrogance that is commonly exhibited

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[74] Medina is correct to point out that one's membership within a privileged social group does not mean that one will automatically develop the vice of epistemic arrogance. Furthermore, epistemic arrogance is not exclusive to members of dominant groups; this vice may be found among oppressed groups. Nevertheless, those who enjoy a privileged social positionality are more likely to develop the vice of epistemic arrogance, insofar as many aspects of their worldview are mirrored in prevailing meanings, values and discourses, and because they enjoy greater epistemic

by Whites with respect to Black lives is linked to what race theorists have called the 'invisibility' of Whiteness.[75] The latter phenomenon is rooted in the tendency for prevailing social norms and meanings to reflect the ideals, achievements and values of Whites as a group, at the expense of marginalised racial identities. As a consequence, the specificity of White ways of knowing and interpreting the world disappears or becomes invisible; through becoming normalized, the White standpoint comes to represent the benchmark for knowing the world 'as it really is.' Owing to enduring structural inequalities of power that impede the ability of marginalised racial groups to have their experiences and perspectives represented in dominant social meanings and norms, White knowledge is able to stake a claim to universal and objective knowledge. This in turn makes it more likely that Whites will fail to recognise the specificity of their worldview; that their way of perceiving and interpreting the world is just one among others, and fails to issue from a wholly objective and universal viewpoint.[76] As Smith reminds us, "few

credibility vis à vis others in many contexts, owing to prejudicial stereotypes which confer greater epistemic authority on some than on others (See Medina, 2013, p. 40).

[75] The concept of the invisibility of Whiteness has been developed by several theorists, including Peggy Mcintosh (1988) and Ruth Frankenberg (1993, 2001). See also Woody Doane (2003) and Mills (2007).

[76] Adrienne Rich (1979) uses the term 'white solipsism' to describe the adoption of a perceptual standpoint that assumes a white perspective as universal. Smith appears to recognise the potential for this kind of solipsism among members of European nations. In *TMS* he draws the attention of his (predominately European) readers to the context in which the normative practices of non-European nations arise, which in turn gives these practices their particular meaning and value. Smith offers the practice of arranged marriage as a custom that falls outside the Eurocentric conception of marriage, the latter of which assumes that the "mutual inclinations of the two parties should be the only thing considered…and should be indulged without any sort of control" (TMS V.2.9). He notes that the practice of arranged marriage takes on a different meaning in societies where men are not of "equal rank and fortune," and where they are exposed to "every sort of hardship." In such societies, Smith claims that choosing one's partner for the sake of love would be "the most unpardonable effeminacy." Smith also points to the practice of infanticide, which from a European perspective, constitutes a cruel and barbaric act, but is "more pardonable" in communities where individuals and their families are constantly exposed to inhospitable and impoverished conditions (TMS V.2.15). These examples can be read as an attempt on Smith's part to draw his readers' attention to the importance of refraining from judging various cultural practices exclusively with reference to the particular norms of one's own culture, and to consider the particular value and meaning these practices have for those who participate in them.

men" are capable of recognising that their judgments are grounded in "habit and prejudice" rather than in reason, and we would expect this to hold especially for those whose perspective aligns with prevailing social norms and meanings, and whose views meet with widespread social support. Moreover, Whites may fail to recognise that their specific way of appraising a given set of circumstances is limited and unreliable, and that there are others who are capable of offering a more informed, reliable and less distorted appraisal of those circumstances in virtue of their differential positioning. This lack of humility is compounded by the fact that privileged identities are – as Fricker points out – usually granted *prima facie* epistemic authority in virtue of who they are, and are not often corrected by others even when it comes to situations and experiences they are scarcely familiar with.[77]

The failure among privileged identities to acquire a better understanding of the circumstances and perspectives of marginalised and devalued identities may also be traced to the former's material circumstances. Owing to the fact that culturally privileged identities exclusively enjoy various benefits (economic, social, legal and so forth), there is frequently little at stake for them in failing to critically interrogate certain institutional structures and practices, whereas the same is not true for those identities who are systematically disadvantaged by these structures and practices. The privileged social and material standing of Whites, in comparison to other racial groups does not compel them to gain a more informed understanding with respect to several aspects of the world. For

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[77] One need not look far to find examples of instances where members of dominant cultural groups have readily assumed interpretive authority with respect to the unique practices and customs of other cultures. Pohlhaus offers the 2008 presidential election campaign in the United States as an example of this phenomenon. During the campaign, the media attacked the sermons of President Obama's (now former) pastor Reverend Jeremiah Wright, and used them to argue that Obama was, like Wright, "anti-American and anti-racist" (2012, p. 732). Pohlhaus notes that despite Obama's attempts to point out that Wright's services would seem quite confronting and unsettling to White Americans who are largely unfamiliar with Black church services, he was eventually forced to distance himself from Wright and withdraw his membership from Wright's Trinity Church (2012, p. 732).

instance, a majority of White people have the privilege of not needing to interrogate many existing institutional structures insofar as these structures provide them with social, legal and material benefits. Black persons on the other hand are often compelled to confront and find out more about these structures insofar as they function as a source of oppression, disadvantage and discrimination.

Privileged identities may not only refrain from inquiring into the circumstances and perspectives of marginalised identities because there is little at stake for them and their immediate interests in failing to do so, but because doing so would actively go against their interests. Indeed privileged identities may refrain from or resist engaging with alternative perspectives not because of a shared attitude that there is no need to, but because of a shared desire not to. Whites, for example, not only have *no need to know* about certain structures and institutions and their impact on the lives of Black persons, they also have a *need not to know* about these things: there is "ignorance out of luxury" and "ignorance out of necessity" (Medina, 2013, p. 34).[78] As the following section explains, it is often inimical to the interests (e.g. economic, legal, political, social) of privileged identities to know more about the histories, experiences and perspectives of oppressed identities, as well as the structures that discriminate against them, especially when doing so would force them to scrutinise the dominant norms, meanings and values which enable them to retain several advantages. The social and material benefits that privileged identities reap from remaining ignorant of the lives of others is thought to be part of what provides them with a shared motivation to maintain this ignorance. This phenomenon has been referred to as 'active' or 'wilful ignorance.'

Wilful ignorance may be contrasted with what is referred to as 'simple' ignorance. The latter refers to a type of ignorance that is the result of a 'mere gap' in one's

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[78] Medina borrows this point from Robert Bernasconi (2007).

knowledge; a gap which is unintended and non-culpable, and which can be easily resolved once it is brought to one's attention (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 1). One might argue that the ignorance that White people tend to exhibit with respect to the lives, history and experiences of Black people represents a form of simple ignorance: an inadvertent lack of knowledge that arises from having little to do with Black communities and from being exposed to a social imaginary that propagates uncharitable stereotypes of Black persons. If this were the case, then this lack of knowledge could be corrected simply by providing more opportunities for interracial contact and communication, and by providing White people with more accurate, non-stereotypical information with regards to the lives and circumstances of Black people. This line of thought assumes that White ignorance is unintentional, and that once Whites are made aware of their ignorance and given more accurate information, they will simply correct for their biased and prejudiced assumptions about Black people and their circumstances.[79] However theorists argue that, more often than not, White ignorance of Black lives is not unintentional, and constitutes a form of wilful ignorance. The latter refers to "a lack of knowledge or an unlearning of something previously known" that is "actively produced for purposes of domination and exploitation" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 1). As an example of White ignorance, Mills (2007) highlights the 'collective amnesia' that White Americans exhibit with respect to the brutalities and violence inflicted upon generations of non-White people, and with respect to non-White achievements. He argues that such ignorance is deliberate or intentional rather than inadvertent, insofar as it allows Whites to retain ungenerous perceptions of non-White people (e.g. as lazy, 'savage,' and unaccomplished) and charitable conceptions of themselves (e.g. as progressive,

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[79] This example comes from Shannon Sullivan (2006, pp. 17-18), who argues that reading White ignorance purely as a form of simple ignorance is naïve and misguided.

accomplished and generous) (Mills, 2007, pp. 26-31).[80] Although Smith could not have

anticipated the phenomenon of White ignorance in all its complexity, he appeared to be

aware of the amnesia and hypocrisy exhibited by members of 'civilized' European

nations. He remarks:

> Some of the savage nations in North-America tie four boards round the heads of their
> children, and thus squeeze them, while the bones are tender and gristly, into a form that
> is almost perfectly square. Europeans are astonished at the absurd barbarity of this
> practice, to which some missionaries have imputed the singular stupidity of those nations
> among whom it prevails. But when they condemn those savages, they do not reflect that
> the ladies in Europe had, till within these very few years, been endeavouring, for near a
> century past, to squeeze the beautiful roundness of their natural shape into a square form
> of the same kind. And that, notwithstanding the many distortions and diseases which
> this practice was known to occasion, custom had rendered it agreeable among some of
> the most civilized nations which, perhaps, the world ever beheld (TMS V.I.8).

In modern egalitarian societies, it is thought that White amnesia of the kind identified by

Mills contributes to the blindness and deafness exhibited by those in the White

community to instances of everyday racism. This has the consequence that many Whites

deny that racism and racial discrimination exist in contemporary society.[81] As Mills puts

it, the highly selective memory of Whites "enables a self-representation in which

differentiated white privilege […] does not exist. In other words, the mystification of the

past underwrites a mystification of the present" (2007, p. 31). White blindness to

contemporary racial injustice is supported by what Mills has referred to as a "strategic

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[80] Of course, to highlight that White ignorance may constitute a willed or intentional form of
ignorance is not to say that Whites maintain their ignorance through a conscious effort. As this
chapter will outline, their resistance to finding out more about the lives of non-White people (and
the reasons for this resistance) may not be readily transparent to them, and may influence their
behaviour without their awareness.

[81] Empirical studies consistently reveal that members of privileged racial groups perceive less
racism in mainstream society than do members of subordinate racial groups (Brown et. al., 2003;
Durrheim, Mtose, & Brown, 2011; Newport, 2012). This has been attributed to the poor
knowledge of historical racial injustices that is exhibited by privileged racial identities, and to the
latter's concern with maintaining a positive group image (Nelson, Adams & Salter, 2012).

color blindness" on the part of White people. Broadly speaking, this consists in the belief that race is no longer a significant factor in shaping people's decisions and behaviour towards others (See also Medina, 2013, pp. 36-39). As Mills points out, this position functions to "negate the need for measures to repair the inequities of the past" (2007, p. 28).[82] It also enables Whites to turn a blind eye to their complicity in sustaining racial inequality, thereby allowing them to maintain their moral self-image and the feelings of self-pride this image preserves.

On the basis of these considerations, we can understand the systematic failure among privileged social identities to imagine the point of view of marginalised and devalued identities as being linked to the fact that doing so would compel them to open their mind up to possibilities which present an unwelcome challenge to the way in which they understand themselves in relation to others, and to certain structures and norms which allow them to retain certain benefits and advantages. As the following chapter claims, imagining the point of view of Aboriginal Australians may compel members of the Anglo-Australian community to confront an image of themselves as perpetuating human rights abuses against Indigenous Australians, and to scrutinise the overriding value they invest in Eurocentric norms, practices and values at the expense of those associated with Aboriginal culture. To enter into Indigenous feelings of shock and betrayal would also require Anglo-Australians to confront Australia's history of colonial violence and Indigenous dispossession, and the disproportionate inequalities and disadvantages suffered by present-day Aboriginal Australians as a result; disadvantages that are not shared by members of the wider Anglo-Australian community, and which

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[82] Recent empirical research suggests that Whites not only tend to reject a picture of themselves as being complicit in perpetuating racial discrimination and inequality; they see themselves as predominant victims of racial discrimination. According to one recent study, Whites believe that they have replaced Black people as the primary victims of racial discrimination in contemporary America (Norton & Sommers, 2011).

allow the latter to retain various social and material benefits.[83] As such, we can understand Anglo-Australians as having a positive interest in maintaining their ignorance with regards to the lives, histories and circumstances of Indigenous Australians, with the result that the lived experiences of Aboriginal Australians consistently fail to meet with widespread social recognition.

The phenomenon of wilful ignorance helps to explain the massive failures of fellow-feeling that mark the relations between privileged and marginalised identities. From a Smithean standpoint, the practice of wilful ignorance on the part of privileged identities manifests in a lack of reciprocity; more specifically, a failure to step outside the sphere of one's own beliefs, values and concerns in order to imaginatively engage with the lived experiences of marginalised identities in an informed and critically reflective manner. Such failures enable privileged identities to turn a blind eye to the recurring injustices suffered by marginalised and devalued groups, and serve to exclude the latter from the circulation of social passions (e.g. compassion, concern, benevolence, and beneficence). In Smith's view as we have seen, the motivating force of these passions serves to bind individuals who have no significant connection to one another in a moral community. Thus in the absence of these passions, societies risk a breakdown of sociability and solidarity among their members. From a contemporary standpoint, the widespread, collective failures of sympathy that mark the relationship between privileged and marginalised identities may account for the social discord and recurring injustices that persist in modern egalitarian societies, in spite of attempts to resolve these injustices through legislative reform.

The practice of wilful ignorance by dominant groups undermines the possibility of sympathetic identification with the lived experiences of marginalised others in a

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[83] Such benefits include, for example, better access health, legal and education services, and greater employment opportunities.

further way: namely, by coercively silencing marginalised identities. Earlier I explained that members of dominant groups may resist actively engaging with the perspectives of epistemically marginalized identities, insofar as doing so risks jeopardizing their interests. Those who are wilfully ignorant with regards to certain aspects of the world may not only exhibit a lack of curiosity and diligence to fill the gaps in their knowledge; even more problematically, they may exhibit close-mindedness and defensiveness in their exchanges with others, actively shutting down or pre-emptively dismissing certain facts, evidence and interpretations that are offered to them (Medina, 2013, pp. 34-35). This kind of defensiveness and close-mindedness is exemplified in the common tendency among White persons to respond to accusations of racial bias by claiming that they do not 'see' colour, or who dismiss or dispute historical evidence of violence and brutality against marginalised racial groups. The tendency among privileged racial and sexual identities to overlook, trivialise or pre-emptively shut down another's perspective and feelings may have the effect of silencing members of marginalised groups in various ways: first, if a speaker's attempt to account for her experience in its particular meaning for her is constantly trivialised, dismissed or invalidated by others in her social community, she may come to doubt her ability to make proper sense of the world, resulting in a loss of epistemic self-confidence which has the effect of inhibiting her from speaking out about her experiences (Fricker, 2007, pp. 162-163). Alternatively, if in communicating one's experience to others one risks being negatively stereotyped, she may be coerced into remaining silent. Linda Alcoff offers the example of young women not wanting to advance sexual harassment claims insofar as they want to avoid being stereotyped as an "angry feminist" (2010, p. 135).[84] Likewise, the risk of being stereotyped as 'playing the

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[84] We can better understand the silencing power of stereotypes if we acknowledge their ability to induce feelings of guilt, shame, and humiliation in the individuals whom they target. As Gatens (2004, p. 284) points out, social norms that are structured by the social imaginary "involve more than just the acceptance of ideas or the holding of beliefs"; they engage our imagination and emotions as well as our intellect, and "bite deeply into the identity of an individual and her/his

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race card' may coerce marginalised racial identities into remaining silent about racism in contemporary society. Lastly, marginalized identities may engage in a form of self-censorship whereby they truncate their account so that it only contains content that will be recognised and accepted by their audience, and which will not jeopardise the interests of themselves and/or those in their community.[85] With regard to the latter, Patricia Hill Collins notes that Black women are often discouraged from speaking about sexual topics that put Black men at risk, because they distrust non-Black publics and because they fear entrenching the sexual stigma that is attached to Black male bodies (1990, p. 125). In sum, the practice of wilful ignorance by dominant identities has the capacity to coercively silence entire groups of people. This has the consequence of obstructing the open communication of opinions and sentiments that is requisite to genuine sympathetic understanding between members of different social groups. A total absence of dialogue results in a complete breakdown of sympathy, thereby undermining a central foundation for human sociability and solidarity.

Wilful ignorance may be consciously maintained; however, more often than not it is "unconsciously generated and supported" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, pp. 1-2). The close-mindedness that is characteristic of those who are wilfully ignorant is, as Medina points out, "an unconscious defense mechanism" and not typically the result of a conscious decision:

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place and status within the community." Gatens rightly observes that while "acting contrary to a rule may mean one has to bear a bad consequence," transgressing a social norm that is tied up with one's group identity "may result in one being judged to be a *bad person*" (2004, p. 284). As such, individuals who engage in non-normative behaviours and practices may risk suffering feelings of guilt and shame that have the ability to constrict an individual's discursive agency.

[85] Dotson (2011) raises this point in her account of 'testimonial smothering.' Of course, not all instances of coerced silencing are bad (one need only think of the bigoted racist who, under the threat of legal and social sanction, keeps his racist tirades to himself), we can argue that coerced silencing is problematic when it systematically affects a particular speaker in virtue of her membership in a group that does not have its experiences represented in the dominant social imaginary of a culture.

> …people do not tell themselves "Let us make ourselves blind to this or that" or "Let us ignore these uncomfortable truths that can undermine our privilege." Close-mindedness as an avoidance strategy […] does not result from a decision or conscious effort to ignore, but from a socialization that leads one to be insensitive to certain things and immune to certain considerations (2013, pp. 35-36).

For this reason, wilful ignorance need not be confined to the uneducated and bigoted; it may also prevail among educated, liberal-minded and well-intentioned individuals.[86] Furthermore, wilful ignorance and its various manifestations in dialogical encounters need not be incompatible with an attitude of care and compassion. As the following chapter illuminates, while many White Australians have openly expressed their concern for the plight of Aboriginal Australians, they tend to do so in ways that fail to acknowledge White responsibility for, and ongoing complicity in the oppression of Indigenous persons, and in ways that do not interrogate their prejudicial assumptions of Indigenous Australians (e.g. as unable to be involved in the management of their own affairs). As Smith observed, uninformed and unreflective sympathy of this kind often fails to be conducive to human sociability and social respect: in the above instance, such a response risks generating support for paternalistic policies made in the absence of genuine dialogue and co-operation with Indigenous communities.

The ignorance that is displayed by privileged identities should not be conceived solely in terms of an individual phenomenon; as a lack of understanding that results from a cognitive flaw and bad epistemic practice, and for which the individual alone is responsible for correcting. The ignorance exhibited by dominant identities with respect to the perspectives and experiences of marginalised identities is a socially-induced and systematically supported pattern of (mis)understanding the world that is connected to, and works to sustain systemic oppression and privilege. Vivian May observes that "there

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[86] This is clear when we consider that empirical studies have found racial bias to exist among participants who demonstrate an explicit commitment to egalitarian ideals. See Adam Pearson, John Dovidio & Samuel Gaertner (2009) for a useful summary and analysis of these studies.

are many things those in dominant groups are taught not to know, encouraged not to see, and the privileged are rewarded for this state of not-knowing" (2006, p. 113). This resonates with Mills' observation that Whites "learn how to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that this set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority, whether religious or secular" (1997, p. 18). Indeed wilful ignorance is not just a matter of bad epistemic practice on the part of individuals; it is a structural issue that requires structural remedies. To address the problem of wilful ignorance and its attendant implications for reciprocal exercises of imaginative perspective-taking, we must focus on institutional initiatives and reforms that may assist in alleviating injustices of the sort produced by dominant social imaginaries that exclusively reflect the experiences and perspectives of powerful social identities. This is not to say that the practices of individuals are unimportant, however. In Chapter Four I outline the need for individuals to cultivate a particular set of skills and virtues to counter the damaging effects that dominant imaginaries can have on social relations. In the following chapter I offer a case study of the Australian Government's *Northern Territory Emergency Response* – commonly known as the 'Northern Territory Intervention' – as a massive failure of sympathetic imagination on behalf of the non-Indigenous community, particularly among members of the Australian Federal parliament. Drafted without any form of consultation with, or input from Indigenous people, the Intervention policy indiscriminately imposed a raft of restrictive measures on hundreds of Indigenous communities. Members of these communities were stripped of their right to control their land and to manage their financial resources. The Intervention measures continue to be supported and upheld by successive Labor and Liberal Governments, despite annual reports showing that the policy has caused widespread feelings of anger and humiliation among Aboriginal people, and has made only marginal progress in curbing incidents of sexual abuse against Indigenous children. From a Smithean standpoint, I argue that the Intervention and the

continued support it receives represents a colossal failure of sympathetic imagination among the Anglo-Australian community under the weight of Eurocentric norms and values that denigrate Aboriginal culture and identity, and which privilege Anglo-Australian perspectives on Indigenous affairs. This chapter will more concretely illustrate why it is that failures of educated and reflective sympathy matter, and shed light on the failure of legal reform, redistribution and other top-down measures to prevent the injustices that are repeatedly suffered by Aboriginal Australians; injustices which are largely rooted in the widespread failure among the Anglo-Australian community to recognise and respect Aboriginal perspectives and experiences.

Chapter Three
Failures of the Sympathetic Imagination:
The Northern Territory Intervention

In Chapter One I drew attention to injustices that are rooted in a failure to acknowledge and respect group difference under the weight of dominant social imaginings that confer diminished value on particular group identities, and which privilege those identities that enjoy greater access to the means of representation and communication in society. I offered reasons for why a distributive model of justice is insufficient to address injustices of this kind, and highlighted the need for theories of social injustice to incorporate a commitment to fostering positive recognition of group difference at the level of individual and institutional practice. At the level of individual practice, I have suggested that Smith's naturalistic moral theory furnishes us with a rich account of what the proper negotiation and recognition of difference entails. The

educated and critically reflective exercises of sympathetic imagination that Smith promotes as a foundation for harmonious social communities have a deeply recognitive element, and play an important role in producing feelings that are able to support a viable sociability between members of different social groups.

Chapter Two offered a theoretical analysis of how dominant social imaginings of sexual and racial difference may undercut sympathetic identification between members of privileged and oppressed groups, and inhibit an ethical response to the suffering of oppressed identities. In this chapter I offer a practical illustration of a breakdown of sympathy engendered by dominant social imaginings of racial difference. Specifically, I focus on the Australian Federal government's *Northern Territory National Emergency Response* as a massive failure of sympathetic imagination on the part of Australia's non-Indigenous community. Against the view that this piece of legislation constituted a humanitarian response which had nothing to do with race, I argue that its implementation and the continued support it receives despite having generated widespread feelings of anger, shock, and betrayal among Indigenous communities is inextricably linked to the devalued place occupied by Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture in the Anglo-Australian imaginary, and its effects on sympathy. In this chapter I consider how Aboriginal Australians have been imagined by non-Indigenous Australians in historical and contemporary contexts, and how these imaginings have been reflected in successive government policies that have profoundly undermined the well-being of Aboriginal persons. The introduction and endorsement of these policies is, I suggest, indicative in part of the capacity for dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity to structure an understanding of the problems facing Indigenous communities in a manner that justifies a top-down, paternalistic response from within the non-Indigenous community, and which invalidates the lived significance of these policies for Aboriginal people. Furthermore, I claim that the immediate implementation

of 'protective' measures that characterised the government's emergency response represents the practical expression of a form of unreflective, 'knee-jerk' sympathy for Indigenous disadvantage that has characterised the relation between well-meaning White Australians and Aboriginal people since colonial times. To the extent that this mode of sympathy fails to be accompanied by a genuine attempt to acknowledge Indigenous perspectives and to critically interrogate aspects of the dominant Anglo-Australian imaginary, it lacks the recognitive element that Smith's account of sympathy plausibly identifies as having the capacity to bind different individuals together in a moral community. [87] By detailing the various injustices and wide-ranging harms that are established and sustained by a failure on the part of privileged identities to imaginatively and reflectively engage with alternative ways of knowing and experiencing the world, this chapter aims to illuminate why failures of sympathy matter, and why such failures ought to be addressed.

i. Aboriginal Australians and Government Policy: A Brief History

In June 2007 the Australian Federal government passed a legislative package that introduced changes to Indigenous welfare provisions and land tenure, in addition to

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[87] By focusing on recurring failures on the part of non-Indigenous Australians to recognise Indigenous points of view, and to sympathetically identify with the concerns and interests of Aboriginal people, I do not seek to deny the fact that there have been several figures from within the non-Indigenous community who have demonstrated their acknowledgment of and respect for Indigenous perspectives and experiences, and who have worked collaboratively with Indigenous Australians to promote and address the issues facing their communities. Former Australian Prime Ministers Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser both strongly supported Indigenous rights to self-determination. During his time in government, Whitlam introduced policies that saw the return of traditional lands to the Gurindji people in the Northern Territory, and which enabled Indigenous Australians to have increased input into the laws and policies directly affecting their communities. Many of these reforms were upheld by the Fraser government. Journalist and film-maker John Pilger has released several films and books that have sought to draw attention to the appalling social conditions suffered by Indigenous Australians and to highlight the racism embedded in government policy. Catholic priest and lawyer Frank Brennan has actively campaigned for Indigenous recognition in the constitution. Nevertheless, the efforts on behalf of these figures to promote and support Indigenous causes are not the norm; rather they are the exception to the rule.

various other measures and reforms. This package is commonly referred to as the Northern Territory Intervention (hereafter NT Intervention). The policy was implemented under the leadership of John Howard, with the ostensible purpose of protecting Indigenous children from sexual abuse, which was described by the government as having reached a 'crisis' point. A major catalyst for the Intervention was an official report released in April 2007 by former Northern Territory Director of Public Prosecutions, Rex Wild QC, and senior Aboriginal health worker Pat Anderson. Entitled *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle: Little Children Are Sacred* (hereafter referred to as *Little Children are Sacred* report), the report noted that the violence and abuse occurring within remote Northern Territory Indigenous communities was acutely worse than any other region in Australia, and moreover had been for decades. The authors emphasised that the nature of the violence and abuse occurring within these communities was extremely complex, with a vast range of contributing factors, including poor health; alcohol and drug abuse; inadequate housing; poor access to health and social services; unemployment; gambling; pornography; general loss of identity and control; and the lack of coordination and communication between government departments and agencies causing a breakdown in services.[88] They stressed that there were no "simple fixes" to the social problems plaguing Indigenous communities, and put forward a "conservative estimate" of fifteen years to make headway in curbing the levels of violence and abuse, and to promote community empowerment.[89] The central recommendation of the report was that there needed to be major transformations "in the way government and non-government organisations consult, engage with and support Aboriginal people," with an

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[88] As summarised in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, *Social Justice Report 2007* (2008), pp. 201–202.

[89] See Rex Wild and Pat Anderson (2007). *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle: Little Children Are Sacred. Report of the Northern Territory board of inquiry into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse: 2007*. p. 13. Hereafter LCAS, p. 13.

emphasis on "immediate and ongoing effective dialogue with Aboriginal people with genuine consultation in designing initiatives that address child sexual abuse" (LCAS, p. 50). Previous interventions by Australian governments had, according to the authors of the report, left Aboriginal people feeling "disempowered, confused, overwhelmed and disillusioned" (LCAS, p. 50). Prior to the release of the *Little Children are Sacred* report, various Indigenous groups had made repeated efforts to bring the government's attention to the issues affecting their communities. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, **a** Goenpul woman and professor of Indigenous studies, points out that since the nineteen-eighties Aboriginal women have put forward several recommendations to resolve the problem of violence, drug abuse, and sexual assault in Indigenous communities, including calls for better health, education, and housing services.[90] These recommendations were ignored by successive governments and the media (2009, p. 71). Following the release of the *Little Children are Sacred* report, the Howard Coalition government accused the Northern Territory State Government of several months of inaction, and labelled the problem a national emergency that warranted Federal intervention.[91] The government went about implementing immediate measures intended to protect children from further abuse. The new legislation took only ten days to enact under the guidance of former Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough, who disclosed in June 2008 that it took merely forty-eight hours to draft up the Intervention policy.[92]

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[90] These recommendations were made at the ANZAAS Fiftieth Conference in Adelaide in 1980, the Federation of Aboriginal Women's Conference in Canberra in 1982, the National Aboriginal Women's Taskforce in 1986, the First Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide in 1989, the Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's meeting in Laura in July 1991 and the ATSIC National Women's Conference in Canberra in 1992 (cited in Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 2009, p. 71).

[91] Six days after the release of the *Little Children are Sacred* report, the Federal government announced that it would implement "immediate, broad ranging measures to stabilize and protect communities" in response to the "national emergency confronting the welfare of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory" (Brough, 2007a).

[92] "Intervention created in just 48 Hours," *ABC News*, June 16, 2008.

Ignoring the call from the authors of the *Little Children are Sacred* report for genuine co-operation and dialogue with Indigenous people to tackle the issue of violence and abuse within their communities, the drafting process was carried out without any form of consultation with, or input from, Aboriginal persons. Out of the ninety-seven recommendations put forward by the report, the Howard Government carried out two.[93] The proposed aim of the Intervention was to "stabilise, normalize and then exit" the prescribed communities over a period of five years, which fell drastically short of the fifteen year estimate given by the report's authors.

The government maintained that the crisis of sexual abuse plaguing Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory called for the implementation of 'special measures'[94] that included nullifying the existing rights of Indigenous persons to control their land and financial resources. In a highly militaristic response, the Howard government sent Federal military units and police to seize control of seventy-three Aboriginal township settlements and associated outstations, in addition to a number of Aboriginal town camps, most of which are on ancestral land. Doctors, professionals, and public servants from outside of Aboriginal communities were also called in. The

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[93] These two measures consisted in increased policing and restrictions on the sale of alcohol.

[94] The Government's classification of the Intervention measures as 'special measures' has important legal significance. 'Special measures' refer to provisions that are exempt from the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (hereafter RDA). The RDA gives effect to Australia's obligations under the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965* (hereafter ICERD). Its official objectives are to promote equality before the law for all persons, regardless of their race, colour or national or ethnic origin, and to make discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin unlawful. Under section 8 of the RDA, the prohibition on racial discrimination does not apply to 'special measures.' Article 1(4) of the ICERD defines special measures as those measures whose purpose is to secure "adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms." This is on the condition that "such measures do not, as a consequence, lead to the maintenance of separate rights for different racial groups and that they shall not be continued after the objectives for which they were taken to have been achieved." Finally, special measures must be implemented with the input of, and consent from the groups that are directly affected by the measures, and must be consistent with fundamental human rights.

government removed the permit system that enabled Aboriginal communities to control who has access to their land, acquired control of local townships through five year leases, quarantined welfare payments, implemented alcohol restrictions and compulsory child health checks, enforced a ban on pornography, removed consideration of Aboriginal customary law and cultural practice in sentencing and bail applications, and assumed command over community resources. Many of the measures granted extra police powers to enter private homes and properties without a warrant. The areas targeted by the Intervention are home to over five hundred Aboriginal communities, and the measures are estimated to directly affect over forty-five thousand people.[95]

The announcement of the Intervention triggered high levels of confusion, panic and fear among Indigenous communities (Mclaughlin, 2008). The Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board found that the experiences of Aboriginal people affected by the measures included feelings of indignity, humiliation, confusion, anxiety, hurt, anger, betrayal and disbelief. They expressed frustration with the focus on Aboriginal child abuse and neglect given that child abuse is a nation-wide issue, and were convinced that the measures would never have been applied to other Australians.[96] Several months after the special measures were implemented, the Central Land Council (CLC) met and consulted with traditional Indigenous landowners from across Central Australia. The CLC report found that a majority of Aboriginal persons were in favour of addressing the problem of child abuse and housing shortages, and bore little opposition

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[95] See Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board, *Report of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board 2008,* p. 9. Hereafter NTERB, p. 9.

[96] NTERB, p. 8. In a letter to the Federal Minister of Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin, Alyawarr spokesperson Richard Downs wrote:

> The Federal Minister, departments and Government Business Managers have not shown any compassion, understanding or respect towards our leaders and my people. Our people are demoralized, hurt, embarrassed, outcaste on their own community. We no longer have any rights to exist as humans in our own country (2009).

to increased policing. They were, however, strongly opposed to welfare reform, land restrictions and changes to the permit system, which were seen to bear little connection to the problem of sexual abuse (Central Land Council, 2007).

A progress report on the Intervention (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs [FaHCSIA], 2010), released three years into its operation and two years off its estimated completion date, showed that it had made only marginal headway in curbing the high levels of violence and sexual abuse in the prescribed communities, and in improving the lives of Indigenous persons living in these communities. Alcohol, substance abuse, and drug related incidents were shown to have increased, with incidents of attempted suicide and self-harm exhibiting a marked increase (2010, pp. 53–55).[97] A 2010 report compiled by the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) found that the Intervention had caused "profound, far reaching, and serious negative effects" on the psychosocial, physical and cultural health of Indigenous persons affected by the measures (2010, p. 18). Despite the lack of progress made by the Intervention, the succeeding Labor government under the leadership of Kevin Rudd upheld many of the Intervention measures under its *Stronger Futures* policy, which remains in place under the current Coalition government.[98] On 29 June 2012, the Australian Senate passed a series of bills that extended the Intervention for an additional ten years.[99] A six-monthly progress report on changes to Indigenous outcomes under *Stronger Futures*

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[97] For a summary and critical analysis of the report findings, see Altman (2010, 2012).

[98] The Howard government remained in power from 1996 until 2007, when it was succeeded by the Australian Labor Party under the leadership of Kevin Rudd and later, Julia Gillard. The Labor government had a six year tenure, from 2007 to 2013. The current Coalition government is led by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who replaced Tony Abbott as preferred leader in September 2015.

[99] The *Stronger Futures* legislation has retained key features of the *Northern Territory Emergency Response Act*, and includes bills such as the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011*, *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2011*, and the *Social Security Legislation Amendment Bill 2011*. The legislation has extended the time frame and geographic reach of the measures that were introduced in 2007 by the Howard government.

covering the period from January to June 2013 show that these outcomes have not improved (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014).[100]

At the time of its introduction, the Intervention legislation received bipartisan support in the Commonwealth Parliament, and was met with support from a handful of Aboriginal commentators and activists. Public opposition to the Intervention has come from prominent Indigenous figures within academia, law and the media. These critics were united in their acknowledgment that the situation in the Northern Territory was extremely grave and merited address. However, they took issue with the blanket imposition of punitive measures upon Indigenous communities, and the top-down way in which they were implemented. The Intervention has been cited twice by the United Nations for human rights abuses, and the government's current *Stronger Futures* policy has been criticized by various agencies and organizations, including Amnesty International.[101] Nevertheless, the continuation of the policy has failed to raise strong concerns among the wider Australian community: the Intervention's yearly anniversary tends to be overlooked by mainstream news outlets, and little media attention is given to reports on the Intervention's lack of progress in improving Indigenous outcomes. While the Intervention has now largely dropped out of non-Indigenous discussion and debate, it remains a daily topic in Indigenous conversation, and continues to be strongly contested by Indigenous academics and activists.

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[100] The report revealed a decrease in the Indigenous employment rate from 50.8% in 2008 to 44.0% in 2012-13. It also showed a 36% increase in the number of assault incidents. In term 2, 2013, the average school attendance rate for Indigenous students living in remote Northern Territory communities remained at 54.8% (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014, pp. 3-4).

[101] On March 13, 2009, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination wrote an Urgent Action Letter requesting that the Australian government take immediate steps to ensure the Intervention's compliance with Australia's obligations under the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1969*. A subsequent letter dated September 28, 2009, confirmed that the Intervention was in violation of Australia's international obligations. See "Indigenous rights: Request for urgent action on NT Intervention from UN CERD," *Human Rights Law Centre*, October 16, 2009.

The Intervention was implemented a decade after the release of the *Bringing Them Home Report,* which detailed the damaging and far-reaching consequences that historical government policies have had for Aboriginal communities. Compiled by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the report was the result of an inquiry launched in 1995 into the impact of child removal policies on Indigenous families. The report featured testimonies from Indigenous adults who as children were forcibly removed from their families, because it was judged that they would benefit more from a 'European' upbringing, and would be able to become more productive members of society by contributing to the nation's growing economy. These removed children were placed into government and missionary institutions, and some were adopted by White families, where they often experienced physical and sexual abuse. The removal policies were implemented in the late nineteenth century, and were in practice up until the late twentieth century. Under this legislation, Federal and State government agencies, along with church missions, were granted the power to remove children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent from their families.[102]

The removal policies formed part of the non-Indigenous response to the deteriorating state of Indigenous communities under colonial rule, many of which became rampant with disease, malnutrition, alcohol abuse and violence after having been forced off their traditional land to the fringes of non-indigenous settlements. [103] By the late nineteenth century it became apparent to White authorities that while the 'full descent' Indigenous population was declining rapidly, the 'mixed descent' Indigenous

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[102] Torres Strait Islander refers to an Indigenous person of the Torres Strait Islands. These islands are located between Australia and the Melanesian island of Papua New Guinea. Torres Strait Islanders are considered to be a separate and distinct group from Aboriginal people living in Australia.

[103] See Sir Ronald Wilson and Mick Dodson (1997), *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families,* p. 23. Hereafter BTH, p. 23.

population was rapidly increasing (BTH, p. 24). As a response to this rising population of so-called 'half-castes,' State governments gradually introduced legislation that aimed to integrate children of mixed descent into the non-Indigenous community, where they would receive education and training in line with European standards, and adopt an Anglo-Australian lifestyle.[104] A widespread assumption was that this policy would be in the best interests of society at large, insofar as the removed children would contribute to Australia's burgeoning economy by providing low cost labour rather than relying on government handouts (BTH, p. 24). Moreover, it was also thought to be in the best interests of the children themselves. The remarks of one particular missionary in 1916 illustrate this view:

> The young require not only isolation from the outside world, but what proved still more difficult, separation from their own people. *When the latter was possible a marked difference is noted in the manners, ways and point of view, as contrasted with those who were not so fortunate* (qtd. in BTH, p. 65. My emphasis).

The attitude that Indigenous children would benefit significantly from being separated from their families was further reflected in the conclusions drawn by the Commonwealth-State Native Welfare conference in 1937:

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[104] In 1937 the first Commonwealth-State Native Welfare Conference was held. In relation to Indigenous children, the conference resolved that:

> … efforts of all State authorities should be directed towards the education of children of mixed aboriginal blood at white standards, and their subsequent employment under the same conditions as whites with a view to their taking their place in the white community on an equal footing with the whites (qtd. in BTH, p. 25).

To focus on the philanthropic or humanitarian motives for the removal of Indigenous children is not to deny or dismiss strong arguments from within academic scholarship (including *The Bringing them Home Report*) that the removal policies constituted part of a eugenicist agenda aimed at 'breeding out' the Indigenous race, and that they were also part of an initiative to free up Indigenous land for non-Indigenous claim. However, since this thesis is primarily interested in the harms and injustices that are generated in part by a failure among well-intentioned people to recognise certain forms of difference, I am less concerned with the role played by explicit economic motives and/or noxious social prejudices in motivating unjust and discriminatory practices.

Nobody who knows anything about these groups can deny that their members are socially and culturally deprived. What has to be recognized is that the integration of these groups differs in no way from that of the highly integrated groups of economically depressed Europeans found in the slums of any city and in certain rural areas of New South Wales. In other words, these groups are just like groups of poor whites. *The policy for them must be one of welfare.* Improve their lot so that they can take their place economically and socially in the general community and not merely around the periphery (qtd. in Bell 1964 p.68. See BTH, p. 27. My emphasis).

Indigenous people were denied any form of involvement in the drafting of the policies that allowed the widespread practice of child removal. In addition, families were not able to make formal legal appeals to regain custody of their children. Evidence compiled by the *Bringing Them Home* report indicates that in a large number of cases, children were removed from their parent or parents without their consent, and upon many occasions with the use of force or deceptive tactics.[105] In some cases, Aboriginal parents were pressured into signing legal forms consenting to having their children removed (BTH, p. 40). In other cases, consent was neither solicited nor required.[106]

The quality of care received by children in institutions and White foster homes was reportedly of a very low standard. Testimonies offered by those individuals who were taken from their families recall instances of being starved, denied proper medical attention, and subject to strict punishments and beatings (BTH, pp. 137-140). Children

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[105] The authors of the *Bringing Them Home* report claimed that children were often taken from their parents under compulsion or duress. Various testimonies featured in the report attest to children being removed from their mothers at birth, who in turn were told that their newborns had died. On other occasions children would be taken from their homes whilst their mother was away in hospital giving birth. The testimonies also describe instances where Indigenous parents were coerced into giving up a child that was wanted by a White family, under the threat of having their other remaining children removed. The report also notes that Indigenous families were frequently misled into believing that placing their children in respite care would constitute a fixed, temporary arrangement. However, once the children were placed into care, they were permanently retained against the wishes of their families (See BTH, pp. 5-9).

[106] In Western Australia for example, the *Aborigines Act 1905* (WA) effectively denied legal guardianship to Aboriginal parents, making all Aboriginal children legal wards of the state. As a result, no parental permission was required to remove them.

living in foster homes were often emotionally abused and suffered high levels of sexual abuse at the hands of their non-Indigenous carers (pp. 140-143). The exact number of Indigenous children removed remains unknown, however the *Bringing Them Home* report estimated that between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children were forcibly separated from their families between 1910 and 1970, and that "not one indigenous family escaped the effects of forcible removal" (BTH, p. 31). The *Bringing Them Home* report found the removal of Indigenous children from their families to have been in serious violation of fundamental human rights that should have been extended to Indigenous Australians living under British rule and law, and that the poor treatment of removed children in government institutions constituted a form of civil and criminal wrongdoing (BTH, pp. 241-242). The authors of the report concluded that past government laws and policies caused a vast array of social problems for those who were removed, including markedly higher rates of incarceration and substance abuse, and lower levels of education and mental well-being in comparison to Indigenous persons who as children were brought up by their families or within Indigenous communities (BTH, pp. 11-14).[107]

How might one explain the ethical failure embodied by the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families and by the current Intervention measures,

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[107] More recent studies on Indigenous outcomes reveal that these same problems have carried over to present generations of Indigenous Australians. In the 2011 Australian census, 548,370 people identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, representing 2.5% of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2011). Between 2001 and 2010, the suicide rate of Indigenous persons (particularly among young teenage males) remained on average double that of non-Indigenous persons (ABS, 2010). In 2000, Indigenous people were 13.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than non-Indigenous people, and this rose to 17.2 times more likely in 2008 (ABS, 2008). Compared with the non-Indigenous population, Indigenous communities also suffer from diminished health, are far less likely to receive a secondary and tertiary education, and experience a much higher rate of domestic and sexual violence and drug abuse. According to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013), life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders born between 2010 and 2012 was 69.1 years for men and 73.7 years for women. This is 10.6 years lower than estimated life expectancy for non-Indigenous males (69.1 years compared with 79.7) and 9.5 years lower for non-Indigenous females (73.7 compared with 83.1).

particularly in light of the consideration that such practices were supported by ostensibly well-meaning individuals? Any account of this failure, I suggest, must pay attention to the devaluation of Indigenous identity and the privileging of non-Indigenous identity in the Anglo-Australian imaginary, and the impact this has on non-Indigenous sympathy for Aboriginal experiences. From a standpoint that takes this into account, the fact that both pieces of legislation were implemented and supported despite generating strong resistance from within Indigenous communities, and despite having failed significantly to improve the living conditions and well-being Aboriginal persons, can be understood to reflect the potential for dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of racial identity to undercut sympathetic identification with Indigenous perspectives and experiences.

The remainder of this chapter traces the various ways in which Indigenous Australians have been imagined by Australia's non-Indigenous community, and the capacity of these imaginings to powerfully undermine the authority of Indigenous viewpoints which present a challenge to dominant norms, meanings, and values. I argue that the twenty-first century Intervention measures align with the nineteenth-century removal policies embedded in Australia's colonial history to the extent that both practices reflect a collective failure among non-Indigenous Australians to recognise Indigenous difference. Moreover, the fact that both practices were implemented and supported despite generating widespread suffering and trauma among Indigenous communities reflects a massive failure of sympathetic imagination on the part of well-meaning non-Indigenous Australians: a failure to imaginatively engage with the perspectives and lived experiences of Indigenous people in an attentive, open- and fair-minded manner, and to subject their situated way of imagining the world to critical interrogation.[108]

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[108] I do not mean to suggest that these policies were purely the result of a failure among otherwise well-intentioned members of the non-Indigenous community to recognize and respect

ii. Failures of the Sympathetic Imagination, Part One: The Stolen Generations

Aboriginal persons and Aboriginal culture occupy a subordinate place in the dominant Anglo-Australian imaginary.[109] The aesthetic, intellectual, and moral devaluation of the Indigenous body, and the diminished value conferred upon Indigenous customs and practices finds one of its earliest expressions in early Australian film. Twentieth-century cinematic texts are awash with conventional stereotypes of Indigenous persons as mystical and menacing figures, 'noble savages' or impoverished fringe-dwellers. Ralph Smart's film *Bitter Springs* (1950) tells the story of a battle between a group of Aboriginals and White settlers over a piece of land that was acquired by the latter through force. The Aboriginal characters are depicted as infantile and primitive, and as idolising European innovation. The film portrays them as progressing out of their 'savage' state to become 'civilised' sheep shearers for the White farm owners; content in

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Indigenous difference and to identify with Indigenous suffering, owing to the influence of dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of racial difference. Particularly with respect to the Intervention, there is evidence to suggest that explicit economic and material interests were a central driving factor in the design of the legislation, rather than the protection of Indigenous children from abuse. Muriel Bamblett of the Secretariat of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) pointed out that the words 'child' and 'children' did not appear once in the legislation, despite the government's insistence that the Intervention was entirely about ensuring the welfare of vulnerable Indigenous children (Bamblett, 2007). On 28 June, Arrernte and Guudanji woman Pat Turner, former CEO of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), spoke on behalf of an alliance of Aboriginal organisations in accusing the government of "using child sexual abuse as the Trojan horse to resume total control of our lands" (Robertson, 2007). The position adopted in this thesis is that while it is plausible to think that economic and material interests were among the motivations for the Intervention, it is equally plausible to think that large sectors of the non-Indigenous community harbored a genuine desire to protect Indigenous women and children from further sexual violence, and perceived the Intervention as the most expedient means of achieving this outcome. I am primarily interested in analyzing cases of the latter kind, and developing an account of the Intervention as an ethical failure – specifically a failure of sympathetic imagination – among well-intentioned members of Australia's non-Indigenous community.

[109] This is not to deny that some elements of Indigenous identity and culture occupy a valued place in the Anglo-Australian imaginary. The extraordinary upsurge of international interest in Indigenous art that began in the last part of the Twentieth century has meant that Indigenous artists and their work are highly prized by the wider Australian community. Yet it is worth noting that indigenous artists rarely see any of these profits.

their work and reconciled to the dispossession of their land. In presenting such a narrative, the film evokes an image that is well-entrenched within the European imaginary: that of the White settlers as conciliatory and generous, despite having unjustly acquired the land through force.[110] The diminished value that is typically conferred upon Aboriginal identity in the Anglo-Australian imaginary is again reflected in Fred Schepisi's film *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978). In the film, a majority of the Aboriginal characters feature as unidentifiable background figures; as destitute alcoholics living in rundown, derelict conditions, who have a tenuous connection to traditional Aboriginal culture and rituals.[111] Perhaps the clearest instantiation of the pejorative social meanings which were attached to Aboriginal identity and culture, and in particular to Indigenous male sexuality, is Charles Chauvel's internationally acclaimed film *Jedda* (1955). The film tells the story of Jedda, an orphaned Aboriginal girl who is brought up in a White family. As Jedda grows older, her curiosity about 'her people' and their culture intensifies, despite her foster mother's entreaties to refrain from associating with Aboriginal people. Jedda is depicted as longing to break from the rigid confines of her White upbringing and the routine of life on the family ranch to explore her Aboriginal heritage. In one scene, Jedda's piano practice is disrupted when she becomes transfixed by the Aboriginal shields and spears hanging on her foster parent's wall, her focus becoming broken by the incessant far-off sound of a didgeridoo.[112] Jedda eventually succumbs to her curiosity, and is enticed away from her White home by an Aboriginal man named Marbuck. Marbuck is depicted as a dark, mysterious figure with a strong physical presence: in one

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[110] See Anne Hickling-Hudson (1990, pp. 264-265) for a critical reading of Smart's film.

[111] As Hickling-Hudson remarks, the Aboriginal characters in Schepisi's film are often depicted "as either mysterious or squalid: dark people, dark images in huddled, shadowy groups, rarely individualized" who reside in over-crowded fringe dwellings, engage in drunken behaviour and who present "a vague, superstitious cleaving to the ancient rituals of the tribe" (1990, p. 269).

[112] A didgeridoo is a traditional Aboriginal wood instrument.

scene, Jedda watches on as he overpowers an aggressive crocodile. Soon after their

encounter, Marbuck abducts Jedda from her home against her will, taking her deep into

the bush. Joe, a well-spoken half-caste stockman, tracks the two for several days.

Throughout the journey Jedda is depicted as openly mourning the loss of her familiar

White world, screaming and begging to be returned to her foster parents. Upon bringing

Jedda back to his native lands, Marbuck is condemned by the tribal council for having

brought a member of the wrong skin group into their community.[113] The members of the

council charge him with having committed a serious crime, and sing his death song as

punishment.[114] Driven insane by the death song, the final scene depicts Marbuk pulling

Jedda with him over a high cliff, just as Joe comes within inches of rescuing her. In

presenting such a narrative, the film evokes the trope of the dangerous Black male, from

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[113] One's skin group or skin name conveys an individual's blood line. An individual receives a
skin name at the time of birth, based on the skin names of his or her parents. Skin names form
the basis of a complex and important system of social organization that determines the roles,
responsibilities, and obligations that particular individuals have within their communities. In
traditional Aboriginal culture, one must marry those of the same skin group, and is forbidden
from marrying those of a different skin group.

[114] Songs are an integral part of Aboriginal culture. The death song or 'death wail' is typically
performed following the death of an Aboriginal person. I leave aside the controversial question
of whether singing a death song as a form of punishment or retribution constitutes a genuine
Aboriginal practice. Senior Lecturer in Indigenous Strategy and Engagement at Flinders
University Dr. Simone Bignall has suggested in private correspondence that part of the ambiguity
surrounding this question owes itself to the fact that many Indigenous rituals constitute a form of
sacred and secret knowledge that is strictly protected by access privileges. Bignall notes that:

> [u]nlike non-Indigenous legal systems, which typically work by transparency and
> universality, Indigenous Law is layered: Indigenous peoples' knowledge of the Law (and
> of the punishments rightfully dealt out in relation to particular crimes) is not freely open
> to all as a matter of right, but is earned over time as an effect of maturity and
> demonstrated responsibility for others (personal communication, July 14, 2015).

Professor Daryle Rigney (Ngarrindjeri man and Professor and Dean of Indigenous Strategy and
Engagement, Flinders University) has provided valuable insights into the practical implications
that White settler (mis)understandings of Indigenous culture and law have had for Indigenous
people, especially for the Ngarrindjeri people in South Australia. See Simone Bignall, Robert
Hattam & Daryle Rigney, 'Colonial Letters Patent and Excolonialism: Forgetting, Counter-
Memory and Mnemonic Potentiality' (forthcoming in a special issue of *Borderlands* e-journal) for
an illuminating discussion of the failure on the part of State and Federal courts to properly
recognise Ngarrindjeri law and culture in the context of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge litigation in
South Australia during the late nineties.

whom women require the protection of White men (or at least men who embody the norms and values of White culture). *Jedda* reflects an image of Aboriginal men – well-entrenched in the European imaginary – as mysterious, volatile, dark and predatory, and as posing a threat to women universally.[115] The film paints a picture of Aboriginal culture as enticing and alluring, yet ultimately very dangerous for those who choose to step outside the confines of 'civilised' White society.

The subordinate place occupied by Indigenous identity and culture vis à vis European identity and culture found practical expression in the invasion and dispossession of Indigenous land that followed the arrival of the first British fleets in the late eighteenth century. Narrative accounts given by European settlers of the time evince a failure to imagine Aboriginal persons as legitimate landowners, against the backdrop of Eurocentric conceptions of humanhood and property ownership (Lloyd 2000).[116] European imaginings of Indigenous persons as primitive 'savages' without any form of legitimate government aligned with the idea that Australia was *terra nullius* (a 'land belonging to no-one') at the time of British settlement.[117] White colonialist imaginings of

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[115] As Dave Palmer and Garry Gillard have pointed out, the mainstream view of *Jedda* is that it represents a gross instantiation of White racism, which "constitute[s] the Aborigine as barbaric, dangerous, distant and sexually risky" (2002, pp. 110-111).

[116] Genevieve Lloyd notes that the privileging of a disembodied and abstract reason as a marker of humanhood, and the exclusive association of this mode of reason with White bourgeois maleness, meant that non-European persons were perceived as being at a "lesser stage of human development" (2000, p. 33). As nomadic peoples who ranged over their ancestral lands, Lloyd points out that Indigenous persons also failed to be recognized as legitimate land-owners by European colonialists, who – heavily influenced by a Lockean conception of property – believed that only those who cultivated land could rightly lay a claim to ownership (2000, pp. 33-34). In her view, Eurocentric imaginings of land ownership and the identification of White, masculine, bourgeois reason with a fully mature or developed mode of human existence had the effect of:

> rationaliz[ing] European presence as embodying the most fully human way of relating to land. Colonization is imagined as the historically inevitable unfolding of nature in the spread of enlightenment, and the participation of indigenous peoples in its fruits (2000, p. 34).

[117] Historians have increasingly acknowledged that the legal term *terra nullius* was not used to justify Indigenous dispossession in Australia throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Indigenous persons and their culture as backward and unenlightened allowed the rapid

decline of the native Indigenous population to be rationalised as the inevitable 'dying out'

of a naturally inferior race, rather than as the direct result of White violence and

introduced disease. As the authors of the *Bringing Them Home* report note:

> The violence and disease associated with colonisation was characterised, in the language
> of social Darwinism, as a natural process of 'survival of the fittest'. According to this
> analysis, the future of Aboriginal people was inevitably doomed; what was needed from
> governments and missionaries was to 'smooth the dying pillow' (BTH, p. 23).

White narratives of Australia's Indigenous inhabitants as a subordinate, 'doomed' race

helped to effectively absolve the European community of any responsibility for the

former's plight, and supported a conception of their role as being primarily one of

palliative care. Perceived as unfortunate yet inevitable, the decline of the Aboriginal

population provided no occasion for critical self-reflection among members of the non-

Indigenous community, and allowed them to avoid intense feelings of guilt, shame, and

remorse.[118]

Perhaps one of the most devastating failures of sympathy under the weight of

dominant White imaginings, and one of the clearest illustrations of sympathy's

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Andrew Fitzmaurice claims that *terra nullius* emerged from the tradition of employing natural law
to debate the justice of dispossession and colonisation (2007, p. 1). The Aristotelian notion that
the realisation of our *telos* as human beings involves the exploitation of the natural environment,
and John Locke's concept that property ownership is determined by the use of that property,
were both used as arguments to justify dispossession and colonisation (2007, p. 7). In
Fitzmaurice's view, *terra nullius* was a product (and not simply a description) of those natural law
justifications for colonisation. While this view strikes me as plausible, I do not enter into the
debate surrounding the issue of how Indigenous dispossession was justified at the time of
European colonisation, and the role that *terra nullius* played in this justification. However,
Fitzmaurice (2007) offers a thoughtful account of the origins of the phrase, and its rise to
prominence in debates over sovereignty and Indigenous land rights.

[118] Of course, this is not to deny that the Indigenous plight drew intense feelings of compassion
and concern from some sectors of the White community. Indeed there is ample evidence to
suggest that many Europeans were concerned about the deteriorating state of Indigenous
communities under colonial rule. However, as this chapter will illuminate, their sympathetic
response fell well short of the kind that Smith saw as being fit to support moral communities,
and starkly illustrates the destructive potential of sympathy that fails to be guided by an effort to
recognise difference and to critically scrutinise one's situated perspective.

destructive potential, is embodied in the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families. The removal practices were described as a form of 'protectionist' legislation to be carried out by 'protectors'; namely, White police officers and Government missionaries. The introduction of the *State Children's Act 1895* in South Australia saw the government assume interpretative authority with regards to what constituted a suitable home environment for Indigenous children, and under what circumstances children qualified as neglected. What counted as child neglect was determined according to a European frame of reference that discriminated against nomadic ways of life, made apparent by the Act's definition of neglected and destitute children as those who slept in the open air, and who did not have a settled place of residence (BTH, p. 104). In many cases, evidence of neglect or destitution was not even required. Evidence compiled by the *Bringing Them Home* report suggests that often "their Aboriginality would suffice" as grounds for removing children (BTH, p. 9).

Against the backdrop of dominant European imaginings of Indigenous people as culturally, intellectually, morally, and socially inferior to Whites, Genevieve Lloyd observes that the forced removal of Indigenous children and their assimilation into White society took on the meaning of being "a gift and the promise of a fullness of humanity that could never have been attained if the Europeans had not come" in place of being "an imposition of something alien" (2000, p. 32). The continuation of this policy over the decades despite mass Indigenous trauma, fear, and resentment exemplifies the capacity of prevailing Anglo-Australian imaginings to undercut fellow-feeling with the lived experiences of Aboriginal people. The grossly misguided efforts of even and, in some cases, especially well-intentioned and compassionate non-Indigenous people during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to maximize the welfare of Indigenous children can be traced to a form of uneducated and unreflective sympathy that Smith identified as playing a marginal role in sustaining a viable sociability and sense

of community between different social groups. From a Smithean standpoint, the removal of Indigenous children from their families and their forced assimilation into White Australian society can be read as reflecting a massive failure of sympathetic imagination on the part of the White community. Specifically, it represents a failure to exercise the Smithean virtues of 'indulgent humanity' and 'self-command': a failure on the part of non-Indigenous people to imagine how it would feel to be permanently separated from one's kin, and to have foreign norms and values imposed on one's culturally distinctive way of life; and a failure to question and critically scrutinise the prevailing social meanings and value conferred upon Indigenous people and culture in comparison to European culture and identity.[119]

From the late twentieth-century onwards, there have been several watershed moments that have presented a significant challenge to non-Indigenous imaginings of Australian history and to the relation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, which have served to facilitate sympathetic identification with Indigenous suffering and disadvantage.[120] The release of the *Bringing Them Home* report, in addition to

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[119] This failure was acknowledged in the official apology offered by the Baptist Church of Western Australia:

> In retrospect […] Baptist Churches of Western Australia acknowledges that its efforts to reach out with Christian compassion, practical care and spiritual help were unfortunately combined with an unconscious complicity with the Government policy of assimilation of 'part-Aboriginal' people. While rightly deploring the degrading impact of European settlement upon Aboriginal peoples, and taking no part in the removal of children, Baptist Churches of Western Australia failed to provide a clear prophetic voice to challenge the Government policies of the day and the general community philosophy of racial superiority. We failed to publicly proclaim, in respect of Aboriginal and Islander peoples, the Biblical view of the intrinsic worth of all people as individuals made in God's image (qtd. in BTH p. 251).

[120] Indeed it is important to recognise that the Anglo-Australian imaginary, like any dominant imaginary, is not impervious to change. Alternative imaginings of, say, racial history and racial difference can exert pressure on, and galvanise shifts within the dominant imaginary, so that certain ideas or possibilities which were once considered unimaginable become more readily conceivable. In other words, it is always possible for elements of marginalised imaginaries to receive mainstream uptake, and to move from the fringe to the centre. Chapter Five explores this possibility in greater detail.

former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to members of the 'Stolen Generations'[121]

and their families in 2008, were among several events that marked a powerful

intervention into more charitable narratives of European settlement and colonisation. By

vividly detailing the various injustices and losses suffered by Aboriginal persons under

White colonial rule, both the report and Rudd's apology elicited strong affective

responses of compassion, shame, and remorse from non-Indigenous audiences nation-

wide. These symbolic challenges were preceded by the landmark legal cases of *Mabo v*

Queensland (No. 2) and *Wik Peoples v Queensland*, in which the Australian High Court ruled

that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people possessed rights to their land prior to

European settlement.[122] By officially recognising native title, the *Mabo* and *Wik* rulings

represented a forceful challenge to the popular fiction of *terra nullius* and to the cluster of

fictions that supported it, including those that sought to deny the humanity of Aboriginal

people.

Despite the significant shifts that have occurred within the Anglo-Australian

imaginary with respect to narratives of Australian history and Aboriginal identity,

pejorative imaginings of Aboriginal persons and Aboriginal culture continue to be

propagated in contemporary public discourse. These imaginings serve to undercut ethical

concern for Indigenous suffering and disadvantage, and to weaken support for increased

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[121] The Australian historian Peter Read coined the term 'Stolen Generations' in 1981. This term figured in the title of a brief pamphlet he compiled for the New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, which detailed the removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales from 1883 to 1969. Read strongly promoted the controversial view that the forced removal of Aboriginal children by White authorities amounted to a form of 'attempted genocide.' The view that these children were 'stolen' from their parents for the purpose of absorbing them into the White population has been the subject of heated public dispute. For this reason, Rudd's use of the term 'Stolen Generations' in his official apology remains particularly significant.

[122] The 1992 *Mabo* ruling granted the existence of native title in response to a case brought before the court by the Meriam people of Murray Islands, led by Indigenous land rights campaigner Eddie Mabo. The Meriam plaintiffs launched and won a legal claim for ownership of their lands on Murray Island. The *Mabo* ruling was later followed up by the *Wik* ruling in 1996, which found that statutory pastoral leases did not extinguish native title. I analyse and discuss the significance of these top-down, judicial challenges to Anglo-Australian imaginings in Chapter Five.

services and resources for Aboriginal people. In 1996 the leader of the One Nation Party, Pauline Hanson, delivered a parliamentary speech in which she depicted Aboriginal people as an unjustly privileged and advantaged subgroup in society.[123] In a 1997 press release she argued that a "war of Aboriginal greed" was being waged on Australians, and that eighty percent of Australia risked being owned by Aboriginal people (Hanson, 1997a). In a book published during her time in parliament entitled *The Truth,* Hanson advanced a narrative of Aboriginal cannibalism, in which she claimed that Aboriginal women ate their babies. This, she concluded, was indicative of "the savagery of Aboriginal society" (Hanson, 1997b).[124] David Ettridge, the One Nation party director, explained that the book's claims were intended to correct "misconceptions" about Aboriginal history, and that such corrections ought to bear on the level of welfare funds afforded to Aboriginal communities. He remarked:

> …the suggestion that we should be feeling some concern for modern day Aborigines for suffering in the past is balanced a bit by the alternative view of whether you can feel sympathy for people who eat their babies.[125]

This statement makes explicit the function of narratives of Aboriginal 'savagery' to undercut fellow-feeling with Indigenous disadvantage. By depicting Aboriginal people as depraved and aggressive, and as committing acts of barbarity against members of their

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[123] The 'One Nation' campaign promotes an ideal of national unity. Among its various proposals, the party has called for tough restrictions on immigration and for the abolishment of native title and welfare benefits for Indigenous Australians. In her 1996 parliamentary address, Hanson argued that present governments were "encouraging separatism in Australia" by providing Aboriginal persons with extra social security benefits (See Hanson, 1996). While Hanson's speech was subject to much backlash in the media and broader public, and resulted in the parliament passing a resolution condemning her views on immigration and multiculturalism, the then Prime Minister John Howard initially declined to censure Hanson. A fortnight following Hanson's speech, Howard told the State Council of the Queensland Liberal Party that the election of his government had released Australians from the "pall of political correctness" that had been preventing them from "speak[ing] a little more freely and a little more openly about what they feel" (as cited in Ward, 1997, p. 216).

[124] See also Janine Macdonald, "Cannibal claim furore," *The West Australian*, April 23, 1997.

[125] See also Greg Roberts, "Hanson book claims Aborigines ate their children," *The Age*, April 22, 1997.

own communities, such narratives serve to elicit affective responses of contempt and disgust, and to structure a perception of Aboriginal people as unworthy of non-Indigenous sympathy.

Prominent challenges to more critical re-imaginings of Australia's colonial past that emerged with the *Mabo* ruling and the release of the *Bringing Them Home* report have been mobilised by high-profile politicians, academics, and media figures. During his time in office, Prime Minister John Howard was active in campaigning against what historian Geoffrey Blainey dubbed the 'black armband' view of history. In his 1996 Sir Robert Menzies Lecture, Howard argued that the "balance sheet of Australian history" had come to be misrepresented:

> The 'black armband' view of our history reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. [...] I believe that the balance sheet of our history is one of heroic achievement and that we have achieved much more as a nation of which we can be proud than of which we should be ashamed (Howard, 1996).

Howard's challenge to narratives of Australia's colonial history that critically acknowledged the role of White Australians in the fate of the Indigenous population was echoed by other public figures. In 2002, historian Keith Windschuttle published a book entitled *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume 1, Van Diemen's Land 1803 - 1847,* which claimed that a large number of writings on Australian Aboriginal history involved deliberate misrepresentations and fabrications of historical evidence. In a similar vein, Australian columnist Andrew Bolt published several articles in the *Herald Sun* questioning the historical accuracy of the *Bringing Them Home* report. Bolt accused the Indigenous testimonies featured in the report of being unreliable and distorted, and disputed the use of the term 'Stolen Generations' to describe Indigenous children who were removed from their families (Bolt, 2013 & 2014b). In a 2006 writers' festival speech, Bolt argued

that a majority of children who were removed by White authorities had not been "saved from their Aboriginality" as other social commentators had argued, but rather had been saved from "sexual abuse and desperate need" (Bolt, 2006). Bolt's attempt to undercut public compassion and concern for present Aboriginal disadvantage and suffering by disputing the reality of historical racial injustices is made apparent in one of his more recent articles, which raises concerns regarding State compensation for Aboriginal persons who were forcibly removed from their families, without claimants needing to provide proof that they were taken "for racist reasons" (Bolt, 2014a).

These challenges to more critical re-imaginings of Australia's colonial past and of non-Indigenous identity have been central in structuring and reinforcing mainstream narratives of present Indigenous disadvantage and welfare dependency as a failure of individual responsibility, rather than as a direct by-product of colonization and dispossession. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson points out, in contemporary social contexts Indigenous people are frequently talked about "as the undeserving poor who lack effort, proper money management skills, a sense of morality, the ability to remain sober, the ability to resist drugs, and a work ethic" (2009, p. 70). She observes that the exclusive reliance on individualist explanations for Indigenous poverty by various public figures ignores the role that colonization and enduring racism has played in establishing and sustaining Indigenous welfare dependency. By obfuscating this last, such explanations evoke the trope of the "bad" Indigenous citizen: one who abuses social security benefits and refuses to take advantage of the opportunities afforded to him, as compared with the "ordinary Australian" who is held up as the exemplar of "good citizenship" (2009, pp. 69-70). Mainstream narratives of Indigenous irresponsibility and pathology assist in structuring collectively-shared perceptions of the problems facing Indigenous communities as the product of their own making (Moreton-Robinson 2009, p. 70). Such perceptions are clearly manifest in recent empirical studies on non-Indigenous Australian

attitudes towards Indigenous Australians.[126] In these studies, participants described Indigenous citizens as abusing the benefits they are given, and as violating norms of reciprocity by not 'giving back' to the Australian community. Participants tended to frame the problems that plague Indigenous communities (such as violence, poverty, alcoholism, unemployment, lack of education, and so forth) as a refusal or failure to take proper advantage of certain benefits and opportunities that are offered to members of these communities. These empirical findings are indicative of the capacity for disparaging stereotypes of Aboriginal people that are structured by dominant social imaginings to shape an understanding of Indigenous circumstances in a way that undermines non-Indigenous sympathy for Aboriginal disadvantage.

The pejorative image of the 'bad' Indigenous citizen was evoked in a publicly televised interview given by Dr. Nanette Rogers, a White female Crown Prosecutor in Alice Springs. On the current affairs program *Lateline*, Rogers narrated shocking cases of sexual abuse and violence occurring within Indigenous communities in vivid detail. Throughout the interview, she described Indigenous law and culture as inherently violent and oppressive, and attributed the problem of sexual abuse in part to the "very punitive" nature of Aboriginal society, which led to witnesses "being subject to harassment, intimidation and sometimes physical assault" by the offender. Rogers confirmed the interviewer's suggestion that "a propensity to silence" cases of sexual abuse was "built into" Indigenous culture. Resonant with mainstream discourses of Indigenous pathology, she attributed the problems plaguing Indigenous communities to the widespread refusal among Aboriginal people "to take responsibility for their own actions" (qtd. in Jones, 2006). Following Rogers' interview, *Lateline* aired another story entitled 'Sexual slavery reported in Indigenous community'. The story relied heavily on testimony from an

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[126] See, for example, Anne Pedersen, Pat Dudgeon, Susan Watt & Brian Griffiths (2006) and Martha Augoustinos, Keith Tuffin & Danielle Every (2005).

"anonymous former youth worker," and alleged that senior Indigenous men in the Mutitjulu community were allowing children to be held as "sex slaves" so that an elderly man with kinship connection could prey on them with impunity. Notably, the 'anonymous youth worker' was later exposed under federal police investigation to be senior government official Gregory Andrews, an assistant secretary in the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, and advisor to then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mal Brough, on violence in Central Australian communities. It was subsequently revealed that Andrews had grossly embellished his original speaking notes, which had been provided to Minister Brough's office prior to the interview. On the program, Andrews evoked vivid and disturbing images of Aboriginal violence and dysfunction, recounting scenes of "women coming to meetings with broken arms […] and with screwdrivers or other implements through their legs," and narrating stories of indigenous men who would "go to other communities and get young girls and bring them back to their community and keep them there as sex slaves and […] exchange sex for petrol with those young petrol sniffers" (qtd. in Smith, 2006). This latter claim was later rejected by Northern Territory police, who conducted a rigorous and extensive investigation and found "no evidence whatsoever" to support the claims aired by *Lateline*. Investigations carried out by the Australian Crime Commission confirmed the report's lack of evidence. Nevertheless, the fact that Andrews was granted the opportunity to advance such claims on what is normally a reliable, high-quality journalism program, despite having never visited the Mutitjulu community, and having never witnessed the scenes of violence and abuse that he described, is telling of the traction that narratives of Aboriginal violence and dysfunction possess.[127]

In what follows I argue that these uncharitable imaginings of Aboriginal

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[127] Prior to his appearance on *Lateline*, Andrews told a Senate Inquiry that he lived in the Mutitjulu community for nine months. This was later revealed to be a lie; Andrews never once visited the community.

communities, and their capacity to undermine fellow-feeling with the lived experiences of

Indigenous persons, are clearly manifest in the Intervention policy. Much like earlier

protectionist policies, the Intervention marks a breakdown of fellow-feeling between

Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This failure may be attributed to the

capacity for dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings to undermine identification with

Indigenous feelings of anger and betrayal by structuring and supporting an understanding

of the Intervention as a necessary humanitarian response, despite the policy being in

clear violation of legal procedure and of Indigenous rights to self-determination.

iii. Failures of the Sympathetic Imagination, Part Two: The Northern Territory Intervention

At the time of the Intervention's introduction, the Howard government

repeatedly insisted that the policy measures had 'nothing to do with race' or racial

discrimination, and rather everything to do with the protection of Indigenous children

from sexual violence and abuse (Howard, 2007). By declaring a national state of

emergency in response to the high levels of violence and abuse occurring within remote

Indigenous communities, the government was able to exclude the application of the

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 to the Intervention. Furthermore, it argued that the

Intervention measures qualified as 'special measures' (and therefore were exempt from

the Act's prohibition on racial discrimination) on the basis that they were put in place to

secure substantive equality for disadvantaged Indigenous communities.[128] However, as

the Australian Human Rights Commission pointed out, the Intervention measures failed

to qualify as special measures, on the grounds that they were not implemented in

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[128] Special measures under Australia's *Racial Discrimination Act* (hereafter RDA) are defined as those measures that are put in place to enable groups or individuals to enjoy and exercise their fundamental rights and liberties. Among the criteria that a set of policy measures must satisfy to qualify as special measures are that they must be consistent with basic human rights, and must be developed and implemented with the consent of, and in co-operation with, the groups or individuals that are directly affected by measures. See fn. 94 in this chapter for a more detailed description of the RDA and its definition of special measures.

consultation with, and with the consent of, those groups affected by the measures.

Moreover, such measures are inconsistent with human rights principles, such as the right

of Indigenous persons to be self-determining. [129] This last was made apparent by the fact

that many of the measures posed a significant impediment to the culturally distinctive

lifestyles and routines of Indigenous persons living in the affected areas. Quarantining

welfare payments and constraining where Indigenous persons were able to spend their

money marked a particularly significant disruption to the high levels of mobility that

characterize the Indigenous way of life, and to the ability of Indigenous people to visit

family, attend important ceremonies, and meet familial obligations (Hinkson, 2010, p. 5).

The Howard government justified the quarantining of welfare payments chiefly with

reference to the failure of Indigenous parents to discharge their duties of care to their

children, and framed the measure as a means of ensuring that Indigenous parents

fulfilled their responsibilities.[130] This emphasis on parental responsibility was echoed by

Mal Brough in a media statement:

> Communities want changes that ensure parents are held to account for the education
> and care for their children and incentives created for young people to aspire to a future
> which gives them choices and opportunity… (Brough, 2007b).

The view that child-rearing is the responsibility of parents alone is, however,

representative of Western parenting practices; it is not representative of the Indigenous

view, which treats child rearing as a more social practice involving a wider network of

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[129] This view has been echoed by several legal theorists. For example, Alison Vivian and Ben Schokman argue that the Intervention was clearly discriminatory, insofar as it failed to be designed and implemented in a way that was "both compatible with the right to non-discrimination and complementary with the realization of other relevant human rights," such as the rights of women and children to be protected from abuse (2009, p. 85).

[130] In his 2007 Sydney Institute address, Howard remarked that a right to welfare support must be accompanied by parental responsibility. Howard argued that this measure had "nothing to do with race" but rather "everything to do with the parental responsibility that accompanies their [Indigenous parents'] right to welfare support."

carers.[131] Despite these cultural differences between indigenous and Western norms of parenting, the practices and norms particular to Indigenous culture were not considered in the drafting of the Intervention policy, and no meaningful attempt was made to implement measures that would be compatible with such practices.

During the drafting and implementation of the policy, members of Indigenous communities expressed the view that the Intervention's top-down, blanket approach to curbing the high levels of Indigenous child abuse was racially discriminatory, and would never be applied to non-Indigenous communities. This view finds support from the Howard Government's response to serious allegations of child sex abuse among members of the Catholic Church in Australia, which began to come to light in the early 1990s, and eventually led to the establishment of a royal commission in 2012. When allegations of abuse and cover-ups were raised against Sydney Catholic Archbishop

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[131] It is quite common for Aboriginal children within Aboriginal communities to be fed and to sleep at the house or camp of a number of different people. It may be that for periods of time – often even a number of years – the primary responsibility for a child's upbringing may rest with an aunt or grandmother. Furthermore, unlike Western norms of financial management, it is typical for Indigenous parents to have financial responsibilities that extend beyond the nuclear family unit. Within Indigenous communities, members of large family groups can levy demand on each other (typically in situations of resource scarcity) and are granted the freedom to access the resources of houses where they are accommodated, with family relatives tending to oscillate frequently between different places of accommodation. Many of the Intervention measures were incompatible with Indigenous norms of resource management. On the basis of these and other considerations, theorists have argued that the Intervention reflects a privileging of Eurocentric values and ideals, and a failure to recognise Indigenous practices and values. For example, Francesca Merlan claims that "the Intervention as launched appears to have been based entirely on notions of deficits or negatives in Aboriginal living situations, and rather shallow accounts of even those, rather than on a fuller understanding of the social processes and relationships to which they relate" (2010, p. 130). Melinda Hinkson has seconded this view, arguing that the Intervention "aimed at nothing short of the production of a newly oriented, 'normalised' Aboriginal population, whose concerns with custom, kin and land will give way to the individualistic aspirations of private home ownership, career and self-improvement" (2007, p. 6). Hinkson's remarks are echoed by Jon Altman. In his analysis of the accompanying ministerial media release to the Government's bi-annual monitoring report for the period July – December 2011, Altman (2012) notes that the release focused exclusively on the jobs and employment opportunities that have been created for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, to the exclusion of other worrying statistics (including the marked increase in rates of self harm and suicide). This focus on individual employment, along with the report's language of 'closing gaps' between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community, counts in his view as further evidence of the way in which Western norms, values and social indicators are privileged over things that matter to Aboriginal communities, such as family and community, and maintaining a spiritual connection to the land.

George Pell, Howard refused to believe them, and openly declared his support for Pell.[132]

In a later parliamentary inquiry, Pell admitted to knowing of attempts by clergy members to cover up cases of abuse, and formally apologised. Despite hundreds of cases of child sex abuse within the Church coming to be known to police and the Government, no top-down, punitive intervention into Church institutions under Howard's government took place.[133]

Despite the fact that the Intervention policy is acknowledged to have been in violation of proper legal procedure, and as having infringed upon the fundamental rights and liberties of Indigenous persons living in the prescribed areas, it nevertheless continues to receive the support of successive governments and large sectors of the non-Indigenous community. This support has endured in spite of evidence that the Intervention has caused more problems for the targeted communities than benefits, and in spite of sustained Aboriginal resistance to the measures. This lack of collective responsiveness to, and ethical concern for, the lived experiences of Indigenous people under the Intervention measures can, I suggest, be at least partly attributed to dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity, which structure collectively-shared perceptions of Indigenous persons as irresponsible, ungrateful, and abusive, and of Indigenous culture as inherently violent and oppressive, in contrast to

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[132] In a televised *Lateline* interview, Howard affirmed that he believed "completely" in George Pell's innocence of any wrongdoing (Dikeos, 2002). When these abuse allegations surfaced, Howard blocked calls for a royal commission. When the church of former Brisbane archbishop Peter Hollingworth called for a national inquiry into the problem of child sex abuse, Howard once more refused (Roberts, 2002).

[133] Theorists have argued that the inequitable institutional response to the problem of child abuse in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities reflects prejudicial assumptions about Indigenous people and Indigenous culture. For example, Moreton-Robinson claims that:

> …child sexual abuse in white homes is dealt with by the government as though it is something aberrant that requires intervention on an individual case-by-case model. There is no intervention into the whole community where perpetrators reside; instead, the civil rights of perpetrators are respected. In contrast, sexual abuse is treated as being normative within Indigenous communities, requiring everyone to be placed under surveillance, scrutinised and punished (2009, p. 71).

more charitable perceptions of the Anglo-Australian community as generous, humane, and progressive in their dealings with Aboriginal people. This way of imagining the relation between Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens was reflected in Howard's 2007 Sydney Institute address. In his speech Howard described Indigenous children as "living out a Hobbesian nightmare of violence, abuse and neglect," and claimed that Indigenous women felt "helpless" to prevent this occurring, largely because of being coerced or shamed into silence by prevailing cultural norms. Resonant with prevailing social narratives of Indigenous dysfunction and irresponsibility, Howard argued that the problems afflicting Indigenous communities were primarily attributable to the "deterioration of social norms and responsible behaviour," and that the "social malaise" permeating these communities "cannot and should not be seen as just a failure of government." Notably, Howard's overarching emphasis on personal responsibility and the inability of Aboriginal people to adequately address the issue of child sex abuse came at the expense of acknowledging the countless efforts made by Indigenous groups over the past decades to lobby Australian governments to work with them to address the issue. It also came at the expense of acknowledging the government's role in sustaining the social problems afflicting Indigenous communities, largely through its persistent refusal to engage meaningfully and co-operatively with members of these communities in designing policies to improve their living conditions. To this extent, Howard's remarks signal an evasion of government responsibility for the high rates of Indigenous child sex abuse.

Dominant stereotypes of Indigenous people as irresponsible and unable to properly manage their own affairs play a role in structuring and conferring legitimacy on an image of the Intervention as a generous and responsible humanitarian response on behalf of well-intentioned non-Indigenous Australians. This perception was reflected in Howard's comments that the Intervention represented "a necessary assumption of

responsibility" designed to prevent future generations of Indigenous children from "sink[ing] further into the abyss," and that the government's top-down Intervention was best placed to bring "some semblance of social order" to the affected communities and to protect the rights of Indigenous women and children. The lack of significant public outcry in response to the Intervention, as well as the support given to the policy by successive governments, suggests that more charitable conceptions of the Intervention have come at the expense of acknowledging the policy as constituting a violation of Indigenous rights and liberties. The absence of strong opposition from within the non-Indigenous community also implies a collective failure to acknowledge the problems afflicting Indigenous communities as being largely the product of colonization and historical racial injustice, and as being sustained primarily by the failure of governments to recognise and respect Aboriginal perspectives, and to work collaboratively with members of Aboriginal communities in designing initiatives to improve Indigenous outcomes. Dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of Indigenous identity help to structure and sustain non-Indigenous perceptions of the Intervention as a necessary assumption of power and authority over a serious human rights issue that Indigenous communities had neither the will nor the capacity to address themselves. This, in turn, has the effect of invalidating Indigenous feelings of anger, humiliation, disbelief and betrayal, resulting in a complete breakdown of fellow-feeling.

As Chapter One outlined, in order to overcome the effects that situated prejudices and biases have on the extent of our fellow-feeling with others' lived experiences, Smith advocates a form of moral deliberation that involves an informed, disciplined, and critically self-reflective exercise of the sympathetic imagination. In line with Smith's account, I have argued that this kind of imaginative activity is crucial for generating sentiments that reflect a moral viewpoint, and which ensure we respond ethically to those identities that occupy a devalued place in the dominant social

imaginary. With respect to the Intervention, its introduction into law and practice and the continued support it receives in the face of widespread and sustained Indigenous resistance reflects a massive failure of sympathetic imagination on behalf of the non-Indigenous community. More specifically, it signals a failure among members of this community to engage with Indigenous perspectives in an open- and fair-minded manner, and to critically scrutinize the overriding value that they place in Anglo-Australian values and ideals. It symbolises a failure to imagine how it would feel, as an individual who neither perpetrates nor condones child abuse, to have one's rights and liberties stripped without say, and to have foreign norms and standards imposed on one's culturally distinctive way of life. It also reflects a failure to imagine how it would feel for those Indigenous people who actively expressed interest in working with government agencies to address the problem of sexual abuse to be completely ignored in the process of legislative design.

The failure among well-meaning members of the non-Indigenous community to properly acknowledge Indigenous perspectives and to imagine the Intervention as lived by Aboriginal persons may be traced, I suggest, to an unconscious resistance or unwillingness to do so, on the basis that engaging in a meaningful and reflective exercise of sympathetic imagination vis à vis Indigenous experiences may have unwelcome psychological, social, and material effects. For example, imaginatively entering into the shock, anger, and betrayal experienced by Aboriginal communities in response to the Intervention may compel non-Indigenous people to confront the various injustices inflicted upon Aboriginal people over the course of Australia's history, which in turn risks jeopardising the pride they invest in their heritage, as well as the moral self-image this pride sustains. This experience may also prompt them to confront a jarring perception of themselves as benefactors of racial injustice and discrimination, thereby inviting critical reflection on their privileged material standing and their responsibilities

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towards remedying Indigenous disadvantage. On this basis, we can understand non-Indigenous Australians as having a positive interest in maintaining a degree of ignorance with regards to the lived experiences of Aboriginal Australians. I have suggested it is this kind of wilful ignorance that sustains the massive failures of sympathy which mark the relation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians.

Much like the removal policies embedded in Australia's colonial history, the Intervention represents a practical manifestation of unreflective, partially informed, 'knee-jerk' sympathy in response to the suffering of Indigenous women and children. Smith rightly identifies this mode of sympathy as having a marginal or even potentially damaging role to play in guiding moral agency. Sympathy of this kind also appears to be what contemporary theorists have in mind when they criticise sympathy for being more unhelpful than beneficial. The Intervention policy itself represents an example of the kinds of injustices that are produced when a powerful affective response to the suffering of others is unaccompanied by a genuine attempt to understand this suffering in its particular meaning for the victims, and unaccompanied by an effort to critically scrutinize one's own perspective. Sympathy of this kind lacks the deeply recognitive element that Smith treats as being crucial to supporting a viable sociability between persons, and ultimately serves to undermine a sense of community, solidarity, and mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

While Anglo-Australian imaginings of Aboriginal identity and Aboriginal culture have played, and continue to play, a central role in structuring how non-Indigenous Australians relate to Indigenous Australians, the Anglo-Australian imaginary is not all-encompassing. Indeed, while a particular social imaginary may be strongly influential in structuring the prevailing values, norms and beliefs within a given society, there are always alternative imaginaries available that offer different ways of understanding one's social environment, and which have the capacity to spark critical reflection upon

dominant social meanings and norms.[134] As Chapter Five will outline, Aboriginal

imaginaries continue to offer alternative ways of imagining Australian history and

Aboriginal culture, and to exert pressure on dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of

racial difference.

Having demonstrated in this chapter how and why failures of the sympathetic

imagination are important, in the following chapter I offer an account of why

imaginatively engaging with the experiences and perspectives of marginalised and

devalued group identities such as Indigenous Australians is an exercise that may be

fraught with a pronounced degree of difficulty and resistance relative to more detached,

intellectual forms of engagement. This account functions as a starting point for a deeper

analysis and critique of the limits of the sympathetic imagination, and its value as a

resource for the recognition and negotiation of the complex clusters of differences that

mark contemporary societies.

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[134] As Medina correctly notes, there are always "alternative (even if marginalised) social
imaginaries" which provide us with a means of countering or "escaping" the influence of
dominant social imaginaries (2011, p. 29).

Chapter Four
Sympathy Reclaimed?
Overcoming the Limits of the Sympathetic
Imagination

Recurring injustices suffered by devalued social identities despite significant

constitutional reform and redistributive measures highlight the need for theories of social

justice to incorporate a commitment to achieving recognition of difference. As we saw in

earlier chapters, theorists such as Nussbaum and Medina rightly emphasise the

importance of imaginative perspective-taking in generating a deeper appreciation of

sexual and racial difference. But how do we move beyond an appreciation of difference

towards building moral communities based on recognition of difference? I have

suggested that Smith's account of the sympathetic imagination offers a constructive

response to this question. His work inspires the thought that reciprocal exercises of

imaginative perspective-taking between spectators and agents can have a deeply

recognitive aspect, and have the capacity to support a viable sociability between different

groups within society when they are harnessed to an informed and reflective imaginative

effort. Indeed, I have suggested that one of Smith's most valuable contributions to

current debates over the ethical importance of imaginative perspective-taking is his

account of the regulative constraints that must bind such an activity if is to avoid

producing ethically undesirable behaviour and generating social divisions. Smith recognises that our sympathetic responses always risk being partial and parochial; yet he claims that these limitations are not inherent to sympathy: sympathy can (and must) be worked at if it is to be a foundation for morality. In his view, it is not 'bare' or unregulated sympathy that is best able to support moral agency and human sociability, but rather sympathy harnessed to an informed and critically reflective imaginative capacity, wherein one attempts to grasp the other's lived experience in its particular meaning for her. Immersed yet critically reflective imaginative powers of this kind function to align or 'harmonize' the sentiments of individuals within a community, which is crucial for establishing and sustaining a viable sociability.

Given the general plausibility of Smith's account of what binds individuals together as moral agents, Chapter Two sought to analyse the massive failures of sympathy that mark contemporary societies. I suggested that the differential value and meaning conferred upon various sexed and raced bodies by dominant social imaginings render certain possibilities implausible or inconceivable, and have the effect of systematically undermining fellow-feeling with the lived experiences of marginalised and devalued identities. The failure among members of dominant groups to engage with marginalised perspectives in a fair- and open-minded manner leads to a breakdown of the kind of sympathy that Smith promoted as basis for moral communities; that is, a mode of sympathy which is grounded in the recognition of alternative viewpoints and ways of being in the world. While I have argued that the bare fact of one's situatedness does not prevent one from grasping and identifying with the perspectives of those who are differently situated, it may be argued that there are too many odds stacked against the possibility of binding various social identities together through a form of sympathy that is informed and reflective; that the depth and scope of collectively-shared social prejudices and blind spots among privileged identities make it impossible for privileged social

groups to achieve a genuine understanding of how members of other particular groups experience the world, and prevent an impartial assessment of others' appraisals of their circumstances. However this line of thought is misguided; the various obstacles thrown up by the dominant social imaginary to sympathetic understanding and identification are not necessarily insurmountable; such obstacles can, and must be overcome - or so I will argue.

Smith, as we have seen, appeals to active critical self-regulation in the form of impartial spectatorship to mitigate the influence of bias and prejudice on our sentiments. Smith's appeal to volitional self-scrutiny as a means of correcting our biased or prejudicial judgments has been re-iterated by contemporary theorists, including Fricker and Medina. However, one may have reason to doubt whether impartial spectatorship - or any kind of volitional exercise of critical self-reflection more broadly conceived - may function as an effective corrective mechanism, insofar as members of privileged groups often fail to be aware that their judgments reflect a lack of understanding and a lack of critical self-awareness, and therefore require adjustment. In this chapter, I offer a critical comparison of the approaches taken by Fricker and Medina to remedy failures of understanding between marginalised and privileged social identities at the level of individual practice. From this comparison I conclude that exercising critical self-reflection and correcting for the influence of social biases and prejudices on one's sentiments cannot – *contra* Fricker – be an individual, solitary activity. This is because it is doubtful that privileged identities will have the capacity to recognise the limitations and shortcomings of their perspective of their own accord, owing to the potential for dominant social imaginings to shape implicit beliefs about others and their circumstances which operate at a level below explicit awareness, and to structure an attitude of epistemic arrogance among members of privileged groups. Rather, as Medina correctly points out, individual critical self-reflection and correction must take place in dialogue

with others. Like Smith, he recognises that interacting with those who are differently-situated is often crucial for bringing individuals to awareness of their biases, prejudices and blindspots, and of the need to modify their judgments. I then consider how Medina and Smith contribute to our understanding of the unique difficulties associated with exercising one's capacity for sympathetic imagination as opposed to more intellectual forms of engagement, and offer insight into the set of virtues that support such an exercise. In the second half of the chapter I consider how Hume and Smith's work on aesthetics supports the idea that individuals may overcome the limits of the sympathetic imagination, and work through the particular constraints that their situatedness imposes on their capacity to identify with the lived experiences of different others. This is achieved through the ongoing practice of making moral judgments, and critically comparing and reflecting upon our past judgments. This kind of effort enables the refinement of one's capacity for moral perception, understanding and feeling. In the final part of the chapter, I consider Jesse Prinz's critique of Humean-Smithean sympathy as a moral resource. I argue that Prinz's dismissal of an imagined impartial viewpoint as a corrective for the effects that bias and prejudice have on our sentiments is unfounded, and overlooks the capacity for our sympathetic responses to be educated and disciplined through exercises of reason, imagination and reflection so that they come to reflect a moral viewpoint.

i. Impartial Spectatorship as a Social Practice

Like Smith, contemporary theorists have acknowledged the importance of active critical self-reflection in ensuring that our moral judgments are reflective of a moral viewpoint. However, the issues raised in Chapter Two give rise to the question of how it is that individuals might become aware of their prejudicial assumptions about others, and hence of the need to adjust their perspective and sentiments. Fricker's work on epistemic

justice inspires the thought that an experience of "dissonance" between one's prejudiced perceptions of others and one's unprejudiced standing beliefs functions to alert one to the need to align her prejudiced perceptions with her beliefs (See 2007, pp. 83-84). In Fricker's view, identifying the influence of prejudicial stereotypes on one's judgements of others also calls for the cultivation of a "distinctly *reflexive* critical social awareness": an awareness of the impact that the other's identity in addition to one's own identity may be having on the exchange (2007, p. 91).[135]

In Chapter Two we saw that failures of sympathetic understanding and identification may be underpinned by hermeneutical injustice, where entire groups of people are prevented from communicating their lived experiences in a way that captures the proper meaning of these experiences, owing to the fact they are unfairly deprived of the conceptual resources to do so. Fricker's account of the 'virtue of hermeneutical justice' inspires the view that in the process of sympathising with others, individuals have an obligation to harbour an "alertness" or "sensitivity" to the fact that another person's inability to coherently articulate her experience may be due to a gap in collective epistemic resources, and not due to a "subjective failing" (2007, p. 169). On this line of thought, individuals have an obligation to regulate their appraisals of another person's feelings and perspective by reflecting on whether the person is likely to suffer a hermeneutical disadvantage with respect to her circumstances, and by considering whether her feelings would be warranted if she were equipped with adequate resources to coherently articulate her perspective (2007, p. 170). According to Fricker, individuals must exercise a "more pro-active and more socially aware kind of listening" than they do in their everyday exchanges with others, which involves paying close attention "to the

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[135] In the case of Tom Robinson from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), Fricker argues that the White jury members who find Robinson guilty of criminal conduct in the face of strong evidence to the contrary fail to demonstrate this kind of reflexive critical social awareness, since they "fail to take account of the difference it makes to their perception of Tom Robinson as a speaker not only that he is black but equally *that they are white*" (2007, p. 91).

meaning that is immanent in what the speaker is saying" (2007, p. 172). This kind of listening requires in part that individual hearers seek out corroborating evidence (for example, by consulting others who are similarly situated to the speaker and enquiring into how they would feel in the relevant circumstances). However, during the course of our everyday interactions we may not have the time to engage in this form of pro-active, socially aware form of listening. Hence, Fricker suggests that often the best we can do as individuals is to simply reserve judgment, and keep an open mind as to the plausibility of the other's appraisal of her experience (2007, pp. 172-173).

As Chapter Two explained, failures of sympathetic understanding and identification between privileged and oppressed identities often need not be linked to any kind of hermeneutical disadvantage suffered by the latter. Rather, they may be traced to the collective failure among privileged identities to take the latter's appraisals of their lived experiences seriously, insofar as these appraisals raise possibilities that lie outside of, or run up against dominant social norms and meanings. Following Fricker's corrective model, we might conceive of individuals as having an obligation to cultivate an alertness or sensitivity to the fact that their inability to take another's perspective seriously may be due to their own subjective failing; to their failure to exercise a sufficient degree of curiosity and open-mindedness with respect to possibilities that run counter to their habitual way of imagining the world and those in it. Harboring these forms of awareness would then alert individuals to the need to bring corrective strategies to bear on their judgments and conduct in situated contexts. Such strategies may involve exercising a higher degree of discipline and restraint than in everyday social exchanges: for example, making a concerted attempt to keep an open mind with regards to the plausibility of the other's appraisal of her experiences, and to critically reflect upon the reasons why one finds the other's perspective implausible. Other corrective strategies may involve adopting the working hypothesis that one's interlocutor is best placed (or at least better

placed than oneself) to accurately interpret and appraise an aspect of the world which, in virtue of her social positioning, she is more familiar with. As Pohlhaus argues, "when judging situations in areas where one has little experience, one would do well to suspect that one's perception may be distorted," and should defer to the other's account (2012, p. 732). Alternatively, one may simply remain neutral, and reserve any judgment as to the plausibility of the other's appraisal of her circumstances.

What is most striking about Fricker's model of critical self-regulation is that it is highly individualistic. Coming to an awareness of one's prejudices and blind spots, and correcting for their influence on one's judgments of others and their circumstances is, on Fricker's approach, an *individual* practice rather than a *social* activity. Her model inspires the view that in the context of sympathy, one independently comes to an awareness of the need to adopt a more impartial perspective through an experience of cognitive dissonance. As an individual practice, critical self-regulation relies heavily on cultivating reflexive critical social awareness, so that one is cued into the potential for there to be prejudicial assumptions at play in one's judgments of the other and her circumstances, and for there to be gaps in one's understanding when confronted with a particular set of circumstances. It is this awareness that alerts one to the need to exercise extra caution, restraint and active critical self-reflection when confronted with a speaker who is differently situated to oneself, and who occupies a relatively disadvantaged social position.

The application of Fricker's individualistic approach to the activity of impartial spectatorship raises several questions. As we have seen, for Fricker the experience of cognitive dissonance is crucial for jolting an individual into awareness that prejudice or bias may be distorting her judgments in a particular context. However, as Fricker herself acknowledges, the operation of prejudicial stereotypes is often especially difficult to detect, insofar as these stereotypes directly influence our judgments of others "without

doxastic mediation" (2007, p. 36). Fricker acknowledges that stereotypes embedded in 'the collective social imagination' often take root in one's mind in the form of images (rather than in the form of explicit beliefs about others), where these images attract affective investments and structure the way we feel about others. Our affect-laden perceptions of others have an impact on our judgments and feelings in situated contexts; they may influence our perception and appraisal of a given set of circumstances, and may do so without our explicit awareness, and in ways that may be at odds with our standing beliefs. Hence, as Elizabeth Anderson notes, "often the operation of our unconscious stereotypes and avowed beliefs are so insulated from one another that we do not feel dissonance from our contradictory mental states" (2012, p. 168). What Fricker fails to account for then is the possibility of having contradictory mental states without experiencing any kind of dissonance, thanks to the capacity of dominant social imaginings to structure affect-laden perceptions of others that structure our judgments of their situation without our awareness. This is significant, since without the experience of such dissonance there will be little to alert us to the need to correct for our judgments and behaviour. Furthermore, we have reason to doubt the ability of privileged social identities to recognize the impact that their social positionality is having on the exchange entirely of their own accord (and hence their ability to recognize the need to exercise greater caution, restraint and active reflection in particular sympathetic exchanges). Indeed, their tendency to be blind to their prejudices, and their characteristic lack of reflexive critical social awareness is made even more powerful by the fact that it is supported by the wider social community.

In line with Medina, I have argued that the dominant social imaginary is not only central to the production and maintenance of prejudicial stereotypes, it also plays a central role in determining the social meaning of particular practices and behaviours, and in structuring dominant normative standards and expectations. This may have the effect

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of preventing those who are excluded from shaping prevailing social norms, meanings and values from having their experiences properly recognised by others. This is the case even when epistemically marginalised persons have the conceptual resources at their disposal to coherently articulate their perspectives. Rooting this type of hermeneutical injustice in a structurally biased social imaginary illuminates the limitations of Fricker's individualistic model of critical self-regulation. Indeed, given the capacity of dominant social imaginings to structure prejudicial assumptions, oppressive norms and biased meanings that influence people's judgments of others and their circumstances without their explicit awareness, we have reason to doubt a person's ability to independently acknowledge that her situated appraisal of some set of circumstances may be unreliable or distorted. This doubt is further reinforced when we consider the substantial degree of credibility that is automatically conferred on perspectives which resonate with dominant values and meanings, and when we consider the degree of institutional support that such perspectives receive.

In contrast with Fricker, Medina claims that interacting with and being corrected by others is often crucial for bringing an individual's attention to her blind spots and lack of understanding, and to the influence of prejudice on her judgments. This is because the dominant social imaginary of a society has the capacity to establish and sustain what he refers to as a form of 'meta-blindness' among privileged identities: blindness to one's own incapacity to see or understand certain things in a given context (2013, p. 75). Smith himself acknowledges the important role played by the embodied presence of others – particularly those with whom we have no particular connection – in jolting us into awareness of the bias embedded in our sentiments and judgments, and of the need to adjust our perspective through critical self-reflection:

> *The man within the breast, the abstract and ideal spectator of our sentiments and conduct, requires often to be awakened and put in mind of his duty, by the presence of the real spectator: and it is always*

from that spectator, from whom we can expect the least sympathy and indulgence, that we are likely to learn the most complete lesson of self-command (TMS III.3.38. My emphasis).

Given the ability of dominant social imaginings to structure an implicit understanding of one's social identity and one's social context that operates below the level of doxastic awareness, and which may influence one's appraisals of others' feelings in ways that preclude sympathetic identification, it is clear that the activity of exercising impartial spectatorship cannot be an entirely individualistic practice. Acquiring critical self-awareness relies heavily on dialogic encounters with others that alert us to the prejudicial assumptions and lack of genuine understanding embodied by our sentiments.

For Medina, the process of adjusting one's perspective and re-imagining the world needs to be a social activity carried out in dialogue with others. Not only do we require others to make us aware of when our reaction to some set of circumstances fails to be sufficiently informed and impartial, we also require others to point out the particular ways in which our reaction is distorted, misguided or prejudicial. In Medina's view, the lived experiences of differently positioned others and their situated ways of imagining the world provide both a counterpoint and a corrective to one's own situated way of imagining the world and others in it (2013, pp.78-79). This approach can again be contrasted with that of Fricker's. In *Epistemic Injustice,* Fricker draws a distinction between "exceptional" and "routine" discursive thinking (2007, p. 104), where the former involves the "innovative" use of available cultural discourses to generate new understandings and meanings, such as applying existing concepts to new contexts or practices (e.g. the application of the concept 'cruel' to commonplace punishments inflicted on children), and coining new concepts (for example, 'sexual harassment' or 'conjugal rape'). Exercising exceptional discursive moves of this kind is notably a solitary individual activity, rather than a social practice that is achieved in concert or co-operation

with others. Medina's account by comparison places greater emphasis on the need for others to point out the ways in which our conceptualizations of the world are misguided, distorted or oppressive, and the need for their perspectives to inform our alternative ways of thinking about the world and those in it. As Medina puts it, achieving critical self-awareness and remedying our blindspots is "not only an individual task, but also (and necessarily) a social enterprise" that necessitates interactions with different others (2013, p. 266).

Finally, recall from Chapter Two that while Fricker draws on the concept of the collective social imagination, she avoids using the term 'imaginary' or social imaginary, owing to her reticence to commit to a particular psychoanalytic framework (2007, fn. 9, p. 59. See also 2010, pp. 167-168). Yet, as we have seen, theorists such as Taylor, Gatens and Medina demonstrate the possibility of taking a broad-brush approach to the social imaginary, without making any particular commitments to psychoanalytic theory. If we take Fricker's concept of the collective social imagination to be more or less congruent with the above approach, another aspect of her account becomes problematic. In particular, her emphasis on volitional individual exercises of self-regulation as a means of addressing epistemic injustice comes to appear misplaced.[136] Fricker briefly acknowledges that large-scale social change and political action are required to remedy the problem of hermeneutical injustice as she conceives of it, since hermeneutical marginalization is the product of structural inequalities of power between different social groups that cannot be overcome by the efforts of individuals alone (2007, p. 174). Yet her account of hermeneutical justice remains squarely focused on what we can do as virtuous hearers to counter the effects of 'hermeneutical gaps' on our judgments of others. Fricker concludes that while individual practices "can only mitigate, rather than pre-empt" cases of hermeneutical injustice, its "collective exercise" could ultimately phase out the

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[136] See Lennon (2009) for a similar critique.

injustice, insofar as it creates an inclusive and respectful environment that is "conducive to the generation of new meanings to fill in offending hermeneutical gaps" (2007, p. 174). Given an account of the social imaginary as the permanent socio-cultural backdrop against which individuals make sense of their social context, and as the source of authoritative social norms and meanings that become embedded in wider social structures and institutional settings, it is clear that volitional individual exercises are neither a primary nor sufficient means for eradicating epistemic injustices (and, by extension, their implications for sympathetic understanding and identification). As Medina points out, epistemic injustices represent systematic injustices that have distinct socio-cultural dimensions, and can only be properly remedied through "deep transformations of the social imaginary" (2011, p. 32) in addition to individual practices and explicit material changes. Chapter Five explores how such transformations may be practically facilitated.

ii. Overcoming the Limits of the Sympathetic Imagination

In the preceding section I considered the difficulties faced by privileged social identities in coming to an awareness of the need to adjust and modify their perspective and sentiments. In this section I consider the various difficulties thrown up by the process of adjustment and correction itself. The imaginative re-adjustments of perspective which are required in order for one's sentiments to reflect an impartial viewpoint are likely to present a greater challenge than modes of deliberation in which one entertains certain possibilities as abstract, intellectual propositions. Medina observes that when privileged identities attempt to imagine the world from the standpoint of those who are marginalised and oppressed, the former are likely to experience a marked degree of visceral resistance, or what is known in existing scholarship as 'imaginative

resistance.'[137] This form of resistance is thought to be rooted in an unwillingness to entertain possibilities that one does not endorse, and does not wish to infiltrate her understanding of herself and her social context. Imaginatively entertaining possibilities is said to produce a form of visceral resistance that a more detached and purely intellectual form of reasoning does not, insofar as vivid exercises of the imagination necessarily implicate one's feelings, and may subvert the deep-seated emotional investments one has in particular bodies, behaviours and practices. As Chapter Two illustrated, these emotional investments are often structured by the narratives, images and symbols that comprise dominant social imaginings. In imagining the world from the perspective of marginalised and oppressed identities, members of privileged groups risk confronting jarring images of themselves that give rise to negative affects (of guilt, shame, remorse and so forth) which destabilise their feelings of self-esteem and self-pride; feelings that are sustained by charitable images of privileged groups embedded in the dominant social imaginary. Re-imaginings that disrupt and subvert the emotional investments one has in particular bodies, normative behaviours and customary practices will be likely to produce a form of visceral, embodied resistance, rather than an experience of purely mental or intellectual discomfort. We could envision this resistance occurring in instances where a

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[137] Medina borrows this concept from Tamar Gendler (2000). As Gendler describes it, the phenomenon of imaginative resistance refers to the phenomenon whereby we experience a marked difficulty in, and visceral resistance to, imagining things that go against our deeply held moral intuitions (e.g. imagining it is permissible to kill one's child, simply because that child is a girl) in comparison to when we are required to imagine scenarios that present a challenge to our factual understandings (e.g. imagining that the earth is flat instead of round). In Gendler's view, the heightened difficulty and resistance one experiences in imagining the former case is not grounded in an *inability* to imagine such a thing, but in an *unwillingness* to do so; an unwillingness to "export" a way of looking at the world which she [the individual] does not endorse and "does not wish to add to her conceptual repertoire" (2000, p. 77). Imagining something that goes against one's strong moral intuitions is likely to generate a form of visceral resistance that merely entertaining that possibility in a cool and detached intellectual manner does not. This is because imagining a morally counter-intuitive scenario to be true implicates our moral emotions (and thus our motivational structure) in a way that hypothetically reasoning about that scenario does not. When the imaginative exercise implicates and subverts one's deeply engrained affective attitudes (e.g. of disgust or contempt) towards particular practices, one is likely to encounter a significant degree of visceral resistance.

Western liberal democratic citizen attempts to imagine a world in which female genital mutilation is an acceptable method of ensuring social order. And we could just as equally envision this occurring in the instance where a proud White American is compelled to imagine dominant social institutions as perpetuating the racial subordination of Black Americans.   Medina adds to our understanding of the difficulties in appealing to exercises of the sympathetic imagination as a social resource: not only will privileged social identities often refrain from imaginatively engaging with the perspectives and experiences of oppressed identities insofar as such an activity may be against their perceived interests, when they do make such attempts, they are likely to experience a marked degree of visceral resistance. However, while this experience of resistance presents a significant barrier to sympathetic understanding and identification, it is not insurmountable. To think otherwise would be to underestimate the capaciousness and flexibility of the sympathetic imagination. As Hume observed:

> Nothing is more free than the imagination of man; and though it cannot exceed that original stock of ideas furnished by the external and internal senses, *it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating and dividing these ideas, in all the varieties of fiction and vision…*[138]

Indeed, while it is reasonable to think that what we can imagine is always constrained or limited by our social positioning and by the dominant norms and meanings of our community, the imagination is also capable of creatively 're-working' social meanings to produce new ideas and possibilities. In other words, while the imagination works on 'givens,' it is always capable of reshaping what is given to generate new ideas and new meanings (Griswold, 1990, p. 340). In exercising the Smithean virtue of indulgent humanity and attempting to imagine the world as different others do (and not merely

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[138] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding* (1748/1999), Section V, Part II, par. 39 (hereafter EHU II.39). My emphasis.

how we *think* they imagine the world or how we *expect* them to imagine it) we 'apprentice' ourselves to these others; and in doing so we engage in a creative exercise of sympathetic imagination.[139] To maintain it is not possible to stretch and expand the sympathetic imagination in this way is to overlook the extraordinarily progressive actions of individuals over the course of history, who have proven themselves capable of imagining the world in ways that run counter to convention, and in ways that provoke critical reflection on, and shifts in received understandings and normative practices. As Medina convincingly argues, the particular limitations of our imaginations are always "contingent" and never "fixed in stone." It is always possible to surmount such limitations through "critical engagement with individuals, groups, or cultures whose experiential worlds and imaginations are sufficiently different" (2012, p. 273).

It is not the case, however, that we are always obliged to overcome the resistance we may encounter in imagining the world from another's perspective, and to wholly align our perspective with his or her own; indeed, privileged identities may have good reason not to identify with the perspectives of marginalised and oppressed identities in some circumstances. It is illuminating to compare Pohlhaus to Medina and Smith on this point. Pohlhaus' approach aligns with the accounts offered by the latter to the extent that it acknowledges that the activity of re-conceiving particular aspects of the world is a social rather than an individual practice; one that is necessarily carried out in co-operation with marginalized identities. However, unlike Medina and Smith, her view implies that

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[139] I have borrowed and adapted this idea of 'apprenticeship' from Jean-Paul Sartre's (1940/1986) account of the distinction between imaginative thinking and perception, and from Elizabeth Spelman's discussion of this distinction in her book *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (1988/1990, pp. 178-182). The idea of apprenticing oneself to the other in the process of exercising our capacity for sympathetic imagination is intended to signal the importance of refraining from imagining the other and her experiences only in a way that it is compatible with our personal desires and interests, and in a way that allows us to avoid any feelings of discomfort. Apprenticeship signals an attentiveness, openness and receptiveness to the other person's reality and to engaging with the other's experience in its lived significance for her.

privileged identities must then submit to the perspectives of marginalized knowers, by simply trusting that the accounts offered by marginalised persons of their lived experiences are reliable and accurate, and by learning how to use the resources that the latter have developed to account for certain aspects of the world (2012, p. 731). Medina, on the other hand, acknowledges that while marginalized knowers often possess greater lucidity than privileged knowers with respect to many areas of the social world, this does not necessarily mean that their perspectives are always undistorted, and that we should unquestioningly adopt their way of imagining the world in all circumstances (see Medina, 2013, p. 74). Medina emphasizes that various situated imaginings ought to function as *mutual* correctives to one another: marginalized perspectives may be inflected with bias and prejudice, and may require correction from other situated perspectives that offer less oppressive ways of imagining the world and those in it. In like manner, we have seen that in Smith's view, if sympathy is to sustain a moral community, it must involve a mutual effort on behalf of spectators and agents to reflect on and adjust their situated standpoints. However, the key point is that we are in no position to judge whether our resistance to identifying with a particular perspective is grounded in justified reasons as opposed to more specious reasons, without first interrogating and critically reflecting on the source of our resistance.

Recall that for Smith, impartial spectatorship requires a form of self-estrangement; it requires that one divide oneself in two, and subject one's feelings and conduct to critical examination. This kind of self-scrutiny is, in his view, a crucial step in ensuring that one's sentiments reflect a moral response. As Chapter One explained, adopting the standpoint of a fair and impartial spectator and ensuring that one's sentiments reflect a moral viewpoint does not, on Smith's account, require individuals to adopt a 'view from nowhere'; rather it requires from the outset a preparedness and openness to imagining the world in ways that may be radically at odds with one's habitual

way of imagining oneself and one's social context. This openness need not entail a whole-hearted endorsement of the other's perspective; however, it does require that we be open to entertaining certain possibilities – including those that mark a challenge to our positive self-conception – and that we be willing to modify elements of our perspective in light of such possibilities.

Smith himself recognised that subjecting one's character and conduct to critical scrutiny is often so jarring that we refrain from engaging with the lived experiences and perspectives of those who would compel us to confront an undesirable image of ourselves:

> It is so disagreeable to think ill of ourselves, that we often purposely turn away our view from those whose circumstances might render that judgment unfavourable. He is a bold surgeon, they say, whose hand doesn't tremble when he performs an operation on his own person; and he is often equally bold who does not hesitate to pull off the mysterious veil of self-delusion, which covers from his view the deformities of his own conduct (TMS III.4.4).

Smith's acknowledgement of the intense fear that individuals have of exposing themselves to feelings of remorse and shame explains why he privileges magnanimity as an important social virtue, where magnanimity is conceived as a kind of heroism that motivates individuals to strive for nobler things rather than to merely seek their own private comfort (as the prudent man does) (TMS VI.i.14). When conjoined with the virtue of beneficence, exercising the virtue of magnanimity ensures that one transcends his or her private interests and comforts in a way that benefits the whole of society (TMS Vi.iii.25). Smith's appeal to this virtue inspires the thought that overcoming failures of sympathetic understanding and identification across difference requires the courageous transcendence of self-preference just as much as it requires humility, open-mindedness and imaginative flexibility.

iii. Morality as an Art

For the Scottish sentimentalists, an enlarged capacity for understanding and sensitivity is not something that one naturally possesses; rather it takes ongoing effort and perseverance to develop and expand one's imaginative and affective faculties. A common theme embedded in their work is that responding morally to others is a skill or capacity that demands cultivation. This idea comes through most vividly in Hume's theory of aesthetics, which has strong parallels to his moral theory. In his essay 'Of the Standard of Taste,' Hume offers an account of what it means to be a 'true judge' of taste. In the realm of aesthetic judgment, the sentiments of the true judges set what Hume refers to as 'the standard of taste': a standard against which the sentiments of all others are evaluated. Hume defines a true judge as an individual with "strong sense, united to delicate sentiment," which is "improved by practice, perfected by comparison and cleared of all prejudice."[140] Those who develop and refine their perceptual capacities through education and practice in judging a particular object, and through comparison of their past judgments and reflection upon their past errors (as the good wine or art critic is prone to do) possess what Hume refers to as a "delicacy of taste" (ST 4). Such persons are better placed than others to pass judgments with regards to matters of taste in Hume's view. Unlike individuals who take an overly narrow view of the object under consideration due to a lack of education and expertise, or due to prejudice, the 'true judge' takes a wider view: her training enables her to discern all the features of the object that have a bearing on its aesthetic value, and ensures that she gives each of these features due weight and attention. Furthermore, unlike the prejudiced critic the true judge avoids deliberately overlooking or dismissing any feature of the object that may

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[140] David Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste' in *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (1758), p. 247 (hereafter ST 247).

impact its aesthetic worth.[141] On these grounds, Hume claims that true judges are able to formulate more accurate and refined aesthetic judgments than those persons who lack sufficient education, training and impartiality.

Although Hume's concept of the true judge is not an explicit feature of his moral theory, his work on the standard of taste inspires the idea that as moral agents we can develop and 'perfect' our capacity for moral perception and moral judgment through education, practice, comparison and reflection. Just as we are able to broaden and refine our palate or our sense of smell, so we are also able to broaden and refine our moral faculties. This development and refinement may be achieved through both formal and informal means: we acquaint ourselves with the conventional moral standards or 'rules' of our community not only through education, but also (and primarily) through observing and participating in social exchanges; that is, through observing others' responses to our own behaviour and to the behaviour of others. It is also achieved through practice: through engaging in the concrete activity of making moral judgments, which implicates our capacity for sympathetic imagination and critical self-reflection. Finally, Hume's account of aesthetic judgment gives rise to the notion that we 'perfect' our capacity for moral judgment through comparing and critically reflecting on our past

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[141] Hume offers an example of those who possess this delicacy of taste in his recounting of a story from Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* (1605 & 1615). In short, the story recounts the tale of seasoned wine tasters who are called to give their opinion on a barrel of wine that was widely assumed to be of excellent quality, "being of an old and of a good vintage." As the story goes:

> One of them tastes it; considers it; and after mature reflection pronounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather, which he perceived in it. The other, after using the same precautions, gives also his verdict in favour of the wine; but with the reserve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish. You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their judgment. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom, an old key with a leathern thong tied to it (ST 239-240).

In Hume's view, the two wine tasters represent true judges of taste, and it is their sentiments which set the standard for judging the sentiments of all others. As this chapter explains, refined aesthetic judgments are comparable to refined moral judgments, to the extent that both demand the cultivation of perception and critical judgment.

judgments and conduct, taking stock of any errors or prejudices to which our feelings were subject in past instances. Regularly engaging in such activities develops, sharpens and refines individuals' capacities for moral perception, judgment and agency by allowing them to perceive things in a given set of circumstances which others who do not possess a similarly educated and refined standpoint cannot. Just like the wine critic who is able to detect elements in the wine that those who lack the relevant practice and training cannot, the true judge with respect to morality is more capable than others of discerning the morally important or salient features of a situation, and to give these features proper weight and attention in the process of moral deliberation. True judges in the moral realm are capable of discerning what Hume refers to as "those insensible differences and gradations" in the character and conduct of men that ought to bear on one's moral judgment.[142] Like the true judge in the aesthetic realm, the true judge with regards to moral matters is more readily able than others to notice and give due consideration to certain particulars that others overlook or dismiss, and are able to make more finely-grained, qualitative distinctions that others do not. As such, the sentiments of the true judge set the standard for moral judgment, and embody more informed and nuanced judgments than those who fail to cultivate their moral capacities.

Smith's account of moral exemplars is consistent with the notion that mature moral judgments rely on a refined capacity for moral perception, which is achieved over time through practice and discipline. He claims that 'wise and virtuous' persons possess a "delicacy of sensibility" that enables them to form a more accurate idea than others of what it is to feel, judge and act with "exact propriety and perfection" in various circumstances (TMS VI.iii.25).[143] In line with Hume's emphasis on education, practice

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[142] David Hume, 'Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion,' in *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (1758/1963), p. 6 (hereafter DTP 6).

[143] Smith claims that each person "gradually" forms an idea of what it is to act and judge in accordance with exact propriety and perfection in a given circumstance on the basis of "his

and discipline in the realm of aesthetic judgment, Smith observes that accurately forming an idea of this kind relies on individual perseverance: on engaging with different perspectives through an attentive and disciplined exercise of sympathetic imagination, and on critically negotiating these perspectives from the standpoint of the impartial spectator. It is through continually exercising our capacity for sympathetic imagination, reason and reflection in our ongoing engagements with different others, and comparing and critically reflecting upon our judgments and conduct in each instance, that we develop and refine our capacity to respond morally to others. As Smith puts it, judging and acting with 'utmost propriety' in a given situation relies on the "slow, gradual and progressive work of the great demigod within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct […] every day some feature is improved; every day some blemish corrected" (TMS VI.iii.25). For Smith as it was for Hume, virtuous conduct – or, as Smith puts it, "acting with the most perfect propriety in every possible circumstance and situation – is an "art" that requires practice (TMS VI.i.15).

Importantly, the standard of perfection towards which the wise and virtuous aspire in their character and conduct is never fully attained or realised, according to Smith. Smith writes that the wise and virtuous man "endeavours as well as he can, to assimilate his own character to this archetype of perfection;" however "he imitates the work of a divine artist, which can never be equalled" (TMS VI.iii.25). The idea of 'exact propriety and perfection' functions as a regulative ideal; it represents a horizon of achievement which individuals continually strive towards but never fully attain. The ethical significance of this notion can be appreciated when considered in the context of responding to social difference: the continual emergence of new perspectives which cut across various axes of difference means that there can be indefinitely many ways of

observations upon the character and conduct of himself and other people." However, this idea is "more accurately drawn" by those who possess a 'delicate' and 'acute' sensibility, and who make those observations with a greater degree of care and attention than others (TMS VI.iii.25).

imagining the world, which in turn means that our moral education is never 'complete'; we must continue to engage with new perspectives in a meaningful and critical way if we are to approximate perfection in our judgments and conduct.

The standard of exact propriety and perfection that the wise and virtuous strive to adhere to in their judgments and conduct is informed, but not wholly determined by prevailing social standards. Wise and virtuous persons regulate themselves by the former standard, even if doing so produces judgments and behaviour that others in their narrow social community may ridicule or scorn. The wise and virtuous man, in Smith's view, is motivated to adhere to ideal standards in his conduct out of a love for doing what is "praiseworthy," rather than what is merely praised by their social peers (TMS III.ii.1). It is the judgements and actions of the wise and virtuous that "contribute to the reconstruction of social norms" and "elevate the degree of refinement in social life" (Valihora, 2001, p. 149). The greater part of mankind exercise "tolerable observance" of the general rules of morality (e.g. the rule not to harm others unjustly). This maintains the functioning of society, yet fails to transform social prejudices and initiate social change (TMS III.v.2)

The combined insights of Fricker, Medina, Hume and Smith give us good reason to think that the barriers to understanding and sympathetic identification between members of different social groups need not be insurmountable. However, as we have seen, overcoming such barriers requires effort and perseverance: it requires one to actively seek out and engage with alternative ways of imagining the world in an open-minded, self-aware and critically reflective manner, and to scrutinise and work through any resistance one experiences in doing so. Imaginatively engaging with others' perspectives and subjecting one's own perspective to critical scrutiny demands a much greater degree of open-mindedness, imaginative flexibility and courage than more intellectual forms of engagement do. While it may be exceptionally challenging for

individuals to step outside of their situated perspective and attempt to experience the world as different others do, it is not impossible. To think otherwise is to underestimate the capaciousness and flexibility of the sympathetic imagination.[144] The possibility of expanding and refining one's capacity for understanding and feeling through education, practice, reflection and discipline inspires the thought that an individual's particular social location need not condemn her to blindness and insensitivity; and provides support for the view that our sympathetic responses to differently-situated others may be trained to reflect, or at least closely approximate, a genuinely impartial viewpoint.

Nevertheless, there are theorists such as Jesse Prinz (2011a, 2011b) who have queried whether it is genuinely possible to make our sympathetic responses expressive of a moral viewpoint. In what follows I consider the force of Prinz's argument that Humean-Smithean sympathy is inherently biased, and that appealing to an imagined impartial viewpoint as a means of correcting for the bias reflected in our situated feelings largely amounts to wishful thinking.

iv. The (Im)possibility of Reflective Sympathy: Prinz's Critique of Sympathy as a Moral Resource

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[144] In her work on Adam Smith, Fonna Forman Barzilai voices her scepticism with regards to the possibility of impartial engagement with the perspectives of culturally different others. She remarks:

> How do they [Smithean spectators] detach themselves from their own experiences as agents disciplined in a world of values and overcome cultural bias? How, within the terms of Smith's thick description of the disciplinary process through which spectators in historical space come to be proper members and gatekeepers of social morality, do they now become critical of and able to transcend historical space when they imaginatively enter into the conditions and motivations of others with potentially very different histories? (2013, p. 167).

In the view I have been defending, it is always possible for individuals to gain critical distance from the particular social imaginaries that shape their perspectives. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that carrying out such a task may be extremely difficult: without recourse to a purely objective viewpoint, impartially entering into the perspectives of others, let alone radically different others, seems to demand at the very least a marked degree of openness to alterity, and a preparedness to adjust (perhaps even significantly) how one imagines the world and others in it.

As Chapter One explained, theorists often run Hume and Smith's concept of sympathy together with the concept of empathy, insofar as the former refers more broadly to a mechanism or capacity that enables us to enter into the feelings of others, rather than to a feeling of pity or compassion *sui generis*. Prinz makes this move by aligning Humean-Smithean sympathy with empathy, conceived as a form of emotional mimicry in which individuals come to feel what another person is feeling, or at least what they take another person to be feeling (2011b, pp. 212-213). Prinz observes that emotional mimicry of this kind can be produced through automatic contagion, or alternatively through an exercise of imaginative perspective-taking (2011b, pp. 211-212). In the same vein as Hume and Smith, Prinz observes that sympathy so conceived is subject to various biases: we are affected more by the feelings of our loved ones, our friends, with those who resemble us more, and with those who are spatially and temporally contiguous with us (2011a, p. 224 & 227). In many cases these biases produce distorted moral judgments and ethically undesirable behaviour (preferential treatment, selective helping, moral myopia and so forth). Prinz acknowledges Hume's appeal to the General Point of View as a corrective to such biases (2011a). He swiftly dismisses it, however, stating that our sympathetic responses are "probably the greatest impediment" to adopting this impartial viewpoint (2011a, p. 228).[145] He also acknowledges Smith's Impartial Spectator as a potential corrective to the parochialism and partiality of sympathy (2011b). However, he argues that adopting the position of this "ideal observer" is extremely demanding, insofar as we rarely have epistemic access to this "truly ideal position of observation" (2011b, p. 228). On this basis, he concludes that Humean-Smithean sympathy has marginal value as a moral resource.

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[145] Prinz claims that it is possible for us to mitigate the effects of similarity biases on our feelings and empathise with members of different groups, "but only by making their similarities salient" (2011a, p. 228). Against Prinz, I defend Smith's view that we may cultivate fellow-feeling for different others in their specificity, where this achieved through a critically reflective exercise of the sympathetic imagination.

Prinz's critique of Humean-Smithean sentimentalism as a social resource has two main shortcomings. First, Prinz offers a highly reductive account of Humean-Smithean sympathy that fails to capture its depth and complexity. Specifically, his framing of sympathy as a form of vicarious arousal fails to take account of the fact that for Hume and Smith, this is merely one form that sympathy may take. As I argued in Chapter One, Smith and Hume promote a particular form of sympathy as a foundation for morality that goes beyond a form of crude emotional mimicry. This comes across most clearly in Smith's work. In his view, the type of sympathy that underpins moral communities is not marked by a duplication or 'unison' of feeling between individuals, but rather by a congruence or 'concordance' of feeling, where this harmony of feeling is achieved through reciprocal and critically reflective exercises of imaginative perspective-taking. The type of sympathy that underpins morality for both Hume and Smith involves not only a visceral *understanding* of what the other is feeling, but also *identification* with the other's feelings; the latter of which is marked by an experience of 'fellow-feeling.'[146]

Hume and Smith acknowledge that sympathy or fellow-feeling of this kind is subject to various kinds of biases, and this is why such feelings must often be subject to correction from a reflective standpoint. As we have seen, Prinz dismisses such a standpoint as an effective corrective to our situated feelings, without providing further justification for this claim (2011a). In this way, his account begs the question as to why it would be so impossible to modify our biased feelings through an exercise of critical self-

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[146] Julia Driver (2011) raises this point in her response to Prinz's paper (2011a). If we take Humean-Smithean sympathy to refer to a mode of affective understanding and identification, then it aligns more closely with the contemporary concept of empathetic concern than it does with empathy *qua* emotional mimicry. In existing scholarship, empathetic concern is defined as the experience of an emotion (e.g. compassion) which is "congruent with the perceived welfare of someone else" (See Batson, 2009, p. 8). Prinz explicitly states that empathetic concern is not the focus of his critique (2011b, pp. 211-212), however some of his remarks suggest that insofar as empathetic concern involves some kind of empathetic experience in which one comes to feel as another feels – as compared with a feeling of concern arising from the detached recognition that someone is in need – it is likely to be susceptible to bias.

reflection, so that our feelings come to reflect a moral response. If it were the case that the feelings generated through sympathising with others were mere affects, devoid of intentional or evaluative content, then indeed any attempt to assess such feelings as appropriate or inappropriate would be futile. However, Smith's account of the central role played by imaginative perspective-taking in facilitating sympathy – and even Prinz's own definition of sympathy as a form of emotional mimicry that may be produced through an exercise of imaginative perspective-taking – gives us good reason to think that more often than not our sympathetic responses to others embody interpretative and evaluative judgments about others and their circumstances, where such judgments may be informed or misinformed, biased or unbiased (Griswold, 1999, p. 137).[147] Insofar as our sentiments contain evaluative judgments, they have the capacity to be modified through an exercise of reason (e.g. through reflection on one's erroneous or biased beliefs) and through imaginative adjustments of perspective (e.g. through adopting the perspective of the General Point of View or the Impartial Spectator). Given the general plausibility of the claim that our sympathetic responses embody adequate or inadequate, informed or misinformed appraisals of the world, we have reasonable grounds for rejecting the idea that our partial sympathetic feelings are devoid of intentional content, and are thereby wholly intractable and entirely impervious to the kind of correction and adjustment that Smith and Hume promote in their account of reflective sympathy.

Of course, Prinz is right to point out that adopting an impartial viewpoint is often extremely demanding; however, his description of Smith's Impartial Spectator as an

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[147] I will not be engaging in debates over whether and to what extent a cognitivist account of emotions is correct. I take it to be uncontroversial that emotional responses which are generated through exercises of imaginative perspective-taking have intentional objects (i.e. the feelings of another person and her circumstances) and contain judgments about those objects. One might argue that in cases of emotional contagion, our vicarious feelings are empty affects that need not embody any kind of evaluative judgment about the other and her circumstances, and so may be impervious to correction. I doubt the plausibility of this view; however, I will not undertake to defend my position here.

'ideal observer' is inaccurate and misleading if by this he has in mind an all-seeing, all-knowing, disinterested and dispassionate figure, whose standpoint we must adopt if our moral judgments are to be genuinely impartial or objective. Smith is clear that the perspective of the impartial spectator is not ideal in this sense. In his view, adopting the perspective of the impartial spectator does not demand the impossible from individuals; rather, it is a matter of engaging in a creative and critical exercise of sympathetic imagination. It is a matter of attempting as best we can to see and understand the world from the perspectives of the parties involved, and of critically negotiating these perspectives in light of alternative possibilities. As this chapter has demonstrated, engaging in such an exercise may present more of a difficulty in contexts where one is forced to critically negotiate the perspectives of radically different others. However, we need not conclude on this basis that Smith and Hume's corrective devices represent an ineffective means of modifying our situated feelings: our situated feelings can always be altered through imaginative re-adjustments of perspective to reflect a moral response.[148]

Having addressed the issue of whether our sympathetic responses have the capacity to reflect a moral response, I now consider the following further objection: that in situations where social prejudices and biases threaten to distort our judgments of

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[148] Prinz makes the additional claim that Hume's appeal to the General Point of View to explain the stability of our moral judgments is "bad psychology." Prinz argues that while the idea may be "attractive to a liberal readership," the fact of the matter is that we rarely adopt this point of view (2011a, p. 228). Extending this line of argument to Smith, one might claim that the mode of sympathy he promotes as a moral resource represents a highly robust capacity; one that individuals fail to exercise often enough for it to play a substantive role in moral thought and action. Smith, however, was an extraordinarily astute observer of human social behaviour. He observed that individuals engage in complicated, critically reflective imaginative manoeuvres on an everyday basis, and are capable of negotiating various perspectives at once. Indeed, Prinz's suggestion that for the most part our sympathetic responses comprise of unreflective, unrestrained, 'knee-jerk' vicarious feelings seems plainly false. Our way of responding to the circumstances of others on many occasions reflects a degree of restraint, judgment and reflection. Take, for example, the various public displays of support that have been enacted by members of the White community for the Black Civil Rights movement. Given that such persons risked violence, alienation and exclusion by engaging in such activities, we have good reason to believe that their actions stemmed from a form of fellow-feeling with Black disadvantage that was considered and reflective.

another person's reaction to her circumstances, the conscious and deliberative task of adopting the impartial standpoint as a corrective measure (either concurrently or after the fact) is too time consuming, and that the practical demands of everyday life do not allow for such exercises. As we saw earlier, Fricker claims that often the best we can do is to reserve our judgment of the other and her situation. However, she also notes that with "sufficient corrective experiences" the task of reflecting upon and correcting for our biased judgments can be carried out more spontaneously. Her remarks with respect to correcting one's judgements of epistemic credibility inspire the view that with practice over time, we may 'recondition' our evaluative standpoint to the extent that our moral sentiments automatically reflect an unprejudiced response (2007, p. 97).[149] Smith adheres to a similar line of thought. Smith's work implies that with practice over time, the wise and virtuous individual comes to automatically regulate himself by an exact idea of propriety and perfection, losing the need to always correct for his immediate feelings. Smith writes that the wise and virtuous man "does not merely affect the sentiments of the impartial spectator. He readily adopts them. He almost identifies himself with, he almost becomes himself that impartial spectator, and scarce even feels but as that great arbiter of his conduct directs him to feel" (TMS III.3.25). In Smith's view, the automatic alignment of one's feelings with those of an impartial spectator is a mark of moral integrity. Consistent with Smith's emphasis on perfecting one's capacity for moral judgment as being a matter of ongoing effort and continual critical self-scrutiny, Fricker notes that the "ever changing and self-renewing" character of prejudicial social

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[149] Significantly, Fricker observes that we may recondition our perceptions and judgments of others not only through sufficient corrective experiences involving active critical reflection, but also through more informal, less individualistic and less reflective means such as regularly spending time with others and getting to know them. In her view, ongoing corrective experiences can lead us to automatically neutralise the influence of prejudice upon our judgments of others; however "plain personal familiarity" can also "melt away" prejudice (2007, p. 96). I consider the ethical importance of regular embodied interactions with different others and establishing personal relationships with them in Chapter Five. In this chapter I also acknowledge the role that institutions may play in facilitating such interactions and relationships.

stereotypes means that while correcting for familiar prejudices may become "second nature" through sufficient corrective experiences, one still needs to remain alert to the influence of "less familiar prejudices" (2007, pp. 97-98). In other words, the fact that one may have learnt to reliably correct for certain social prejudices does not obviate the need for ongoing active critical self-reflection.[150]

To highlight the fact that individuals are capable of reconditioning their evaluative standpoint to such an extent that they lose the need to continually self-correct is not to underestimate the difficulty of such volitional practices, however. Indeed, it is hard to imagine what would motivate everyday individuals to engage in such practices in the first place (apart, perhaps, from a virtuous character), especially when these may threaten their emotional attachments and interests, and especially when retaining one's ignorance with respect to many aspects of the world is supported, encouraged and even rewarded by one's social community. Smith himself was aware that our love of social praise is extremely strong, and can often overwhelm our love of doing what is actually praiseworthy. This is why he claims that only the wise and virtuous "few" will regulate their character and conduct by ideal standards, and not simply by prevailing social standards (as the "great mob of mankind" are inclined to do). The question of how to motivate individuals to engage in corrective exercises is also an issue for contemporary theorists like Medina, who faces the question of how to provoke individuals towards self-problematisation especially in cases where doing so may threaten to jeopardize their material interests, and the personal and social benefits they enjoy as a result of remaining

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[150] In line with her individualistic model of critical self-regulation, Fricker suggests that alertness to the influence of unfamiliar prejudices on one's judgments remains a matter of "ongoing active critical reflection" (2007, p. 98). Medina and Smith on the other hand rightly argue that critical self-reflection must often be a social, dialogical enterprise, insofar as we often require others to alert us to the existence of unfamiliar prejudices, and the extent to which these prejudices may be influencing our judgements and actions in particular contexts.

ignorant.[151] The issue of how to motivate individuals to engage in critically reflective

exercises of the sympathetic imagination need not mean we turn our attention away from

the latter as a resource for the negotiation and recognition of difference, however.

Rather, it means that cultivating and practicing our capacity for sympathetic imagination

and critical self-reflection in our encounters with different social identities requires

institutional support. This is precisely the point made by Smith in his later work, *The

Wealth of Nations*. I address what these supports may look like towards the end of Chapter

Five. In the following chapter, I turn to consider a further objection to sympathy as a

social resource: that sympathy is too individualistic and has limited ethical and political

value, insofar as it focuses on specific individuals and fails to extend to socio-political

groups. I take Sally Haslanger's (2005) reflections upon her lived experience of transracial

parenting to reinforce Smith's view of sympathy as a crucial foundation for establishing

harmonious social relations across lines of difference. Haslanger's account complements

Smith's insights with regards to the ethical value of sympathy by demonstrating how

sympathetic identification with an individual whose body is marked out and devalued as

different within a culture may have the effect of transforming the way in which we

experience our own embodiment, or 'imaginary body'. This in turn has the effect of

expanding the scope of our fellow-feeling to accommodate entire social groups radically

different to our own. As we will see, while Haslanger's reflections mark a valuable

contribution to Smith's work by widening our understanding of the social importance of

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[151] In her review of Medina's *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice and Resistant Imaginations* (2013) Laura Beeby claims that Medina's account leaves open the question as to what would motivate individuals to engage with different and contrasting perspectives, and to embrace the difficulties and challenges offered up in doing so (2013, p. 69). However, in *The Epistemology of Resistance,* Medina emphasises that while overcoming failures of understanding and identification between different social identities relies on volitional individual efforts, such failures also demand structural remedies. Remedying the injustices and harms that are underpinned by dominant social imaginings requires institutional reform in addition to large-scale cultural shifts in his view (2013, p. 76. See also Medina, 2011). Chapter Five builds on this line of thought, by discussing the role played by various institutional programs and bottom-up initiatives in disrupting dominant social imaginings and facilitating sympathetic identification across lines of difference.

sympathy, Smith's emphasis on the importance of critical self-awareness, and on the role played by institutions in cultivating this awareness, offers a useful starting point for addressing Haslanger's own concerns regarding the capacity for identification with differently embodied others to function as a liability.

Chapter Five
Transformative Imaginings: When Adam Met Sally

Appealing to impartial spectatorship as a means of addressing the obstacles to sympathetic understanding and identification between marginalised and privileged identities is not without its limitations, as I noted in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, I have argued that critically reflective exercises of sympathetic imagination may bridge failures of fellow-feeling on the condition that the process of reflection and correction takes the form of an ongoing, dialogical social practice rather than a solitary, individual activity. In the final part of Chapter Four I addressed potential challenges to the practicability of Smithean sympathy; specifically, whether it is possible to train our sympathetic feelings to reflect a moral response, and whether the kind of sympathy Smith identified as a moral resource is simply too robust and time-consuming for individuals to exercise on an everyday basis. In response to the first challenge, I suggested that our emotional reactions to others' lived experiences are responsive to the

discoveries of reason and to critical reflection, insofar as exercises of the sympathetic imagination produce feelings that are not 'mere feels,' but which embody evaluative judgments. These judgments may be modified through the acquisition of new information and through critical self-reflection to express a moral viewpoint. In response to the second challenge, I suggested that the conscious and deliberative task of correcting our situated sentiments may become more automatic or 'second nature' through sufficient corrective experiences. Through such experiences, individuals may recondition their critical standpoint to such an extent that they lose the need to continually self-correct.

Having dealt with these potential objections to Smithean sympathy as a resource for social recognition, in this chapter I consider the additional objection that sympathy is inescapably parochial: that exercising our capacity for sympathetic imagination produces feelings of benevolence and compassion directed towards specific individuals, where such feelings fail to extend to entire social groups of people. In short, the worry is that sympathy is too individualistic to be a genuine social resource. For example, Scarry claims that while our concern may extend to "a person," rarely does it extend to "a people" (1998, p. 105). In other words, we feel for the one, but not for the many. If it is the case that exercises of the sympathetic imagination may only change the way we relate to specific individuals rather than to entire groups of people, then we have reason to doubt the value of sympathy as a means of transforming patterns of sociability between different social groups.

As we saw in Chapter One, Smith claims that we may come to feel for the suffering of distant peoples through an imaginative re-adjustment of perspective; specifically, through adopting the perspective of an impartial spectator. In the first part of this chapter I consider how Sally Haslanger's reflections upon her lived experience of transracial parenting add to Smith's insights regarding the potential for perspectival shifts

to expand the scope of our fellow-feeling to accommodate entire communities of people. Haslanger offers an account of how her lived experience of being a White mother to her adopted Black children has transformed the way in which she relates to Black and White individuals, and Black and White communities. Her reflections suggest that taking on the lived experiences of an individual through an exercise of sympathetic imagination – particularly the experiences of an individual who belongs to a culturally devalued group – may transform the way in which one relates to, and the extent to which one feels for, the entire group to which that individual belongs. Embodied modes of engagement achieve this effect, in her view, through transforming the way in which individuals experience their own embodiment (or 'imaginary body') and the bodies of others. On this basis, her account contributes to Smith's own work by deepening our understanding of *how* it is that exercises of the sympathetic imagination and embodied contact may transform the way in which members of privileged groups relate to marginalised and devalued groups, and not simply to individual members of these groups.

The second half of the chapter addresses concerns with appealing to exercises of the sympathetic imagination as a social resource in less intimate contexts than parenting. In such contexts, racial biases and prejudices may lead individuals to avoid the kind of embodied contact with differently racialized others which, as Chapter Four has shown, is often crucial for bringing individuals to awareness of the need to exercise critical self-reflection and to adjust their perspective. Furthermore, privileged identities in wider social contexts may harbour an unconscious desire to retain their ignorance with regards to the lives and experiences of marginalised others; hence it is unclear what would prompt them to imaginatively engage with marginalised experiences of their own volition. As a response to these concerns, I consider Smith's account of the role played by institutions in making up for individual limitations; in particular his appeal to commercial society as having the potential to promote embodied contact between

differently situated others, and to encourage familiarity with diverse perspectives. I then discuss how commercial society and other institutional structures which aim to promote social interaction and co-operation may fall short of producing a viable sociability across lines of difference, owing to the pervasiveness of social biases and prejudices which have their roots in prevailing social imaginings. Addressing this issue calls for large-scale cultural and symbolic shifts. I suggest that such shifts may be achieved primarily through bottom-up initiatives, which present a particularly powerful challenge to dominant imaginings of social difference through their appeal to the sympathetic imagination.

i. The Imaginary Body

Haslanger – who describes herself as "WASP-y looking" (pale skin, straight brown hair, grey eyes) – claims that her lived experience of being a loving White mother to her adopted Black children has changed the way in which she relates to the Black community as a whole. Central to understanding this transformation is Haslanger's claim that taking on the needs and desires of her Black children has had the effect of altering her 'imaginary body' (2012, p. 286). She herself says little about this concept; only that it refers to the "largely unconscious sense of one's own body" (2012, p. 286). In what follows I elaborate on the concept of the imaginary body, and outline its connection to the social imaginary; specifically I consider the influence that dominant imaginings can have on the way in which individuals experience their own racial embodiment and the racialized bodies of others, and the patterns of collective social behaviour this experience produces.[152]

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[152] Haslanger herself does not make reference to the concept of the social imaginary, but she does observe that we make sense of our own bodies and those of others through the "symbolic and narrative resources" that are available within a culture (2012, p. 282). In her view, these resources feed into the non-conscious, unreflective experience of our own embodiment and the bodies of

The concept of the imaginary body refers to a person's experience of her own embodiment. Theorists have suggested that the way in which we experience our own embodiment structures our experience of the world, and how we respond to those in our social community.[153] Having an imaginary body relies on the work of imagination in perception. This does not involve conjuring up an inner mental image of the body before us; rather it refers to the imagination's capacity to layer or transpose images onto the body, which in turn allows us to perceive it in a particular light: as having this or that meaning or significance. As Chapter Two outlined, the perception we have of others' bodies as well as our own is not a neutral or purely cognitive one; it is "affectively charged" (Lennon, 2004, p. 116). This can be attributed to the 'close union' between imagination and affect. As Lennon points out, "we do not only categorise the bodies of ourselves and of others, we imagine them, and the way we imagine them structures the formation of our desires" (2004, p. 116).[154]

The way in which we imagine others' bodies as well as our own will be shaped by our personal history and relations with significant others, as well as by our social context; more specifically, by prevailing social imaginings that construct diverse forms of subjectivity. As Chapter Two explained, the significations that constitute the social imaginary of a culture construct various bodies in meaningful ways. The White Male

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others, and give rise to collectively-shared ways of relating to differently embodied others. The connection between the social imaginary and the imaginary body that is highlighted in this chapter intends to capture this idea. Gatens has previously drawn a clear link between these phenomena in her seminal work, *Imaginary bodies: Ethics, Power, and Corporeality* (1996).

[153] The concept of the imaginary body has a strong philosophical, phenomenological, psychoanalytic and medical pedigree: Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Schilder, and more recently Kathleen Lennon and Moira Gatens are among those who treat the imaginary body as central to our experience of our own bodies, and how we respond to the bodies of others.

[154] Lennon rightly observes that we err in thinking of the imaginary body as "an inner mental map or picture we have of our bodies" that involves a "brute causal response[ ] to anatomical shape." Rather we would do better to think of it as a "mode[ ] of experiencing our concrete body" (2004, p. 115).

Body, the Black Female Body, the White Female Body, and the Black Male Body take on different meanings that vary historically and contextually, and which "determine[ ], in part, their value, their status and what will be deemed their appropriate treatment" (Gatens, 1996, p. viii). These meanings give rise to shared attitudes (of disgust, contempt, pride and so forth) towards differently embodied others, and structure shared ways of relating to them.

We have seen in earlier chapters that the dominant social meanings which attach to particular bodies will tend to reflect the way in which powerful social groups imagine the world and those in it, insofar as they enjoy privileged access to the means of interpretation and communication within a society. The ongoing, socially-coerced exclusion of marginalised social identities from meaning-generating fields such as journalism, law, politics and popular media has meant that prevailing social imaginings tend to reflect the perspectives of dominant group identities, and are typically uncharitable in their representation of marginalised group identities. As Chapter Three illuminated, the ongoing cultural devaluation of Aboriginal Australians as a group has caused them to suffer significant personal, social and material disadvantages that are not shared by non-Indigenous Australians. Similarly, African-Americans are subject to various disadvantages owing to the subordinate place they occupy within the dominant White American imaginary.[155] Indeed Black Americans are overwhelmingly represented

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[155] Going forward I refer to African-Americans as Black Americans, in line with the description of the term 'Black' offered in Chapter Two. To re-iterate: 'Black' is a technical term that refers to a particular social class of individuals, which is generated by the dominant social meaning and value attributed to particular "physical markers" of race, where these bodily features are "inherited through an ancestry traceable to a particular geographical region" (Haslanger, p. 277). On this account, to be Black is to suffer subordination (economic, political, legal, social, etc.) in virtue of dominant cultural interpretations of one's bodily features. To be White, by comparison, is to reap privileges (economic, political, legal, social, etc.) in virtue of dominant cultural interpretations of one's bodily features. See Haslanger (2012, pp. 275-281) for more detailed discussion.

as violent, uneducated and drug-dependent within mainstream media.[156] Black men in particular are often cast as criminal offenders, and as having an uncontrollable sexuality that makes them a significant threat to women.

Dominant imaginings of the Black body in relation to the White body regulate everyday social interactions between White and Black people. In his account of the 'racing' of space, Charles Mills notes that people's conceptions of their racial identity 'map[ ] a micro-geography of the acceptable routes through racial space' (1997, p. 52 cited in Haslanger, 2012, pp. 286-287). In societies structured by racial oppression, different racialized individuals will unconsciously form and follow a map that dictates spaces of intimacy and distance vis à vis others, with Black persons facing far greater restrictions in the spaces they can occupy in relation to White persons without significant cost. The cultural devaluation of Black bodies in relation to White bodies, and its influence on affective attitudes and racial self-maps, may partially explain the aversive behaviour exhibited by Whites in their embodied encounters with Black people. This behaviour can include a tendency to maintain physical distance from Black persons, and to exhibit signs of bodily discomfort and diminished eye contact when in the presence of the latter (Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, & Howard, 1997). Collective ways of imagining Black bodies not only have consequences for how Whites respond to Black persons in everyday embodied encounters, they also have the capacity to diminish concern for Black disadvantage and suffering. As we saw in Chapter One, Smith and Hume were among the first to observe that our fellow-feeling hinges on associative ties: we feel more for those whom we perceive to be similar to ourselves; those whom we see as being 'like us'. Hence we would expect that social imaginings which constantly underscore the

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[156] The effect of such representations on collective social attitudes can be significant. Studies have found that Black Americans are more likely than any other racial or ethnic group to be described by White Americans as violent and drug-dependent (Sigelman & Tuch 1996) and that Black Americans are perceived on average to be less educated and intelligent than White Americans (Blair, 2001; Plous & Williams, 1995).

differences between racial identities whilst masking their shared humanity would inhibit concern for the suffering of different racialized others. As it stands, empirical studies reveal a steady tendency among Whites to offer less assistance to Blacks who are in serious need of help (Saucier, Miller, & Doucet, 2005). This tendency was arguably reflected in the US Government's response to the (predominantly Black) victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The Government's management of the crisis was widely criticised as slow and grossly inadequate, and was taken to evince a general lack of concern for America's disadvantaged Black citizens (Henkel, Dovidio, & Gaertner 2006).

In Chapter One I proposed that exercises of the sympathetic imagination have the capacity to positively transform relations between privileged and marginalized social groups. However, so far this proposal has left open the question as to whether the social benefits of sympathy may extend beyond the one to the many; that is, whether sympathetically identifying with the lived experience of a specific individual may have the effect of not only changing the way in which we relate to that individual, but also how we relate to the entire group of which she is a part. In what follows, I demonstrate how Haslanger's account of her experience as a transracial parent furnishes us with valuable resources for responding to this question in a way that illuminates the potential for sympathetic identification with the lived experiences of differently racialized individuals to change the way in which one relates to entire racial groups.

ii. Transformative Imaginings: When Adam Met Sally

In 'You Mixed?' (2012), Haslanger describes how her lived experience of being a White mother to her adopted Black children has transformed her perception of herself and the way in which she relates to those in Black and White Communities, with the consequence that she tends to identify more with those in the Black community than those in the White community. Haslanger begins by noting that while adoptive parents

do not have "a biological connection to the bodies of their children" they are nevertheless "intimately involved" in the child's physical being. She writes:

> Parents learn to read the needs and desires of the baby from cries, facial expressions, body language and in some cases it is as if the patterns of the child's hunger and fatigue are programmed into your own body… (2012, p. 286).

Through regularly internalising the lived experiences of her Black children, Haslanger notes that her sense of her own embodiment has shifted:

> This empathetic extension of body awareness, this attentiveness to the minute signals of another's body, does not in any metaphysically real sense make the other body part of your own, but taking on the needs and desires of another body as if your own, perhaps especially if the other's body is marked as different, alters your own body sense, or what some have called… the "imaginary body" (2012, p. 286).

Through an exercise of sympathetic imagination, Haslanger takes on the desires and needs of her children as if they were her own. In doing so she imagines herself as having a different embodiment, with the result that her sense of her own body has become, in her words, "racially confused" (2012, p. 286). The effects of this can be radical: Haslanger recalls a story recounted to her in which a White mother of two Korean-born adoptees, upon returning to Korea with her children, was thrilled to be surrounded by people who 'look like us' only to realise after receiving surprised and perplexed glances from onlookers that she did not resemble those around her in the relevant sense (2012, fn. 14, p. 213).

Haslanger's experience of being a parent to Black children has not only had the effect of disrupting her sense of her own racial embodiment; it has changed her aesthetic appraisal of Black bodies and White bodies in a way that lies at odds with White aesthetic ideals. As a parent, Haslanger engages in close, embodied interactions with her children on an everyday basis, and finds their bodies beautiful. She claims that across time, the

experience of parenting has affected her aesthetic appraisal not only of her own children but of other infants. She remarks that among transracial parents, it is common to hear that White babies come to appear insipid, and that babies of colour have a "magnetic" charm. Moreover, she claims that the experience has significantly altered the way in which she perceives and evaluates adult bodies, including her own (2012, p. 288).

The effects of mothering Black children have proven in Haslanger's case to be profound and far-reaching. She notes that her "entire social map has been redrawn": she finds herself to be "physically at home with African-Americans in a way that she was not before," and finds that in large group settings, she seeks out eye contact with Black people and prefers to be seated next to them. (2012, p. 287). She also finds that her "own sense of community has dramatically changed"; she feels unsettled in all-White settings and finds herself "drawn to those who aren't White." Perhaps most significantly, Haslanger claims that racism is no longer something she finds "offensive and morally objectionable"; she experiences it "as a personal harm" (2012, p. 289).

With respect to the connection between sympathy and recognition, Haslanger's experience as a transracial parent is illuminating for several reasons. First, her reflections upon her own experiences and those of other parents demonstrate that the brute fact of physical difference need not be an insurmountable barrier to sympathetic identification, and that racism is not biologically 'hard-wired,' as some may be inclined to believe.[157] It is thanks to the capaciousness and flexibility of the sympathetic imagination and its effects on the imaginary body that individuals may come to identify with differently

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[157] Studies using brain imaging techniques claim to have shown that individuals exhibit a much more intense emotional reaction to the suffering of those who are of the same racial group than to the suffering of those who belong to a different racial group (See for example Xu, Zuo, Wang, & Han, 2009). On the basis of such studies it may be inferred that our capacity to feel for others is determined by biological factors, and that it is not possible to overcome the limits that biological differences place on the scope and intensity of our fellow-feeling. I suggest we err in drawing such a conclusion. This is because it overlooks the role played by imagination in perception, and thus the power of the sympathetic imagination to alter the way in which we perceive others, and to generate fellow-feeling for others who possess a radically different embodiment to our own.

embodied others. As Smith's example of a man sympathising with a woman's pain in childbirth implies, embodied difference need not necessarily prevent or inhibit a sympathetic response (TMS VII.iii.1.4). Most importantly for the aims of this chapter, the changes experienced by Haslanger to how she relates to the Black community as a whole demonstrate that the effects of sympathy need not be confined to individual members of different racial groups. Her experience suggests that imaginatively identifying with the needs and desires of an individual whose embodiment is different to one's own has the capacity to transform the way in which we relate to the wider group of which that individual is a part. Lastly, Haslanger's experience demonstrates the epistemic value of sympathy. She shows that identifying with the experiences of others through an exercise of sympathetic imagination has unique potential to produce a form of knowledge that has a deep connection with feeling, action and one's sense of self. The experiences afforded through sympathising with others do not simply furnish us with additional beliefs that we add to the list of beliefs we already hold. Rather, engaging with others in this way can alter one's epistemic standpoint in a way that is deeply transformative for the self, and for how one responds to the world. For example, prior to becoming a mother to Black children Haslanger knew that she lived in a racist society. She also judged racism to be morally reprehensible. However, as a parent she now knows and judges these things in a very different way; in a way that strongly implicates her feelings, her sense of self, and her will to act. By imaginatively adopting the perspective of her Black children and 'bringing home' their experiences (to borrow Smith's phrase), the issue of racism takes on a level of personal and affective significance for Haslanger that was missing before she became a parent. In her own words, it is through being a loving and sympathetic mother to Black children that she has now become "more fully aware of the cost of racial injustice for all of us" (2012, p. 289). Haslanger's visceral understanding of racism and racial injustice reflects the mode of social knowledge that

has been explicitly called upon by theorists such as Sandra Bartky: a knowing that, in Bartky's words, has "an affective taste" and which "transforms the self who knows" (1997, p. 179). As Bartky points out, registering the reality of racial discrimination and becoming more informed with regards to the disadvantages suffered by Black people is not enough to effect meaningful social change; the latter is more readily achieved when individuals acknowledge these issues in a way that implicates their emotions and will to act.

Through a reading of Haslanger's work, we have seen that imaginative identification with the lived experiences of differently racialized persons may have the capacity to alter the way in which people experience their own embodiment and the bodies of others, which in turn may have deeply transformative effects for the way in which they relate to different racial groups and to issues of race. Yet one may wonder why emphasis ought to be placed on sympathetic identification with differently racialized others when Whites may transform the way in which they respond to Black persons through cultivating and maintaining a conscious commitment to anti-racism. Haslanger herself acknowledges this possibility (2012, p. 292). However, the fact that racial biases and prejudices typically manifest as unconscious, affect–laden perceptions of others and their circumstances suggests we have reason to doubt the effectiveness of purely cognitive forms of self-regulation. Indeed if an individual relies solely on abstract reasoning, or on calling to mind a set of facts ('Not all Black men are violent!'...) to correct for the influence of her prejudiced perceptions on her judgments, we would expect such exercises to have only a marginal effect. This is because our affective dispositions towards others (and the imaginings that underpin them) often can demonstrate a lack of responsiveness to rational argumentation. As Lennon argues, we cannot alter the way in which people perceive their social environment "simply by offering them contrary facts" (2010, p. 387). With respect to altering collective social

imaginings of Indigenous Australians and their relation to the Anglo-Australian community, she notes that:

> [p]ointing out that there were people in Australia when British settlers arrived can have bearing on the image of *terra nullius*. But it is not sufficient. To dislodge this image those people and their social arrangements and relationships to the land have to be *imagined* in ways that give them rights over its use and disposition (2004, p. 119. My emphasis).

Given the 'close union' Hume identified between imagination and affect, exercises of the sympathetic imagination in which individuals vividly re-imagine the world from the perspective of another may be more effective than purely cognitive or intellectual methods in altering people's perceptions of marginalised others, and the way in which they respond to them and their circumstances.

There is, however, the risk that a strong sympathetic response will obfuscate important rational considerations or matters of fact; in other words, there is the risk that affect will overpower cognition. A possible instance of this is where White persons come to perceive themselves as belonging to the Black community, and take themselves to possess privileged insights into the lived experiences of Black persons ('I know exactly how you feel'…). Indeed there is always the possibility that in sympathising with others, the line between self and other will become blurred to the point that the sympathetic imagination begins to function in assimilative and appropriative ways. This issue draws attention back to Smith's claim regarding the inability of individuals to exactly replicate others' lived experiences through imagination, insofar as they cannot literally inhabit others' bodies. What we might add to this point in light of the above concern is that individuals must acknowledge and constantly maintain an awareness of their imaginative limitations if sympathy is to support sociability across lines of embodied difference. This is especially the case for privileged identities, who may harbour a higher degree of epistemic arrogance and a lower degree of epistemic humility in comparison to

epistemically marginalised identities, and who may be less capable of acknowledging their epistemic limitations. Haslanger exemplifies the kind of critical self-awareness necessary to avoid epistemic arrogance. She notes that despite the fact her imaginary body has become 'racially confused' through sympathising with her children, she does not therefore think of herself as a Black person. Haslanger is careful to point out that she retains an awareness of herself as being White (and of the privileges that come along with this), and as having a White identity (2012, p. 292).

iii. Sympathy, Institutions and the Imperative to Shift the Social Imaginary

Up until this point I have drawn on Haslanger's experience as a transracial parent in order to illustrate the potentially transformative effects of sympathy. However, it is not necessary to become a parent to Black children to experience these effects: significant empirical and anecdotal evidence suggests that sympathetically identifying with a friend or romantic partner may alter the way in which one relates to differently racialized groups.[158] Nevertheless, the capacity of dominant social imaginings to structure deep-seated racial biases and prejudices gives us reason to doubt whether individuals situated in wider social contexts will, of their own accord, seek out the company and friendship of differently embodied others, particularly those who belong to culturally devalued groups. The phenomenon of wilful ignorance also gives us reason to doubt the extent to which privileged identities will inquire into, and imaginatively and reflectively engage with marginalised experiences of their own volition. I argue that these issues need not

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[158] The ability of cross-group friendships or romantic partnerships to positively condition the way in which one relates to unfamiliar 'out-group' members is well-documented in the psychological literature (Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004; Emerson, Kimbro & Yancey, 2002; Islam & Hewstone, 1993). Confluent with the idea that exercises of the sympathetic imagination are central to sustaining a viable sociability across lines of difference, researchers studying intergroup relations claim that the wider pro-social effects of cross-group friendships can be attributed to episodes of sympathetic identification and emotional resonance within friendships (Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, Mashek, Lewandowski, & Aron, 2004; Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001).

discount Smithean sympathy as a valuable resource for social transformation. Rather, they bring into focus the need for institutional arrangements to make up for individual limitations.

Smith was well aware of the important role played by institutions in supporting human sociability. In *Wealth of Nations,* he argues that the commercial marketplace plays a key role in facilitating contact between members of different social groups, and in encouraging individuals to exercise their capacity for sympathetic imagination. In his view, a thriving marketplace in which everyone has the opportunity to participate on fair and equal terms establishes relations of co-operation and interdependence between differently-situated individuals.[159] Such relations compel individuals to recognise and engage with the distinct perspectives of those with whom they deal. Smith claims that commercial self-interest (for instance, the desire among buyers to accumulate goods at a cheap price) provides a strong incentive for buyers to imaginatively adopt the perspective of the seller, and to regulate their conduct in light of the seller's interests (WN I.ii.2).[160] By engaging with the seller's perspective and adjusting their sentiments and demands to the appropriate 'tone and pitch,' buyers exercise Smith's prized virtues of indulgent humanity and self-command. Not only must buyers and sellers acknowledge and respect each other's personal interests and concerns, they must also be polite and courteous in their business dealings, lest their commercial interests be harmed. Being arrogant or contemptuous will risk jeopardising one's chances to buy or sell profitably. In this way,

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[159] Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations (1776/1976), Bk. III, Chap. iv, Par. 11 (hereafter, WN III.iv.11). Smith argues that it is imperative that governments provide individuals within a society with equal opportunities to participate in the commercial marketplace by addressing gross socio-economic inequalities. See also WN V.i.f-g.

[160] Smith writes:

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages (WN I.ii.2).

commercial society may foster civility.[161]

Smith offers us grounds for thinking that commercial societies not only encourage familiarity, mutual understanding and respect, they also provide fertile ground for the cultivation of critical self-awareness and impartiality. This is because commercial societies are, as Maria Paganelli notes, "societies of strangers" (2010). For Smith as we have seen, it is not by taking the perspective of one's partner, friend or brother that we are typically prompted into an awareness of our self-directed bias. This awareness is achieved more readily through adopting the perspective of one with whom we share an impersonal relationship. Since family and friends are more likely to indulge our biased, situated passions (and us theirs) than are strangers, the latter provide us with a more detached perspective from which to survey and evaluate our conduct. As Paganelli points out, it is by seeing ourselves through the eyes of strangers whom we encounter in the commercial marketplace that alerts us to the need to exercise a greater degree of self-command than we otherwise would. Practicing self-command in this way develops our capacity for the kind of discipline and restraint that is involved in exercising impartial spectatorship.

The potential for commercial society to have a civilizing effect resonates with the work of contemporary theorists such as Elizabeth Anderson, who in *The Imperative of Integration* (2010), argues for the importance of initiatives (e.g. affirmative action policies, equal employment opportunities, and other integrative measures) that aim to increase the

[161] Richard Boyd offers a detailed analysis of the civilizing effects of commercial society in *WN*. He notes that the attitudes which Smith observed as being characteristic of members of privileged groups – namely, pride and vanity – are "inconsistent with a modern commercial society in which people must interact, on a day to day basis, with others who occupy radically different – and sometimes unequal – social positions" (2013, p. 454). Boyd takes Smith's remarks in *WN* to imply that commercial society encourages individuals to familiarise themselves with the perspectives of different others and to be respectful in their interactions (albeit for the sake of self-interest), thereby assisting to break down social prejudices and parochial attitudes (2013, p. 455). Of course, although it is consistent with Smith's view to think that participation in commercial society has positive social benefits, we should not overestimate the potential of commerce to dramatically improve social relations (as contemporary experience affirms).

presence of marginalised racial identities in the labour market and in other spheres, and which promote inter-group cooperation on terms of equality. Unfortunately, what we have witnessed is the failure of such initiatives to be fully successful in transforming interracial relations. The tendency of affirmative action measures to entrench damaging racial stereotypes, and their failure to curb the discrimination faced by marginalised racial identities in various sectors has been well documented. In many cases, racial integration in American society has led to the phenomenon of 'white flight.'[162]

One possible explanation for the failure of these initiatives is that they are not enough to break down deeply engrained, widespread racial prejudices that are structured and sustained by dominant social imaginings. To achieve this may require large-scale cultural or symbolic shifts. Such shifts may be mobilised through bottom-up initiatives and top-down reforms; however, as this thesis has illustrated, the latter often fail to generate meaningful social and cultural change on their own. Hence, in what follows I consider the potential for bottom-up initiatives to instigate shifts in the dominant social imaginary through the promotion of alternative narratives, images and symbols that mark a challenge to, and spark critical reflection upon the prevailing narratives, images and symbols within a society that shape how individuals in that society make sense of their social context.[163] Such initiatives may be necessary in addition to integrative measures for

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[162] Elizabeth Anderson points out that in many instances, intergroup contact fails to be successful in improving intergroup relations because it fails to meet certain regulative conditions, such as those identified by Gordon Allport (1954) in his 'contact hypothesis' (See Anderson 2010, pp. 123-127). These conditions are that contact must be sustained, cooperative, institutionally supported, and that contact must take place between individuals of equal status (1954, pp. 261-281). However, I take it that not even integrative measures that meet the above conditions will be sufficient to alter the aversive attitudes and behaviour that privileged racial identities manifest in their encounters with oppressed identities, especially if the former are constantly bombarded with cultural images and narratives that denigrate Black identity and privilege White identity. On these grounds, I argue that large-scale shifts within the dominant racial imaginary are also required.

[163] The notion that the social imaginary can be both a source of oppression and a resource for resisting and overcoming it can be found in the work of Gatens, Medina and Bottici. James notes that from this point of view, the fact that the social imaginary is capable of "contribut[ing] to the construction of subjectivity in ways that are oppressive is balanced by the fact that it can contribute to our freedom by providing tools for critical reflection" (2002, p. 191). Bottici, for

increasing what Anderson refers to as the "social and cultural capital" possessed by oppressed racial groups; an increase that she acknowledges as being central to overcoming Black disadvantage (2010, p. 186).

Challenges to dominant imaginings of racial identity may be realised in various ways. Take, for example, the indigenous cultural awareness programs that have been introduced by educational institutions in North America and Australia. These programs invite Indigenous elders as distinguished guest speakers to impart their unique cultural knowledge and expertise to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. By situating Indigenous bodies within a privileged academic setting and positioning Indigenous speakers as educators, these programs disrupt and subvert dominant imaginings of Indigenous people as objects of knowledge rather than subjects of knowledge. By presenting Indigenous elders as important and valuable sources of knowledge and culture, these programs represent a significant attempt to shift the diminished social value and meaning that is ascribed to Indigenous persons and their cultural perspective.

While cultural awareness programs and other similar institutional initiatives may play a key role in breaking down racial stereotypes and prejudices that are embedded in the dominant imaginary, often the most significant challenges to the latter are achieved through grass-roots social movements. The Civil Rights Movement of the nineteen-sixties is illustrative of a bottom-up movement that opened up America's racial imaginary to multiple contestations, primarily through counter-narratives and images that were evoked in street protests, public speeches and in the works of various artistic, literary and intellectual figures of the time. This movement played a central role in the inscription of America's *Civil Rights Act 1964* into law, which was deeply symbolic in its recognition of African-Americans as bearers of equal rights. A more recent example of a social

example, notes that while our exposure to certain images may undermine our capacity to recognise devalued group members in their "full humanity," alternative images can assisting in establishing (or restoring) a perception of others as fully human, and thus worthy of equitable moral and political treatment (see Bottici, 2014, p. 175).

movement that has constituted a powerful challenge to dominant racial imaginings can

be found in the series of protests against police violence and racism in the United States.

These protests originally arose in response to the police shooting of an unarmed Black

teenager named Michael Brown, which took place in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9,

2014. Brown's shooting followed soon after the death of another Black male, Eric

Garner, who died from a police chokehold after having been arrested for a

misdemeanour. The powerful images and slogans associated with the protests ("Hands

Up, Don't Shoot" "I Can't Breathe" "Black Lives Matter") quickly went viral, and the

anguished reaction from Brown's parents was widely broadcast by mainstream news

outlets. What followed was an overwhelmingly sympathetic response from TV audiences

and followers of social media worldwide, with the Ferguson protests sparking an

additional series of protests both locally and internationally.[164]

The intensity of this response may be explained by the 'close union' that the

Scottish sentimentalists observed between imagination and affect, wherein images give

rise to affects, and affects give rise to images. As Bottici has stressed, the close

intertwinement of image and affect is connected to moral action. In *Imaginal Politics*:

Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary, Bottici claims that it is through being

emotionally affected by images of human vulnerability and suffering that we become

"compassionate spectators" to human rights violations, and feel more strongly compelled

to enforce these rights (2014, p. 162 & p. 170). The images of Black suffering evoked by

the Ferguson protests implicate viewers imaginatively and affectively by inviting

individuals to see and feel things from the perspective of those targeted by police

violence: to imagine how it would feel to be choked to death and to have one's plea for

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[164] Take for example the recent series of mass protests or "die-ins" that have been enacted on
university campuses and various public spaces across North America and the United Kingdom.
These protests have seen hundreds of people gather together to simulate their own deaths in
protest of police racism and violence.

help ignored, or to imagine how it would feel to have one's gesture of surrender count for nothing in preventing one from being shot. Exercising one's capacity for sympathetic imagination in this way has the potential to generate a strong level of identification with Black experiences of police racism and violence, which transforms the issue from being something morally objectionable that happens to others, to something that has a personal, affective significance. Consonant with Haslanger's experience of racism as a transracial parent, it is through imagining oneself in the victim's shoes that the problem of police violence becomes more than just a moral and political issue for observers; it takes on an embodied significance that moves one to act. It is for this reason that the Ferguson protests represent such a powerful intervention into a racist imaginary that attempts to mask the shared humanity of Black and White persons, and which attributes diminished moral value and standing to Black bodies.

The potential for images and narratives to provoke critical reflection upon dominant imaginings of racial identity and to generate a powerful social response finds further support from the deep social and cultural shifts that were generated by the Aboriginal land rights movement in Australia. While the *Mabo v Queensland* (1992) and *Wik Peoples v Queensland* (1996) High Court rulings presented deeply symbolic challenges to dominant imaginings of Australian history and of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity,[165] it was arguably the series of grass-roots social movements that took place in the lead up to these rulings which marked the most significant intervention into the way

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[165] The *Mabo* and *Wik* rulings were deeply symbolic in their official recognition of native title. As Henry Reynolds points out, these judgements were largely unforeseen, and marked "a turning point in Australian jurisprudence" that brought principles of native title out of the shadows to the forefront of public debate and discussion, both within and outside of Australia (2007, p. 231). Justice Deane and Justice Gaudron's comments in the *Mabo* case referred to the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples as part of "a national legacy of unutterable shame," thereby marking a powerful challenge to the cluster of fictions (including narratives of Indigenous savagery and primitivism) that played a key role in denying Indigenous law, custom and land tenure. In this sense, the *Mabo* and *Wik* rulings reinforced the challenges thrown up by various grass-roots movements in previous decades to dominant social imaginings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity.

in which White Australians imagined Indigenous Australians and their relation to the land. A powerful symbol of the land rights movement was the Aboriginal 'Tent Embassy,' consisting of a cluster of small tents pitched on the front laws of Australia's Parliament House in protest of the Federal government's refusal to recognise native title. The circulation of media reports and images which captured the government's (often aggressive) attempts to remove the embassy meant that the latter became a potent symbol of Indigenous resistance, determination and solidarity that drew the attention of the international community. Another deeply symbolic challenge to hegemonic imaginings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity occurred during the bi-centenary celebration of European settlement. On January 26 1988, over twenty-thousand marchers dressed in the colours of the Aboriginal flag took to the streets to protest the nation's celebration of what they referred to as 'Invasion Day' and as a 'Day of Mourning.' The slogans associated with the protest ('White Australia has a Black History') evoked images of the violence, injustice and losses suffered by Australia's original inhabitants. These images marked a strong challenge to prevailing narratives of peaceful 'discovery' and 'settlement' that traditionally have been used to describe the arrival of European fleets to Australian shores. By subverting the myth of *terra nullius* and provoking a re-imagining of Australia's colonial history as one of violence, dispossession and injustice, the protest called into question the collective feelings of pride and esteem that non-Indigenous people invest in their heritage.[166]

By destabilising the fiction of *terra nullius*, and illuminating the injustices and losses suffered by Aboriginal Australians under colonial rule, the images and narratives evoked by the 1988 protest and various other grass-roots movements marked a

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[166] As Genevieve Lloyd explains, the fiction of *terra nullius*:

> …allowed non-indigenous Australians' sense of their history to resonate with emotions of pride – of continuity with achievements of discovery, of endurance, and of the creation of something new (2000, pp. 31-32).

significant counterpoint to non-Indigenous accounts of European colonisation. These counterpoints served not only to destabilise prevailing imaginings of the non-Indigenous community as humane, generous and just in their dealings with Aboriginal people, but also to disrupt dominant stereotypes of Aboriginal persons as infantile and uneducated. Most significantly, these images and narratives posed such challenges in a way that appealed to their audience's capacity for sympathetic imagination. The slogans associated with the Invasion Day protests, for instance, invited non-Indigenous audiences to imagine how it would feel to be brutally dispossessed of one's land, and worse, to have to endure this day being celebrated by the wider Australian community. In his famous Redfern Park speech, former Prime Minister Paul Keating explicitly called upon members of the non-Indigenous community to exercise their capacity for sympathetic imagination:

> [I]t might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we have lived on for 50 000 years – and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours. Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless….Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it (Keating, 1992).[167]

Keating does not merely offer an exposition of the injustices suffered by Indigenous persons; he invites his audience to imaginatively 'bring home' the lived significance of these injustices for members of the Indigenous community in an effort to elicit fellow-feeling for Indigenous suffering.

Through their capacity to engage persons imaginatively and affectively and to generate sympathy for the suffering of Aboriginal persons, the powerful images, symbols and narratives evoked by bottom-up initiatives throughout Australia's history have

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[167] As Lennon has rightly pointed out, in this speech Keating "is not simply amassing facts. He is trying to bring about a change in the way the past is imagined, and consequently thought and felt about" (2010, p. 388).

presented a particularly powerful challenge to the way in which non-Indigenous

Australians not only think about the past but also to how they imagine themselves in

relation to Indigenous Australians, and the land on which they live. The potential for

collective re-imaginings of this kind to generate feelings of compassion and to galvanise

widespread socio-political action is reflected in the strong public displays of support

among the non-Indigenous community for Indigenous recognition over the past

decades. Such displays have included the People's Walk for Reconciliation - an event

which saw more than 250,000 people from both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous

community walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of reconciliation - and the

first 'Sea of Hands' installation on the lawns of Australia's Parliament House in 1997,

consisting of 120,000 hands bearing the colours of the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander

and Australian flags, each carrying a signature from a nation-wide petition supporting

native title and reconciliation.

The power of images and narratives to elicit strong sympathetic responses from

their audiences and to generate collective action means that poetry, literature and film

may also function as valuable resources for challenging dominant social imaginings.[168] In

TMS and *WN*, Smith gestures towards the social benefits that are generated through

engagement with great tragedies and poems, which compel their respective audiences to

exercise their capacity for sympathetic imagination.[169] From the standpoint of this thesis,

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[168] See Medina (2013, pp. 230-234) and Bottici (2014, pp. 170-174) for similar arguments. Of course, Bottici is correct to point out that while literary narratives may be a source of emancipation, they have also served to entrench women's subordination. Bottici cites Shelley B. Ortner's analysis of popular fairy tales (1996) as an example of how fictional narratives have been instrumental in perpetuating oppressive images of women as lacking full agency in comparison to men. In the final section of this paper I address the broader issue of counter-narratives or images promising liberation for devalued identities in theory while serving to reinforce oppressive hierarchies in practice.

[169] For example, in one passage from *TMS* Smith suggests that great literary works have the capacity to expand and enrich our capacity for moral agency. This is because such works sensitize us to the nuances and complexities of character and context, which is requisite to making more precise and refined moral judgments. Good literature, in his view, acquaints us with "the

the capacity for artistic works to support imaginative identification with the lived experiences of different others enables them to play an instrumental role in disrupting and transforming the way in which individuals imagine and relate to those in their social community. Take, for example, Sally Morgan's best-selling autobiographical novel *My Place* (1987), which traces Morgan's quest to find out about her Aboriginal heritage and her family's past, and Phillip Noyce's multi award-winning film *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), which recounts the real-life journey of three young Indigenous girls who were forcibly removed from their family and placed into a White settlement camp.[170] Both texts represent particularly powerful interventions into dominant imaginings of Australian history and of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity, owing to their vivid and sympathetic portrayal of the lived significance of White assimilation policies for Indigenous persons. Through the use of emotionally-charged narratives and images, both novel and film invite their respective audiences to imaginatively enter into and identify with the grief, fear, loneliness and confusion suffered by Indigenous children and their families as a consequence of forced child removal policies. Noyce, for example, juxtaposes images of the harsh and regimented life of the camp with images of the peaceful and fulfilling life enjoyed by the girls in their native community, thereby inviting his audience to vividly imagine the Eurocentric education and training given to

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different shades and gradations of circumstance, character and situation, to differences and distinctions which, though not imperceptible, are, by their nicety and delicacy, often altogether undefinable" (TMS VI.ii.i.22). Smith offers the example of Voltaire's *L'orphelin de la Chine* (1755) to illustrate this point:

> In that beautiful tragedy of Voltaire, the Orphan of China, while we admire the magnanimity of Zamti, who is willing to sacrifice the life of his own child, in order to preserve that of the only feeble remnant of his ancient sovereigns and masters; we not only pardon, but love the maternal tenderness of Idame, who, at the risque of discovering the important secret of her husband, reclaims her infant from the cruel hands of the Tartars, into which it had been delivered (TMS VI.ii.i.22).

The significant potential for such works to support the moral development of the citizenry led Smith to argue that the State ought to provide support for the Arts (WN V.i.g.15).

[170] Noyce's film is based on the novel *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* (1996) by Indigenous Australian author Doris Pilkington Garimara.

Aboriginal children from an Indigenous perspective; that is, as patronizing, degrading and cruel, rather than as the 'generous gift' of European 'civilization.' By tracing the long and physically gruelling journey undertaken by its young protagonists who manage to escape from the camp and walk 1500 miles home to their family, *Rabbit Proof Fence* serves to disrupt the popular myth that there was little Indigenous resistance to White colonial rule, and that Aboriginal persons more or less willingly acquiesced to White control.

In a similar vein to *My Place* and *Rabbit Proof Fence,* Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) compels its readers to recognise Black disadvantage, vulnerability and resilience in a way that engages their emotions. Set in Lorain, Ohio during the years following the Great Depression, *The Bluest Eye* conveys the racial tensions and deep racial segregation between those in Black and White communities. Morrison employs rich imagery and symbolism to elicit a sympathetic response from her readers to the socially induced shame and self-loathing of Black women and men living in White-dominated society, and their constant struggle to resist internalising moral and aesthetic ideals that privilege White bodies and type-cast Black bodies as monstrous and grotesque. In one passage, Morrison conjures up a vivid image of the exhausting and pain-staking rituals endured by a young boy at the hands of his mother, who attempts to dissociate him from any markers of Black identity and culture:

> She had explained to him the difference between colored people and niggers. They were easily identifiable. Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud. He belonged to the former group: he wore white shirts and blue trousers; his hair was cut as close to his scalp as possible to avoid any suggestion of wool, the part was etched into his hair by the barber. In winter his mother put Jergens Lotion on his face to keep the skin from becoming ashen. Even though he was light-skinned, it was possible to ash. The line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant (1970, p. 67).

The knowledge of racial oppression that we acquire through engaging with literary works and films is not adequately described in terms of abstract, propositional knowledge. Rather the mode of knowledge we acquire through engaging with such mediums is particular, embodied and visceral. It is by "bringing home" the lived experiences of the novel's protagonists through an exercise of sympathetic imagination that the issues of racial injustice and racial discrimination become less abstract and more particularized for the reader, and take on an affective valence or significance which engages one's will in a way that more didactic methods of communication may not. Furthermore, the ability of literary works and films to depict the experiences of their protagonists in such a manner as to elicit a strong affective response from readers and viewers suggests that we can sympathise with, and feel compassion for individuals whom we have never met, including fictional representations of individuals. The capacity for artistic works to engage our sympathies offers additional support for the view that one need not become a parent to Black children to experience the transformative effects of sympathy: sympathising with the experiences of fictional characters may be enough to produce an intense emotional response which, in turn, may significantly alter the way in which one relates to members of differently racialized groups and their circumstances.[171]

However, if public acts of counter-imagining exercised by a single person or a group of people are to present a meaningful challenge to dominant social imaginings and to generate cultural and political change, they must – as Medina points out – be "echoed"

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[171] I have been implicitly assuming that it is White readers who experience the ethically transformative effects of sympathising with the experiences of Black fictional characters. Though, of course, literary works like *The Bluest Eye* also have the capacity to be deeply transformative for Black readers, who in identifying with the experiences of the novel's Black protagonists, may find their real-world experiences (of joy, pride, resentment, shame and so forth) validated or affirmed. It should be noted that while I assume engagement with literary works and other forms of art may have a real and significant impact on how one perceives and relates to various social identities and social issues, not all theorists are convinced of the morally edifying potential of fiction. For a robust debate on this issue, see Posner (1997) and Nussbaum (1998).

or "reverberated" by others and "woven into a network of collective practices of resistance" (2013, p. 249). [172] In order to generate this kind of widespread social reverberation, these counter-imaginings must be "shareable" by others (2013, p. 248). To the extent that the counter-imaginings evoked by artistic works and grass-roots social movements often tap into and promote engagement with shared, universal human experiences (for example, experiences of shame, loss and grief; the love of family and belonging) they have real potential to receive uptake from wide networks of people, who in turn echo these imaginings in their subsequent actions. This echoing was demonstrated in the series of protests that took place in the wider North American community as well in the international community in support of the Ferguson rallies against police violence. It was also manifest in the series of symbolic demonstrations held by non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Australians in support of reconciliation and native title. As Medina notes, this kind of political action, when echoed by vast networks of different people, ensures that small-scale acts of re-imagining the world "become politically effective" and leave a "noticeable cultural mark" (2013, pp. 248-249).

iv. Which Imaginary? Whose Imaginary?

In the preceding section I stressed the role played by institutional initiatives (e.g. Indigenous cultural awareness programs), grass-roots movements (e.g. the Ferguson Protests; the Indigenous Australian land rights movement) and artistic works (e.g. Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*; Morgan's *My Place*) in provoking critical reflection upon dominant collective imaginings of racial history and racial identity. *Prima facie*, we would expect the imaginaries that are instituted by marginalised and devalued identities to present individuals with a more reliable and less distorted picture of the world than that

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[172] As Medina correctly points out, acts of small-scale resistance will fail to generate significant cultural and political change so long as these acts "remain isolated and disconnected" (2013, p. 247).

which is structured by dominant imaginaries, insofar as dominant identities have greater incentive to, for example, gloss over certain historical realities. Yet the question of whether a particular counter-narrative or image ultimately gets us closer to a more *accurate* or *objective* understanding of the world is a moot one. This is because there is no standpoint outside of the social imaginary from which we can access some 'undistorted' or 'pure' reality; from which we can see things 'as they really are.' There is, in Lennon's words, no "independently accessible reality" against which we might check if alternative imagined configurations are accurate (2004, p. 119). Bottici echoes this point, noting that while "images present themselves as real […] we have no criteria with which to establish their reality" (2014, p. 152). Indeed, to try to assess an image of, for example, Aboriginal people as resilient and resourceful in terms of its truth or falsity is unproductive. A more fruitful endeavour would be to evaluate alternative images and narratives according to the meaning and significance they have for those whose self-understanding is shaped by them. As Lennon suggests, rather than try to grasp whether or not a particular imagined configuration reveals some objective 'fact' about our social existence, it would be more constructive to consider whether and to what extent a particular way of imagining the world answers to the lived experiences of differently-situated individuals within a community, and to what extent it offers these individuals "satisfying and liveable ways of being in their environment" (Lennon, 2004, p. 120).

When considering the issue of whether and to what degree alternative social imaginings enable different groups within a community to flourish and to live well with others, it is important to recognise that not all challenges to, and shifts within the dominant social imaginary which are galvanised by marginalised identities can be classed as emancipatory and empowering (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002, p. 327. See also Bottici, 2014, pp. 194-195). The potential for alternative imaginings to reinforce hierarchies of oppression is particularly apparent when we consider the various

interventions and shifts that have taken place with respect to dominant imaginings of Aboriginal politics and affairs, and the damaging implications some of these interventions and shifts have had for members of the Indigenous community. Consider the collective re-imaginings of Aboriginal persons as full citizens with equal political standing that was galvanised by various bottom-up initiatives and top-down reforms from the early twentieth century onwards. While this shift in the dominant imaginary was undoubtedly empowering for Aboriginal Australians as a group, it failed to have a fully emancipatory effect to the extent that it left the social and institutional privileging of Eurocentric norms, values and practices unchallenged. The language of self-determination that now dominates Aboriginal politics has, by comparison, marked a significant challenge to the cultural privileging of Anglo-Australian culture and the cultural devaluation of Aboriginal culture. Nevertheless, the privileging of Indigenous rights to self-determination in the social imaginary has, as many theorists have pointed out, often come at the expense of the interests and well-being of Aboriginal women. The privileging of race and culture and the concomitant marginalisation of gender in prevailing social imaginings of Indigenous self-determination has meant that such imaginings have real potential to overlook the oppressive, gendered aspects of Indigenous customs and their implications for Aboriginal women.[173]

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[173] This potential has been demonstrated by high-profile legal cases of recent times, where charges of non-consensual sexual intercourse and sexual violence laid against Aboriginal men in the context of arranged marriage were met with lenient sentences, out of consideration for Indigenous customary law and conjugal rights. I refer here to the case of the *Queen v GJ* (2005) and *Hales v Jamilmira* (2003). In the case of *Hales v Jamilmira*, a thirteen-month prison sentence for the offender was reduced to twenty-four hours on appeal. The presiding Supreme Court judge, Justice Gallop, found that the initial sentence failed to give sufficient consideration to customary and traditional law, stating that the offender was exercising his conjugal rights and that his bride "knew what was expected of her." However the public outcry in response to this decision led to a further appeal, in which Justice Gallop's decision was reversed. What these cases show in part is that by failing to consider how power relations between Aboriginal men and women affect the meaning and scope of rights to self-determination in Aboriginal communities, the contemporary emphasis on Indigenous self-determination in the dominant social imaginary risks entrenching the subordination of Indigenous women. For further details of these court cases, see LCAS report, pp. 70-71. For a detailed analysis of Indigenous customary law and women's rights in the broader context of the clash between human rights and cultural norms, see Gatens (2004).

In an effort to empower Aboriginal women who are vulnerable to sexual violence within their own communities, feminist anthropologist Diane Bell (1989) has sought to promote a narrative of intra-racial rape as 'everyone's business' rather than as primarily Aboriginal business, and as warranting intervention from outside parties. The everyone's business narrative finds it roots in the concern that the issue of Aboriginal men's violence fails to be meaningfully discussed among the wider Australian community owing to a fear of being charged with political incorrectness and racism (Stringer, 2012, p. 20). The narrative highlights the shared vulnerability of non-Indigenous and Indigenous women to rape, and ostensibly aims to ensure that the sexual abuse of Aboriginal women by Aboriginal men is granted the same degree of social and legal recognition as the sexual abuse of non-Aboriginal women. The notion that rape within Aboriginal communities is equally a matter of non-Indigenous business as it is Indigenous business has been re-iterated by various public figures within the non-Indigenous community. Yet despite its emancipatory goals, this way of imagining the problem of sexual violence against Indigenous women has been criticised for overlooking and negating the highly particularized meaning of Indigenous women's suffering, and for failing to acknowledge the role played by White racism and racially discriminatory institutional structures in establishing and perpetuating the problem of sexual violence in Indigenous communities, and in dissuading Indigenous women from seeking help. As such, it risks reinforcing the narrative of 'Indigenous pathology' that has been central in motivating and justifying intrusive and harmful top-down policies targeting Indigenous communities such as the Intervention (Stringer, 2012, pp. 19-28).

The controversy surrounding the 'everybody's business' narrative draws attention to the need for alternative discourses to recognise intersectionality, and to critically attend

to multiple forms of domination that cut across lines of gender, race and class. As Bottici has pointed out, narratives that aim to be emancipatory for women universally may only prove to be genuinely liberating for a particular class of women (e.g. White, upper-middle class women), and may risk reinforcing the subjugation of other women (e.g. Black working-class women) if they fail to subvert "all forms of hierarchy" grounded in "gender, class, or racial oppression" (2014, p. 195).[174]

The controversy also foregrounds the need for alternative imaginings of oppressed social groups and their circumstances to be informed by the members of those groups, especially if such imaginings are to generate attitudes and affects that are conducive to establishing a viable sociability between privileged and oppressed identities. There is also a need to acknowledge the diversity of perspectives that exist among members within a particular group whose identities may be differentiated across various lines of difference (gender, sexuality, class, age and so forth), and to recognise that a particular set of individual group members do not necessarily speak for the whole (Yuval-Davis, 2012, p. 51; Sahgal & Yuval Davis, 1992/2001). Indigenous critics of Morgan's *My Place* have, for example, argued that Morgan's narrative account of her lived experience of racial discrimination glosses over present injustices and sidelines the issue of White responsibility for Aboriginal plight, allowing its White readers to maintain a blind eye to their complicity in sustaining Indigenous disadvantage. Furthermore, insofar as Morgan only discovered her Aboriginal heritage during her adult years and grew up in a middle-class suburb instead of a traditional Indigenous community, her critics point out that her experiences are far removed from those of other Indigenous women who grew

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[174] Bottici offers the example of feminist narratives that construe female emancipation in terms of the achievement of formal equality with men. As she correctly notes, while these narratives may be liberating or empowering for, say, White women who enjoy increased access to the public sphere, this is not the case for immigrant women who "replace[ ] the white housewife in providing domestic care" and who remain confined to the position of a waged labourer in the private sphere (2014, p. 195).

up with full knowledge of their heritage and history. While this difference need not be problematic in itself, it becomes problematic when Morgan is received and presented as the single authoritative or 'authentic' voice of what it means to be Aboriginal. As it stands, there is the risk of receiving her work as such: having sold over half a million copies nation-wide within a decade of its publication, and having been an enduring fixture in the national school curriculum, *My Place* continues to dominate public representations of Aboriginality, whereas diverse representations of Aboriginality remain largely absent from mainstream media. The exclusive attention granted to *My Place* at the expense of alternative representations of Aboriginality risks essentializing Morgan's standpoint as 'the' Aboriginal perspective, thereby homogenizing the diverse and heterogeneous experiences that people can have within social groups and social locations. Indeed there is no such thing as 'the' Aboriginal perspective or 'the' perspective of Aboriginal women: Aboriginality is lived and experienced differently by those who are differentiated across lines of gender, sexuality, age, class, and so forth within that community. As this chapter has shown, if alternative social imaginings fail to be shaped by a diversity of perspectives within a particular group, they risk entrenching intra-group oppression and inhibiting recognition of the lived experiences of those who occupy a devalued place within that group. Ensuring that the dominant social imaginary of a culture answers to a diversity of experiences and perspectives requires explicit material and social changes, otherwise it will remain the case that only certain groups of people, and certain members within particular groups, will retain the power to have their imaginings, institutions, challenges to convention (and so on) act more forcefully in the establishment of social norms than those of other social groups (See Gatens, 2004, p. 283. See also Gatens, 1996, p. 141).

Importantly, we err in thinking that shifts in the dominant social imaginary will eventually lead to a utopic society in which all difference is recognized, thereby erasing

the need for further interrogations and disruptions of prevailing social imaginings. The continual emergence of new social identities with unique needs and interests means that the social imaginary of a culture will need to keep shifting in order to accommodate these needs and interests in a way that strives to be compatible with the existing needs and interests of other group identities. Furthermore, given the fact that norms are not isolated phenomena but rather exist in complex interconnected clusters, there is often no way of reliably predicting from the outset what the effects of unsettling one particular norm will be. A challenge to one particular norm in order to empower a certain group may result in a challenge to another norm or to a whole cluster of norms that other groups may be significantly attached to and invested in.[175] Constant vigilance is therefore required with respect to the lived implications that particular normative challenges have (or may have) for different social identities, and in particular the effects that such challenges have on sympathetic understanding and identification between members of different social groups.

Creating and sustaining a harmonious sociability between different social identities, and ensuring that the lived experiences of various identities are properly recognised by the community at large necessitates that our social imaginings be continually subject to interrogation, revision and transformation. In this chapter I have suggested that ongoing challenges to and shifts within the dominant social imaginary are necessary alongside the promotion of opportunities for inter-group exchange as a means of breaking down entrenched racial biases and prejudices that cause privileged identities to avoid contact with marginalised and devalued identities, and which prevent them from imaginatively engaging with the latter's experiences and circumstances in a sufficiently fair- and open-minded manner. I have argued that encouraging informed and reflective

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[175] Gatens has promoted this 'cluster concept' of norms (2004, 2008), pointing out that "criticism of one norm will involve critical engagement with the norm cluster in which it is nested" (2008, p. 159). She notes that normative shifts with respect to women's identities "cannot but have an effect on men's identities, as well as on marital and familial norms" (2008, p. 162).

exercises of the sympathetic imagination at both an individual and structural level is a worthwhile endeavour, insofar as such exercises demonstrate greater potential to change the way in which we relate to others than purely cognitive modes of engagement, and especially insofar as sympathetic identification with a specific individual may have the capacity to change the way in which we relate to entire social groups.

Conclusion

I began this thesis with the aim of contributing to existing scholarship on the issue of misrecognition. My contribution seeks to develop an account of what achieving recognition for culturally devalued identities demands from individuals and institutions. As part of this project I have drawn on Adam Smith's concept of the sympathetic imagination as a valuable resource for the negotiation and recognition of the complex differences that mark contemporary societies. I have suggested that Smith's account of sympathy offers an important contribution to current debates over the role played by imaginative perspective-taking in generating ethical concern for the suffering of devalued identities, and in establishing and sustaining a viable sociability between members of different social groups.

In this thesis I have sought to highlight the richness and depth of Smith's account of sympathy as compared with contemporary accounts of sympathy and empathy. Far removed from a form of emotional mimicry or a feeling of pity or

compassion, Smithean sympathy presents itself as a complex mechanism that implicates our capacity for imagination, understanding, judgment and critical self-reflection. I have suggested that Smith's pluralist account of sympathy and his rigorous analysis of its various moral functions offers a useful framework for understanding how it is that a certain mode of sympathetic identification may have beneficial effects in one context but prove damaging and unproductive in another. Indeed one of the most valuable insights to be gleaned from Smith's work is the ways in which sympathy may function both as a resource and a liability for morality. Smith appeared to be well attuned to sympathy's destructive potential: just as sympathy may establish social bonds, he recognised that it may just as readily reinforce social divisions and perpetuate social conflict. From him we learn that if sympathy is to be the 'secret chain' that binds individuals together as moral agents, it must have regulative constraints upon it.

On my reading of Smith, the mode of sympathy that best supports a viable sociability across lines of difference does not take the form of spontaneous, pre-reflective vicarious arousal or emotional mimicry. Rather it implicates one's capacity for critical and reflective judgment. Smith was aware that our appraisals of others' experiences and circumstances may reflect a lack of information and, moreover, a degree of bias and prejudice. Hence, they will often require correction from a reflective standpoint. I have argued that Smith presents a plausible empirical account of how individuals may come to make their sentiments expressive of a moral point of view; one which does not rely on a problematic appeal to a highly abstract and idealised standpoint that exists outside the self. Adopting the perspective of an impartial spectator does not require the impossible from individuals; it does not require that one become a noumenal self, nor does it require that individuals assume a God's Eye perspective or Archimedean point of view. In line with Smith, I have acknowledged that while it may be particularly challenging for individuals to adopt an impartial perspective in certain contexts, it is not so cognitively

demanding as to stretch the capacities of individuals entirely beyond their limits.

This thesis has sought to foreground Smith's cogent analysis of what establishes and sustains a viable sociability between individuals within a community who may know little and care little about one another. For Smith, social concord is ensured in large part through having spectators and agents engage in mutual efforts to vividly imagine one another's particular perspectives, and to critically scrutinise their own evaluative standpoints. Along with Smith, I have argued that the ethic of reciprocity that is at the heart of such exercises and the deep mode of recognition they engender is paramount to the establishment and preservation of harmonious social communities.

What makes Smith's account of sympathy relevant to contemporary studies on misrecognition is, in part, his emphasis on the inescapable influence that our particular socio-historical and cultural context exerts on the way we judge various people, practices and behaviour. Smith's remarks suggest that mature moral judgments involve an acknowledgement of this fact, and a concerted attempt to familiarise ourselves with others' distinctive standpoints (informed as these standpoints are by their particular histories, experiences, values, and normative beliefs) before we pass judgment It also demands that we critically reflect on the social norms, meanings and values that have shaped the way in which we assess our own and others' circumstances, motives and feelings.

I have endeavoured to develop this aspect of Smith's thought by exploring the complex social dimensions of sympathetic understanding and identification in contemporary contexts, and how these play into the massive failures of sympathy that mark the relationship between culturally privileged and devalued identities. Drawing on the concept of the social imaginary, I have sought to highlight that our grasp of our social context will always be brought to bear on our judgments of others and their circumstances, and that this wider grasp is informed by our lived experiences as well as

by our exposure to public images, narratives and symbols that confer value and meaning on particular bodies, practices and behaviours. When the prevailing significations of a society exclusively reflect the experiences and perspectives of some group identities at the expense of other identities, they have the capacity to structure widely shared, implicit beliefs and assumptions that render certain possibilities more plausible or conceivable than others, and which strip marginalised perspectives of legitimacy. This engenders a breakdown of sympathetic understanding and identification between members of different social groups.

I have argued that the Northern Territory Intervention policy marks a practical example of a breakdown of sympathy under the influence of dominant Anglo-Australian imaginings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity. In this context, I argued that the implementation of and continued support given to the Intervention evinces, in part, a colossal failure of sympathetic imagination among the non-Indigenous Australian community; a failure, that is, to recognise Indigenous perspectives, and to properly acknowledge the Intervention's lived significance for Aboriginal Australians. I have also suggested that the Intervention, much like Australia's earlier assimilation policies, offers a powerful demonstration of the destructive potential of sympathy; of the egregious consequences that strong feelings of compassion and pity can have when they fail to be underpinned by a genuine understanding of others' distinct perspectives, and remain unaccompanied by an attempt to critically reflect on the assumptions and beliefs that inform one's perceptions of others and their circumstances.

Failures of sympathy between privileged and devalued social groups are sustained, on my account, by the practice of wilful ignorance on the part of privileged identities. I have argued that the latter are more likely than the former to resist exercising their capacity for sympathetic imagination, owing to the fact that they are more likely to harbour an active (even if unconscious) impulse to refrain from properly engaging with

the perspectives of devalued social identities, and to avoid subjecting their own perspectives to critical scrutiny. This kind of resistance can be explained by the fact that engaging in such an exercise may lead privileged identities to confront jarring images of themselves in relation to others, and prompt them to question whole clusters of norms, values and meanings that allow them to retain various social and material benefits. The unwillingness on the part of privileged social identities to exercise their capacity for sympathetic imagination ensures that marginalised and devalued identities remain excluded from the circulation of social passions, and that their lived experiences fail to meet with the kind of recognition that Smith claimed is central to individual flourishing. Furthermore, it engenders a breakdown of the kind of reciprocity that is crucial to establishing and sustaining harmonious social relations.

The capacity of the dominant social imaginary to structure a set of implicit habits and attitudes among privileged identities that inhibit them from engaging in the kind of imaginative exercises that Smith promotes as a basis for ethical communities need not be devastating for an appeal to Smithean sympathy as a social resource, or so I have suggested. Since privileged identities may fail to independently recognise the fact that their sentiments reflect distorted and unreliable judgments about the world, the activity of critical reflection and correction must, as Smith himself implied, often take on the form of a social, dialogical practice rather than a solitary individual activity.

Smith recognised that engaging in disciplined, educated and critically reflective exercises of the sympathetic imagination is no simple feat. Doing so may often require us to break through a 'veil of self-delusion' and expose ourselves to intense feelings of guilt, shame and remorse. Furthermore, as Medina has pointed out, we may encounter a significant degree of visceral resistance through engaging in such exercises, especially when we are invited to imagine the world in ways that disrupts our affective attachments to certain beliefs, values, practices and habits. Medina and Smith converge on the view

that while engaging in a process of self-estrangement and imagining oneself and one's social context in an alternative light may be highly difficult, jarring and alienating, it is never impossible. The constraints that our particular situatedness imposes on our capacity to sympathetically identify with the sentiments of differently-situated others can always be transcended, thanks to the radically creative and flexible character of the imagination. Both theorists rightly emphasise that overcoming the limits of the sympathetic imagination requires ongoing practice and effort, and the cultivation of an array of skills and virtues including humility, open-mindedness and courage. I have argued that the conscious and deliberative task of engaging in critical self-reflection and correction represents a robust capacity, but *contra* Jesse Prinz, not so robust as to be unfeasible. With practice and over time, individuals may recondition their perspective to such an extent that correcting for certain biases or prejudices becomes second nature, so that their feelings come to automatically reflect a moral viewpoint.

Despite the difficulties and resistance associated with overcoming the limits of the sympathetic imagination, I have sought to defend my appeal to Smithean sympathy as a resource for creating and sustaining ethical relations against appeals to purely cognitive modes of self-regulation. I have done so on the grounds that the latter do little to subvert the deeply-engrained affective attitudes that are structured by the way in which we imagine our social context, and which exert an authoritative influence over our judgments and behaviour. Moreover, I have argued that exercises of the sympathetic imagination may have particularly significant ethical import, insofar as they may alter the way in which we respond and relate to entire social groups, and not just to specific individuals. The capacity for exercises of the sympathetic imagination to alter the way in which we experience our own embodiment – or 'imaginary body' – demonstrates that our fellow-feeling may overcome its parochial bounds and extend from the one to the many. As I have sought to illustrate through Haslanger's account of her lived experience as a

transracial parent, such exercises may have the capacity to counter the influence that oppressive social imaginaries have on the way in which we perceive and respond to those identities that occupy a devalued place within these imaginaries.

Despite Smith's belief that sympathetic understanding and identification is always possible thanks to the ability of individuals to enter into the experiences of others and adjust their own feelings, he was well aware that individual capacities only extend so far, and that virtuous conduct will often require support from institutions. I have suggested that Smith's remarks on the civilizing effects of commercial society shed light on the potential for modern integrative measures such as affirmative action policies and equal employment opportunities to play a significant role in facilitating sympathetic identification between privileged and devalued social identities. However, I have also argued that top-down measures are often not enough to transform patterns of social behaviour, owing to the capacity for entrenched social biases and prejudices to sustain anti-social sentiments. To break down these biases and prejudices requires large-scale cultural and symbolic shifts. This thesis has proposed that such shifts may be spurred on by top-down reforms such as legislative amendments, but may also be powerfully realised through bottom-up initiatives, especially grass roots social movements and literary narratives that promote counter-images and narratives which appeal to the sympathetic imagination, and which thereby have the capacity to generate widespread feelings of ethical concern for the lived experiences of devalued identities. Drawing on the work of Bottici and Medina, I have argued that facilitating sympathetic identification between different social identities in a manner that supports ethical communities requires that the dominant social imaginary be opened up to interrogation from a plurality of perspectives, and that challenges to prevailing social meanings, norms and values attend critically to oppressive structures which cut across various axes of difference. Furthermore, I have suggested that the continual emergence of new social identities with unique needs and

interests necessitates ongoing shifts in the dominant social imaginary to accommodate these in a way that strives to be sensitive and responsive to the needs, interests and values of other social groups. Finally, since norms exist in interconnected clusters, I have emphasised the need for constant vigilance with respect to the lived implications that particular normative challenges have for different social identities, and especially with respect to the capacity for such challenges to undercut sympathetic identification between members of different social communities.

In a similar spirit to Smith's own work, this thesis has sought to foreground the ethically transformative potential of the sympathetic imagination, as well as the limitations and dangers of appealing to sympathy as a resource for the negotiation and recognition of difference in contemporary contexts.

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