Violent Intersections

Towards a Poetics of Intersectionality in Contemporary First Nation Australian Novels

Von der Philosophischen Fakultät der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Technischen Hochschule Aachen zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades einer Doktorin der Philosophie genehmigte Dissertation

vorgelegt von

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Tag der mündlichen Prüfung: 03.11.2025

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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Jan Alber for providing me with the opportunity for this dissertation, his patience, and his constructive criticism. I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Ralf Schneider for his time and support. Thank you for the opportunity you provided.

My special thanks go to my fellow PhD candidates. I thank you all for the friendships we have forged over the last few years. You have encouraged me to write, provided me with theoretical (and practical) food for thought, great dinners, whiskey and wine, feminist rants, warm hugs and writing retreats, occasional moments of shared insanity, inspirational Tarot readings, and, most of all, the absolute belief that this dissertation would, in fact, be written.

Thank you, Jessica Leon, for your friendship and support, and for being *right there* for the first few pages. Thank you, Jackie, Willi, and Bella, for providing levity and distractions. You all have kept me in balance.

Finally, my most grateful thanks go to my family. To my husband, thank you for being my touch stone. For your unwavering love and support, for believing in me always, and for eighteen years of being my favorite human being. And thank you to those who have gone too soon. You have provided me with the very foundations I rest upon. I wish you could be here.

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This dissertation follows the MLA reference and citation style (9th edition). The following exceptions are made:

The titles of primary sources (i.e., the novels discussed in the analysis) are not shortened according to MLA style in the text. This is a conscious decision to heighten the visibility of Indigenous titles within a canon that continues to be euro- and U.S.-American-centric. However, I use short titles in references.

The words "Indigenous," and "Black," will be capitalized whenever they are a shortened form of proper names, such as "Indigenous Australian" or "Black American." In order to highlight them as such, they are capitalized. The spelling is not changed in quotations since capitalization (or lack thereof) may often be a conscious decision by the individual author.

Direct quotations from British, New Zealand or Australian English are not changed to American English but remain in their original form.

1 Introduction

1.1 Investigating Structures of Power – Violence, Intersectionality, and the White Researcher (Or: Locating Violence in Politics and the Researcher in Relations of Power)

This thesis endeavors to offer an intersectional reading of narrations of violence in contemporary First Nations Australian[1] novels. In the following, I will first explain the title of this thesis, then my reason for choosing this specific topic, and then I will illustrate how my reading of the three novels in this corpus offers a new approach to the study of Indigenous literatures from a perspective that is critical of whiteness as a structure of power. This thesis is a literary study, but it is deeply grounded in cultural and social theories and views literature as a cultural artifact that allows the reader to learn about culture through literature. More specifically, I view Indigenous literature as an opportunity to learn more about white culture and its structures of (often invisible, unmarked) power and domination.

In this thesis, I define *violence* in the sense of Johan Galtung as a system of power that produces inequalities. These inequalities are harmful because, for one, they affect an individual's ability (or likelihood) to reach the general potential for human beings in present-day society (such as, for example, reaching an average lifespan of 80 years that modern medicine and living conditions have made possible). The likelihood of the fulfillment of this potentiality is not reliant on the individual but determined by a complex system of societal, institutional, and ideological structures that disadvantage certain (minoritized) groups of peoples and privilege others (especially the able-bodied white middle and upper class in Western industrialized nations). These structures of disadvantage are also referred to as forms of structural violence. In order to investigate this system of power and to consider questions of inequality in their social complexity, I draw on intersectionality as a theoretical approach. *Intersectionality* is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and describes the analysis of power as a system of relations (for instance, gender, race,[2] class, (dis)ability, sexuality, national identity, ethnicity, age) that intersect and

[1] The term "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" is the term most often used to describe members of the Indigenous population in Australia and the Torres Strait. But "First Nations Australian" has also gained traction in recent years, and I will use it interchangeably with "Aboriginal Australians" throughout the thesis. "Indigenous" is less specific to the Australian context and is more often used in transcultural and comparative approaches. I will extend on this in Section 2.3.1. Whenever possible, I will name the specific community membership of an Indigenous person.

[2] In this thesis, the word "race" is understood as a social construct. I use the term instead of "ethnicity" because I specifically analyze discourses that produce "race" as a social category by "racializing" others due to (supposed)

produce different effects on specific individuals (i.e., subject positions). For example, the exertion of power (i.e., domination) along the dimension of sex may affect white and Black women quite differently, producing cultural frames of reference of the (white) virgin and the (constantly available) oversexualized Black woman (see Section 2.3.5). Developed out of social justice movements, intersectionality allows for an investigation of these differences.

Violence experienced by Australian First Nations people is to an overwhelming degree a direct result of the violent structure of colonization.[3] At the time of writing for this introduction, "Australia remains the only Western democracy without a national human rights act or charter," "in South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, and Western Australia, children as young as 10 [years of age] can be held criminally responsible and incarcerated" and of the youth prison population (ages 10 to 17), 60 percent are First Nations children (39). Indigenous children are 10.4 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home-care than non-Indigenous children (D. Brennan in recourse to the 2025 *Report on Government Services*), and incarceration rates for First Nations Australians overall are at about 2,266 per 100,000, compared to 149 per 100,000 for non-Indigenous" Australians (Human Rights Watch 40). A 2023-2024 senate inquiry into the cases of missing and murdered First Nations women and children revealed that "First Nations women are seven times more likely to be homicide victims than non-Indigenous women, and of those women, 75% are killed by a current or former partner" while at the same time "First Nations women are 33 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family and domestic violence than non-Indigenous women" (McCarthy et al.). In addition, the suicide rates among First Nations people are up to three times as high "comparted to non-Indigenous Australians" with "almost a quarter of all deaths (22.0%)" of those under the age of 24 and almost a fifth of all deaths of those aged between 25 and 44 being suicides (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Suicide* n.p.).

These statistics alone incorrectly suggest that violence is an "Indigenous problem." During the inquiry, Aboriginal Legal Services therefore rightfully argued that

> Aboriginal women and children are exposed to *all* forms of violence at disproportionate levels. This includes violence perpetrated *within* communities by Aboriginal family members and partners; however, it also includes violence committed by non-Aboriginal perpetrators. The high levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and children is multifaceted (Aboriginal Legal Service

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outward appearances and markers (i.e. forms of racism). I understand ethnicity, in contrast, as a form of identity marker that is based on cultural practice and belonging. The two terms overlap to a degree, and they may influence each other, especially where questions of belonging are posed (see Section 4.1.2). Whenever I talk about systems of power and domination, however, I talk about social constructions and categorizations and will therefore rely on the term "race" or "racialized."

[3] The term is taken from Patrick White, see Section 2.1.1.2.

(NSW/ACT), *Submission* 25, 2-3, quoted in Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee 65, first emphasis "*all*" is *my emphasis*, the second emphasis "*within*" is original to the source)

Part of these multifaceted experiences are also "experiences of structural violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation perpetrated by State actors against First Nations people" in the past and continuing in the present, which also contextualizes experiences of violence *within* First Nations communities in the broader context of colonization and intergenerational trauma (Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee 80).

For many Indigenous scholars and activists, this wording is too sanitized. Chelsea Watego argues that all of these statistics are symptoms of the ongoing structural disadvantages in Australia and, in fact, the results of "state-sanctioned colonial violence" (Watego 9); state-sanctioned, because the state ultimately decides who lives and who is left to die.[4] Watego points out that these statistics are a measure of the inferiority of the Black body: "the very ideological foundation upon which [First Nations Australians] become visible is as statistically inferior" (38). They serve the "hypervisibility of [First Nations Australian's] state of despair," which in the name of "closing the Gap" to the white majority further vanishes the First Nations Australian (through assimilation) that in the colonialist imagination is always already extinct (Watego 26-31). Moreover, "within the current Indigenous social policy context of gap closing, the Aborigine is constructed as a problem; a problem that can be solved statistically, through increased control and surveillance by the state" (Watego 54). The policies still fail to properly contextualize these statistics as the results of the systemic failures of the health care, justice, and education systems.

Writing about violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from a white European position will invariably bear the risk of reproducing "colonial narratives of Aboriginality as 'a' or 'the' problem" (Watego 9). This is why my focus lies on the structural violence and continued systemic racism, on *white violence*, which causes the disproportionate levels of violence in these communities. This thesis is not, to borrow from Chelsea Watego, "about Black problems or the problem of Black people" (Watego 8). Instead, it is a thesis on present-day structures of violence and the normalizing power of whiteness that remain invisible in everyday discourses while the focus is directed on this supposed "Black problem." As such, it is an "absent and absented violence," in the words of Robyn Maynard, a way in which the "perfectly modern society . . . tidily keeps its atrocities out of plain sight" (R. Maynard and Simpson 15). I argue that the novels chosen

[4] This sentence refers to Foucault's concept of *biopolitics*, which explains that the modern state exhibits its power by determining whose live is worth living, and whose life is "let die" by refusing to change state policies or supporting the saving of said life (see Section 3.5).

for this corpus bring this absented violence into focus and they offer narrative strategies that allow us to speak about this violence without reproducing stereotypes.

Novels can be the "shock of awareness" necessary to challenge "conventional thinking and . . . stimulate the development of alternative forms of knowledge" (Cox 39). By these "alternative forms of knowledge" I specifically do not mean the appropriation of the knowledges of Indigenous peoples or people of color. I mean an alternative form of how we – as white researchers and people – think of ourselves in the world. As Reni Eddo-Lodge remarks, for white people

> it is never rare or odd to see people who look like them in positions of power or exerting authority. In culture particularly, the positive affirmations of whiteness are so widespread that the average white person doesn't even notice them. Instead, these affirmations are placidly consumed. To be white is to be human; to be white is universal. (xvii)

It is this form of knowledge for which we need to find alternatives, but first we need to understand how this knowledge is entrenched in power and made to be universal.

There is urgency in the consideration of structural (colonial) violence, of racism and white supremacy because people continue to die.[5] The urgency is not new, but with populist discourses striving to dominate the sphere of politics and laws turning back the clock on policies that were changed slowly and laboriously through advocacy, projects of decolonization and social justice movements, we – as white researchers – need to learn how to dismantle our own structures of power. This is not a matter of becoming a "white savior"[6] but of allyship.[7] As a white researcher I risk reproducing and continuing colonial narratives of control in which that control is simply

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[5] As Jackie Huggins states: "Aboriginal writing is concerned with history, with precise knowledge of the history of Aboriginal existence, gleaned if necessary from white records, and prised out of white archives. . . A great deal of oral traditional material has been rescued and recorded. . . Aboriginal people have begun to be heard by others, as they name their own world and relate their own experiences" (9), and further, "Aboriginal writers have a sense of purpose, an urgent task on behalf of their community" (10).

[6] "White savior" usually refers to people from the Global North (industrialized Western nations) "giving something back" or "doing something good" by involving themselves in countries of the Global South. At first glance, the intentions behind this commitment seem to be good. However, this often conceals the conscious and unconscious assumption that the origin of the white saviors entitles them to "enlighten" other people and "save" them from supposed poverty. This belief therefore is a continuation of (implicit) conceptions of white superiority and the associated view that countries of the Global North are "evolved" and "progressive" and that it is therefore their responsibility to teach people in the Global South progressive ways of thinking and living. Within such processes, the white savior assumes a patronizing position of power. This denies Black people and people of color their own ability to act and expertise about their own life situation (FUMA, Fachstelle Gender & Diversität NRW, "Saviorism" n.p., my translation).

[7] Allies are people in positions of (relative) power due to their nationality, age, gender, religion, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientation, and/or social background and who use these advantages (privilege) to support people who are less privileged. The aim is to overcome the underlying structures of power and inequality that determine these positions (FUMA, Fachstelle Gender & Diversität NRW, "Allyship" n.p., my translation).

reframed as benevolence (Watego 59).[8] To avoid this pitfall of appropriation, I will center Indigenous and Black critique in this thesis and combine it with an intersectional approach critical of power – including my own. I follow Reni Eddo-Lodge's reminder that "every voice raised against racism chips away at its power. We can't afford to stay silent" (xvii). As such, I read the Indigenous texts in my theory and in my corpus for their expertise of whiteness. As Moreton-Robinson has pointed out, Black and Indigenous scholars have always been experts on whiteness (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xvi; Andersen, "Critical" 81), and it is from this expertise that I can learn. I will engage with the Indigenous texts – the narratives and the criticism – in a respectful manner; by acknowledging that their perspective is not only valid but offers insights that are not easily (or at all) accessible to me through white knowledge systems. I will pay attention to this difference, and I will not attempt to disappear this difference in an attempt to harmonize or universalize a point of view. As Ijeoma Oluo states, change begins with conversation (6) and this thesis aims to be a part of that change.

1.2 Indigenous Novels as Theory (Or: Locating Literature in Politics)

Having defined the first part of my title, "Violent Intersections," I now need to explain why I approach this topic through literature in general, and narratology in particular. Structural violence is in and of itself less visible to the untrained eye than forms of direct violence (e.g., a fist fight). Structural violence only becomes visible in context. One way of providing this context is statistics. For example, I may analyze the effect of a specific federal policy on different population groups. If I disaggregate the data according to different identity categories and account for their intersection, I may, for example, offer proof that recent changes to the criminal law in Australia disproportionately affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth from poor socio-economic backgrounds (Middleton; Hawtrey). Statistics alone, while valuable for political argumentation, seldom evoke a change of heart. Instead, political and legal discourses have long recognized the power of narrative in argumentation (see Olson). Similarly, narratives – and especially novels – can make structural violence visible and – even more important – intelligible in its complexity.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that understanding the world around us has always begun with personification: "the very origins of the universe are explained in myths and stories (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 15). In particular, "the novel, like the myth and the parable, gives a view of society from its contemplation of social life, reflecting it, mirror-like, but also reflecting upon it,

[8] For a fictional account and discussion of this white, colonial benevolence see the novel of the same name, *Benevolence* by Burruberongal woman Julie Janson.

simultaneously" (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 16), thus offering a fruitful object of investigation for socio-political interrogations. As Thiong'o elaborates:

> Novelists draw from the data of life that they have noted with their senses of touch, sight, hearing, and smell. They see patterns and connections that their mind helps coalesce into something that transcends the individual particular objects of their senses into a kind of universality in which readers of different ages, climes, and gender can see themselves and the world in which they live, differently. (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 16)

I understand Thiong'o's "kind of universality" of seeing the world not as a unification of the reading process or the mental representation of the text in the readers' minds. Cognitive literary studies have offered various models to explain how this reading process takes place and the role that, for instance, an individual's cultural background or gender may play in understanding the text (see, e.g., Alber, "Cognitive"; Vaeßen; Schneider). Instead, I understand this "kind of universality" as the common ground at which inter-personal understanding takes place: the novel "helps organize and make sense of the chaos of history, social experience, and personal inner lives" (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 16–17) and it "analyzes, synthesizes, has a view, and reaches out to beyond the space and time of its location" (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 18–19). The novel is thus a place of engagement – of cross-cultural engagement, but also of engagement across different subject positions and lived experiences – and a place of learning. It presents a "view," a specific perspective on life and culture that may be vastly different from my own. As a white European middle-class female and able-bodied researcher, I argue that there is a lot for me to learn from perspectives on life that differ vastly from my own privileged experience. And as Goenpul poet Lisa Bellear states "the creative arts is the most powerful of all mediums which can be used as a vehicle to educate" (63). As such, literature helps "grow our combined humanity towards a greater human competency" and should "have a role to play in helping to shape the future of our combined humanity" (Wright, "Boisbouvier" n.p.).

Thiong'o continues his argument beyond the space of shared experience and understanding, arguing that "it was fiction that first gave us a theory of the colonial situation," and even going as far as to claim that "fiction is the original poor theory" (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 15). By fictionalizing the colonial situation – and colonialism is a complex cumulation of structures of power, domination and violence – the novel itself can even become a form of "writing theory" (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 15). Extending this argument beyond the scope of colonialism, contemporary Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander novels can provide us with theory of structures of power, domination and violence in present day Australia. I find it important to note at this point that the focus for both examples – colonialism and present-day Australia – lies on the dominating systems of power and not on the subjugated peoples. During this thesis, I will argue

that approaching the literature of marginalized peoples from a position of (relative) power with the intent to "know" the other bears the danger of neo-colonial appropriation. It is an inherent marker of Western epistemologies that in search of knowledge, universality and categorizations take precedence over heterogeneity and the toleration of difference and ambivalence (see Section 2.2 on the inherent racism in Western natural sciences). The claiming of the authority to "know" the racialized *other* is an inherent marker of the *white gaze* (see also Watgeo 6-9, 21). I will therefore approach the novels of my corpus from a critical whiteness perspective – a perspective critical of whiteness as a structure of power – and instead of asking what these narratives tell us about Aboriginal identities, I will ask what they tell us about *white* identity and *white* habits, and I argue that they offer theory of whiteness.

As such, this thesis can be counted as an approach within what Jan Alber refers to as "critical ethical narratology," which "can potentially draw attention to both the ideological and the political consequences of the stories that circulate and that we tell one another on a daily basis" and which are important to take notice of and critically evaluate "if one does not want to be manipulated" by populist discourses ("Ethical Narratology" 64).

By this point, it should be clear that I regard literature as deeply political. I argue that everything is political while structural violence endangers lives and livelihoods, the world is at war, and the world is heating up. The claiming of an apolitical stance is a reinforcement of the status quo and being able to claim an unpolitical stance in the first place is a sign of privilege, because it means that I move through my everyday life without diverging from the norm: my body, my voice, and my position of power remain unmarked. In this form of unmarked violence, literature was complicit in the "enterprise of empire making": "the seemingly apolitical literatures of the West have contributed to the naturalization of colonialist myths or ideologies" (K.-W. Lee 89, see also Dwivedi et al. 9; Viswanathan). The novels chosen for this thesis reverse this mechanism: "if one accepts the proposition that all literatures are political expressions, then Aboriginal literature is one of those which has not yet succumbed to the rhetorical ploy of saying that politics gets in the way of literature. It asserts the contrary: literature is one of the ways of getting political things done" (J. Davis et al. 2). As Nicole Watson (Birri-Gubba people and Yugambeh language group) states, Indigenous literature is "closely aligned to Indigenous movements, it is a rich source of information in relation to what Indigenous people believe is necessary for them to receive redress for the injuries of colonisation" and as such "part of an enduring struggle for the transformation of relationships between Indigenous people and the state" (N. Watson, "Justice" 44). Even more poignant, Wiradjuri woman Alexis Wright says that

> . . . our words are weapons too. Our books are time bombs and already are breaking down many barriers on their way across the world. It is just like Solzhenitsyn said: "Falsehood can hold out against much in this world. but not against art – the art of literature." All we have to do is wait for a delayed reaction. We only have to wait and one day we will see change. This is the hope of writing. Believing the unbelievable. (Wright, "Politics" 20)

Wright articulates a hope for social and political change (also) caused by literature.[9] This hope influences how and what she writes:

> I felt literature, the work of fiction, was the best way of presenting a truth – not the real truth, but more of a truth than non-fiction, which is not really the truth either. Non-fiction is often about the writer telling what is safe to tell. In being an Aboriginal person, we can feel constrained by cultural values on some issues. We can also feel constrained by our own families or the communities in which we live. This is to do with safeguarding all kinds of interests of the individual, the family, community, or Aboriginal people as a whole – and sometimes, rightly so. (Wright, "Politics" 13)

Wright here refers to the imaginative power of fiction that – less constricted by questions of realism and factual truths – can foreground thematic, ideological and contextual truths. This foregrounding aids, I argue, in making the usually invisible visible. The novels chosen for this analysis are all contemporary fictional narratives that render (white) structural violence visible through different narrative strategies.

Anita Heiss argues in a similar vein to Wright:

> Indigenous literature provides a platform for this country's First Nations people who are essentially still voiceless in the 21st century. Our poetry, our novels, our life-stories are all saying "this is who we are, this is what we aspire to, this is how we want to be identified, this is how we can work together, and this is why the history of this country is important to all of us." Indigenous Australia *is* the first story of this nation, we must therefore be a major part of the storytelling. (Heiss, "Introducing" n.p.)

Understanding Australian First Nations literature in this way means understanding it as an opening for conversation, as the opening up of "windows to communication" (Knudsen xi). Engaging respectfully in this conversation means that I engage with the awareness that while "black writing has interrupted the unquestioned privilege of whites to represent non-whites in Australia" (Wiradjuri Poet Jeanine Leane quoted in Mason n.p.), there continues to be

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[9] This political motivation is not uncontested. As Chelsea Watgeo reminds us, "the demands of the market has kept too many Black stories off bookshelves, because the success of Black story is still measured via white readership" (Watego 7), and Black stories tend to unsettle the white self (see also Section 2.3.3). She argues that strategies of change that are based on the idea that "the coloniser just [doesn't] know, and that if they heard [Black] account[s] or saw evidence, they would accept it and act accordingly" are destined to fail (67). These strategies underestimate the white subject's attachment to power and its ability (and authority) to re-narrate its own story (Watego 61) to save itself from "ontological disturbance" Moreton-Robinson (*Possessive* 51). This is not to say that white readers cannot learn from her work, but it is a refusal to accommodate for them (Watgeo 9).

> . . . silence engulfing Australia in which the Black Witness must battle. We [the Black witnesses] already have weaponry. It is contained in the voices of our elders around campfires and kitchen tables, in community meetings and in the stories we tell our children. It is in poetry, in song, in art and in journalism. But we struggle to overcome the voice of the White Witness. The White Witness speaks above us and for us, and it is always the White Witness who is heard most clearly, because they speak the language that has been enforced on us through violence. It is violence that has enacted the silence, that has made the Black Witness an "unreliable" one, a "threatening" one, a "violent" one in itself. It is not just the violence of the original massacres, but the violence of the education, justice, health, child protection and political systems. (McQuire n.p.)

In order to not be a white witness that silences black accounts and testimony, I must acknowledge that "Black Witnesses speak from our lived experience, from the position of the oppressed, and because of this positioning, the evidence overwhelmingly backs our account" and that I cannot manipulate this testimony by "water[ing] down the language of violence" thus further making "this violence invisible" (McQuire n.p.). The precondition for this thesis is the understanding that

> Imperialism and ongoing colonialism have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence, and Indigenous and Black peoples have been building worlds and then rebuilding worlds for as long as we have been in existence. Relentlessly building worlds through unspeakable violence and loss. Building worlds and living in them *anyway*. . . Our communities are already postapocalyptic experts and can best imagine worlds beyond our current realities, but in order to imagine, some of us have to first survive. (Simpson, *Rehearsals* 44)

It is this fight for survival that turns the telling of Indigenous stories into theory (Simpson, *Rehearsals* 34).

1.3 Theoretical Foundations and Structure (Or: Locating this Thesis in Theory)

Recent developments in literary theory have engaged with data-driven approaches. Well known suggestions are the call for *Distant Reading* by Moretti, as well as recent empirical approaches to cognitive literary studies. For my chosen topic, I find neither approach to be appropriate. In the case of Moretti, criticism has shown that his suggestion of distant reading is extremely vulnerable to statistical prejudice. For example, his analysis of the "development of the novel" as literary genre was, in effect, simply a reconstruction of the expansion of the British Empire. Secondly, Indigenous peoples have historically been the subject of Western empirical research in the name of "knowledge production" and this knowledge was appropriated, abused and misrepresented in colonialist and racist discourses.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us that not only our position as researchers is influenced by our socio-historical context, but also the *way* in which we derive *knowledge*. Empiricism, for example, is a specifically Western methodology that presumes that through the gathering of quantifiable data we might reach a (somewhat) objective interpretation of the issue at hand, thus

moving closer to the position of a supposed "universal truth." Indigenous ways of knowing function differently. Instead of maximal distance between researcher and object of investigation, Indigenous ways of knowing, such as Leanne Simpson's understanding of sovereignty as "learned and enacted on the land" foreground embodied methods of knowledge production. According to this epistemology, knowledge is not gathered through distance but embeddedness. And this embeddedness includes the presence of body and mind on ancestral lands, which in turn is represented and present in the literary texts. In an effort to "enter into a conversation" with the awareness of these differences as I illustrated above, I therefore find an empirical study that derives neither from the specific needs of the Indigenous community nor is it led by community-members themselves to be inappropriate. So instead, I will once more follow Thiong'o's argument who wrote that

> Within a wider theoretical framework, close reading can turn every text into a treasure house. It is the one approach that can prevent theory from becoming the kite that has lost its moorings or prevent critics from becoming attorneys and judges who argue their cases, in prosecution, defense, or judgment, without adducting reasons from the evidence. It can be an antidote to the tendency, probably derived from Plato's notion of divine madness and possession in poets, to treat writers as mindless geniuses and use their work as simply a platform to launch a critic's flight to space. (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 13)

At the same time, he cautions that

> . . . without that broad political-cum-ideological framework, close reading and obsession with formalistic elements can turn into attempts to squeeze the world of the literary text through the eye of the critical needle, a contribution to poverty of theory. It's like entering a treasure trove and counting the items inside without an awareness of their value, unable to relate them to anything outside. (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 13)

My close reading will be enabled through my grounding in narratology as a literary discipline, and my ideological reading will be grounded in critical race and critical whiteness studies, as well as critical Indigenous studies, and a critical position to postcolonial studies. These approaches will be brought together through intersectionality.

Central to this thesis is the understanding of perspective as a point of view determined by a specific local, historical, and social position (of a person, a researcher, or a text), and the understanding that the concept of the *gaze* is a perspective that is entrenched in structures of power. In fact, it is a structure of power. The *gaze* can follow the lines of power and be used to reinforce existing inequalities and hierarchies, thus becoming a form of violence (e.g., the *white gaze* or the *male gaze*), or it can be directed *back* at power, thus revealing its mechanisms to a wider audience (e.g., the *Black gaze*). Theories are established as both standpoint and perspective for analysis. Following this understanding of perspective and point of view, my thesis has two central

arguments. First, I argue that Indigenous novels have the potential to make the otherwise invisible structures of racist (but also sexist, heteronormative, ableist, and classist) violence visible. I argue that they do this through different strategies such as the narrating of networks (through layering of perspectives and categorizations), the narrating of allegories, or by breaking down the rhythm of Western narration and fast capitalism itself. Second, I argue that while the Western concepts of narrative strategies allow for a description of what is happening on the textual level, the concepts themselves may at times be revealed as insufficient and Eurocentric by the narratives.

This thesis is structured as follows. In order to properly understand and discuss the novels' narrative strategies, the analysis is grounded on the foundational columns of postcolonial theory, critical race and critical whiteness theory, intersectionality, and critical Indigenous studies. Section 2.1 provides an overview of postcolonial theory, which deals with the cultural, political, and material effects of colonialism. The section explains that the term *postcolonial* describes both the period after formal colonial rule and the continuing colonial structures and power relations that continue to operate in the post-independence nation state (Section 2.1.1). It locates postcolonialism in its historic context and explains how neocolonial forms continue to shape global relationships today. Differences between *settler colonialism* [10] and *extractive colonialism*, [11] as well as *neocolonialism* are explained as they continue to impact Indigenous communities and societies in the former colonies. This section also defines the terms *ideology*[12] and *hegemony*.[13] Section 2.1.2 then takes a closer look at the terminology developed by postcolonial theory. It places postcolonial literary studies within the wider context of postcolonial discourse theory and introduces the concepts of the colonized *other* and the *colonial gaze*. The colonized *other* is produced through the dialectical process of *othering* which the *colonized* is culturally, materially, religiously, and politically located and constructed as inferior to the European colonizer (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 12–13). The perspective that implements this construction of inferiority is the *colonial gaze*. The section also touches upon key concepts of postcolonial theory such as Homi Bhabha's (cultural) *hybridity*[14] and the fact that literature had an important role in the establishment of a national identity. The section also touches upon the criticism that has been directed at postcolonial theory,

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[10] Settler colonialism is a specific form of colonialism in which invaders "come to stay" and intend to build a new society or community in the colony (Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism* 2).

[11] Extractive colonialism is a specific form of colonialism in which invaders primarily extract the resources from a colony and only the necessary infrastructure for this endeavor is constructed in the colony.

[12] *Ideology* describes the underlying worldview of a society or community and take effect in material relations, shaping social action (Hall, "Race" 55).

[13] *Hegemony* describes the dominance of an ideology, cultural institution or person in a society (Althusser 98).

[14] The concept *hybridity* describes the cultural and material effects of cultural contact and intermixture.

especially the assessment that despite its aim to deconstruct (neo)colonial power structures, postcolonial theory as a mainly Western (or Western-educated) approach continues to reproduce the very power imbalances it claims to try and subvert. In order to address this criticism, the thesis therefore rests on strong foundational concepts from critical race and critical whiteness theory.

Section 2.2.1 firstly takes a look at critical race theory and its historical development out of African American criticism and human rights activism. Following a definition of the term *race* as a social construct throughout the centuries, the section then reviews the most pertinent concepts, such as DuBois' *double consciousness*,[15] institutional and everyday racism, and the concept of the *Black gaze* and how they also pertain to the Australian First Nations context. In this approach, racism is understood as a process that is reinforced by cultural norms and practices. Section 2.2.2 introduces critical whiteness theory, an approach that has been inherent in African American and Indigenous criticism, but that wasn't institutionalized until the 1990s. Critical whiteness theory turns its analysis back on the supposed white center, but not in order to reinforce its position, but to ask how it gained and maintains this position in the first place. It endeavors to identify the markers of *whiteness*, and how these are just as socially constructed and historically determined as markers of *blackness* or *Indigeneity*. Section 2.2.3 brings both approaches together by introducing the concept of intersectionality. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, but again part of African American and Indigenous critical practice long before then, intersectionality is an analytic more than a complete theory. It looks at how different structures of discrimination such as racism, sexism, ableism, heteronormativity, and classism interact. Intersectionality pays attention to the fact that the effects of discrimination may be different e.g., for a man and a woman of color due to their gender, and that experiences of sexism will differ for white women and women of color due to their different racialized positioning. The different effects of the intersection of varying categories of discrimination therefore need to be kept in mind in any analysis, otherwise only the most (relatively) powerful identity marker in each group will be addressed in pursuits of equal rights and social justice.

Section 2.3 introduces critical Indigenous studies and provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches developed by Indigenous scholars and activists. Indigenous perspectives will be centered throughout the dissertation. The section explains the most important concepts in Indigenous epistemologies. First, it gives a comprehensive overview over the term *Indigeneity* and its use in both legal and cultural discourses in section 2.3.1. The term

[15] W.E.B. Du Bois' concept describes the internal conflict experienced by subordinated or colonized groups in an oppressive society in which the identity they are ascribes is in constant conflict with the identity they ascribe themselves.

Indigenous gained prominence in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly through the efforts of Indigenous rights activists at the United Nations. *Indigenous* differs from mere membership of an ethnic or racialized minority, as it implies the right to self-determination. It carries a different political power. This is also the reason membership is often contested both from the outside (especially the nation state) and inside (through discourses of authenticity). At the same time, critics such as Chris Andersen and Aileen Moreton-Robinson argue that an isolated focus on cultural differences limits the ability to combat harmful representations of Indigeneity in wider society. Andersen instead suggests a focus on cultural density and interdisciplinary exchange with critical race theory. Section 2.3.2 explains the concepts of land or *Country*, *Dreamtime* and *Native title* in Indigenous and especially First Nations Australian epistemologies. Country is central to Australian Aboriginal First Nations people because Country *is* the ancestors who moved across the land in ancient times, forming the rivers and mountains and the lakes and watering holes. Afterwards, these ancestors transformed into the mountains or became the wind, but they continue to be present in place. The Indigenous understanding of Country is fundamentally different to that of the white settlers. Country is not property. In Alexis Wright's words, the premise of the relationship is that "we do not own country, country owns us" (Wright, "Inward").

The section further explains how this understanding of caretaking fundamentally opposes the white settler's concept of *terra nullius*, of declaring the Australian continent uninhabited and how it continues to interact with the granting of Native title in the 1992 Mabo decision and the following Native Title Act in 1993. The recognition of Australian Aboriginal land rights continues to be based on Western concepts of land ownership and possession, as does the process for legal recognition. This last point is explored further in Section 2.3.3. It reviews Aileen Moreton-Robinson's concept of *white possession* and the deep interconnection between land possession and whiteness. Section 2.3.4 also reviews a number of different Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty from both North America and Australia that have influenced one another. Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty move beyond imaginings of political independence and rights of exclusive access to territory. In contrast, it focusses on land-based healing and survivance, the freedom to live according to traditional law and customs as well as self-determination.

The next subsection (2.3.5) focuses on cross-disciplinary exchange between critical Indigenous studies and queer and feminist studies, and the challenges of incorporating a gendered or feminist critique into an Indigenous analysis in the face of an overwhelmingly white feminist and queer academy. While many scholars have automatically incorporated an intersectional analysis, other have claimed that feminist or queer analytics stand in opposition to Indigenous authenticity. This area of conflict is not easy to navigate, which is explained with the example of

the Bell-Huggins debate in Australia, which has substantially shaped feminist and Indigenous cooperations. Nonetheless, an intersectional perspective is paramount for any discussion of gendered or sexualized violence in and against Indigenous communities and must be included in any policy aiming to address these issues.

Last but not least, subsection 2.3.6 focusses on Indigenous research methodologies. Understanding Western research practices and theory as entrenched in Western knowledge and belief systems, localizes and historicizes science. Instead of viewing it as "objective" and "universal," Indigenous research methods reveal the role science played in colonization and racialization projects. In an effort to decolonize these methodologies, Indigenous scholars have developed guidelines for respectful engagement and community-centered methods that observe Indigenous customs and beliefs. Overall, Chapter 2.3 provides a deeper insight into the complexity and multi-faceted nature of Indigenous studies and emphasizes the need to foreground Indigenous perspectives and methods.

The next step, presented in Section 2.4 and titled "Contextual Narrative Theory and Ideological Critique," will bridge these theoretical insights with narrative theory. This section will demonstrate two key points: (a) Indigenous novels have the capacity to expose the often-invisible mechanisms of systemic racism and colonialism, particularly by framing harmful power structures as forms of violence (a concept that will be further explored in Chapter 3); and (b) the three novels under examination – *Too Much Lip*, *Dancing Home*, and *Praiseworthy* – employ distinct narrative techniques to reflect and challenge the *white gaze*. This section explores the integration of ideological critique with narratology, resulting in contextual narrative theory. It discusses various theoretical approaches, such as postcolonial studies, critical race theory, and critical Indigenous studies, which aim to reveal power structures and their effects.

Chapter 3 in this dissertation offers a comprehensive overview of different forms of violence and their categorization. Violence is difficult to define, and categories often overlap. Whereas the concepts of interpersonal, self-directed, and collective violence are easier to observe and explain (Section 3.1), indirect or structural violence requires a more complex analysis (Section 3.2). Structural violence describes a form of violence that arises from the way social, economic, and political systems are organized. Because there is no one single person responsible, it is not immediately visible. At the same time, as with structural racism – which is a form of structural violence – the structures suggest to the individual that discrimination is acceptable, and this understanding influences individual behavior as well. Structural violence is embedded in the norms and institutions of society, leading to unequal access to or an unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights. Section 3.3 therefore concerns itself with the question of

legitimate violence – usually state violence – and how this is enforced through power hierarchies, and legal and political discourses. Foucault's concept of *biopolitics* attempts to explain how modern states and institutions regulate lives and bodies and how they govern populations. These regulations often marginalize and oppress certain population groups, often based on racist and colonial ideologies. Through the investigation of discourses of power, biopolitics is also linked to Giorgio Agamben's concept of "bare life" and Judith Butler's "precarious life" (Section 3.4). Both scholars analyze how discourses of power differentiate between life "worth living" and "worth grieving" and therefore also worth protecting, and lives that are "expendable" and thus dehumanized and deprived of their rights, leaving them increasingly vulnerable. These discourses as well are heavily racialized. In summary, this section analyses how state and societal structures define certain lives as less valuable or worthy of protection, thereby legitimizing inequalities and violence. The following section (Section 3.5) brings these discourses into contact with the lived reality in the (post)colony. Firstly, *epistemic violence* describes the suppression and marginalization of knowledge and knowledge systems of Indigenous populations, thus destabilizing core structures of Indigenous identities. Epistemic violence hits at the heart of what "we know" and "why we know it." The development of Indigenous research methodologies as introduced in Section 2.3.6 are strategies directed at defending Indigenous communities from epistemic violence. Secondly, environmental violence describes the results of global warming and climate change, but it includes analyses of how these effects disproportionally affect Indigenous and marginalized communities. *Environmental violence* also includes an intersectional perspective on how Western conservation efforts are often unsuitable for localized contexts and replicate neocolonial power structures if they fail to properly consult the communities most affected by them. Thirdly, and strongly connected to environmental violence is Rob Nixon's term *slow violence*, which shifts the focus to the underrepresentation of certain types of violence that are not easily captured in huge "media events." The slow rise of the ocean does not make riveting media-footage which means that the people affected by it receive less attention. In a world where attention is tied to financial resources offered, this means that, structurally, victims of slow violence are at an added disadvantage.

Chapter 4 shifts focus to the examination of three contemporary Australian Aboriginal novels. These texts have been selected for their distinct narrative strategies in representing the overlapping impacts of structural violence: the network, the allegory, and the intricate system of relationality. While the first two novels engage with intersectionality through the lens of the individual subject position, utilizing singular characters to expose structural violence, I contend that the third novel – Wright's *Praiseworthy* – conceptualizes structural violence as an assemblage

of intersecting systems of oppression materialized through subjugating discourses and their constructed others. In contrast to the first two novels, which narrate the progression from the individual experience to the structural dimension, *Praiseworthy* traces the movement from the structural sphere to the individual, with each narrative mode offering different engagements with what I have defined as the structural violence of the *white gaze* (see Chapter 2).

2 Theory – Part I – Untangling Complexities

In this chapter, I will offer an overview of the three theoretical fields that inform this dissertation. First, I will turn towards postcolonial theory as the most well-known theoretical approach to literatures written in the (former) colonies of the European empires, and especially the British Empire (see Section 2.1). Postcolonial theory is at once an extremely broad field that has subsumed many different interdisciplinary approaches and scholars from around the globe under one heading, and a theory that continues to be highly influenced by Western or Western-educated academics. Concentrating on the political, cultural, and material effects of colonialism, the approach places investigations of the experiences or the processes of colonization at its center. In this effort to render colonial power structures visible, however, postcolonial theory sometimes falls prey to the caveat that it does not reflect upon its own theoretical history and privileged position.

To counter this weak spot, I therefore add theoretical foundations from *critical race theory* and *critical whiteness studies* to my analysis (Section 2.2). These theories focus not on the effects of colonization (though they may often intersect in their topic of investigation or methodology) but on the processes of racialization and its political, cultural, and material effects. Most importantly, they also turn the critical lens back on the supposed *white center* which continues to remain unmarked in far too many circumstances, the processes through which it becomes centered in the first place and how these processes remain invisible. So instead of asking "Why and in what form is this or that group of people racialized?", it turns the question around and asks, "Why and how does the dominant group (often white-skinned) racialize other peoples and which structures do they employ in order to remain the supposedly 'normal' point of reference from which all proclaimed others deviate?".

This perspective is further sharpened by my aim to center Indigenous voices, theory, and practice whenever I approach Indigenous texts. Critical Indigenous studies cannot simply be subsumed under one more critical perspective within theories of racialization. Instead, critical Indigenous studies are in and of themselves a theoretical approach, an activist movement, and a path for (re)vitalization of Indigenous research practices, methods, and cultural knowledge. It is multifaceted and context-specific, and at times it contains coded references that are illegible to outsiders. I will not ever claim to be able to use (never mind theoretically develop) Indigenous research methods. But I consider it my duty to be informed of them, to listen to them and to respect them wherever I approach Indigenous cultural artifacts – may those be of the past, present or future. Section 2.3 will therefore focus on a broad range of critical Indigenous approaches and theories.

These three theoretical perspectives form the foundation of my own perspective as I approach the three novels I analyze in Chapter 4. However, before I can apply them to the texts, I need to connect them to literary theory. I will do so through the literary approach of contextual narratology, which I will introduce in Section 2.4. This will provide me with the necessary instruments for analysis (especially that of *perspective*) that I will need to describe how the novels transport the context of Sections 2.1 to 2.3 on the level of the narrative. Once the connections between postcolonial theory, critical race and critical whiteness theory, intersectionality and critical Indigenous studies to contextual narratology have been firmly established, I will offer a working definition of violence in Chapter 3. This will allow me to define as violence the structures of power, inequality and racialization identified in Chapter 2, allowing for an analysis of different forms of racial violence in the narrative in Chapter 4.

2.1 Postcolonial Theory

The very first theoretical approach that I base my dissertation on is *postcolonial theory*. In the following, I will first define the term *postcolonialism* and then introduce the overall structure of this section. Postcolonialism describes, in the chronological sense as first used by historians, the time period after Western colonialism, which took place from the late 1400s to the middle of the twentieth century, when most European colonies achieved or were granted independence after violent anti-colonial struggles and the general deterioration of colonial power in overseas territories, which made the forced subjugation of other peoples by the European empires untenable (Ivison n.p.).[16] 1492 is most often referenced as the starting point of the colonial period, dating back to Columbus' arrival in America, but colonial occupation efforts can be traced back as far as 1488 when Europeans first sailed around the Cape of Africa. With the occupation of foreign territories and the extraction of their resources, power shifted to the seafaring nations, especially Portugal, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Great Britain, but also to Germany, Belgium and Denmark (Ivison n.p.).

Due to its complexity, postcolonialism as a theoretical approach evades a precise and finite definition. For one, postcolonial theory investigates the cultural effects of colonialism and is tightly intertwined with political theory. It thus belongs to the broader field of ideological criticism. It approaches the former colonies and their cultural and political productions after their independence (post-colony). For two, postcolonialism also understands itself as ideological approach that further supports the goal of decolonialization. Decolonization can be most broadly defined as measures and processes that are aimed at dismantling and reversing the cultural and material effects of colonialism in a (former) colony. Different approaches for decolonization will be discussed in Sections 2.1.2 and 2.3. Postcolonial theory, understood as supporting the overall goal of decolonization in this second sense, acknowledges that although the colony is no longer under the formal rule of the empire, this does not mean that colonialism has suddenly been

[16] The word "peoples" is used here specifically because the use of the word "nation" in this context is highly problematic. When European Empires arrived in Africa, the Americas or the South Pacific, they usually declared territories along easily recognizable territorial markers or "natural boundaries" such as rivers or mountain ranges. These territories paid little concern to the existing social structures of the communities living in these areas at the time. Territory lines were negotiated through treaties (e.g. in North America) but over times these territories would change hands between Empires by force or by trade (e.g. the territory of Louisiana in the U.S.A.) until they eventually made up what we recognize as different countries or states today. In contrast to national borders in Europe however, the communities "in place" had little to no room for argumentation in these negotiations, which eventually led to different tribal communities being split over state or national borders (e.g. the Lakota in North America or the Yoruba in Nigeria, Benin and Togo). These "forced upon" territory boundaries and the legacy of colonialism continue to cause conflicts (if not civil wars) today. Similarly, the concept of the nation state is a specifically Western concept that was exported to the colonies and later granted or fought for in their independence.

removed from the political, economic, and societal structures of the now nominally independent state. The removal of imperial forces does not eradicate the systems of government or education that were established during the empire's rule. As such, the "post-colonial is not a chronological period but a historical condition" (Ashcroft 24). This holds especially true for those nations that even today have not yet released all their colonies to independence. Most notably, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and the U.S. continue to hold territories in the Caribbean and the (Indo-) Pacific.[17]

Postcolonial readings of literary texts are sensitive to positions of power. The approach is connected to historical and continuing processes of colonization and investigates fissures and contradictions on the textual level that reveal that the underlying assumptions on which a text is based (*conceptions of truths*) are constructions. For Huggan, "one of the discipline's greatest strengths is its continuing commitment to complexity . . . and its scrupulous attentiveness to the instable relationship between aesthetics and politics, activism and academia, actions and words" ("Preface" xvii). However, in its application, postcolonial studies remain a "loose configuration of critical approaches" (Huggan, "Preface" xvi) that evade comprehensive definition. Nonetheless, I will provide a broad overview of the field in the following two subsections. Section 2.1.1 will first provide a synopsis of the different forms of colonialism to make the complexity of colonialism more tangible and thereby show the challenges for a comprehensive definition and generalized application of postcolonial theory. It will highlight the relationship between capitalism, colonialism, and concepts of *civilization* before it differentiates between settler colonialism and extractive colonialism, as well as the concept of *neocolonialism* and its effects. Section 2.1.2 will then locate postcolonial within cultural and literary studies. It will explain the key terms and concepts, such as *ideology*, *hegemony*, the colonial *other*, *hybridity* and *mimicry*. Whereas *hybridity* and *mimicry* will not feature in my analysis repeatedly, *ideology*, *hegemony,* and the concept of the *other* will be referred to repeatedly, as they overlap with similar terminology from critical race and critical whiteness studies.

2.1.1 Forms of Colonialism

There are two terms regarding European expansion, *colonialism,* and *imperialism*, which are often used interchangeably but have a different scope of meaning: *imperialism* was an enterprise driven

[17] With deepening political crises and the threat of the destruction of whole island states due to climate change, questions of independence from European countries are increasingly complex in the Pacific. See, for example, the latest referendum for independence in New Caledonia in 2021 in which citizens rejected independence from France amid calls for boycotting the referendum altogether (Rose and Packham).

by the strive towards economic expansion and control. The manufacturing industry located in England heavily relied on resource extraction from the British colonies, or, later, trade with the local dominion government. In this relationship, the underlying conditions for trade were not negotiated on equal footing, but prescribed by the imperial center, oriented along its needs for production (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 48, 54). Imperialism can thus be defined as the general domination of foreign territories by an imperial center, including the underlying worldview of superiority and hierarchy (ideology).[18] *Colonialism*, on the other hand, is the implementation of imperialism and describes the establishment of permanent settlements in these territories (practice) (Said, *Culture* 8). Ideology and practice induce each other, and while chronologically the material effects of colonialism were the first to be observed, the underlying ideology of superiority and the establishment of economic control have driven its expansion. It is easy to argue, however, that this distinction between ideology and practice while useful, is not sufficient considering the material effects of imperialism – not just colonialism – today.[19] Instead of debating the original cause for the realization of imperialism and colonialism, it could be argued, the political-activist positioning of postcolonial theory is more visibly served in investigating its effects in greater detail. As Ashcroft et al. point out, "European colonialism in the post-Renaissance world became a sufficiently specialized and historically specific form of imperial expansion to justify its current general usage as a distinctive kind of political ideology" (*Keywords* 54). This leads me to a closer look at the different forms in which colonialism has taken effect in the (especially British) different colonies in the following sections.

2.1.1.1 Capitalism, Colonialism and Civilization

The political ideology that Ashcroft mentions at the end of the previous section is defined by the growing reach of capitalism in Europe. This section will therefore provide a comprehensive overview of how capitalism, colonialism and the concept of *civilization* are intertwined. First, imperialism continued and extended mercantilism (as an early and specific form of capitalism) of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and eventually tied it to national affect (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 140-41). One of the most notable voices in this regard is British Historian Eric

[18] The imperial center in this sense does not yet denote the "Empire" in the sense of the "British Empire". The Empire developed out of the continued colonialism and expansion of territories of one nation as it subjugated and occupied foreign territories. The underlying ideology (the European nations thinking of themselves as superior), however, was at work much sooner and drove the continued colonization of territories from the "imperial center" outwards. Therefore, there are four terms at play here, that have great overlap, but the first two describe the process, the latter two its specific effect: Imperialism and Colonialism, and Empire and Colony.

[19] For a more thorough elaboration on imperialist ideology and material, economic effects in a historic context see Francesco Macheda.

Hobsbawm. In *Industry and Empire*, he identifies imperialism as one of the driving forces for the British industrial revolution. Both the extraction of resources and cheap labor from the colonies as well as a market for any excess productions are crucial for the development of the British economy at that time.[20] This is important because public and political discourses continue to refer to former colonies as supposedly "underdeveloped" economies, which often suggests that these economies have failed to develop to the same extent as Western economies. Both postcolonial and Indigenous writers do not tire of pointing out that this so-called "underdevelopment" was intentional and is rooted in Western exploitation.

In *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith proclaims mercantile trading as key factor for civilization. In his vision of "perfect liberty," the rational individual's strive for the betterment of their condition enters into competition with other individuals' ambition for the same goal.[21] Supposedly, since individuals generally act according to human reason, this competition regulates individual passion, and ultimately, through market-driven wages and free enterprise, leads to the betterment of society in general (Heilbroner n.p.). Societies without mercantilism in this sense are then at a lower level of achievement and general success, irrespective of other cultural conceptions of social cooperation. In colonial discourse, this is a point where racism and economic success become tightly interlinked. The roots of this interconnection are important to note here, since this reasoning still carries weight in racialized discourses on Indigenous and Black communities today. In these racist discourses, poverty or economic hardship is attributed to individual failings and the structural (and statistical) predetermination of the history of colonialism and slavery is ignored. Racial theories such as developed by Arthur de Gobineau in his *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* even went as far as to pseudo-scientifically trace the inferiority of commoners (what would later be considered the working class) back to racist assumptions of interbreeding with inferior races in contrast to a "more pure" aristocratic Aryan master race. Traces of racism thus also bleed into conceptions of *class* (see Section 2.2).

Like the intertwining connotations of capitalism, national affect (identity) and racism, colonial discourse and concepts of modernity are tightly interwoven. Bryan Turner argues that

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[20] For an exemplary study of how Manchester as cotton capital of the world was tied to colonialism in general and the slave trade in particular, see The Guardian Series "Cotton Capital".

[21] Smith's view of "savage" nations is in itself deeply racist and defines "wealth" solely along the lines of capital, consumption and availability of goods for trade. Criticism has been aplenty, not least by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Postcolonialism in its criticism of power structures also takes a very critical stance towards neo-liberalism, not least because it draws the connection between the industrialization in European countries and the extraction of resources in the colonies.

"the imperial regulation of land, the discipline of the soul, and the creation of truth" are inherent to modernity and, also, the rise of colonial discourse (B. S. Turner 4). Like Adam Smith's economic theory, reason and rationality were considered core concepts of the modern human being. This belief leads back to European enlightenment and is thus a Eurocentric idea. Within colonial discourse, *modern* was used synonymous to *civilized*, and in this perspective once more justified European colonization as supposedly civilizing mission. Europe was considered as the "bringer of Enlightenment" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 162), ever superior to the so-called uncivilized colonies.

Where two cultures – that of the *civilized* England and the *uncivilized* colony – came into contact, the distinction of these cultures had to be coded in difference. Unless the "English" culture of the "homeland" was defined as both distinct and separate, how else would absolute superiority be justified? This code of differences has led contemporary postcolonial theorists to emphasize the complex interconnections between modernity, imperialism, liberal market theory, and the rise of the nation state and also explains why postcolonialism not infrequently draws on Marxist ideas (see, for instance, Balibar; Chatterjee, "Community"; Chatterjee, *Nationalist;* Goldberg, "Modernity"; Hage). As Ashcroft et al. summarize:

> Constructions of the nation are thus potent sites of control and domination within modern society. This is further emphasized by the fact that the myth of a 'national tradition' is employed not only to legitimize a general idea of a social group ('a people') but also to construct a modern idea of a nation-state, in which all the instrumentalities of state power (e.g. military and police agencies, judiciaries, religious hierarchies, educational systems and political assemblies or organizations) are subsumed and legitimized as the 'natural' expressions of a unified national history and culture. (*Keywords* 167)

Over time, settlers in the colonies developed their own sense of identity. They drew on the English culture of the imperial center but partially redefined it, depending on their specific local circumstances. For Australia, this meant incorporating Irish Catholic convictism into their sense of self and establishing a myth of classlessness and egalitarianism that has since become a staple of Australia's nationalism (see Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 49).[22] Because British colonies with white majorities (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) were less racialized by the imperial center (and I say *less* racialized, because examples on how in the context of miscegenation they were still both marginalized and racialized "through contact" will be discussed in Section 2.1.2 in this thesis), they achieved (nominal) political independence earlier than extractive colonies with white minorities such as India, Pakistan and the African states that did not reach independence until after WWII. However, in all the cases mentioned above, "it is worth

[22] Classlessness and egalitarianism are, of course, a myth in all former British colonies.

noting how long the process of achieving independence [nevertheless] took to complete" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 144). Independence was always a process, not an event.

2.1.1.2 Settler Colonialism and Extractive Colonialism

The four countries mentioned above (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the U.S.A) fall under what Patrick Wolfe calls *settler colonies*, which he defines as a specific form of colonization. According to Wolfe, in *settler colonialism*, the invaders "come to stay" (*Settler Colonialism* 2), which is a fundamentally different premise to the colonies where the extraction of resources (both natural and labor in the form of slavery) was the main objective. This would apply to most – if not all – former colonies on the African continent, at least from the European perspective.[23] Once the resource extraction is secured beyond colonial rule through continued economic dependency, leaving the territory of the former colony and "granting" its independence becomes a nationally solvent idea (see Section 2.1.1.3 on neocolonialism below).

Settler colonies are thus "premised on the elimination of native societies" and if the "colonizers come to stay – invasion is a structure not an event" (Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism* 2). As a structure – in contrast to an event – it then has no specific end date and continues to persevere until it is properly dismantled, a process that activists commonly refer to as *decolonization*.[24] Secondly, "the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element" (Wolfe, "Settler" 388). Racism, in turn, is one key strategy that allows for access to this territory. By defining the peoples living in desired territories at the time of colonial invasion as "less than," occupation and subjugation are justified. This irreducible element – access to territory – then also determines Wolfe's differentiation between what he terms "the logic of elimination" of settler-colonies and genocides as perpetrated by e.g., Nazi Germany, against the Tutsi in Rwanda or the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire (Wolfe, "Settler" 387).

Wolfe here talks about colonialism as a structure, as a process that spanned several centuries. At the beginning of this colonial process (often called first contact), treaty negotiations were widespread practice in the colonies of North America and in New Zealand. And even though treaties often brough with them their own difficulties regarding translation and customary

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[23] In nation states such as South Africa, the remaining descendants of Dutch colonizers are far in the minority. The goal was never to "supplant" the Native population with the invaders. Instead, colonizers were established as "rulers" over the existing population with the aim of their management.

[24] For a more detailed elaboration of the concept of "decolonization" see Section 2.3.

knowledge,[25] they were considered to be the "evolved" and more "sophisticated" approach to securing territorial rights. They introduced Western legal concepts and offered written "proof" of land rights that established a sense of "rule of law" for the self-justification of the settlers. Further, the right of preemption fell to the "first European to visit and properly claim a given territory" which established "a monopoly over land transactions with the natives, who were prevented from disposing of their land to any other European power" (Wolfe, "Settler" 391).

Australia is the exception to this practice. It was declared *terra nullius*, devoid of inhabitants, which allowed its occupation and annexation. Since "British dominion was effectively unchallenged by other European powers, [Aboriginal Australians] were accorded no rights to their territory, informal variants on the theme of terra nullius being taken for granted in settler culture" (Wolfe, "Settler" 390-91). Later, this legal construct proved difficult in upholding the image of "lawfulness" and "justice." For Wolfe, this was especially problematic once attitudes toward the Indigenous population changed with the arrival of more settlers and their need to build "peaceful" livelihoods.[26] The right to remain in continental Australia therefore had to be justified through other means, mainly by the general ideology that the settlers were more skilled and advanced in how they used the land than the Indigenous population (Wolfe, "Settler" 389).[27]

With the rise of settler nationalism, this assertion became even more pivotal. Firstly, the very existence of Aboriginal peoples on the land in face of direct contact between farmers and local resistance fighters could no longer be denied. The resistance fighters stood between the settlers and the occupation of the territory. Secondly, a complete "erasure" of Indigeneity on the territory would also eliminate the symbolic transferal of "indigeneity [to the settler society] in order to express its difference – and, accordingly, its independence – from the mother country" (Wolfe, "Settler" 389). In other words, if the emerging Australian nation continued to deny the existence of Indigenous peoples in the territory, they had no more right to the land than the British crown that first sent them there. If the connotation of *Indigenous* could, on the other hand, be transferred from the existing Indigenous population to the settlers (through continued contact, the supposed "betterment" of the Indigenous population), this supported their claim of uniqueness and belonging

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[25] One of the most famous examples is the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand, which was signed in 1840 and in which the original texts in English and Te Reo Māori differ significantly (see Black). Similar issues also occurred in negotiations with the Anishinaabe in today's Canada, (see Simpson, *Dancing*).

[26] There were obvious encounters between the settlers and the Indigenous population, clearly revealing it as a myth. Exoticism combined with missionary beliefs also caused a rising number of arrivals determined to "educate" and "save" *the Native*." For a visualization of the frontier wars between 1776 and 1928 and massacres see the Guardian project on "The Killing Times" by Evershed et al.

[27] Bruce Pascoe vehemently opposes this ideology in *Dark Emu*, a well-researched account of Aboriginal Australian agriculture and land tenure before European occupation.

in place.[28] The existence of Native peoples in the settler colony therefore caused a double bind for the objectives of settler society that could neither be solved through the complete elimination nor by retreating from the land. This predicament later led to assimilationist policies and then the rhetoric of the *dead Native* as employed by all colonies of the British empire. It also finds expression up until the twentieth century in the White Australian policies.

The exceptional position of *the Native*[29] as both obstructing access to and legitimizing the occupation of the land in the colony also explains the difference of racial taxonomy as applied to Indigenous populations and the Black slave population, which was brought to the colonies along trade routes from the African continent.[30] Because "Indigenous people obstructed settlers' access to land, . . . their increase was counterproductive. In this way, the restrictive racial classification of [Indigenous peoples] straightforwardly furthered the logic of elimination" (Wolfe, "Settler" 388). But because they also legitimized the occupation of the land by the white Australian settler in differentiation to the imperial center (the Crown and the claim to the colonies territory by the British nation state) during the process of independence from the British nation. This conundrum did not apply to Black people enslaved and brought to the colony from the African continent, because they did not threaten the settlers' access to land. Originating from a different continent altogether and bound to the white settler through slavery, they had no claim on the territory. Instead, they were (ab)used as labor to "cultivate" the land.[31] It is important to note that Wolfe's distinction is problematic insofar as it is only applicable to the context of the British colonies in the Americas, Australia and New Zealand. As Leanne Simpson criticizes, Wolfe "erased African Indigeneity through the logics of elimination in the transatlantic slave trade, and did not address

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[28] This is a classic example of the constant contradictions inherent in colonial ideology. There is no "one way" of interpretation, for all interpretations fall under the settler state's prerogative and current objective. If the objective changes, interpretations may change. At the same time, some justifications develop a life of their own and then need to be re-addressed.

[29] *Native* is of course a term that is charged with racism. Much like *Aboriginal* there has been much debate on its usage as reference for Indigenous populations and tribes in North America and Australia. Some Indigenous scholars avoid its usage, others use it explicitly and redefine it for their use. The largest association for Indigenous studies is named NAISA-Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, choosing to be inclusive of both terms and allowing self-determination. Whenever I refer to racist constructions of *the Native*, I will place it in single quotation marks, for further elaboration see Section 2.3.

[30] For a visualization of routes of the slave trade between the African continent and North American colonies in the specific context of the cotton trade (see Blood et al.). The slave trade to the Australian and New Zealand colonies originated – in part due to the additional distance – rarely from African colonies and more often involved the abduction of Pacific Islanders. Australia, as a convict colony from the very beginning also had an additional source for human labor.

[31] I use the term *cultivate* in apostrophes in this instance, because – even though agriculturally correct – the terms *culture* and *civilization* and their derivates must be used with caution whenever it is used in a way that implies Western culture "being introduced to" Indigenous peoples.

settler colonialism as a structure and a process on the African continent" (*Rehearsals* 86). She further contends that the distinction has also caused harm in the relationship between Indigenous and Black activists in the United States and Canada (86). Wolfe's distinction is therefore to be used with caution, for the localized context only and with the clear understanding that it refers to a white structure of power that produces its subjugated *other* (see Section 2.1.2) and that have a "vested interest in keeping Black and Indigenous movements apart and competing" (R. Maynard and Simpson 99).

In the North American context, according to Wolfe's logic,

> . . . Black people's enslavement produced an inclusive taxonomy that automatically enslaved the offspring of a slave and any other parent. In the wake of slavery, this taxonomy became fully racialized in the "one-drop rule," whereby any amount of African ancestry, no matter how remote, and regardless of phenotypical appearance, makes a person Black. For Indians, in stark contrast, non-Indian ancestry compromised their indigeneity, producing "half-breeds," a regime that persists in the form of blood quantum regulations. (Wolfe, "Settler" 387–88)[32]

Similar regulations were in place in Australia up until the second half of the twentieth century and governed government policies with regard to the placement of Aboriginal people on missions or the removal of Aboriginal children from their communities. In difference to the North American colonies, however, the need for the import of labor was (at first) addressed through the deportation of convicts from Britain to Australia. However, both Australia and New Zealand have a long history of *Blackbirding* (Abella et al., "Blackbirding" n.p.). *Blackbirding* denotes the recruitment of South Pacific Islanders for work on plantations in Australia and New Zealand, which often happened under threat or with false promises, leading to *de facto* enslavement.

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[32] Wolfe draws on authors such as Floyd James Davis, David Rankin and Virginia Dominguez, Aloyisus Leon Higginbotham, and Joel Williamson for elaborations on the "One-Drop-Rule." For comprehensive discussions of classifications of Native Americans, Wolfe further draws on Annette Jaimes and Jack Forbes: "The relationship between Native and African Americans illustrates the distinction particularly well. In the main, Native (North) Americans were cleared from their land rather than exploited for their labour, their place being taken by displaced Africans who provided the labour to be mixed with the expropriated land, their own homelands having yet to become objects of colonial desire. The ramifications of this distinction flow through, particularly in so far as they affect the different constructions of 'miscegenation' that have been applied to the two communities. Briefly, whilst the one-drop rule has meant that the category 'black' can withstand unlimited admixture, the category 'red' has been highly vulnerable to dilution. This is consistent with a situation in which, whilst black labour was commodified (so that white plantation owners fathered black children), red labour was not even acknowledged (so that white fathers generated so-called 'half-breeds' whose indigeneity was compromised). In Australia the structural counterparts to African slaves were white convicts, which has meant that racial coding and questions of emancipation have operated quite differently between the two countries. Where the respective indigenous populations have been concerned, however, there are substantial similarities between the racial calculations on which official policies have been placed" (Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism* 1–2).

According to Wolfe,

> . . . settler colonialism was foundational to modernity. Frontier individuals' endless appeals for state protection not only presupposed a commonality between the private and official realms. In most cases (Queensland was a partial exception), it also presupposed a global chain of command linking remote colonial frontiers to the metropolis. ("Settler" 394)

In turn, however, modernity does not suffice as an explanation for settler colonialism's continued need for territorial expansion. Instead, Wolfe identifies agriculture as a main driving force. He reasons that while forestry, fishing, pastoralism, and mining would generate more revenue through expansion and therefore act as motivator, only agriculture is self-sufficient in that its resources can also provide for the laborers working on the land that it uses for production. Wolfe therefore states that "in contrast to extractive industries, which rely on what just happens to be there, agriculture is a rational means/end calculus that is geared to vouchsafing its own reproduction, generating capital that projects into a future where it repeats itself" ("Settler" 395). Within postcolonial analyses of texts and cultural artefacts, references to modernity, forestry, pastoralism, mining but also agriculture must therefore be read within the colonial context of expansion and territoriality.

2.1.1.3 Neocolonialism

Colonial structures continue to influence the global capitalist system today. Kwame Nkrumah, an independence leader and the first president of Ghana, first coined the term "neo-colonialism" in *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. He writes that the "essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside" (4). This causes the problem that, in Nkrumah's analysis, "the rulers of neo-colonial States derive their authority to govern, not from the will of the people, but from the support which they obtain from their neo-colonialist masters," leaving them with little intrinsic motivation to tackle the social and economic problems at hand (8).[33]

In contrast to contemporary British popular discourse, the former colonies were not granted independence due to a sudden empathetic shift in attitude toward the colonized peoples.[34] Instead, any form of independence was gained through considerable anticolonial movements and struggles

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[33] The ruling class in the (post)colony is also often referred to as the *élite* or the local "intelligentsia", the Western educated class implemented as local rulers by the European imperial power to govern in their stead, but also in European interest, see Fanon (*Black* 144). This class is also often referred to as "comprador class."

[34] For a more in-depth overview of the processes of decolonization leading to independence but also the continuing social and political issues see Betts as well as Rothermund.

(Ahmad, "Politics" 4),[35] and the empires fought to retain as much power and influence as possible. Even in settler states with white majorities such as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, "dominion status or limited independence to white settler cultures was the result of long constitutional and political struggles and was made dependent on the retention of legal and constitutional links with the Crown," which ultimately "limited the right of those societies to conduct their own affairs and to develop their own systems of justice or governance" (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 57). The Australian constitution, passed in 1900 and effected in 1901, still considers the British monarch as head of state, represented by the local governor general as sovereign of Australia (Rickard et al.), and, of course, the constitution did not, at first, grant citizenship to the Indigenous peoples of Australia (for a closer look at the extension of citizenship to Indigenous Australians, see Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive*).

For other former colonies that were not made up of a majority of white settlers, the granting of independence was often highly dependent on the establishment of a government that continued to rule the state in a way favorable to the former imperial power. Trade agreements ensured that the resource extraction supporting the manufacturing industry in Europe continued, and that dependency and exploitation remained unchanged if renamed. The underdevelopment of these countries today therefore did not originate in an inherent inferiority of the local population but was structurally induced by the imperial powers and global capitalism (see also Section 2.1.1.1 above). The interrelation of imperialism and economic development as *dependency theory* was first introduced by the Argentinian Raúl Prebisch Munro and opposes *modernization theory*'s assumption that – in accordance with neo-liberal thought – underdevelopment is a result of a lack of knowledge, scientific development, and ambition in the local population.

Modernization theory draws on both Marx and Weber and surmises that all societies will eventually pass the same stages of development on their way to a fully industrialized nation. This disregards two vital facts: One, the newly formally independent states of the post-colony would enter into unequal competition with the already established industrialism in the Western states (fueled by colonialism and the exploitation of resources from these very countries). And two, the European countries had established structures and governments that would ensure the continued

[35] Also see Ashcroft et al.: "It is one of the great myths of recent British colonial history in particular that the granting of independence to its colonies was the result of a proactive and deliberate policy of enlightenment on the part of the British people, a policy that distinguished British colonialism from the inferior and more rapacious European brands. Such readings are, of course, part of the construction of the ideology of late nineteenth-century imperialism in which literary representation played a vigorous part, whether actively, as in the work of Kipling, or in a more ambivalent way in the works of Conrad" (Ashcroft et al. (*Keywords* 57).).

exploitation even after the withdrawal of troops and government from these territories (see Nkrumah above). As Ashcroft et al. point out, modernization theory also does not

> . . . take into account the considerable social and political transformations necessary for economic modernization, or the considerable cultural variations that would need to be pressed into one economic mould. Furthermore, the idea of development as based on the model of Western modernity overlooked the rise of multiple 'alternative' modernities in non-Western societies, modernities that might bear no relation to the linear historical model espoused by development theorists. (*Keywords* 79)

Modernization theory approaches have therefore been criticized, especially since mounting criticism of neo-liberal capitalism has shown that economic growth is and should not be the only indicator to measure the improvement of living conditions and standards of living (see Sections 2.3 and 3.5). Both postcolonial studies and critical Indigenous studies approach their subjects of inquiry with this very context in mind. Both view capitalism as a form of ideological expansion and engage critically with the effects it has had on postcolonial and Indigenous communities. They draw attention to the history of dispossession of Indigenous communities, which pertains both to racist policies that impede the accumulation of wealth by the people in these communities (in its most basic form covering the cost of living, and especially visible in the history of indentured labor on Australian missions), and to the displacement from and barring of access to ancestral lands that would allow for the most basic forms of self-subsistence (agriculture, hunting and gathering). This history of dispossession is identified as the origin for, e.g., the high welfare dependency in Indigenous communities. However, this does not prevent national political discourses from firmly placing the blame for welfare-dependency on Indigenous communities and individuals. I will extend on this interconnection and the underlying argumentation in Section 2.3.3 by drawing on Aileen Moreton-Robinson's concept of *white possession*. Once I have introduced critical whiteness theory and intersectionality in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, respectively, I will also reconnect this line of argumentation to the definition of structural violence offered in Section 3.2.[36] For now, however, it is simply important to note that postcolonial studies and critical Indigenous

[36] With regard to literature, the above-mentioned effects of historical dispossession and the continuing structural violence that disadvantages Indigenous communities are, for example, very visible in the realist novel Once Were Warriors by Māori writer Alan Duff. The novel centers on the Heke family, a Māori family living on the fringes of the city of Auckland in Aotearoa New Zealand, struggling with poverty, domestic violence and cultural displacement. Showing how literary criticism and investigations of violence may be connected, Otto Heim has analysed the novel with regards to its depictions of violence, and I will return to his observation in my analysis of Melissa Lucashenko's Too Much Lip, in Section 4.1. More specifically, Heim traced how the narrative takes on a position of witnessing violence and how this position "hovers between empathy with the victims of violence and complicity with its perpetrators" (Heim 17). For the corpus analysed in Chapter 4, interconnections between and references to colonialism, capitalism, modernity, conceptions of civilization and demands for "development" need to be read within this critical context.

studies view capitalism as a system that perpetuates (and accelerates) existing structural inequalities and thus can be defined as a form of structural violence.

2.1.2 Postcolonialism and (Post-)Colonial Literary Theory

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to postcolonial theory as hard to define due to its complexity. The previous section has offered some insight into this complexity by elaborating on the interconnection between capitalism, colonialism, and conceptualizations of civilization, and by further differentiating between settler colonialism, extractive colonialism, and neocolonialism to better describe its (continuing) material and ideological effects. In addition to the theoretical concepts introduced in the previous section, the term *postcolonial* is sometimes also simply used as a synonym for *anti-colonial* and *post-independence*.

As a theory in literary studies, however, postcolonial theory has been employed since the 1970s and is heavily influenced by the poststructuralist turn in the 1980s and 1990s, and postcolonial studies (T. Brennan, *Position* 93–125). Major critics such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak apply *discourse theory* as developed by Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida, respectively, to the colonial context, drawing attention to both power relations and material effects of the process of colonialism. In order to visibly mark this focus on discourse analysis, this first generation of postcolonial scholars often insisted on a hyphen in *post-colonial*, as a sign of resistance and opposition, giving voice to the pluralism of interwoven postcolonial experiences "without making its position relativistic and thus politically irrelevant" (Ashcroft 28). In recent years, the insistence on the hyphen to distinguish postcolonial literary theory as specific form of discourse analysis from the broader field of postcolonial studies has lost its fortitude.[37] As such, postcolonial theory in literary and cultural criticism investigates the effect of colonialism on the colonized peoples and cultures, considering how they both internalized and resisted colonial ideologies (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 204).

[37] The discussion on the usage of the hyphen in postcolonial appears as an attempt to mark out a discipline's territory that is in itself highly contextual and constantly in motion. I concur with Ashcroft that there is an inherent danger in postcolonial theory to not "do it properly," by investigating colonial power relations but inadvertently reproducing them, but I take issue with the idea that all criticism marking itself with the hyphen is aware of this fallacy and/or manages to avoid it. The use of the term *postcolonial* in critical Indigenous studies will be discussed below. A common argument, however, is that the conception of *post* in today's settler colonies is misleading since Indigenous communities are still very much under the colonizers (now national) rule. I will therefore adhere to the more contemporary writing of *postcolonial* for nations with a white European minority and that have since achieved their independence, with the understanding that there is no *post* for Indigenous communities in settler-nation states such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

Especially regarding the postcolonial criticism of the 1980s to 2000s, this focus on the internalization and resistance of colonial ideologies has led to an investigation of cultural identities and transnational comparisons of what might be considered a *postcolonial identity*. Postcolonial critics generally agree that the politics and measures of postcolonialism differed greatly between the colonies – and thus, the experiences of the encounter with the colonizer in the *contact zone* –, but they nonetheless suppose that the subjugating strategies to both justify and stabilize the rule of the British Empire (in the case of twentieth-century postcolonial studies with its academic centers in Great Britain, North America, and former English colonies, most notably India) are similar enough across different territories that a joint theoretical framework is fruitful for investigation.[38] Any analysis of postcolonial culture thus needs to pay attention to the localized and material effects of the specific colonial encounter (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 207). As Ashcroft et al. note, the "theoretical issues latent in these two fundamentals – materiality and location – lie at the basis of much of the dispute over what the term [postcolonial] references and what it should or should not include" (*Keywords* 207).

Postcolonial theory draws on Foucault's definition of discourse as both material manifestation through utterance and speech act, but also as intangible system that structures knowledge and what is perceived to be true (Foucault, "Orders" 10–11). Discourse is thus a system through which both the world and the self can be known. Underlying power relations structure and produce discourse, and discourse in turn produces effects of truth (Foucault, "Truth" 60–61). This leads Foucault to conclude that forms of knowledge are produced by power and are thus socially determined ("Truth" 61).

Power in this sense is not only institutionalized power (governmental power), but there are also other power relations that may structure discourse (for example, in the context of counterrevolutions, existing discourses of knowledge are restructured, and their meaning is reassigned, see Foucault, "Truth" 60–62). Institutionalized power, however, is the one that is most invested in regulating knowledge, what Foucault calls the "will to truth," and it is

> . . . accompanied by whole strata of practices such as pedagogy – naturally – the book-system, publishing, libraries, such as the learned societies in the past, and laboratories today. But it is probably even more profoundly accompanied by the manner in which knowledge is employed in a society, the way in which it is exploited, divided and, in some ways, attributed. ("Orders" 11)

Michel Foucault has extended on this theory of subject construction and has located it within the specific historical, social, and cultural knowledge systems of the individual. For Foucault, different

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[38] For a more in-depth discussion of the localized context and the danger of a homogenizing effect of postcolonial theory see B. Hodge and Mishra, Williams and Chrisman, Mishra and B. Hodge, Shohat, and A. McClintock.

subject locations within discourse and different discourses form different subjects, and the subject is always subjected to different discourses. He further connects these discourses to power, by examining more closely how these discourses are controlled and by whom:

> . . . subjects are constructed by the circulation of certain systems of knowledge. Foucault provides detailed analyses of the ways in which power is exercised to produce and control (to 'subject') individual subjects through systems of knowledge about the 'criminal,' the 'pervert' and the 'lunatic' within the discourses of criminality, sexuality and psychiatry. Within any historical period, various discourses compete for control of subjectivity, but these discourses are always a function of the power of those who control the discourse to determine knowledge and truth. Thus, while a person may be the subject of various discourses, subjectivity will be produced by the discourse that dominates at the time. (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 251)

With the colonial discourse controlled by the imperial power and institutionalized through the governmental and educational system, the colonial subject is thus produced by the colonial discourse. And since the empire rests on the foundational concept that the superior needs to rule the inferior (even for their/the common good), this underlying hierarchy produces colonized subjects who have internalized their supposed inferiority.[39] In turn, however, this means that as Althusser has also noted, "no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses" (98). If they lose the power to determine the colonial discourse, they lose the power to produce the colonial – non-resistant – subject. Within this context, then, the colonial power and later on the settler state need to "manufacture ideological consent for its continued right to rule" (Teves et al., "Sovereignty" 10). Because the colonial discourse relies on this division of people into categories of superiority and inferiority, and because this power relation produced a harmful effect, it can be categorized as a form of structural violence (see Chapter 3, especially Sections 3.2 and 3.3).

The British Empire spent enormous resources on spreading British culture in its colonies. One of the main pathways was through education (also identified by Foucault as one of the most effective institutionalized discourses of governmental power). Missions and residential schools were established to teach "the natives" the British language and culture. They used British books – both teaching volumes and literary texts – to teach language skills, customs and British moral values to the students.[40] The often-horrific conditions and teaching methods in these missions and

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[39] The concept of the colonial subject produced through colonial discourse is closely related to what critical race Studies in recent years has also termed "internalized" racism. For further elaboration see Section 2.2.

[40] This is of course to be read with a grain of salt since missionaries especially were also part of the expansion of the empire and the imperial ideology (see Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 158–59).

residential schools have only recently received broader public attention even though activists and scholars have been pointing out their racist and abusive conditions for much longer than that.[41]

At the same time, the goal for the British education of the natives was never to "raise them" to be equal to the white settlers (see also Section 2.1.1 above), but to train them as domestic servants and farmhands for the white population (Teves et al., "Indigenous" 309).[42] British education was in so far crucial to the establishment and stabilization of British rule in the colony as it ensured that the colonial ideology was impressed upon "native" children from a very young age. Since we are now entering a discussion about the interaction between ideology, education, and indoctrination, I will first offer a working definition of ideology as it is understood in this thesis.

Coined by French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy, *ideology* was at first introduced as an area of study investigating "ideals of thought and action on an empirically verifiable basis" (Freeden 4). Instead of Descartes' notion of the Cartesian self, which thought of the mind and the body of two separate entities, Destutt de Tracy's approach saw thought as a biological function of the brain. Following the positivist movement of the nineteenth century, he therefore assumed human thought and thus ideology could be analyzed with accuracy and permanence (Freeden 4–5). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels later modified this definition and studied German idealism, arguing that in idealist thought, philosophy itself was ideology, because the ideal was in effect an illusion. Striving for idealism meant thus striving for illusion and disregarding reality (41–43). By invoking the imagery of the *camera obscura*, they argued that "in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down" – which in turn are dehumanized by the domination of capitalism (Marx and Engels 42). They argued that the "role of ideology was to smooth over [the] contradictions [of the material world] by making them appear as necessary, normal, and congruous" (Freeden 5). Ideology thus had an important function for sense-making, but, within the capitalist critique of Marx and Engels, also for the maintenance of unity within society (Freeden 5–6). Furthermore, Marx and Engels were the first to contend that ideology was disseminated by the ruling class in order "to exercise control and domination; indeed, to 'manufacture history' according to their interests" (Freeden 6). Ideology, then, became "truth-claims that [supposedly] possessed universal, rational validity", which allowed the ruling class,

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[41] For an Indigenous literary representation of life in a Canadian residential school, see e.g. Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, first published in 1998. For Aboriginal Australian fiction turning towards life on missions, see Aboriginal Australian life writing such as Sally Morgan's *My Place* from 1987, Doris Pilkington Garimara's *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* from 1996, and Ruby Langford Ginibi's *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (1988); for Aboriginal Australian historical fiction see e.g. Dylan D. Coleman (*Mazin*)'s *Mazin Grace* (2012).

[42] For the North American context see Lomawaima, and Adams.

state, or government to use ideology to "forge the myth of a unified political community, through illusory law, cultural direction, and . . . the power over language" (Freeden 6).

Marx and Engels were also the first to further analyze how ideology played a significant role in regulating subjugated people. Looking at the division of labor and the proletariat – the working class – they contend that ideology played a crucial role in convincing the workers to continue production despite exploitative working conditions. Looking back at the free-market theory briefly introduced in Section 2.1.1, Marx and Engels showed how ideology hid the deep inequalities inherent in the capitalist system from view and instead propagated the idea of equal chances for success as tied solely to an individual's willingness to work hard (Freeden 6). In this framework, ideology is clearly negatively connotated as a tool used by those in power to stay in power, and to obscure an underlying truth. Once this truth is discovered and addressed, ideology, in this interpretation, will lose its power and function (Freeden 7).

Karl Mannheim broadened this concept of *ideology* to liken it to *Weltanschauung*, as a general system of thoughts and ideas indicative of a historical epoch. Within this system of ideas, individual attitudes are influenced by the specific social location (Abella et al. "Mannheim"). This leads to a "multiplicity of ways of thinking" and "analytical pluralism" in society. Mannheim also highlights the unconscious presuppositions guiding human thinking, and the psychological features of ideology, to which he also counted self-deception (Freeden 16–17). Nonetheless, the underlying positivist presumption – as with Marx, Engels and Destutt de Tracy – remains that "ideas could be studied objectively . . . [and] *generated* objectively – as knowledge of social reality" (Freeden 17). He thus still presupposes an underlying "truth" to all ideas, which, once discovered and shared would still lead to a position of scientific knowledge that would then be free of ideology (Freeden 17). Ideology thus becomes a far broader concept that is not only used to influence the dominated classes, but one that affects every individual and that is in turn also affected by the individual's ideas, and thus changes over time (Freeden 17–18).

According to Louis Althusser, ideology precedes the individual and constructs the subject. Before the individual comes into being, ideology has already devised a space for the individual to fit into. In turn, the individual thinks of themselves as a subject with agency, because they are in fact constantly "hailed" as a subject (by being addressed as subjects and through the performance of material practices) by both other individuals and by institutions such as the church, the education system, or the police. This "hailing" – the calling forth as a subject – is a constantly repeated process (interpellation) and keeps the individual in this predetermined spot (subject-position) (see Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 249; Hawkes 123). The individual "find[s] subjectivity within the expectations of their parents and their society, and they endorse it because it provides a sense of

identity and security through structures such as language, social codes and conventions" (Althusser 139).[43] Althusser thus sees ideology in the form of hegemonic power as a form of control. At the same time, ideology's inherent inconsistency and fragmentation (the contradiction in its assertions), offers the subject the possibility to detect and observe the process of interpellation (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 249). I concur with Ashcroft et al.'s assessment that,

> Despite what many critics have seen as the extreme functionalism of this view of subjectivity, the concept of interpellation is still useful for describing how the 'subject' is located and constructed by specific ideological and discursive operations, particularly formations such as colonial discourse. (*Keywords* 249)

Within postcolonial (discourse) theory, the *colonial subject* describes the colonized subject who has been educated in the European system and has internalized the colonial ideology to the point of acceptance (see also Tyson 421).

Postcolonial theory draws its understanding of the construction of the self and the *other* from Freud and, more extensively, Lacan. Jacques Lacan distinguishes between the *Other* and the *other*. The non-capitalized *other* refers to the image in the mirror through which children first gain an understanding of themselves as "separate" (as their own being, separate from the mother), and which forms the basis of the ego and, eventually, the child's identity (Johnston n.p.). This *other* is also object to the subject's mastery (for it merely mirrors the self, the mirror image is under the child's control). In postcolonial theory, the place of this *other* is assigned to the colonized peoples, who gain their identity through their difference from the colonizer (as constructed through colonial discourse). The capitalized *Other* – the *grand-autre* – is the Symbolic Other (often a parent) whose gaze constructs the subject's identity:

> . . . the Other can refer to the mother whose separation from the subject locates her as the first focus of desire; it can refer to the father whose Otherness locates the subject in the Symbolic order; it can refer to the unconscious itself because the unconscious is structured like a language that is separate from the language of the subject. Fundamentally, the Other is crucial to the subject because the subject exists in its gaze. Lacan says that 'all desire is the metonym of the desire to be' because the first desire of the subject is the desire to exist in the gaze of the Other. (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 187)

In this interpretation, the place of the *Other* is represented by the colonizers or – more specifically – colonial discourse, through whose gaze the colonized first construct their identity. As such, "it becomes the 'absolute pole of address,' the ideological framework in which the colonized subject may come to understand the world. In colonial discourse, the subjectivity of the colonized is

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[43] As Stuart Hall has pointed out, this means that the struggle against the *status quo* is always an ideological struggle (see S. Hall, *Hard* 167, also referenced in Teves et al., "Sovereignty" 10).

continually located in the gaze of the imperial Other" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 187).[44] The colonial discourse therefore organizes both "social existence and social reproduction" in colonial relationships (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 50-51). The differentiation of *Other* and *other* is not consistent for postcolonial critics. Some do not distinguish between the two at all, many will capitalize the colonial *other* to emphasize it and visualize it as postcolonial term.

In his seminal *Orientalism*, Edward Said showed explicitly how this construction of the *other* was realized within European discourses of the Orient, establishing Europe's supposed superiority over the *Orient* through the use of binary categories (Said, *Orientalism*). The binary is the most extreme form of difference within discourse, because the two terms offer no overlap in their reference but total exclusion. Drawing on Enlightenment philosophy, the binaries that Said identified were the oppositions of rational/emotional, masculine/feminine, civil/barbaric, educated/infantilized.[45] The rational therefore contains no emotion and the emotional cannot ever be rational. At the same time, these binaries allow supposed knowledge of the *other* (because it is the opposite of the self), and this knowledge (which is of course one-directional, the self knows the *other* but the *other* does not know the *self*) establishes authority and control, posing the *other* as object to the Western subject. As mentioned above, however, this also reveals "the Orient," the *other* as constructed phenomenon, relying on naturalizing stereotypes and assumptions as they fit the binary model, not on proper interest or recognition.[46]

Moreover, since binaries are mechanisms for control, any person or action is immediately categorized as *either* one *or* the other, and divergence is negated or (violently) subdued. This binarism establishes a violent hierarchy on which imperialism is based. Even more, this hierarchy is naturalized, by inscribing both the colonizer and the colonized with "inherent" – and genetically determined – attributes that in case of the colonized, education and environment may "mitigate"

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[44] Frantz Fanon further elaborates on this identity construction through the colonizers' *gaze* and its effect on the colonized subject in *Wretched of the Earth*.

[45] Enlightenment and the high value placed on rational thinking led to a general feeling of superiority of the European society, additionally supported by the advancements in technology and the following military superiority. Knowledge was equated to truth and symbolized by "light," which led to the figure of the European "bearers of light" to the supposedly underdeveloped peoples of the colonies.

[46] One racist stereotype that was constructed as the "Other" of European civilization was the "native savage," the emotional, aggressive and irrational black (or red) body that threatened the peaceful and evolved European colonizer on his endeavor to civilize the rest of the world. The Native Savage was perpetuated within European representations of African tribes, such as in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as well as by the slaves paraded around England for the general entertainment and "education" of the society in the mother country. Rousseau's employment of the "Noble Savage" (see Abella et al., "Noble"), despite its romanticization of "the Native" perpetuates the same binarism and racism inherent in the later theories of Social Darwinism. Even "benevolent racism" and exotism are still forms of racist dehumanization and objectification based on skin color.

but never truly change.[47] Racism was thus one of the core justifications for imperialism and colonialism and the horrific treatment of enslaved peoples and Native inhabitants in occupied territories (for a definition of racism see Section 2.2).

In some colonial contexts, a strict binary of *Black* and *white* was not sufficient to address (and define) local specificities. Depending on the usefulness of the dominant political narrative, the colonizers would establish hierarchies among the people in the colonies that allowed them to elevate one class of people over others. One example would be Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education*, which is a good example because it makes strategic use of racism in order to suggest that due to the minority of British rulers in the country, effective subjugation could only be achieved if a minority of Indian people were educated and established as the ruling class in the colonizers' image. The British were thus a driving force in the construction of the caste system as mandatory and generalized social order in India (see Chakravorty). Similar mechanisms were also employed by Nazi Germany in their coalition with Japan, establishing the racist argument that "the Japanese" were the Aryan race of the Asian continent. Nevertheless, in all of these cases the true "elevation" of the colonized to the level of the colonizer is forever postponed.

As Brathwaite has shown in *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*, the colonizing settlers in foreign territories could – on the other hand – be "contaminated" by their extensive contact with the supposedly inferior races, and "go native." The imperial center would then consider them culturally inferior, though still just a step above the "actual" natives. For settlers in Canada and Australia, for instance, this included the transferal of the presumed enhanced "physical prowess" and "sporting ability" of the Indigenous peoples to the white settlers, while they supposedly "lost" their "cultural and social sophistication" (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 55–56).[48] The example shows a problematic mixture of cultural and physical traits within these ascriptions that was common during the discourse of the time.[49] It is of course not true that the settlers actually

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[47] As Ashcroft et al. write, "the colonialist system permitted a notional idea of improvement for the colonized, via such metaphors as parent/child, tree/branch, etc., which in theory allowed that at some future time the inferior colonials might be raised to the status of the colonizer. But in practice this future was always endlessly deferred." (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 56–57). There is thus no true possibility of "evolvement", but only partial change if at all. The colonialist ideal is the desired goal, always out of reach.

[48] This is, of course, a racist trope. For a historical view on the construction of whiteness in Australia see W. Anderson

[49] During the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, anthropologists had begun to link phenotypical representations such as the circumference of a head to inherent capabilities, such as presumed intelligence. The expression of inherent drives and urges was supposedly observed in the behavior, and this often led to false and deeply racist appraisals of non-European cultures. The line between culture as learned societal behavior and biologically determined differences between different ethnic groups was blurry and frequently crossed, producing highly damaging narratives about "the Natives" that in turn fueled and was fueled by the Exotism movement in Europe at the turn of the century.

took on any physical traits from the Indigenous population, but the new environment and the increased physical labor going into the establishment of settlements on a foreign continent explain the physical changes easily. Furthermore, during the time of nation-building and independence, the need to form a national identity separate from the colonial center became more pressing, strengthening the convenient narrative of taking on "Indigenous traits" as political strategy. This development shows that even though binary systems of exclusion lie at the core of colonialism, they are discursive constructions that can seldom be sustained in the colony and that rarely survive the so-called colonial *contact zone*. As mentioned above, different colonial contact zones, i.e., territorial or temporal spaces, lead to different colonial experiences. Any contact, however, leads to cultural exchange, both intended and accidental. Postcolonial theory also calls these areas of contact and exchange *interstitial spaces* that often give rise to cultural *hybrid* forms.[50] Both the notion of the interstitial space and the concept of *hybridity* go back to postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha, and I will return to his work shortly.

Drawing on Said's and later Bhabha's use of the term *other*, Gayatri Spivak coined the term *othering* to specifically describe the dialectical process of how colonial discourse creates the *other*.[51] It is dialectical because the subjected and colonized *other* cannot be constructed without also constructing the subjecting and colonizing *Other*: "Europe ha[d] consolidated itself as sovereign subject by defining its colonies as 'Other,'[52] even as it constituted them, for purposes of administration and the expansion of markets, into programmed near-images of that very sovereign self" (Spivak, "Rani of Sirmur" 247). As such, the identity of the colonizer is dependent on the difference of the colonized other: the "Subject with a capital S" is inscribed by the colonized other as "the consolidating subjected subject in the lower case" (Spivak, "Rani of Sirmur" 254). Postcolonial theory also often refers to this *other* by the term of *alterity*. *Alterity* describes a state of difference and otherness and is used within postcolonial studies not the least to further distinguish the discussion in colonial discourse theory from philosophical theories on otherness as an epistemic problem. The epistemic consideration of the *other* is concerned with questions about how the *other* can be known when consciousness is bound to the individual consciousness, whereas

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[50] As I will explain below, Bhabha's theory applies to *cultural* forms of hybridity, never to *genetic* hybridity.

[51] "Dialectical" has been defined differently throughout history. For Plato, it was mainly the process of arriving at a known truth through dialogue and arguments brought forward by different sides. For Hegel, dialectics describes the process in which two seemingly opposing terms (such as colonizer and colonized) determine each other's meaning (Maybee). The colonizer is defined by those who are colonized and the other way around, and in their dialectical reference to each other, they open up another space of meaning, the "synthesis" through which the two terms can be better understood.

[52] Spivak's work is an example for inconsistent capitalization of the "Other" in the sense that she is not following Lacan's spelling. She here refers to the colonized as Other, not other.

the *other* or the *alterity* in postcolonial studies is culturally, materially, religiously, and politically located and constructed (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 12–13).

Edward Said has identified that literature played a fundamental role during the process of maintaining colonial control. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said especially points towards the nineteenth-century novel as important tool to dominate the discourse on the *other* (*Culture* 85).[53] Following modernization theory's expectations that all cultures will eventually "evolve" through the same stages, the written word and the novel as the supposed pinnacle of literary and societal expression were seen as far more sophisticated than oral or performative storytelling. This also included a devaluation of Indigenous carvings – such as the cave paintings in central Australia or the extravagant wooden carvings of Māori marae –, traditional weaving, and other forms of visual art that did not follow explicit Western standards. Since Indigenous carvings often held the peoples' histories, the privileging of the Western written word also allowed to further perpetuate the myth that the colonized Indigenous peoples had no histories and thus no civilization prior to occupation.[54]

The privilege of the written word continued through colonial "patronage systems" in which the "acquisition of literacy was seen as the mark of civilization, and being raised to a 'civilized' state was a concomitant of, if not an absolutely necessary precondition for, salvation" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 53). This included – in some colonies – the establishment of "newspapers, journals and various kinds of fiction . . . to encourage the development of a class of colonials willing to participate in colonial modes of social and artistic production" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 53). The patronage system was less common in settler states where the white settlers quickly became the majority, and the extinction of the Indigenous population was a goal of government policy. But nevertheless, patronage systems continue to influence literary and artistic production in the former colonies even today, (see Lefevere; G. Griffiths, also quoted in Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 53) through publishing houses' conventions of "literary merit" and biased standards of what is considered to be "good literature" that determine whether an Indigenous work is being published or not. Indigenous publishing houses have since worked to address this imbalance, with examples

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[53] A popular trend in postcolonial theory was the analysis of novels with regard to their function as "national allegory," a term introduced by Fredric Jameson in his essay "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" and in which he proclaims the clear connection between the story and development of the individual (usually the protagonist) and the (historical and political) development of the postcolonial nation. While some novels certainly gave ample material for such an analysis (such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* as illustrated by Jan Alber, but also Claire Coleman's *Terra Nullius*), the approach in general has received much criticism for its reductionism (see Ahmad, "Jameson").

[54] For a discussion on exoticism and primitivism see Section 2.3. For the relationship of Indigenous storytelling, myth and history see McGrath and Rademaker 4.

such as Magabala Press in Australia and Huia Publishers in New Zealand. Their reach remains regional, however, and access to a broader readership is usually only facilitated through the acceptance into First Nations series such as that by the University of Queensland Press.

The production of the *colonized subject* is destined to fail. Heavily pervaded by racism, the education of the *Indigenous* or *Native subject* in the mirror image of the colonizing subject can never be fully achieved. This holds especially true for Indigenous peoples who are always defined as already extinct (see Section 2.3). For as long as the presumed "lack of civilization" and the imperial binaries are thought to be inherent properties, education can only be seen as mitigating but not fundamentally changing these properties. It follows, then, that the colonized subject can never fully achieve the consciousness of the colonizer, not least because their body will always remain marked as *colonized*, and this will in turn influence how they perceive and experience their location in colonial society. Postcolonial theory here often speaks of the *double consciousness* of the colonized subject (see Section 2.1 for W.E.B. DuBois' definition of the Black double consciousness).

Instead of compliant and docile colonial subjects that *mimic* the colonizer in their reproduction of habits and values, the colonial education and ideology produce an ambivalent subject whose *mimicry* becomes a form of mockery:

> Ambivalence describes this fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery, an ambivalence that is fundamentally unsettling to colonial dominance. In this respect, it is not necessarily disempowering for the colonial subject, but rather can be seen to be ambivalent or 'two-powered'. The effect of this ambivalence (the simultaneous attraction and repulsion) is to produce a profound disturbance of the authority of colonial discourse. (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 13)

Therefore, there is a certain power to mimicry wherever it threatens to expose the colonizer through parody. Mimicry may locate "a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 155). In addition to the potential of mockery and parody, perfect mimicry would threaten the "absolute difference" between colonizer and colonized, white Europeans and others, civilized and barbaric, on which the legitimization of empire depends. This also explains why mimicry may often cause a deep feeling of discomfort for the colonizing subject. Colonial discourse will therefore always be ambivalent and inherently holds the potential for its own destruction. This does not mean, as Ashcroft et al. point out, that the colonial relationship *will* necessarily be disrupted, "regardless of any resistance or rebellion on the part of the colonized" (*Keywords* 14), but it does mean that additional energy needs to be directed towards maintaining this difference the more the educational goal of mimicry succeeds. Within cultural and political discourse in the post-colony, other

categorizations may then come into play, in contemporary debates often as placeholders for racial ascriptions (see Section 2.2).

Within postcolonial studies, Homi Bhabha has thus coined the term *hybridity* to describe how the relationship between colonizer and colonized is interdependent with regard to "the mutual construction of their subjectivities" (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 136). Bhabha reflects on the liminal space where any two cultures interact, because this is where "the problem of cultural interaction emerges, . . . where meanings and values are (mis)read or signs are misappropriated" (*Location* 34). He has also termed this space of interaction the *contact zone* or the *Third Space* where additional meanings of cultural identity are produced. For "cultures are never unitary in themselves" (*Location* 35-36) but can only be expressed in differentiation to others. Bhabha here refers to Derrida's *différance*, which means that merging is always deferred.

The supposed unity of material and ideological properties of a culture is a myth because cultures always resist comprehensive definition. The attempt to authorize the "subject of cultural knowledge" through "synchronicity and evolution" (Bhabha *Location* 36) invariably fails under closer inspection, because as in subject construction, the construction of cultural identity means splitting the cultural Self from the Other, establishing relational meaning. In the Third Space, this identity is then enunciated but the enunciation means different things to different individuals – shaped as they are by their own culture and social location (see the section on identity construction and ideology above) – they remain inherently ambivalent. There is no "historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People" (Bhabha, *Location* 37) in the same sense that Benedict Anderson reveals the Western nation as nothing but a figment of the imagination: "It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable" (Bhabha, *Location* 37).

This *Third Space,* in its enunciation of culture, then also gives rise to the hybridity of any culture. For Bhabha, all cultures are essentially hybrid, but never more so than when they come into contact in the Third Space. He sees no hierarchy in this hybridity because there is no purity to begin with, and at the same time he does not negate the hierarchy in the power relations within colonial Third Spaces, allowing for an analysis of how cultural influence affected both the colonizers and the colonized along these lines of power.

However, the concept of *hybridity* has been extensively criticized because despite Bhabha's acknowledgement of the imbalance of the power relations, it strongly accentuates the "transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts," thus more easily lending itself to a

replication of "assimilationist policies by masking or 'whitewashing' cultural differences" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 136). This critique is further bolstered by the tendency within postcolonial critique to use the term *hybridity* interchangeably with transculturality. As Ashcroft et al. point out, however, there is

> nothing in the idea of hybridity as such that suggests that mutuality negates the hierarchical nature of the imperial process or that it involves the idea of an equal exchange. This is, however, the way in which some proponents of decolonization and anti-colonialism have interpreted its current usage in colonial discourse theory. (*Keywords* 137)

Postcolonial scholars such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Aijaz Ahmad have criticized this concept and colonial discourse theory in general for its neglect of specific localities and differences in colonial experiences. Aijaz Ahmad criticizes that in "India, for example, it is very difficult to treat the social and cultural consequences of colonialism as discrete and *sui generis*; in histories of gender and caste and class, the precolonial and the colonial – and now, some half a century later, the postcolonial – are too deeply intertwined for that sort of treatment" (Ahmad, "Politics" 7). The experiences of colonization in Iran and Egypt, he elaborates, were disparate, because the territories were colonized to a different extent.

Chandra Mohanty argues in a similar vein against the "uncritical use of particular methodologies in providing 'proof' of universality and cross-cultural validity" (which the concept of *hybridity* as analytical tool does presuppose). It leads to an unjust and in itself subjugating homogenization of the cultural *other*, producing when applied to feminist writing "the average third world woman," which is "an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender" and her position in the *third world*[55] (Mohanty, "Under" 337). This leads to a homogenization of identities and experiences that are in truth remarkably diverse. Both Mohanty and Ahmad argue against the tendency of postcolonial criticism to define a "shared postcolonial condition" through the de-historicization and de-localization of "cultures from their temporal, spatial, geographical and

[55] Lois Tyson names the usage of the terms first, second, third and fourth world as clear examples of Eurocentric language, because it "privileges European military conquest as the primary means of organizing world history" (Tyson 420). Postcolonial studies have long defined the first world as the Western industrialized nations, meaning Europe and the United States, the second world as the former white colonies that have since reached independence, meaning Australia, Canada, New Zealand. Some definitions also include South Africa, other definitions divide first and second world for the named countries along the lines of the market system (capitalist white nation states for the first world, communist (white) nation states – mainly the countries of the former Soviet Union – for the second world). All conceptions generally agree, however, that third world refers to former non-white colonies not yet fully industrialized, broadly clustering most countries in Africa, South and Middle America, and Sout-East Asia into one category. The fourth world then generally refers to non-white Indigenous peoples in white settler states. Despite its clear Eurocentric perspective, one might argue that the categorization is also incredibly outdated with regard to the technological developments in countries such as India and China over the last two decades.

linguistic contexts," which leads to "an abstract, globalized concept of the textual that obscures the specificities of particular cultural situations" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 137).

In turn, colonial violence becomes less specific, less tangible, and is pushed into the background, and, I would argue, its goal of erasing the culture of the colonized is partially repeated, when the perspective of the critic is broadened to such a degree: "texts from a variety of cultures are lumped together under the aegis of a unitary theory that while proclaiming commitment to difference and radical alterity, tends to obsessively insist on similarities among societies, and literatures as product of those societies" (Bungaro 98). Histories, particularity, and subjectivity are pushed aside in favor of a generalized view. The overly generalized view, at the same time, overwrites the particular, partially repeating the colonial violence of erasing local cultures and histories. In the words of Tabish Khair, postcolonialism "is highly selective in its memory: . . . it privileges the colonial moment above other moments that have also gone into the formation of contemporary poetries/literatures in Asia, Africa and South America" (261).

What remains important to note throughout the discussion of hybridity and transculturality, at this point, is that Bhabha's concept of *hybridity* refers to *culture*, to learned social practice and community, not to an individual's inherent genetic make-up. However, as further critique of the term *hybridity* points out, its original use stems from horticulture and describes a form of "cross-pollination" between different species. This has made it especially easy, as Robert Young points out, to appropriate the term for a racist discourse of colonialism (*Colonial*). Especially around the turn between the nineteenth and twentieth century, *hybridity* was used for the interlacing of disparate races instead of different (sub)cultural discourses. Conceptions of cultural differences became place holders for racist ideas of intrinsic characteristics connected to phenotypical ascriptions (following Couvier, see above).[56] The racist idea of a "master race" whose blood had been diluted by "interbreeding" with "lesser" races goes back to Arthur de Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Races*, but originally referred to class-distinction, not social constructions according to skin color.

Nonetheless, this adds additional weight to the connections between conceptions of race and conceptions of class. In the same vein, the term *hybrid* has been used within racist colonial discourse to refer to persons of "mixed" descent. Robert Young points back to Foucault's analysis of how "blood functions in a traditional society, based on systems of filiation and dynastic alliance" and where blood thus becomes a symbol for power (Young, "Foucault" 11–12, drawing on Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*). The dilution of powerful blood with what is considered

[56] For further discussion of the connection between cultural essentialism and racism, see chapter 2.2.

"inferior blood," in this logic, then leads to a dilution of power. This in turn influences social position within colonial society. Australia, as many of the white British settler states, long held on to racist policies that were and continue to be directed at regulating, assimilating, and extinguishing Indigenous "bloodlines." I will further extend the discussion of these highly problematic, deeply racist associations and the resulting policies and their impact on Indigenous communities in Australia today in Section 2.3.

Andrea Smith points out that there is also a certain problem with viewing hybridity through the lens of cultural contact and intermixture beyond the critique that this pushes the forces and violence of colonialism to the background. More effectively, it does not move beyond the question of "how individuals feel subjectively included or excluded within the category of Native and instead consider how the category of Native itself is constructed through the logics of settler colonialism" (Andrea Smith, "Mixed" 227).

Bhabha looks at the interconnectedness and discursive interdependence of two categories (the settler and the Native) that are at heart both clearly European concepts.[57] What is more, Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that the concept of *hybridity* overlooks "the particular situatedness of different migrants in relation to power and the legal context in which their hybridity has been and is manufactured" (*Possessive* 9). She means that ideas of "home, place, and belonging" are socially constructed and depend on more than ethnicity and an (imagined) homeland. Instead, they are always "conditional upon a legal and social status as well as the economic and political relations in the new country and its imperial legacy" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 9). *Cultural hybridity* will mean quite different things for a white European immigrating to Australia than a refugee arriving from Myanmar.[58]

As such, blood quantum is a post-Enlightenment European construct, perpetuating a racialized correlation between ascriptions of intelligence, skills, character and race: "blood-quantum laws were deployed to racialize Native peoples, replacing Native senses of belonging and kinship" and many "Native studies scholars agree that the imposition of blood quantum functioned to support the systematic removal of Native people from their lands" (Teves et al., "Blood" 200). It was employed with the specific goal to control and subjugate Indigenous peoples and to interrupt their connection to the land that stood in direct contrast to the ownership desire of the white settlers. As such, blood quantum policies continue, e.g., in the United States today to regulate the status of

[57] For a critique of both terms and their usage within Indigenous criticism, see Section 2.3.

[58] Even the modes of arrival in Australia (either by plane or by boat) determine their legal status and will affect, e.g., whether or not they will be detained. For further information see for example the websites of the Refugee Council of Australia.

Native American. Indigenous scholars have argued that the policy continues as a form of slow violence, continually geared towards an eradication of Native American communities through "dilution of blood," thus slowly reducing the number of people who may lay claim to the land of Native American reservations in the United States (see Section 2.3).

At this point, we must differentiate between two different concepts of *hybridity*. For one, the unconscious processes leading to hybrid forms such as the development of creole [59] in the Caribbean colonies that is, in itself, not politicized *a priori*. Second, the very conscious process of hybridization is regulated by the abovementioned policies. This is the clearly racist context in which *hybrid* has been used profusely and for which the term has been extensively criticized. Bhabha, in Young's reading, however, draws on Bakhtin's concept of the *intentional hybrid* as the location of a politicized polyphony of perspectives: "Bakhtin's intentional hybrid has been transformed by Bhabha into an active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant colonial power" (Young, *Colonial* 23). It thus allows the hybrid individual to displace space, thereby depriving "the imposed imperialist culture not only of the authority that it has for so long imposed politically, often through violence, but even of its own claims to authenticity. In its attempt to be imposed or to be imitated, colonial culture actually raises the question about its own origins and its own authenticity" (Bhabha, "Postcolonial" 247–48). Young also cautions, however, that through the constant repetition of the concept of *hybridity* and due to the strength and longevity of its highly racialized context, we will continually echo its racist meanings (*Colonial* 26–27). I concur with this argument, and this dissertation will therefore only use the term *hybridity* if referring to Bhabha's concept of cultural non-hierarchical *hybridity* in the *contact zone*, and I will put it in italics to visually signal that I am fully aware of its problematic usage. Whenever possible, I will use different concepts, such as *liminality* or *interstitial spaces* to focus on the point of contact between cultures (or the different imaginations of cultural identities).

At this point, I will return to the abovementioned concept of *mimicry* as defined by Bhabha and focus more pointedly on possible processes of resistance to the colonial rule. In their seminal 1989 work *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin argue that the commonality between postcolonial literatures "beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics" and the characteristic that makes them "distinctly postcolonial" is their emergence "out of the experience of colonization . . . by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by

[59] The English "creole" derives from Portuguese "Criolulu", translating as "native", by route of the French term "créole", translating as Indigenous, and originally referred to white (men) of European descent, who had been born in a tropical colony. Later on, "creole" also included Indigenous peoples from those colonies and others of non-European descent and was then extended to also include the languages spoken by Creoles in and around the Caribbean (see Romaine).

emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (Ashcroft et al. *Empire* 2). The imperial center, in the case of Anglophone postcolonial texts, is, of course, England and, more specifically, the London metropole (less so Great Britain due to the history of invasion in Wales, Scotland and Ireland and the still contested cultural differences and national affiliations). And any colony is – in this model – placed in the periphery. This assumption has rightfully been criticized as it continues to portray a Eurocentric perspective. As Ashcroft et al. have also pointed out, however, the *writing back* employed by postcolonial writers (through different modes such as, e.g., parody or allegory) ultimately serves to de-center the British position of power, going so far as to re-center the post-colony at the periphery (*Empire*). The usage of the binary *periphery* and *center*, like all binary categories on which the ideology of colonization ultimately rests, thus bears the risks of unconsciously replicating colonial power structures. So, while Ashcroft et al. employed the terms to uncover the underlying hierarchies, I will only refer to the periphery-center binary when I additionally reference the empire's own Eurocentric perspective. The periphery-center binary is not an objective locator for the physical or ideological position of Empire and (post-)colony, but an evaluative positioning through the perspective of colonial ideology.[60]

One of the strategies for *writing back* identified by postcolonial theory is that of appropriation. Contrary to, e.g., the appropriation of Indigenous designs and customs for commercial profit by Western industries, postcolonial theory focuses on the appropriation of dominant colonial texts and practices by colonized peoples to give expression to their experiences. Choosing the colonial language and text (forms) then allows these artists a vaster possible audience than, e.g., texts written in Indigenous languages of the area (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 19). As such, writers and artists make use of the existing colonial structures for their own purposes. The novel *Dancing Home* by Paul Collis (Barkindji) could be interpreted as one such example, because it makes use of the structure of the Greek tragedy for his plot development. My analysis will show, however, that the terms *appropriation* or *writing back* are insufficient to describe his narrative because they continue to *center* Western culture.

This form of appropriation has led to intense discussions on the use of the English language in postcolonial texts. While Ashcroft et al. in *The Empire Writes Back* still distinguish between *English* as the applied standard British English and *english* as the dialects, variants or creole languages as often used in the colonies (Ashcroft et al., *Empire* 8), more contemporary work avoids such a differentiating approach that inadvertently reproduces the colonial hierarchy as implied in the periphery-center binary. The attitude regarding English as publication language differs

[60] For the critique of the concept of *writing back* from a viewpoint of Indigenous studies, see Section 2.3.

between writers. Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, for example, has written extensively in English and sees the use of the English language as an opportunity "to challenge Europe's presence and position in their native land with the intellectual weapons of Europe itself" (5). He famously states: "And let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in English for we intend to do unheard of things with it" (*Morning* 7). Drawing on James Baldwin, he states that the English language properly employed may "be able to carry the weight of [his] African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (Achebe, *Morning* 62).[61]

Kenian author and critic Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, by contrast, has staunchly refused to write in English, instead writing in his native Kikuyu. Thiong'o has argued in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* that the acquisition of English in his home country is a matter of elite education in the first place, and that thus writing in English only reaches a wider audience in the society of the former colonists, whereas his native tongue makes his work more accessible for the people most affected by the colonial experience, with a greater possibility of bridging class lines. Thiong'o further argues that in order to decolonize the people from the continuing effects of the colonial rule, the internalization and the true vastness of colonial ideology, institutions and structures need to become known and then actively countered. [62] For the process of countering British ideology and education, especially, the return to or revival of native languages and cultures is paramount. Culture, language and thought are intricately intertwined, which is why for Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o decolonization starts with language (Thiong'o, *Decolonising*).

Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o choose to write in different languages, with contesting views on the usage of the English colonial language, but they both clearly position themselves as anti-colonial writers:

> Anti-colonialism signifies the point at which the various forms of opposition become articulated as a resistance to the operations of colonialism in political, economic and cultural institutions. It emphasizes the need to reject colonial power and restore local control. Paradoxically, anti-colonialist movements often expressed themselves in the appropriation and subversion of forms borrowed from the institutions of the colonizer and turned back on them. Thus the struggle was often articulated in terms of a discourse of anti-colonial 'nationalism' in which the form of the modern European nation-state was taken over and employed as a sign of resistance (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 15)

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[61] For Achebe, "most African writers [but not all] write out of an African experience" (Achebe, *Hopes* 74).

[62] "Decolonization" in this sense and throughout the dissertation does not simply refer to the removal of imperial military and administrative forces in the colony but is considered a process – sometimes with a specific end-goal, sometimes open-ended – that works to counter the long-lasting effects of the colonization and especially colonial ideology and hegemony on the people in the (former) colony.

For me, this definition by Ashcroft et al. places too much emphasis on the appropriation of colonial structures and practices. As mentioned above, this was of course *one* valid path of resistance. However, I strongly concur with Stephen Howe, who argues that while this perspective sees "mimicry, or 'sly civility' . . . as subversive of the colonial project" it also presupposes that the colonized "mounted their resistance entirely on ground previously defined by colonial culture itself" (163). He further argues that this

> . . . failed to register the possibility—indeed the massively documented reality from a vast range of colonial situations—that the colonized had retained and adapted their own fairly autonomous discursive agendas, not necessarily either copying or overtly resisting, but synthesizing the old and the new, the indigenous and the imported. (Howe 163)[63]

These "synthesized" texts thus took a wide variety of forms. The ones accessible to English language readers (and still in large parts biased in their production through the demands of publishing houses), for example, often merged Indigenous mythology with British novelist styles – giving rise to what Jacques Stephen Alexis termed magical realism[64] – but also led to a revival of Indigenous oral storytelling. Orality may be visible both in the language style employed by, e.g., characters and narrators/focalizers within the stories, but also in the change of plot lines, such as the circular storytelling in Patricia Grace's (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa, Te Āti Awa) novel *Potiki*.[65] These texts strongly resist the Western classical anthropological claim that orality belongs to the conceptual field of *tradition*, ever unchanging and "less than" the supposedly modern written form and Western logo-centrism. Oral forms in African societies "have a continuing and equal relationship with the written" (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 184), a statement that holds true for other Indigenous societies as well, as will be shown in the textual analysis in Chapter 4.

The resistance to hegemonic colonial culture also took place through the resistance to English literary texts. As Gauri Viswanathan points out, "the humanistic functions traditionally associated with the study of literature – for example, the shaping of character or the development

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[63] This statement also follows the more recent practice by avoiding the term "hybridity" and using the less loaded term "synthesizing" instead.

[64] Jacques Stephen Alexis first coined the term "magical realism" in his 1956 Essay "Of the Magical Realism of the Haitians" and has since gained a distinctive history in Latin American criticism. Magical realism, according to Alexis, describes the inclusion of local magical, legendary and mythical traditions into the literary works of writers in postcolonial societies. In his understanding, magical realism is tightly entwined with the expression of local identities. Later uses of the term have been less specific in order to describe any contemporary narrative that contained mythic or legendary material from local traditions, and this in turn has caused criticism of its usage as another form of "othering" non-Western literature. For a more detailed view of the history and usage of the term see Zamora and Faris. Examples for narratives in the tradition of magical realism would be Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1984) or Sam Watson's *The Kadaitcha Sung* (1990).

[65] For an elaborate discussion of the circular storytelling in *Potiki* see Knudsen's seminal *The Circle and the Spiral*.

of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking – can be vital in the process of sociopolitical control" (2). In this sense, "the English literary text functioned as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state", embodying what were considered universal human values, and allowing British colonial administrators to use the texts as hegemonic control "under the guise of a liberal education" (Viswanathan 23, 17). English literary texts presented the ideal human being which everybody must aspire to become, but moreover, beyond the material of the text, the discursive modes of discussion were imbued into "the native pupil." Literary texts thus offered both material and discursive strategies for hegemonic control.

Thus, another objective that developed out of the call for resistance against colonial hegemony was for the decolonization of the canon. This call then must go further than the mere replacement of "classic" English literary texts with texts from the colonies.

> This would be radically to simplify what is implicit in the idea of canonicity itself. A canon is not a body of texts *per se,* but rather a set of reading practices (the enactment of innumerable individual and community assumptions, for example about genre, about literature, and even about writing). These reading practices, in their turn, are resident in institutional structures, such as education curricula and publishing networks. (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 189)

Along with a change of textual content, any decolonization would therefore also include a change in methodology and patterns of thought. It goes beyond what Gayatri Spivak termed *catachresis*, i.e., "the process by which the colonized take and reinscribe something that exists traditionally as a feature of imperial culture, such as parliamentary democracy" and make it their own. An example for "empowering catachresis" would be "the application of the term 'nation' to a social group in existence before colonization, such as the 'Zulu nation,' the 'Aboriginal nation,' the 'Sioux nation'" (Ashcroft et al. *Keywords* 41). The application of an English term or concept in this sense would still be considered an act of hegemonical resistance. Decolonization, however, would go even further and question the concept of *nation* in and of itself. A decolonizing – not just resisting or anticolonial – approach would investigate if and how Indigenous concepts of community may still be both applicable and purposeful today.[66]

Theories of decolonization to a large degree originate in anticolonial work, most notably that of Martiniquan psychiatrist Frantz Fanon.[67] Fanon was actively involved in the Algerian

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[66] This does not mean that what we would term *traditional* concepts would need to be applied to today's context in an unchanged form. But it would mean an investigation of original culture and language and a development of these cultural concepts within Indigenous methodologies to adapt them to the current political and social situation. How the word "nation" ties in with Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty will be explored in Section 2.3 on critical Indigenous studies, as will Indigenous methodology and the connection between authenticity and tradition.

[67] The terms de-colonial and anti-colonial are not interchangeable. The first usually describes a continuing process through which colonized subjects seek to work through the trauma and effects of colonialism to develop a sovereign

liberation movement and observed anticolonial movements in Northern Africa through the lens of Freud's psychoanalysis. Fanon surmised that there was first a need to develop a radical native *intelligentsia* to both instigate and lead a revolution. Neither the *comprador class* nor what (after nominal independence) he termed the neo-colonialist *élite* could be relied upon to bring legitimate change to the colony, because they were both educated as Bhabha's *colonized subject*, indoctrinated with the colonial ideology. Decolonization encompasses a complete eradication of colonial structures and power, including cultural and institutional influences on the communities. Anti-colonial theorists such as the Trinidadian Cyril Lionel Robert James (most notably *The Life of Captain Cipriani*) and the Cape Verdean activist Amilcar Cabral (founder of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) saw Indigenous (African) cultures as the key to decolonization, following a nativist approach by romanticizing and idealizing pre-colonial culture.[68] Fanon, on the other hand, took a more critical stance, fully aware that, for one, pre-colonial societies were neither faultless nor homogenous, and, for another, knowledge about pre-colonial society would invariably be implicated by colonial European knowledge (see Section 2.3, for the African context see as well Mudimbe, *Idea;* Mudimbe, *Invention*).

Decades if not centuries of European colonization and targeted cultural erasure have long since infiltrated all remaining accounts and historical sources about pre-contact Indigenous societies. Colonial archives are, in many cases, the only access to written sources from the time of first colonial contacts, and then heavily biased through the perspective of the white European gaze. Oral sources in the form of stories, songs, and tradition may often have been influenced by decades of European oppression and even if they can be reconstructed in any "original" form, are invariably understood und interpreted with the experiences of the subject under colonial rule or born post-independence but generally educated within the European knowledge system. Any concept of a "pure" pre-colonial culture is thus highly problematic and artificially constructed. It goes beyond the idea of a cultural revival – a successful example for this would, e.g., be the Te Reo Māori language revival in New Zealand – and moves into the context of cultural essentialism. Cultural essentialism, in turn, falls all too easily into the conceptual trap of needing to be distinctly "not European," causing a different kind of dependency on the colonial power and knowledge system.

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and self-reliant community. Anti-colonial work, on the other hand, predates decolonization efforts and focuses on the resistance to colonial presence and (military) power and usually ends with the expulsion of the colonizer's military and administrative personnel from the territory. The term "decolonization" continues to be redefined, especially in the aftermath of the #BlackLivesMatter-Movement and differs between critical approaches, such as critical race theory and Indigenous studies, but also in its application by different theorists. A more in-depth discussion will follow in Section 2.3 on critical Indigenous studies.

[68] See Amilcar Cabral (*Revolution*) and Amílcar Cabral (*Return*).

It can also, however, be strategically employed in order to reach certain political goals. I will further elaborate on this point in Section 2.3, where I will draw the connections between and implications of employing cultural essentialism, concepts of *authenticity* and *sovereignty* for land claims within the settler legal system.

Postcolonial theory has been criticized as highly Eurocentric itself, mainly because many of its own critics were and continue to be educated in the Western academy and belong to national elites, which has led to increased attention to subaltern studies in South Asia. Originally introduced by Antonio Gramsci, the term *subaltern* refers to non-hegemonic groups within a nation or society. Gramsci especially refers to the peasants in southern Italy, who, at the time, "were thought to lack a social and political consciousness of themselves as a class" (Rao 277). Ranajit Guha was the most prominent scholar of subaltern studies in South Asia, who broadened the definition of *subaltern* to the "general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (vii). In his seminal *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty turned toward European universalist assumptions about modernity, democracy and Marxist political thought and analyzed their shortcomings with respect to the Indian national context. Highly influential on the Indian nationalist movement in the second part of the twentieth century, to the point that they were "haunt[ing] debates on modernity in India" (xiv), Chakrabarty traces European critical thought back to its own localized traditions, arguing that instead of true universals they are just as dependent on historical and local context, just as particular, as epistemologies from different parts of the world:

> Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history. (4)

In turn, this means that no country "is a model to another country," despite what all the models of "catching up" in terms of industrial development may suggest: "There is nothing like 'the cunning of reason' to ensure that we all converge at the same terminal point in history in spite of our apparent, historical differences. Our historical differences actually make a difference" (Chakrabarty xii). Chakrabarty thus made a strong claim for subaltern studies to further question European premises and to develop their own alternative – equally localized, non-universalist – concepts and theories.

Criticism of subaltern studies soon followed, however, because leading scholars of the field were just as much part of the elite and academically educated as postcolonial critics in general, which led – despite an increased attention to subaltern groups – to them *speaking for* the voiceless instead of giving them their own voices. Spivak points out this problem in her much-quoted article

"Can the Subaltern Speak?", questioning the role of the intellectual with regard to subaltern agency and representation (for further context see also Rao 277–280). Spivak herself criticizes the tendency of subaltern studies to posit *subaltern* as a homogenous mass that encompasses everyone who is *not the elite*, and in this fails to pay attention to the actual heterogenous composition. Instead of negating that subaltern groups may speak or develop a voice, she instead strives towards a more diversified approach that pays attention to how discourse shaped the construction of *subaltern* to begin with.

In a similar vein to subaltern critique that postcolonial studies inadequately considers and makes space for the voices of lower classes within the colonial and post-independence society, feminist criticism has pointed out a lack of engagement with the patriarchal structure of the British Empire and colonization. Holst-Petersen and Rutherford coined the term *double colonization* in their 1986 study of women's writing in colonial and postcolonial contexts. They argue that women in the colony are subjugated by both colonial and patriarchal structures, thus *doubly colonized* (see also Tyson). The two can, however, not be equated. Any analysis of colonial and patriarchal structures of subjugation must recognize that patriarchal structures affect white women and women of color differently.[69] An example of this would be the general symbolization of the white woman settler as the "womb" of the Empire, necessary for procreation and child-raising, in direct contrast to the hypersexualized Black female body that is always accessible to the white male colonizer but not desirable for procreation.[70] Both white and Black/Indigenous women were subjugated under patriarchal colonial rule, but the effect on their lives and the consequences for both their physical safety, societal acceptance and recourse in case of violations are vastly different.

Alliances across racial lines that erase these differences in favor of a shared fight against patriarchal suppression have been refused by a number of Black and Indigenous feminist critics, most notably by Hazel Carby in *White Woman Listen!*, but also specifically for the Australian context by Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson in *Talking up to the White Woman*.[71] Moreton-Robinson argues that the very presence of patriarchy within Indigenous Australian communities today was established through colonial rule, and is thus an import, not an inherent characteristic of Australian Indigenous society. In the erasure of the differences in lived experience

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[69] Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw has coined the term "intersectionality" to describe how different categories of discrimination such as race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability and class intersect and thus differently affect individuals to whom they are ascribed (see Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing").

[70] The metaphor "womb of the Empire" stems from Whitlock, for the history on how the black female body was represented in European art and literature see Sander L. Gilman. The "hypersexual black female body" will be explained in Sections 2.2 and 2.3.

[71] See Mohanty ("Under"), Suleri, and also Barrios de Chungara.

between white women (who still hold racial privilege) and Indigenous women and women of color lies the danger of neo-colonialist structures in which white (middle-class) women (who have also widely profited from racism) pursue their own goals by declaring their needs as universal to all women, thus appropriating and subjugating their supposed sisters' voices and needs. I will further elaborate this critique in Section 2.2. In my opinion, what remains most important to postcolonial studies, however, is the general need to remain wary of universals and to take into account that any analysis of colonial oppression must consider how it may have operated along gender lines/categories.[72]

While much has been published under the heading of postcolonial studies since the 1990s, little has been done in terms of working on a comprehensive development of the field. Articles and book-length publications have been highly specified in their topics, often avoiding or circumventing the usage of the discipline's key terms that had come under such intense critique. Since the early 2000s, this has led scholars such as Mishra and B. Hodge to repeatedly speak about the "death of postcolonial studies," further influenced by the general air of the "post-ideological time"[73] after the demise of the Soviet Union (see also Loomba et al. and Dirlik). In his 2011 *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, Neil Lazarus suggests that postcolonial studies have regrettably lost the vocabulary of revolutions that energized anti-colonial activism as exemplified by Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. David Scott has proclaimed that it is a "time of postcolonial crisis in which old horizons have collapsed or evaporated and new ones have not yet taken shape" (168).[74]

At the same time, scholars within the discipline have continued to publish extensively, with issues of anti-Muslim racism and the United States military response to 9/11 being major foci. Another have been the migration movements towards the European Union and a critical investigation of EU political and societal responses.[75] In *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of Indigenous Relations*, Kevin Bruyneel engages postcolonial theory, and especially Homi Bhabha's concept of the *Third Space*, to describe American sovereignty as residing neither "inside nor outside" the nation's political system, but on its borderline, offering a place from which to reveal the conditions and practices of colonial rule (xi–xxiv). The key

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[72] See also Spivak, "Rani of Sirmur"; Spivak, "Subaltern"; Spivak, "Three Women's Texts".

[73] The concept of "post-ideological time" caught the general feeling of having entered or progressed beyond the grand ideological political narratives of the twentieth century. I would argue, instead, that we have simply moved to a different state of political ideology, or even multiple parallel "bubbles" of political ideologies.

[74] Scott here imagines that in Hayden White's sense of hi*story*, the literary form of the Tragedy best corresponds to this status, whereas he supposes that a Romance would have best described the narrative of the anticolonial struggle.

[75] See, for example, the essays in the 2017 edited volume *The Postcolonial World* by Kim and Singh and the 2013 edited volume *Postcolonial Theory in the Global Age* by O. P. Dwivedi and Kich.

concepts and theoretical findings of postcolonial theory thus continue to be engaged in contemporary studies of political relations both in settler-nation states, in former colonies and with regard to neo-colonial relations in a globalized world.

Patrick Williams has lauded postcolonial studies for its ability to develop "new discourses of resistance" (88) and Janet Wilson et al. go so far as to claim that the postcolonial studies of the early 2000s has readjusted its focus to address the "neocolonial imbalances" that are part and parcel of globalization ("General" 1, see also T. Brennan, "Globalization"). Graham Huggan, on the other hand, has reminded and cautioned postcolonial scholars that "the incessant proclamation of the 'new', a sure sign of the intellectual branding prevalent under late capitalism, is part of a commodifying process [that postcolonial studies] explicitly contests" ("General" 4–5).[76] The discipline has received renewed attention with the recent upwind of the civil rights movements across the world (especially the #BlackLivesMatter movement). Calls for the decolonization of English departments and university curricula have also led to an increased interest in postcolonial studies.

Within area studies, African studies and Oceania/Pacific studies have strengthened their own field of research, as have Indigenous and Native studies in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. While there continues to be a certain overlap, the growing strength in these disciplines and certain theoretical opposition has led to a general decline of publications within postcolonial studies. In the following chapter, I will turn to the theoretical foundations of Indigenous and Native studies, and most notably to Geonpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson's analysis of what she terms the *white possessive*. She argues convincingly that in Australia, "'postcolonial' remains based on *whiteness*" (*Possessive* 10, *my emphasis*).

[76] Huggan here references his own monograph *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*, see, for example, the preface.

2.2 Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and Intersectionality

In this section, I will offer a concise overview of the most prominent developments in critical race theory (Section 2.2.1) and, as a more specific field of inquiry, critical whiteness theory (Section 2.2.2) before I introduce intersectionality (Section 2.2.3). First, however, the terminology is in need of further definition.

The term critical race theory broadly frames intellectual and activist approaches and theories from multiple disciplines that take a critical stance towards racism and analyses its structural and systemic nature within societies in order to eliminate unjust power hierarchies. The term itself has been in use since the late 1980s but has much older origins as it developed out of writings in philosophy, sociology and literature by mainly African American writers who called attention to the continuing system of racial oppression in the United States as part of the abolition and later civil rights movements. This criticism draws on both national (literary and intellectual) canons but has also – especially as part of the African cultural revival in the United States[77] and the Pan-Africanism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Harlem Renaissance[78] and thereafter – been strongly influenced by Black writers from the African continent, of which the most well-known are Albert Memmi, Valentin-Yves Mudimbe and Frantz Fanon.

All intellectual and scholarly writings that contend themselves with the analysis of *race* and *racism* within the body politic and society in general offer a critical view on *whiteness* (the power structures ascribed to being white). Similarly, writing by Indigenous scholars and activists have offered profound analyses of how *whiteness* operates within the system of racial oppression. However, the focus within white dominated academia has long remained on the racial *other*, the non-white. The understanding of whiteness as a racial construct as much as Blackness or Indigeneity has only gained traction relatively recently. The term *critical whiteness theory* (or critical whiteness studies) reflects this change of awareness. Technically a part of the wider field of critical race theory, critical whiteness studies signal in its name the insistence to finally mark whiteness as racial construct and to throw back the theoretical (white, Western) *gaze* onto itself.

This last statement is central to this dissertation. First, the structural and systemic nature of racism is a form of violence, as I will show in Chapter 3. Second, I will argue that literature has the potential to make the structures of racist violence visible. Third, I will argue that the novels

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[77] The term *revival* is not unproblematic in this context. While used often and widely, it suggests a "reawakening" of something that was lost, whereas in this context, it is more of a growing recognition of cultural heritage and confidence that was "finally" recognized within more mainstream (i.e. white heteronormative middle class) discourse.

[78] The most well-known names of the Harlem Renaissance include the writers Gwendolyn Bennett, Angelina Weld Grimké, Langston Hughes and W.E.B. DuBois, and the singer Josephine Baker.

chosen for analysis in this dissertation use different narrative strategies (layering of perspectives, plot structures and ambiguity to name a few) to refuse this white, *Western gaze* and reveal it for the structure of power it is. Before I can make this argument, however, I will need to add to the foundations of postcolonial theory from the previous section (2.1) further insight grounded in critical race and critical whiteness theory, as well as intersectionality and critical Indigenous studies. In the next sections, I will therefore first turn towards different definitions of race and racism as they will be employed in this dissertation. I will then turn to the most relevant theoretical concepts of critical race theory before I offer an overview of the relevant turns in critical whiteness theory over the last couple of decades and then turn to the theoretical approach of intersectionality.

The term *race* first gained usage in the description of *lineage* or *line of descent* and developed political strength in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and France, during the controversies and revolutions regarding the rights of the aristocracy and the so-called commoners. At this time, line of descent legitimized political rule, and, as Banton notes, this "original idea of race . . . [did] not originate in the encounter between white men and black so much as in the growing self-consciousness of European peoples" (17). With growing confidence in the natural sciences taking over from the Old Testament as the ultimate authority, "explanations in terms of origin gave less satisfaction and people looked for a more systematic understanding of the present nature of things. In this intellectual climate, 'race' changed over from designating a historically defined group to designating a zoologically defined one" (Banton 17). One of the most influential works of typology in this context was Georges Cuvier's *Leçons d'anatomie comparée* ("Lessons on Comparative Anatomy", 1800-1805) in which he declared there to be three basic human types, and that inward anatomical differences predetermined differences in behavior and mentality. His teachings gained popularity through the publications of his students, such as Charles Hamilton Smith's *The Natural History of the Human Species* (1848) and Robert Knox's *The Races of Men* (1862). Both further advocated the typology of humankind, as did Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des Races humaines* in 1853, who further connected the concept of *race* with the concept of *class*, stimulated by the 1848 revolutions in Europe. The most systematic proclamation of typology was brought forward by Josiah Clark Nott and George Robins Gliddon in *Types of Mankind* (1854). Interestingly enough, all these "typologists warned against colonization," expecting that Europeans would necessarily be defeated by the "type" more acclimated to their respective environments (Banton 20).

Despite their popularity, which was further heightened by historical romances of the time such as those by Scott Kingsley and Bulwer-Lytton,[79] these typologies were quickly overthrown and pushed aside with the publication of Darwin's 1859 *Origin of Species*. Darwin disproved the idea of *permanent types* and instead identified supposedly *pure types*. The dominant changes brought out in natural selection became of much more interest since they "would reveal the direction of evolution in *homo sapiens*" (Banton 20–21). This became especially relevant when Darwin claimed in *The Descent of Man* that "the wonderful progress of the United States, as well as the character of the people" were "the results of natural selection; for the more energetic, restless, and courageous men from all parts of Europe have emigrated . . . and have there succeeded best" (167-8). As Banton points out: "whatever Darwin intended, many of his readers were bound to speculate about the possibility that England's economic success was evidence of natural selection preserving a favoured race in the struggle for existence" (21). In this, the

> . . . optimistic strand in social Darwinism was not concerned with the myth of pure races in the past but implied that there would be pure races in the future, for natural selection would fulfil itself once selection could regulate the competition of the major races on a global scale. In this process even racial prejudice could be presented as a beneficent agency that kept interbreeding populations separate and enabled them to develop their special capacities. (Banton 22)

And, even further, this argument of natural selection made it even easier to accept Sir Karl Popper's concept of *moral historicism*, which subscribes to "the doctrine that good is what the future will bring" and from which it followed that "if you believed that the weaker races were bound to die out then it did not make much difference whether they died in your generation or the next one, or by what means they were eliminated" (Banton 22). As such, racism and racist thought was of course extremely beneficial to colonial expansion, because it claimed scientific grounds for the supposedly natural superiority of the white European over the colored Indigenous native. Of course,

> . . . social scientists have during this century accumulated a wealth of evidence to show that prejudice is not inherited, but learned; that race does not determine culture; and that in so-called race relations there are no elements present that cannot also be found, even if in different strengths or combinations, in the relations of persons who are considered to belong to the same races. We may express this last proposition more concisely by saying that inter-racial relations do not differ from intra-racial relations in any necessary respect. (Banton 22–23)

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[79] As Banton explains: "Independently of the developments in natural history, the idea of race became important in the mind of Victorian England through its use in historical writing of both the popular and the academic variety. The historical romances of Scott Kingsley and Bulwer-Lytton reached a wider audience than any before from the newly literate to the highest in the land" (21).

But we can certainly see in the continued prevalence of racism today that "if men define social situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Banton 16). However, until the early twentieth century, determinist definitions of *race* as biological precondition prevailed.

In the 1920s, the Chicago school of sociology strongly attacked these biologistic definitions of race. Scholars such as – most notably – Horace Kellen and Robert E. Park, as well as Booker T. Washington introduced the *ethnicity-based paradigm* with key concepts such as *cultural pluralism* and *assimilationism* in contrast and stark opposition to biologically oriented definitions of *race*. Within the ethnicity paradigm, "race was but one of a number of determinants of ethnic group identity or ethnicity" whereas "ethnicity itself was understood as the result of a group formation process based on culture and descent" (Omi and Winant 15). By 1944, with the publication of *An American Dilemma* by Gunnar Myrdal in 1944, the ethnicity-paradigm overshadowed biologist approaches to race in dominance. At the same time, however, Myrdal was strongly criticized for his propagation of assimilationism as solution to racial tensions in the United States and for limiting his investigation of racism to a question of "morality." Omi and Winant criticize the ethnicity paradigm, on the one hand, for its hypothesis that the potential for integration (which is not, in itself, questioned as a common goal in early ethnicity theory) is solely dependent on inner-group (i.e., ethnic group) values and based on the assumption that all ethnic groups face common, i.e., universal circumstances. Success and failure thus solely rest on the ethnic group's shoulders while issues of (racial) discrimination are not considered. On the other hand, Omi and Winant criticize that the ethnic paradigm fails to recognize the various ethnicities (i.e., heterogeneity) of Black Americans, while it still remains unable to articulate shared experiences of discrimination while living in a mostly white American society (20–21).

Other scholars extended on the investigation of racism in the 1960s, notably Louis Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt, as well as Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, focusing on the concept of *institutional racism* as counter point to *individual racism*. Philomena Essed, with her concept of *everyday racism*[80] at the beginning of the 1990s criticizes these structural approaches for placing "the individual outside the institutional" and "thereby severing rules, regulations, and procedures from the people who make and enact them, as if [institutional racism] concerned qualitatively different racism rather than different positions and relations through which racism operates" ("Everyday" 178). Instead, she posits that "racism is more than structure and ideology. As a process it is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices" ("Everyday" 177). Racism as a process is "inherent in culture and social order" and in its complexity requires

[80] Philomena Essed first introduced the concept in 1984, in *Alledags Racisme*, later translated to *Everyday Racism* in 1990.

interdisciplinary investigation (Essed, "Everyday" 177, 176). Essed draws on both the *aggregation hypothesis* as stated by Collins (1981), contending that micro situations add up to social reality on a macro level, and Circourel's (1981) *representation hypothesis*, which states a top to bottom approach, arguing that the underlying structures on the macro level are reproduced in social interactions on the micro level in order to draw attention to the fact that racism as a process is not one-directional, but operates like a feed-back loop across both the macro and micro level (Essed, "Everyday" 181).

In reference to Hannah Arendt's concept of *communicative power*, Essed further examines the role that group dynamics play in the perpetuation of racist behavior. She states that "the consciously or unconsciously felt security of belonging to the group in power, plus the expectations that other group members will give (passive) consent, empowers individual members of the dominant group in their acts or beliefs against the non-dominant group" ("Everyday" 182), establishing a fundamental mechanism within racist behavior: "Group power can only empower individuals when they have a sense of group membership" (Essed, "Everyday" 182). This means that there needs to be a clear (but imagined) demarcation between "us" versus "them." However, within the dominant group it remains important "to make a clear distinction between the structural beneficiaries of racism and the actual agents of racism in everyday situations" (Essed, "Everyday" 184). A person does not need to be the one exhibiting racist behavior in order to benefit from racist structures or the racist behavior of other people. A classic example of this would be the selection process of job applications (see Quillian and J. J. Lee, Quillian et al.). *Implicit* (also referred to as unconscious) or *explicit bias* on the side of the selection committee regarding race, gender, and/or ability may lead to the exclusion of highly capable candidates, offering a better chance for those who remain in the process. The person who is ultimately receiving the job offer may profit from the (unconscious) racist bias of the committee without exhibiting racist behavior themselves.

Essed thus offers the following definition for everyday racism as

> . . . a process in which (a) socialized racist notions are integrated into meanings that make practices immediately definable and manageable, (b) practices with racist implications become in themselves familiar and repetitive, and (c) underlying racial and ethnic relations are actualized and reinforced through these routine or familiar practices in everyday situations. ("Everyday" 190)[81]

One example for these practices would be predicted policing or stop-and-frisk policies. The underlying socialized racist assumption in this context would be that criminal behavior is more frequently exhibited by people of color (especially Black people), and that the policing of Black

[81] The quotation is completely italicalized in the original.

communities should therefore be intensified.[82] This leads to more frequent stops of Black drivers or pedestrians by the police, which on an individual level will often be justified by a number or subjective observations about "why" this person was stopped and searched, but which ultimately depends on (sometimes unconscious) racial bias. An increase in policing will invariably result in more instances in which criminal behavior or illegal substances are discovered. The same would happen if policing was increased for white lower and middle-class neighborhoods.[83] However, because the increase in policing is race-specific, statistics only increase for Black peoples, thus confirming the underlying racist assumption that people of color are more likely to commit crimes.[84] Both Gary Lanesborough's *The Boy from the Mish* and Paul Collis' *Dancing Home* deal with racist policing from an Indigenous point of view.

In "A Genealogy of Modern Racism," Cornel West argued as early as 1982 that "the initial structure of modern discourse in the West 'secretes' the idea of white supremacy" (91). By this he means that the "secretion" (the "underside of modern discourse") is in essence a "logical consequence of the quest for truth and knowledge in the modern West" (West 91). West traces what he terms the Western *normative gaze* characterized by its search for truth and knowledge production through observation and evidence back to the scientific revolution and the rediscovery of classical antiquity.[85] He concurs with Ashley Montagu's argument that the evolvement of racism in Europe and the Western world cannot be separated from the establishment of *classification* as a category of knowledge production within natural history.[86] At the same time, the recovery and high regard for Greek aesthetics and philosophy perpetuated what West calls the "European value-laden character of their observations" (101). Assessments with regard to aesthetic and cultural value were made according to classical ideals, thus, of course, rendering judgements that found Europeans closer to these ideals than peoples of African or Asian descent. If the

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[82] For the inherent racism in this assumption see, for instance, Robyn Maynard's *Policing Black Lives*.

[83] Statistically, crime such as robberies or break-ins as well as drug abuse are related to poverty and stark economic inequality. However, statistics would also go up if, for example, tax screening was increased in white upper-class neighborhoods. Tax fraud is called "white-collar-crime" for a reason: You need a certain income bracket to substantially profit off tax evasion or fraud.

[84] This is further compounded by so called confirmation-bias, when the confirmation of underlying assumptions about a group of people (may this be because of their gender, race, sexuality or dis/ability), weighs more heavily in cognitive processes than instances that undermine or run contrary to these underlying assumptions. This is further reinforced through hyper-presentations of certain biases in the media. For example, there is a hyper-representation of terrorists who are read as Arabic or Islamic, while, at the same time, representations of Christian fundamentalists and extreme-right terrorists receive much less attention.

[85] West especially names the discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Descartes and Leibnitz as the foundational events that established the authority of science.

[86] And more specifically the emergence of the pseudo-sciences of phrenology and physiognomy.

supposed ideal is in itself of European origin, any developing system of evaluation will of course value European features higher than any cultural or ethnic *other*, thus laying the conceptual groundwork for racism. West further elaborates that

> . . . the idea of white supremacy emerges partly because of the powers within the structure of modern discourse – powers to produce and prohibit, develop and delimit, forms of rationality, scientificity, and objectivity which set perimeters and draw boundaries for the intelligibility, availability, and legitimacy of certain ideas. These powers are subjectless – that is, they are the indirect products of the praxis of human subjects. (92)

In other words, powers are "immanent in nondiscursive structures and discursive structures [without necessary direct correspondence between them]" (West 92), which means that *power* is not necessarily nor primarily subject-bound (93), a perspective that has also been taken by queer criticism in the proposals for *subject-less critique* that focusses its analysis on how power structures shape a subject's identity in the first place.[87] A *subjectless critique* allows for an analysis of the power structures (and imbalances) within the overall social system, independent of individual agency, but it also creates the danger that it inadvertently recenters white heteronormative identity by failing to name the identity that is shaped by both racialization and colonization (see Andrea Smith, "Queer").[88]

For Stuart Hall, race does not have "a single, unitary, transhistorical character" ("Race" 42) and he looks to Louis Althusser's and Antonio Gramsci's understandings of ideology (and hegemony) to investigate the usefulness of their concepts for the discussion and theorization of *race*. For Hall, "Althusser sometimes tends to represent ideology as rather functionally secured to the rule of the dominant classes: as if all ideology is, by definition, operative within the horizon of the 'dominance ideas' of the ruling class", whereas for "Gramsci, ideologies are thought of in a more contradictory way – really, as sites and stakes in the class struggle" (S. Hall, "Race" 55). Hall concludes, however, that both theorists "insist . . . that ideologies are not simply 'in the head,' but are material relations . . . which shape social actions, function through concrete institutions

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[87] Power relations within discursive structures can then, of course, also be observed within literature as part of a specific discourse. A change in perspectives, and more specifically in knowledge systems as we may accomplish when we read Indigenous or critical non-white literature, may then expose fissures within our familiar discourse, allowing the white reader to grasp otherwise invisible aspects of power structuring white discourse.

[88] As Troy-Anthony Baylis remarks, "the lived realities of colonisation have constructed a silencing force that mutes Queer-Aboriginality. It is as if history has constructed Aboriginality as being so pure and so savage, so purely savage, that if tainted by the complexity of sexuality and gender, mixed geographies and mixed appearances, the whole look would be ruined. Aboriginal people would be regarded as not pure, not savage" (1). And further, "the sexual and gender diversity of Aboriginal peoples remains mostly absent in the recordings and interpretations of Australian histories, and these absences reinforce a heterocentric reading of Aboriginal cultures" (Baylis 1).

and apparatuses, and are materialized through practices" ("Race" 55). Within the discussion of what comes first – either the structure (or ideology) that perpetuates individual racist behavior, or individual racism that accumulates to a whole societal frame of mind – neither *economic reductionism* (the explanation of social formations and racial conceptualizations through economic theories of production) nor *historical relativism* (the description of social formations in their complexity without socio-economic specificity) suffice to properly explain race and processes of racialization (S. Hall, "Race" 42). Nonetheless, one needs to take into account the role that capitalism has played in the reorganization and rearticulation of racism. By this, Hall means that even though racism was flourishing in "precapitalist social formations," its articulation (Hall uses this term similarly to Althusser's interpellation but focuses it on the mechanisms and materializations in human interactions and through institutions, how racism "manifests" itself) has taken on a more intricate and sustaining role within capitalist society ("Race" 57, also see Section 2.1.1.3).

In *Racist Culture,* David Theo Goldberg traces a similar interconnection between racism and "modernity's conceptions of moral personhood and subjectivity" (10). He claims that "racial divisions and racist dominations came to be normalized on the Western socio-philosophical tradition" (10). Following a similar argument as Cornel West and drawing on his earlier work,[89] he traces how the concept of *rationality* as articulated by political and economic theorists such as John Locke and later David Hume during the Enlightenment period is dependent on the racialized (and I would argue gendered) *other*: "the rational, hence autonomous and equal subjects of the Enlightenment project turn out, perhaps unsurprisingly, to be exclusively white, male, European and bourgeois" (28). The same binary opposition of rational subject/impulse-driven savage is tied itself into the philosophy of Kant and into liberal market theories, thus also becoming a common thread in the woven fabric of modern society. Based on this opposition, the rational subject is imbued with value (whereas the racialized other is not), shaping European conceptions of *morality*, which Goldberg defines as the system of justification on which the assignment of values is based (15-40).[90]

The discussion on definitions and terminology is, of course, only one side of the coin. A large body of work has been published with regard to the analysis of the manifestation of racism in the body politic and society at large. It would go far beyond the scope of this dissertation to give a comprehensive overview of this body of scholarship – especially since it is interdisciplinary in

[89] Though not explicitly on "A Genealogy of Modern Racism", he draws on earlier articles that deal with the subject.

[90] Section 3.3 will extend further on how (political) discourses assign value to human beings and human life.

its scope and spans analyses from sociology, the political sciences, national and international legal studies, educational theory, and practice, and may more. I will, however, briefly sketch a few of the concepts as they are relevant for the further analysis of the novels in Chapter 4.

2.2.1 Critical Perspectives on Race

Historically, the earliest concept that I would like to focus on is that of the Black American *double consciousness*. W.E.B. Du Bois developed his theory of *double consciousness* as early as 1903. According to his theorem, American *national identity* is ultimately a *white identity*. Within mainstream discourses of society, *American* is always presented as *white*. This leads to a rupture in the identification process for Black Americans. They cannot form one coherent, unified identity that incorporates both their identity as people of color and as American citizens, leading to a continuous split in their consciousness. In everyday life, he argues that they constantly view themselves from an *inside perspective* as part of the African American community, and from the *outside perspective* as they are represented through the gaze of white Americans (especially within mainstream media). This leads to a split in their consciousness, Du Bois' *double consciousness*:

> . . . it is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this two-ness, – an American, a N[****];[91] two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (8)

This sense of "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others," meaning through the eyes of the white dominant society, is a state of consciousness that is much described in both BIPoC[92] literature and theoretical writings in literary studies and sociology. The *white gaze* is strongly internalized, today often referred to as *internalized racism* if it is accompanied by decreased self-esteem, and leads to a constant feeling of having to monitor their behavior and speech around white people, and even to self-censorship (profoundly expressed in Eddo-Lodge's *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*). All of this takes enormous mental energy and has been linked to a multitude of mental health problems such as depression, mental fatigue, and even

[91] Despite the common usage of the word, including broad usage by African American writers, I will not repeat it in this dissertation due to its highly problematic use within racist discourses. For historical accuracy – if necessary – please refer to the original publication of the work.

[92] Black, Indigenous and People of Color, the terminology is often used to refer to all people not *marked* as white, but not everyone affected necessarily agrees with the term. Variations are used often and are to be read as self-expressions of identity. I will use the abbreviation BIPoC in this dissertation when I differentiate between *white* and *non-white* but still want to refer to Black and Indigenous people and People of Color through their own identity markers (instead of as the construction of the *other*, which relegates their visibility as dependent on the white normative).

suicidal tendencies.[93] As harmful to mental health, racism can be categorized as *violence* according to Johan Galtung (see Chapter 3).

In Gary Lonesborough's (Yuin) *The Boy from the Mish*, the protagonist Jackson expresses this feeling of exhaustion when, after a day at the river with his siblings and cousins that ended with a snake bite and a trip to the urgent care clinic, he rejects his friend Kalyn's suggestion to meet friends from school at a party with the words "I don't really feel like talking to white people right now" (29). Staying with *mob*,[94] with family and friends who share his Aboriginal experience is supportive and healing, whereas bridging the different experiential horizons between the own racialized self and (mostly) unaware if not ignorant white people takes far too much energy. What Jackson describes here is basically what anti-racist, feminist and queer activism has termed a "safer space," an area in which racialized, or otherwise marginalized people can be among themselves without white interference or surveillance. The "safer" indicates that even here marginalizing power structures may continue to interfere due to their pervasiveness and that complete safety in this sense is an unreachable ideal.[95]

Toni Morrison suggests that the defining characteristics of national American literature such as "individualism, masculinity, social engagement versus historical isolation . . . are . . . in fact responses to a dark, abiding, signing Africanist presence", presenting "itself as a coherent entity . . .because of this unsettled and unsettling population" ("Playing" 2). To a large degree, this statement echoes the postcolonial key concept of *othering* through which the white Empire redefines itself (see chapter 2.1), with the critical distinction that for the African American context, the *other* is continually present within the own territory's border. It nonetheless stands in addition to the colonial *other* in Section 2.1.2 that in settler nation states mainly refers to the Indigenous population. What makes Morrison's observation relevant to the Australian context is the following comparison:

> . . . the United States, of course, is not unique in the construction of Africanism. South America, England, France, Germany, Spain – the cultures of all these countries have participated in and contributed to some aspect of an "invented Africa." None has been able to persuade itself for long that criteria and knowledge could emerge outside the categories of domination. ("Playing" 3)

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[93] For articles explaining the interconnection between experienced racism and mental health see e.g. Mental Health America.

[94] The term "mob" is used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people "to describe people of a particular social group or belonging to a particular Country. A specific mob can have its own group or language name and can be described by its characteristics. So Ngarigu are 'ice mob,' the people on the coast are 'saltwater mob,' and those who live inland are 'freshwater mob' and 'desert mob'" (Troy 54).

[95] A discussion of the validity and construction of safer spaces would go far beyond the scope of this dissertation here. For further reference and an introduction to the topic see Andrea Smith, "Unsettling".

Race, in this statement, is once again revealed as social construct, whereby Morrison explicates that she uses the term *Africanism* not as referent for the actual heterogenous peoples and cultures of African people,[96] but "as a term for the denotative and connotative Blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people" ("Playing" 2–3). If we exchange the word *Africanism* with *Blackness* but continue to use it in Morrison's sense of a Eurocentric imagining, a translation to the Australian context becomes possible. Here as well, white Western imaginations of Blackness (in this case First Nations Blackness) have shaped national literature and identity, though not always in opposition, but sometimes also in the development of hybrid identity ascriptions (see Section 2.1 on Bhabha's concept of *hybridity*), but always through the lens of the *white gaze*. In both contexts, the United States and Australia, literature "has taken as its concern the architecture of a *new white man*" (T. Morrison, "Playing" 7, for Australia see Dasgupta and Das 6),[97] most visible in the acclaimed canons and listings for literary prizes.

2.2.2 Critical Whiteness Theory

After much critique from African American scholars such as Angela Y. Davis (A. Y. Davis, *Race;* A. Y. Davis, *Culture*), the last quarter of the twentieth century, and especially from the 1990s onwards, have seen increased attention to critical perspectives of *whiteness* by white academics.[98] Where within general discourses it is usually persons that are identified as *other-than-white* that are marked, critical whiteness studies have turned their efforts towards marking whiteness and investigating what it means to either identify or be identified by others as *white*. Both African American and Indigenous corpora have always offered plentiful material for critiques of whiteness, as both Moreton-Robinson and bell hooks note,[99] but white academics engaging with critical race theory had heretofore seldom reflected on their own markers of whiteness: "white people can 'safely' imagine that they are invisible to black people since the power they have historically asserted, and even now collectively assert over black people accorded them the right

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[96] For this definition of "Africanism" refer to the works of Valentin-Yves Mudimbe.

[97] Morrison refers only to the literature of the United States with this specific statement, but the underlying structure is visible in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Britain, as well. Recent years have seen efforts to diversify the literary canon as well as shortlists for literary prizes, but the statement still holds true at its heart.

[98] As in many cases, this field of studies did not gain wider academic recognition until white academics engaged with and published on the topic, despite the fact that both Black and Indigenous scholars had already introduced the criticism from the 1960s onwards.

[99] As the most well-known example, hooks points to James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* (1955).

to control the black gaze" (hooks 168). The *Black gaze* in this context is not just the physical act of seeing, even though historically, "Black slaves, and later manumitted servants, could be brutally punished for looking, for appearing to observe the whites they were serving as only a subject can observe, or see" (hooks 168). Much like the *male gaze* or the *white gaze*, the *Black gaze* has become a metonymic short-hand for describing the connection between underlying power structures and the observations from a specific subject-position. In this case, the *Black gaze* looks back *on* power instead of from the direction *of* power. If the subject-position is denied, however, because the underlying ideology objectifies the human being, their perspective, their *gaze* is also denied. I will tie this differentiation between *position* and *line of sight* into the literary concept of *perspective* in Section 2.4, but for now I will continue with the concept of *whiteness* and how it may or may not be marked.

Critical and conscious engagement with processes of racialization of others does not necessarily mean that a white person may also consciously racialize the white self. Instead, as Ruth Frankenberg, one of the most notable white academics on critical whiteness theory, states, by "asserting its normalcy, its transparency, in contrast with the marking of others on which its transparency depends" is precisely how "whiteness makes itself invisible" ("Local" 6). The marking of racialized others is subject to change and – correspondingly – the properties/qualities of whiteness change over time. They are both historically and locally specific. For Ruth Frankenberg, then, "whiteness emerges as a process, not a 'thing,' as plural rather than singular in nature," because "whiteness must be viewed both as emergent from multivalent historical processes and through multiple dynamics of alterity" ("Local" 1, 4). Both in critical whiteness theory and in postcolonial studies (which, of course, offer great opportunities for interdisciplinary overlap) manifestations of *power structures* (*racialization* on the one hand and *colonization* on the other hand) are described as processes instead of static entities. Power is thus capable of adapting to different and complex socio-economic systems, and this also makes it notably hard to grasp and define in isolation from its specific circumstances.

What it means to be *white* and – more to the point – what is desirable to be *considered* white, is very much dependent on the specific socio-economic needs of the community in power. In her definition of the *white possessive*, Moreton-Robinson draws on Toni Morrison's thesis that whiteness in various forms of social constructs is produced and served by constructions of Blackness (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 49; T. Morrison, "Playing"; T. Morrison, "Black"). The employment of Blackness may be subject to change depending on the requirements for changes in the constructions of what it means to be white. As such, constructions of Blackness have served as a contrast in order to *whiten* European migrants and Jews in the Americas, enabling

class mobility for them while African Americans remained confined to the lower working class (Brodkin; Jacobson; Roediger). White identity is thus revealed as much a social construction as Black identity.[100]

Another well researched example for how constructions of race "construct each other" within critical literature is the close interconnection of nationhood and race in Western nation states. In Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States concepts of "legitimate 'ownership' of the nation" are tied to *whiteness*. This means that due to the colonial history and the occupation of the territory, the white occupiers need to legitimize their ownership and repress the "memory of the brownness of the original residents of th[e] land . . . and of the immigrant origins of white" citizens, repressing, in effect, "another crucial dimension of the story" of the nation state (Frankenberg, "Local" 6, see also Balibar, and Goldberg, *Racist*). The dispossession of Indigenous peoples lies at the origin of these nation states, a history that threatens the white identity that has claimed democracy and adherence to the rule of law as its moral compass, and that continues to benefit from and profit off this original dispossession. It thus becomes an issue of protecting "the possessive white self from ontological disturbance" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 51). The link between the self and the history of dispossession in settler-colonial nation states is too visible, too material, thus making it impossible to create enough distance.[101] Repression remains the only feasible option, rendering the Indigenous connection as invisible or as disconnected from the contemporary world as possible. Discourses about authenticity and constructions of prehistorical stereotypes of "the Native" aim towards this repression and are necessary for the nation state's survival. A nation cannot "exist without land and clearly defined borders" and that ultimately represents "the legally defined and asserted territorial sovereignty that provides the context for national identifications of whiteness" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 51). Frankenberg's and Moreton-Robinson's analyses show how ideas of legitimate ownership of both territory and nation are irrevocably tied to race.

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[100] In fact, France Winddance Twine has conducted a qualitative survey to show how middle-class Black college students from majority-white suburban neighborhoods were "whitened" during their childhood and adolescence and were, in fact not read as Black until they arrived at a college with a rich history in critical race theory and anti-racist activism.

[101] Moreton-Robinson argues that this distance is easier achieved between the self and the history of slavery, mainly because in the latter case the very precondition of the white nation state is not at stake (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 51–52). Frankenberg also clarifies that the "unmarkedness" of whiteness here represents the perspective of white identities: It "is safe to suggest that whiteness remains quite visible to men and women of color even when 'cultural micro-climates' make it possible for the concept to disappear into false universality from the purview of some white people" (Frankenberg, "Mirage" 77).

Ruth Frankenberg further argues that whiteness is, in fact, "more about the power to include and exclude groups and individuals than about the actual practices of those who are to be let in or kept out" ("Local" 13). This leaves whiteness as a continual construction that is "always in the process of being made and unmade. Indeed, its characterization as unmarked marker is itself an 'ideological' effect that seeks to cover the tracks of its constructedness, specificity, and localness, even as they appear" (Frankenberg, "Local" 16). The closer that ideological hegemony thus posits whiteness as self-evident and invulnerable to change, the less marked it appears. It follows in turn, as Frankenberg points out, that whiteness is only ever truly (completely) unmarked when white supremacy has reached hegemony ("Local" 5). This, of course, can never be sustained across all of society at the same time, but it may, in fact, appear in what she calls "cultural micro-climates," in smaller subcultural groups. In all other circumstances, whiteness retains a certain level of markedness. Its recognition, however, requires both practice and a tenacious hold on "the unreality of race while adhering tenaciously to the recognition of its all-too-real effects" and "a particular kind of vigilance, breadth of vision, and refusal of 'either-or' thinking" (Frankenberg, "Mirage" 73). A description, I would argue, that applies to all the main critical and contextual approaches presented in this dissertation.

Frankenberg posits the following list towards a comprehensive definition of "whiteness":

> 1. Whiteness is a location of structural advantage in societies structured in racial dominance.
> 2. Whiteness is a "standpoint," a location from which to see selves, others, and national and global orders.
> 3. Whiteness is a site of elaboration of a range of cultural practices and identities, often unmarked and unnamed, or named as national or "normative" rather than specifiable racial.
> 4. Whiteness is often renamed or displaced within ethnic or class namings.
> 5. Inclusion within the category "white" is often a matter of contestation, and in different times and places some kinds of whiteness are boundary markers of the category itself.
> 6. Whiteness as a site of privilege is not absolute but rather crosscut by a range of other axes of relative advantage or subordination; these do not erase or render irrelevant race privilege, but rather inflect or modify it.
> 7. Whiteness is a product of history, and is a relational category. Like other racial locations, it has no inherent but only socially constructed meanings. As such, whiteness's meanings are complexly layered and variable locally and translocally; also, whiteness's meanings may appear simultaneously malleable and intractable.
> 8. The relationality and socially constructed character of whiteness does not, it must be emphasized, mean that this and other racial locations are unreal in their material and discursive effects. ("Mirage" 76)

This definition offers a *standpoint-oriented* critique of power structures and structures of dominance within society that privilege a racial perspective while also allowing the incorporation of other identity markers (such as gender, age, sexuality, and (dis)ability) into the analysis of systems of subordination (and systems of subordination can be defined as structural violence). The

definition also foregrounds the historical, social, and relational constructedness of racial categories into which whiteness is explicitly included without denying their material effects on both the individual, the body politic and society at large.

Following this theoretical perspective, I do not understand critical whiteness theory as a reaction to "leveling the field" of identity politics by focusing "more" on white identity after a prolonged period of civil rights activism and critical race theory (especially not since political strategies that declare that we have paid attention to one marginalized group for "long enough now" usually hide the underlying agenda of reinforcing the status quo by forcing different marginalized groups into opposition and into a fight for resources amongst themselves), but as a turn towards a more nuanced view on power structures and how they are connected to racialization.[102] It is not a way to recenter whiteness, but to critically analyze how it has been and continues to be centered in the first place. Unless we understand the myriad ways in which it is centered, ever-adapting racist structures will continue to determine the social and economic system.

Within the Australian context, critical whiteness studies have been formally organized in the *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association* since 2003, of which Geonpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson is a founding member (see Nicoll, "Beyond"). As the association's name suggests, critical race theory, critical whiteness theory and intersectionality – the theoretical approach that focusses even more specifically on interactions between underlying power structures (see below) – often overlap and draw heavily on one another. This is especially true for the Australian context. All three approaches were influenced strongly by Black (and in the Australian context especially First Nation) feminist thought, and I will turn to intersectionality in more detail in this next section.[103]

2.2.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality as an academic approach goes back to Kimberlé Crenshaw's seminal 1989 essay "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," in which she formally coined the term. Here she formulated a cohesive theoretical approach that for the first time allowed for an analysis of how various markers of difference intersect under supposedly neutral legal and

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[102] This is a strategy especially known for political groups of the right and extreme right in order to connect to mainstream neoliberal discourses, see Lo Mascolo.

[103] Within the Australian context, Indigenous feminism is complicated in its articulation and framing and found its expression in the Huggins-Bell debate. For an explication on the matter see Section 2.3.5.

government policies, and that went beyond the previously described trifecta of gender, race, and class. However, the "naming" of the approach is not its beginning. As with all critical approaches that deal with social inequality, the origin of intersectionality is not neatly definable. Instead, it grew out of the overlap and fruitful theoretical exchange between anti-racist activism, Black feminist critique, Latina and Latino critical theory, Asian American women's activism and Indigenous critical studies (Hill Collins and Bilge). Intersectionality thus developed out of activist movements that were in themselves marked by a position of multiple subordination. As such, their "intellectual production and activism . . . were not derivative of the so-called second-wave white feminism but were original in their own right" (Hill Collins and Bilge 65).[104] Established at academic institutions in the 1990s, *intersectionality* has a much longer and complex history than the date suggests.

As an example for this longer, complex history in the 1980s, Black feminists such as Angela A. Y. Davis and Audre Lorde increasingly called white feminism out for failing to incorporate the experiences and socio-economic realities of racialized others into the white feminist movement. They offered a gendered and classed perspective on racial oppression themselves (especially for the North American context).[105] In *Women, Race & Class*, Davis offers a detailed description of the effects of various policies that women of color (and often also Indigenous women) have been subjected to, reaching from structurally concealed racism from the federal funding for birth control and the abuse of surgical sterilizations and its interrelation with (white) discourses for abortion rights to obviously racist discourses of population control (215–18).[106] Davis traces how white feminism has been in parts utilized and complicit in these discourses, failing to distinguish that people of color were less concerned with "the individual right to *birth control*, but rather [with] the racist strategy of *population control*" (*Race* 210, 213, 215).[107] While the different effects of

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[104] Hill Collins and Bilge here reference Benita Roth as well as Kimberly Springer for a more comprehensive view on the feminist movements of the 1960s to 1980s.

[105] Angela Y Davis was, of course, by far not the first Black woman to call out white feminism. An early example is abolitionist Sojourner Truth in her 1851 "Ain't I a Woman" address to the Ohio Women's Rights Convention.

[106] Black feminist criticism and intersectional approaches both often turn to the issue of (sexual) violence against women in order to analyze and problematize the differences in experiences and realities of women. This is of course also an influence of the political debates in (white) feminism of the second half of the 20th century that brought gendered forms of violence to political attention. Violence against women and girls continues to be one of the largest political and societal topics with regard to feminism and gender equality worldwide.

[107] Davis names different policies and political discourses that targeted the withdrawal of federal funding for abortions, leaving "Black, Puerto Rican, Chicana and Native American Indian women, together with their impoverished white sisters, . . . thus effectively divested of the right to legal abortions", while at the same time, surgical sterilizations "remained free on demand" (A. Y. Davis, *Race* 206). This greatly opposed white middle class women's experiences, because they were usually denied access to sterilization should they choose it.

these supposedly race- and class-blind policies have been more extensively researched within the context of the United States, forced sterilizations have been part of Australian history as well. As recently as 2018, the UN called on Australia to prohibit and end forced sterilization of women and girls with disabilities (Australian Human Rights Commission; Jabour), and forced and coercive sterilizations of Indigenous women were also part of the racist policies of genocide in Australia in the past (see A. Jones for a comprehensive overview).

Indigenous women in Australia have also widely criticized the color-blindness of white feminism although other than for the North American context, calls for a shared activism have been rare (see Section 2.3.5 on Indigenous feminism). Nonetheless, the criticism that was voiced in the debates is similar: the experience of white middle- and upper-class women is not universal and their proposed policy changes may in fact have distinctly opposite effects on women of color and Indigenous women.[108] Following further critiques by Black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins ("Defining Black Feminist Thought," *Black Feminist Thought*) and Cheryl Harris, white feminist academics (see e.g. Vron Ware, *Beyond;* Ware, "Island") engaged with this critique and a growing number has since also adopted an anti-racist perspective into their research.

This leads us to a closer look at research that categorizes itself as intersectional criticism. Returning to Kimberlé Crenshaw, previous mainstream feminist and anti-racist approaches had mainly been focused on the most privileged groups that fall into each of these categories. As Crenshaw points out, when we talk about discrimination due to gender, the connotation is usually "*white middle-class* women," when we talk about race, the connotation usually is "Black *men*." This does not, however, comprehensively reflect the dimensions of discrimination and the heterogeneity within these groups, and "marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened" and who are thus often the most vulnerable (Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing" 140). Crenshaw thus proposes a critique that more fully focusses on how these different markers of marginalization intersect. Instead of thinking race in terms of the Black middle-class man, we should think it as the Black working-class woman. This approach has since been extended to also include markers of marginalization such as (dis)ability, nationality, age, and sexuality, asking us to redefine our mental connotation for disability, for instance, from the white middle-class heterosexual man to the Black lower-class asexual and teenaged woman.

At a first glance, this might merely look like a mental exercise of "how many marginalizing categories can you think of?" But, as Cho et al. state quite succinctly, "intersectionality is best framed as an analytic sensibility" (795). Changing the mental model (or prototype, if you will) of

[108] Dean Spade warns that any policy change trying to address gender or race discrimination without taking the heterogeneity of the marginalized group into account will invariably fail to change the system towards more equality.

one discriminatory monolith into a multi-axial intersection will allow for a more complex view on the effects of power structures on heterogenous population groups. As such then, "what makes an analysis intersectional is not its use of the term 'intersectionality,' nor its being situated in a familiar genealogy, nor its drawing on lists of standard citation" but at the heart of the matter lies "what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is" (Cho et al. 795). Or, in other words, "what makes an analysis intersectional – whatever terms it deploys, whatever its iteration, whatever its field or discipline – is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power," and by "conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power" (Cho et al. 795).

In this vein, intersectionality has often been linked (and criticized for this link) to identity politics since it uses categories of identity as analytical concepts. What is often misunderstood, however, is that these categories of identity are used to shine a light on structures of power, "to illuminate how intersecting axes of power and inequality operate to our collective and individual disadvantage" (Cho et al. 795). According to Crenshaw, "the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite – that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences" ("Mapping" 1242). Like Davis, Crenshaw uses the example of violence against women to further extend this analysis, showing that Black women and women of color due to their intersecting identities as women *and* persons of color are frequently left out of both feminist and anti-racist discourses. This example shows the close connection between intersectional analyses and violence. Structures of power that produce or enhance inequality and, in this inequality, produce harmful effects are defined as violence (see Chapter 3).

Catharine McKinnon extends on this line of thought when she clarifies that the (often) stereotypically presented identities used within political discourse "are the ossified outcomes of the dynamic intersection of multiple hierarchies, not the dynamic that creates them. They are there, but they are not the reason they are there" (1023). Their multilayered analysis, then, may in turn reveal the underlying structures of subordination at work. This also explains why intersectional analysis focusses on some identities more than on others, and why, for example, a call for the equal engagement with the identity "white heterosexual male" (often using equal "quantity" as grounds for argument) reveals a fundamental misunderstanding (or politically motivated misdirection of the discourse) of intersectionality (for further reference see Tomlinson; Cho et al.). In the end, it is the analysis "of power that reveal[s] which differences carry significance" (Tomlinson 1012).

Some critics within the field even go so far as to claim that from this point of view, all politics are identity politics (Chun et al.).

Mieke Verloo in her article "Intersectional Cross-Movement Politics and Policies" connects this significance of differences to the use of binary categories. Echoing postcolonial theory's concept of *binarism*, she finds that politics of inclusion and exclusion define and reveal the underlying power structures and are most easily and stereotypically expressed through oppositional pairings within discourse. Verloo, however, goes beyond the (neo)colonial context and broadens this mechanism to an analytical tool that is applicable to all (capitalist) societies in which structures of subordination operate and produce marginalized identities.[109]

Cross-disciplinary dialogue is further visible in Devon Carbado's term of *colorblind intersectionality*,[110] in which he contends that "framing whiteness outside intersectionality" ultimately leads to an epistemology in which the "racial presence, racial difference, and racial particularity of white people travel invisibly and undisturbed as race-neutral phenomena over and against the racial presence, racial difference, and racial particularity of people of color" (823–24). Whereas the term "colorblind intersectionality" might be a new intervention, the underlying concept certainly is not. Both Frankenberg and, even more detailed, Moreton-Robinson previously elaborated on the need to racially mark whiteness and how one of its hegemonic mechanisms of power remains the very fact that it is continually unmarked in political and everyday discourse (see Section 2.3.3).

All of the theoretical approaches presented above have in common that they are "socially transformative scholarship" (Nicoll, "Beyond" 4) that requires the scholar as an individual "to situate [them]self within historical and continuing structures of privilege and possession" and to continuously remain aware of how their own habitus has been shaped by this position (Nicoll, "Beyond" 2–3). However, intersectionality is not a complete framework. "Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experience" (Hill Collins and Bilge 25), and frameworks for complexity cannot be universal. They need to be adapted to circumstance and "intersectionality itself is constantly under construction"

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[109] Another critic that engages both postcolonial and intersectional frameworks is Chandra Mohanty in her 1988 "Under Western Eyes".

[110] The term clearly draws on Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's "colour blind racism" that denotes the strategy of (especially) white people to announce that they "see no color" and can thus "not be racist." To the contrary, however, unconscious bias is culturally transmitted and taught and always needs to be countered through active learning and engagement. The term also denotes how e.g. policies that do not actively take the often extremely heterogetic experiences and lived realities of marginalized and racialized groups into account lead in fact to an exacerbation of existing disadvantages. Equal treatment does not automatically guarantee fairness if it is not properly contextualized.

(Hill Collins and Bilge 31). Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge suggest six "core ideas" that repeatedly structure intersectional analyses:

1. **Inequality**: Social inequality in one form or another has been one of the core motivators for intersectional approaches. Intersectionality allows for a multi-layered analysis of inequality, "recognizing that social inequality is rarely caused by a single factor" (26).
   An example for the first circumstance would be policing practices in which "suspicious behavior" gives cause for stop-and-search practices. Theoretically, the rule is equal for all, but in practice, "suspicious behavior" is racially coded. Racial bias (conscious or unconscious) means that Black, Indigenous and People of Color are more often perceived as behaving "suspiciously," thus leading to discriminatory practice (again, conscious or not) in the rule's application.
2. **Power**: People's identities are usually marked by systems of power that mutually construct each other and that interlock and intersect. Identity markers include (but are not restricted to) race, gender, class, sexuality, age and dis(ability), as well as ethnicity, nationality, and religion. "Within intersectional frameworks, there is no pure racism or sexism" and as such, "power relations are to be analyzed both *via their intersections* . . . as well as *across domains of power*, namely structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal" (Collins and Bilge 27).
   An example of this second circumstance would be the voting system in the United States. Every citizen has the right to vote, and their vote should count the same, but due to gerrymandering as well as the preconditions for the registration to vote such as a valid driver's license (which in turn requires a person to pay for driving lessons and pass the test), the outcome is, in fact, neither equal nor fair.
3. **Relationality**: Relationality moves the analysis away from binary categories and "embraces a *both/and* frame" (Collins and Bilge 27). Intricately connected to complexity, but still a core idea in its own right, relationality focuses on interconnections instead of differences. It assumes that "power is better conceptualized as a relationship, as in *power relations*, than as a static entity" (Collins and Bilge 28). This concept of relationality as defined for intersectional approaches must not be confused with the concept of relationality as it is defined in critical Indigenous studies (Section 2.3.2.1). Relationality from an intersectional perspective is always tied to (relative) structures of power.
4. **Social context**: Anything and everything within intersectional analyses needs to be seen *within context*. Intersectionality as an analytic sensibility (as Cho et al. frame it) positions complex relations of power in historical and localized contexts. It also means

"contextualizing one's [own] argument, primarily by being aware that particular historical, intellectual, and political contexts shape what we think and do" (Collins and Bilge 28).

5. **Complexity**: Even though it is more than obvious from the above-mentioned categories, complexity needs to be explicitly mentioned. "Intersectionality itself is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world" (Collins and Bilge 29), and I would argue that it lies at the very core of intersectionality to "complicate things" (29). Especially with regard to power structures, intersectionality counters "easy" and one-dimensional explanations (e.g., stereotypes) with complexity.
6. **Social Justice**: Social justice lies at the heart of many intersectional approaches and directly results from the observation of and deep engagement with social inequality. The concepts of "winner and loser" are easy to accept as long as the playing field is even.[111] "Yet fairness is elusive in unequal societies where the rules may seem fair, yet [are] differentially enforced through discriminatory practices" and "fairness is also elusive where the rules themselves may appear to be equally applied to everyone yet still produce unequal and unfair outcomes" because they are applied to very different individual realities (Collins and Bilge 29).

These proposed core ideas all overlap. This overlap reveals the complexity of intersectional analysis. This list is nonetheless a very fruitful proposition for analysis, and I shall refer to it during my textual analysis whenever different forms of violence (both direct and structural, see Chapter 3) affect people differently due to their identity markers. First, however, I would like to further complicate this list by combining it with the categories of analysis as they have been identified within critical Indigenous theory. As I am working with novels by Indigenous authors, I will foreground and privilege Indigenous epistemologies and critical inquiry.

Once I have discussed the most relevant concepts and lines of argumentation from critical Indigenous studies as they relate to my investigation of violence in contemporary Indigenous literature, I will connect postcolonial theory, critical race and critical whiteness studies, intersectionality, and critical Indigenous studies with the field of contextual narratology in Section 2.4. The section will add the *narratology* to the *context* of Sections 2.1 to 2.3. Once this link is firmly established, I will turn to the central concept of *violence* as referenced in the title of this dissertation. The definition of structural violence I will offer there will reveal that both racism and colonialism are, in fact, forms of violence. This will then conclude my theoretical foundation and allow for the analysis of the three Indigenous novels in Chapter 4.

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[111] Hill Collins and Bilge use the soccer playing field as extended metaphor to explicate intersectional analyses.

2.3 Critical Indigenous Studies

While the last two sections focused on postcolonial theory and then critical race and critical whiteness studies, as well as explaining the analytic of intersectionality, this section will now turn to *critical Indigenous studies*. Critical Indigenous studies center *Indigenous* perspectives and epistemologies in their research, thus offering a different standpoint and worldview from the Western academy. In the following, I will shortly explain how critical Indigenous studies are situated in relation to the theories mentioned above. I will then offer a concise overview of the general structure of Section 2.3.

The area of critical Indigenous studies has grown within academic departments – often by the way of Native studies departments or chairs – in the last quarter of the twentieth century, but much like intersectional analysis, it has existed as a practice long before it was both named and institutionalized. Indeed, critical Indigenous voices, both academics and elders, have been engaging with the settlers and the nation state since first contact. They have done so in activist and political settings, but many times, they have also engaged with the nation state and structures of colonialism through literature.

Several Indigenous critics and writers have situated themselves within the conceptual framework of postcolonial studies. For Samoan writer Albert Wendt, e.g., "the *post* in postcolonial does not just mean *after*; it also means *around*, *through*, *out of*, *alongside*, and *against*" (Wendt 3, italics in the original), and it thus offers a broad range of possible engagements. However, a growing body of work within the last decades has established critical Indigenous studies as a separate field of theory and methodology. Scholars such as Emma LaRocque (Plains Cree Metis) criticize postcolonial writings for their focus on the colonists in the settler states and their relationship to their colonial center to the detriment of Indigenous peoples. She understands the *post* of postcolonialism as emphasizing the radical rupture caused by colonialism in the history of (especially) Indigenous peoples, and as focusing its field of enquiry on everything that temporally happened "after" this rupture, including the ongoing colonialism today. In this understanding, Indigenous history and tradition remain dwarfed by settler colonialism (see L. T. Smith 14). In

contrast, Native and Indigenous studies[112] assert holistic[113] Indigenous perspectives at the very center of their theoretical work.[114]

The content of this section is well prefaced by the following two quotes:

> *This is territory that has been marked by and through violence and race. Racism is thus inextricably tied to the theft and appropriation of Indigenous lands in the first world.* (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xiii)
>
> *The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary.* (L. T. Smith 1)

The first quotation, written by Geonpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson, calls to mind the history of occupation and colonialism in Australia. Indigenous relationships to land will be central to this chapter, as will the disruption of this relationship by white occupation. It also ties this disruption explicitly to violence, and violence to racism, a connection that has been explored in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, but that will be further grounded in theory in Chapter 3. The second quote by Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes the fundamental issue that presents itself whenever a white European researcher approaches a topic of investigation that is linked to Indigenous cultures and epistemologies. Science at large and anthropological and empirical research in particular have been instrumentalized in the project of racialization and colonization. As I explain in my introduction to Section 2.2., however, Smith's quote is not an expression of anti-scientific sentiment. As a researcher herself, she instead calls out the Western academy on the inherent

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[112] Scholars often consciously decide to either use "Native" or "Indigenous" studies to describe their research. Both concepts are problematic in either their historical use (Native) or their strong generalization (Indigenous), but they are often also connected to clear political positions. "Native Studies" is more common in the territory of the United States, Canadian scholars often use "First Nation" (in the past also "Aboriginal Studies", but this has since been rejected by First Nations peoples), but as within the Australian context, "Indigenous Studies" is also very common, especially for comparative approaches. Australia also widely uses "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies," but "First Nation" has also been gaining ground within the last decade. In all territories, however, specific tribal and national identities are named whenever applicable, and "Indigenous" serves as more of a conflating term. In the following, I will therefore use the term *critical Indigenous studies* whenever I refer to the shared body of research and will use tribal/national or language group identifiers whenever concepts are culture specific.

[113] Holistic in this sense does not mean that they are following white traditions of searching for "universals" but are focused on locating each topic of research in its historical and epistemological interrelation.

[114] Whereas until the 1990s critical Indigenous studies have mostly seen cross cultural influence and exchange within the English-speaking territories, recent years have more and more included Indigenous scholars from former Spanish and Portuguese colonies as well. There has also been an increased attention to Indigenous populations within other countries, such as the Sámi in Norway. In this thesis, I will primarily draw on Indigenous voices from the former British colonies, because of the greater similarity in the structural oppression by the same imperial power. I will draw parallels to other Indigenous populations where applicable. This especially includes voices from Oceania and Pasifika studies, territories that are also formerly European, but that made their own experiences have due to their regional specificity (islands in the ocean) and developed responses to (neo)colonization.

racism of its research methods. She argues that the claims of neutrality and universality are illusions and that this unmarkedness of white power structures (in the terminology of critical whiteness theory) need to be acknowledged and consciously counter-acted. As such, *research* is not to be avoided as a term, but it needs to be localized in its epistemological context as does the methodology the research employs.

Tuhiwai's warning is the very reason this thesis is structured as it is, with such a large focus placed on critical race and whiteness theory, as well as on critical Indigenous studies. Both critical race and critical Indigenous studies offer a counterpoint to white Western theory (especially postcolonial theory), and they *mark* its *whiteness*. Since my corpus is First Nations Australian, critical Indigenous studies are central to locating the narratives in position to my own Western education and theoretical toolbox (which includes Western theories of narratology, see Section 2.4). At the same time, Indigenous research methods are culture-specific and community-centered, which means that while they are accessible to me as a white researcher by reading Indigenous publications and activism, they are not methods that are accessible to me as a *toolbox*. Applying these methods without the necessary in-depth cultural background or guidance would be another form of appropriation. However, this does not mean that remaining silent on Indigenous texts is the answer. Instead, my approach needs to be based on respect and the willingness to listen (through reading) and learn (see Alber, "Ethical Narratology" 51–52; Klein, *Poetics* 12–13).

Overall, this is the reason that I am conscious of centering Indigenous perspectives and what they may reveal of existing structures of power and violence, and why I will at no point use this dissertation to make claims *about* Indigenous identities. Neither will I claim neutrality or universality for the claims that I *do* make. Instead, my analysis is influenced by my position as a white European researcher, as is my methodology, despite my attempts to broaden my own perspective. I will invariably remain bound by my *position* (see Section 2.4). What I will do, however, is learn more about my position as a white Western researcher from Indigenous texts, and I will mark my own whiteness in my research. This is a critical perspective on whiteness (see Section 2.2.2) that is specifically informed by Indigenous perspectives: a critical perspective on whiteness as a structure of power – as well as on gender, class, and sexuality as structures of power – which makes this perspective intersectional and the foundation of this dissertation. This means that I will refer to Indigenous concepts and apply them to the text, but I will not extend or develop them further. I will especially not claim to use Indigenous methodology. Instead, I will remain aware of the latter and draw on the former in my analysis to illustrate where Western concepts are insufficient or revealed as structures of power in the Indigenous novels of my corpus. I thus offer a critical perspective on whiteness as it is narrated in these three Indigenous novels.

In the following sections, I will first offer a definition of *Indigeneity* as it relates to *raciality* and *whiteness* (Section 2.3.1). This is important because it allows me to then refer to racism with regard to Indigenous peoples without mitigating the difference of their position. This definition is then followed by an explanation of the central concept of *Country*, *relationality* and *Dreaming*[115] that can be considered cornerstones of Australian First Nations epistemologies in Section 2.3.2.1. This explanation is then set in contrast with Western conceptions of land as property as exemplified in the Native title legislation in Section 2.3.2.2. Remaining with Western concept of property, I then connect this to a critical whiteness perspective that identifies the structures of power that are inherent in property as a category defined through whiteness. This culminates in the term *white possession* which denotes the deployment of whiteness as property, and therefore as an element of racialized power in Section 2.3.3. As racialized power, *white possession* can in turn be defined as a form of violence (Chapter 3). Afterwards, I will return to the concept of *sovereignty* and how it is defined in Indigenous criticism in Section 2.3.4. *Sovereignty* as seen from this perspective must be defined because, much like *Country*, it strongly differs from the Western concept of *sovereignty* as a nation state's right to territory (property) and governance. *Sovereignty* is also (almost) always tied to cultural expressions, which may, for instance, take the form of oral or written storytelling or dance.

In order to ensure a varied and intersectional overview of critical Indigenous studies, I then turn towards feminist and queer perspectives in the field in Section 2.3.5. This section takes a closer look at Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality, but also of gender-based violence, which will both be relevant to an *intersectional* analysis of my corpus. Last but not least, in Section 2.3.6, I will turn to recent developments and prerequisites for Indigenous research methods and how they will inform the textual analysis in Chapter 4. What is important in this section is the understanding that all Indigenous research methodologies are deeply aware of structures of (especially white) power and of how these structures may shape social relations and discourses. Indigenous methodologies are always culture-specific, which means that the development of such methods must lie in the hands of community members. Opportunities for understanding these methods depend on how they are communicated and whether they are intended for community-external audiences. Wherever they are communicated, however, they offer a guideline for how to engage with Indigenous cultures in a respectful manner.

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[115] Both *Country* and *Dreaming* are capitalized in this dissertation because they refer to the understandings of the words in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemology. They carry additional spiritual meaning and do not refer to Western conceptualizations of country or night-time dreaming. *Relationality*, on the other hand, is a term that describes the interrelation between every living thing. While it plays into spiritual conceptualizations of the world, it is not a term referencing a specific spiritual concept and is therefore not capitalized.

2.3.1 Indigeneity

The term *Indigenous* gained international legal traction in the second half of the twentieth century, when Indigenous rights advocates turned to the UN for support and the United Nations Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities was established in 1982. *Indigenous* allows for a distinction between a native but dominant ethnic or racial majority in a specific country and people who are native to the territory but have ethnic or racial minority status. As such, *Indigenous* is a political category that carries specific weight, because other than the status as racial minority, international law bestows on Indigenous peoples the right to self-determination (Teves et al., "Indigeneity" 109–110). Constructions of Indigeneity have therefore at times been quite contentious (see Corntassel and Hopkins Primeau, and Andersen, *Métis*). At the same time, the right to *self-determination* does not grant Indigenous peoples the right to *secession*, because it does not, in international law, affect the right of nations-states' territorial integrity (Teves et al., "Indigeneity" 111).[116] Indigeneity "signifies the dialogic process of movement and tradition" and offers a different path to *the Native*, "who remains locked within ethnographic anthropology," where each term creates opportunities to complicate the other (Teves et al., "Indigeneity" 113).[117] Because it is a political term, constructed through discourses of power, the "category's political effects shift depending on how it is deployed" (Teves et al., "Indigeneity" 115). Differentiating Indigeneity from *raciality* is not always easy to do.

Kānaka Maoli Maile Arvin's definition of *Indigeneity* draws on Walter Mignolo's "colonial difference" and understands "indigeneity as in articulation with raciality and coloniality rather than as a category that refers directly back to these other categories" (Arvin, "Analytics" 121). *Raciality* is also a European construct that depends on the merger of "Hegel's ideas of transcendental poesis" and "Darwin's scientific renderings of human progress and 'civilization'" (Arvin, "Analytics" 120). Indigeneity is then not only one aspect of raciality but partially overlaps and partially stands apart from conceptions of *race* (Arvin, "Analytics" 120). Arvin also draws on Stuart Hall and uses his understanding of "articulation as a metaphor" (Arvin, "Analytics" 121). For Arvin, Indigeneity and raciality coexist and heavily influence each other, they stand "in articulation." Her use of articulation is echoed by Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kimberley TallBear, who sees in this metaphor "new cultural and social formations in acts of borrowing, interpretation, and reconfiguration", allowing for a definition of Indigeneity that also moves beyond the discourses

[116] For an overview of the transnational Indigenous rights movements and their different approaches see Engle (*Elusive*).

[117] The essay especially draws on Pacific scholars such as Teresia Teaiwa (*Native Thoughts*), Ty Kawika Tengan (*Native Men Remade*), and Andrea Smith (*Native Americans and the Christian Right*) as examples.

of "disappearance" that are usually cojoined by discourses that concentrate indigeneity on genetic markers ("Genomic" 133). [118]

TallBear has argued in favor of genetic testing if and where the results can be used in knowledge claims against nation states, because they continue to be valued more highly within Western nation states than Indigenous histories and knowledge claims ("Genomic" 131). At the same time, a genetic definition of Indigeneity invariably "overlooks concepts of indigenous self-determination and colonial opposition that undergird indigenous peoples' own articulation of indigenousness" (TallBear, "Genomic" 139). Essentialist discourses of *authenticity* and *originality* generally disavow Indigenous peoples' right to change and adapt, or at least not without giving up their claim to be *Indigenous*. They hence establish a double standard that applies to Indigeneity but not raciality and especially not to whiteness.

Indigenous scholars in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States have established the field of critical Indigenous studies, foregrounding both Indigenous cultural and historical particularity while exchanging cross-cultural concepts and ideas.[119] They recognize a shared (yet different) experience of colonization by the British Empire and later the respective nation states and the effects of their governmental policies.[120] Indigenous studies in the early 1970s were "primarily informed by the global Indigenous political movement for self-determination and sovereignty"[121] and thus "discussions were centered on the defense of Indigenous lands and nationhood, as well as Indigenous knowledges and rights" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xiv). The two key concepts driving the epistemic development of Indigenous studies were

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[118] See Arvin: "in certain popular discourses, including genetic ancestry tests, *everyone is indigenous*, and thus *no one is indigenous* – we all are from Africa and we all came from somewhere else (even Native Americans supposedly came across the Bering Strait). Or, as this logic seems to be applied in a number of quarters, including, in a certain light, the discourse of human rights for indigenous peoples, we all *used to be* indigenous, but now we are all *just human.* In each of these contradictory truisms, one thing remains the same: indigenous peoples vanish into more stable categories of immigrant, citizen, and human" (119, emphasis in the original).

[119] As TallBear warns: "in organising internationally we must be careful not to violate our political and cultural integrity as peoples with distinct beliefs, histories, and cultural practices. If we racialise ourselves into one monolithic Indigenous race, we diminish understanding of the diversity among us and we present risks (in addition to those the coloniser thrusts upon us) to the specific knowledge and histories that we carry. We may also undermine the cause of tribal-specific political rights" (TallBear, "Racialising" 7). For a comparative approach to critical Indigenous studies see Banerjee.

[120] Aileen Moreton-Robinson has termed this the shared experience of "white possession": "White possession is the common denominator we all share, even though its specificities and manifestation vary. We are no longer the sole possessors of our ancestral lands taken by conquest, cessation, or as *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one). These lands are appropriated in the name of the Crown, signifying the rule of the king and the masculine capacity to possess property and to bear arms." (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* x).

[121] The term "sovereignty" in its most basic form means "authority to rule," but it has been defined quite differently by individual Indigenous scholars and will receive its own section for explanation below.

"Indigenousness," which encompasses "culture, place, and philosophy," and "Sovereignty," which in turn encompasses "history and law" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xiv). According to Moreton-Robinson, this approach strongly influenced the development of Natives studies in the United States and Canada, as well as Kānaka Maoli studies in Hawai'i, while shaping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies in Australia to a lesser degree (*Possessive* xiv).[122]

This endogenous approach has both advantages and disadvantages and lends itself to *essentialism*. It is invariably concerned with the specificities of *cultural difference*,[123] which, on the one hand, allows Indigenous scholars to develop strong agency and authority in the knowledge production about themselves, opposing the constant definition of their identity by white settlers (see the notion of "othering" in Section 2.1.2 on postcolonial theory). However, as Moreton-Robinson has argued, it also unintentionally leads to the "reification of cultural difference" (*Possessive* xv). By "compel[ling] 'culture' to function discursively as a category of analysis in the process of differentiation," it echoes white "exogenous disciplinary knowledges that have been produced *about*" Indigenous peoples and that "operationalize 'race' as the marker of . . . difference, even when defining indigenous 'cultures'" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xv, *my emphasis*).[124] Choctaw scholar Clara Sue Kidwell therefore argues that this essentialist approach is routed in an extreme form of postcolonialism that "implies that American Indian ways of thinking existed before colonialism and remain unknowable by anyone outside those cultures" (6). In this line of thought, pre-colonial epistemologies can be recovered unaltered by colonialism, and Indigenous critique "cannot center on a critique of the colonial experience but rather must focus on the individual and community choices American Indians make to realize their culture, values, and political and economic interests within the constraints and opportunities presented by changing colonial contexts" (Champagne, "Theory" 360). Both Moreton-Robinson and Kidwell argue that this is, in fact, impossible and all recovered knowledge will have undergone change and been influenced by the continuing colonial oppression. At the very least, the native scholars reconstructing these knowledges today will have been affected by colonialism, making any "pure" or "original" epistemologies inaccessible. A turn towards cultural essentialism also has further

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[122] For an overview of the development of Māori studies in New Zealand, see Mason Durie (Ngāti Kauwhata and Rangitāne).

[123] For an example of an articulation of Indigenous studies marked by cultural difference, see Champagne, "Theory" and Champagne, "Rise".

[124] In other words: "Patriarchal white nation-states and universities insist on producing cultural difference in order to manage the existence and claims of Indigenous people. In this way the production of knowledge about cultural specificity is complicit with state requirements for manageable forms of difference that are racially configured through whiteness" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xvii–xviii).

consequences with regard to what is deemed culturally *authentic*, an issue I will turn towards later on this section as well as in Section 2.3.5.

Métis scholar Chris Andersen proposes that instead of *cultural difference*, critical Indigenous studies should be concerned with *cultural density*. He finds fault with Champagne's approach, because it "assumes that boundaries [between Indigenous and Western disciplines] are discrete and readily discernible, such that he [Champagne] effectively erases the object–subject relationship within which all other academic disciplines produce knowledge" ("Critical" 84). Instead of reducing itself to defining what makes Indigenous *Indigenous*, Anderson further argues, critical Indigenous studies also contains a well of information on Western disciplines, most prominently, on how *whiteness* has shaped them ("Critical" 81).[125] He is therefore sympathetic to and supportive of calls for more extensive research on tribal-specific knowledge about land, language and peoplehood (such as made by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Muskogee scholar Craig Womack, Jace Weaver et al. and to a greater degree by Tom Holm et al. in their peoplehood model),[126] but he emphasizes that in all of this, any "attempt to isolate Indigenous communities epistemologically from the broader social fabric of dominant, whitestream society effectively removes a large part of our arsenal for combatting the damaging representations of Indigeneity woven into larger society" (Andersen, "Critical" 85). In other words, an isolated investigation of Indigenous identity and culture would be done at the expense of activist potential that is directed at a future change of the relationship with white settler-colonizers and the nation state at large.

Andersen further argues for a critical exchange of ideas between Indigenous studies and critical race theory.[127] Even though he sees the danger of Indigenous and native populations being reduced to "just another ethnic minority,"[128] he contends that "whitestream representations of blackness operate along epistemological and ontological taxonomies familiar to those ordering Indigeneity, making [the] comparison a danger worth risking" (Andersen, "Critical" 92). As a researcher approaching Indigenous literatures through a critical whiteness perspective, I strongly agree with Anderson. The exchange of ideas between critical race and critical Indigenous studies can offer a more extensive view on how whiteness works as a structure of power (and subjugation).

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[125] See also Moreton-Robinson's argument that this different approach to Native studies offers the "possibility of theorizing how racialization works to produce Indigeneity through whiteness." (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xviii).

[126] The concept of peoplehood as applied to North American tribal identity was developed by Robert K. Thomas and Tom Holm in order to offer a more specific naming of social group identity than "ethnicity," which they considered to be far to broad to properly describe First Nations and Indigenous cultural affiliations. Peoplehood thus defines a social group along the lines of shared language, sacred history, religion and land (Holm et al. 12).

[127] A similar call for cross-disciplinary engagement in Australia comes from Bargallie and Lentin.

[128] This is my phrase in order to summarize Anderson's argument, but I place it in quotation marks to highlight that this quotes the register of the dominant white discourse which Anderson and the author of this thesis strongly criticize.

Moreover, I argue that including intersectionality to these two critical perspectives will provide a pathway that allows me to avoid collapsing Indigeneity into ethnic minority, thus addressing Anderson's concerns. Because intersectionality pays particular attention to subject positions *in relation* to power, it also investigates how, for instance, racist policies may affect different racialized subject positions (i.e., Indigenous, Asian Australian or African American) in distinct ways.

Anderson further clarifies:

> Like blackness, Indigeneity is often (still) positioned in opposition to white/colonial identity along a series of binary oppositions which labour to reaffirm the supposed superiority of the latter over the apparent primitiveness of the former. And like blackness, Indigenous complexity has been reductively fixed in time and space through apparently objective, logical markers used to bear the discursive weight of our authenticity and legitimacy. (Andersen, "Critical" 92)

Interdisciplinary exchange is therefore to be undertaken carefully but may prove to be very insightful. Andersen reaffirms Moreton-Robinson's point that "colonial experiences have meant that Indigenous people have been among the nation's most conscientious students of whiteness and racialization" (Moreton-Robinson, "Whiteness" 85). Just like critical race theory, Indigenous studies demonstrate "that epistemologies do exist outside the scopic regimes of Western modernity" (Nicoll, "Reconciliation" 21). For Andersen and Moreton-Robinson, the "teaching about whiteness, how whiteness frames Indigeneity and how Indigenous people know whiteness should stand as a central component of the discipline of Indigenous studies" (Andersen, "Critical" 94). This, then, also offers a solution for the issue that Torres Strait Islander scholar Martin Nakata has identified as central to (especially academic) discourses about Indigeneity, which is the "issue for Indigenous scholars . . . of how to speak back to the knowledges that have formed around what is perceived to be the Indigenous positions in the Western 'order of things'" (5). Only through knowledge of the Western concepts that have previously been used to define Indigeneity can they be effectively opposed and deconstructed. Otherwise, "they niggle their way further into the foundations of discursive representations, insulating themselves from critique. This is the power of whiteness" (Andersen, "Critical" 94). Critical Indigenous studies, undertaken from this point of origin, thus always contains a critical whiteness perspective (see Section 2.2.2).

Many Indigenous scholars stress, however, that a fundamental difference between the civil rights activism of African-American and other racialized minority groups, and Indigenous peoples is that whereas the former seek recognition and equal rights within the legal framework of the nation state, the latter are campaigning for decolonization and sovereignty over their ancestral

territory (Teves et al., "Colonialism" 272).[129] As both Moreton-Robinson and Elisabeth Povinelli argue, Indigenous peoples do not seek justice *within* the framework of the settler nation state, but contend that they never should have been oppressed under it in the first place (Povinelli, *Cunning;* Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive*). This structural similarity also leads to a similarity in the resistance against white oppression but contains a distinction in the pursued policy goals that need to be addressed in activist alliances.

This distinction is especially important because as a basis for coalition work, Kirisitina Sailiata argues, the frameworks of *decolonization* and *settler colonialism* largely remain insufficient. Sailiata warns that the

> . . . term decolonization suggests we can undo the process of colonization as if it never happened. Decolonization becomes then an extractive process . . . [that] quickly lead[s] to a politics of purity whereby we must remove any colonial impure thoughts that we have in order to regain a prelapsarian sense of innocence. (Sailiata 301)

Decolonization is thus a term that is often used to separate (political and societal) aims of Indigenous peoples from other anticolonial activists. However, this focus on *separateness* (or *difference* in Andersen's words) focuses on uniqueness instead of shared experiences of oppression and how these are linked to colonialism as well. Sailiata suggests that instead of looking at Wolfe's two definitions of *settler colonialism* and *extractive colonialism* as distinct and separate forms – as either / or – we should rather see them as "mutually reinforcing practices that manifest property rights differently within the settler imaginary: property as a right of occupation and property as a right of commerce" (302). Both forms of colonialism relied on labor (through slavery or indentured work), the occupation of the land, and the extraction of resources (for the relation between resource extraction and the imperial center, see Section 2.1). For Sailiata, decolonization often remains "delimited to political independence," missing out on the opportunity to engage with settler-colonial theory (e.g., for a critique of political recognition) or Native Pacific cultural studies, a field in which scholars have intensely engaged with questions of how political independence intersects with militarism, sports and tourism (305).[130]

The categorization of *settler* and *Native* is intricately linked with questions of belonging (who does, and who does not), and risks becoming a discourse continually struggling over "whose

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[129] Moreton-Robinson points to scholars such as Kim TallBear and Brendan Hokowhitu as exceptions who attend to matters of race and how this influences Indigenous lives but sees a more widespread need for the incorporation of "race" into Indigenous criticism. As explicit example for "how race and whiteness operate in tandem through a socially constructed racial hierarchy" she names *The Cherokee Rose* by Tiya Miles, who investigated Cherokee slaveholding (see Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xviii).

[130] See, for example, Teaiwa, "Bikinis" Diaz and Kauanui, Shigematsu and Camacho, and for a poetic approach Kava and Perez.

oppression is the most politically important at the moment" and should thus take precedence in political activism. At the same time, these categories tend to focus on one identity marker only, such as ethnicity, class or gender, risking that, e.g., "indigenous peoples as people of color and those who do not labor" are erased (Sailiata 303). It follows, in Sailiata's argument, that the "solution is alternately not to collapse the divergence in experience or racialization but to ask critical questions that build, strengthen, and pluralize the anticolonial critique" and for this, neither *decolonization* nor *settler colonialism* offer the right analytic (303). It is this very pluralization of experiences in the settler-nation state that offers room for cross-disciplinary engagement.

As Māori scholar Brendan Hokowhitu points out, the development of Māori studies in Aotearoa New Zealand differs slightly from that of Indigenous studies in Australia, Canada, and the United States. Evolving out of anthropology, Māori studies in New Zealand in the 1970s centered around cultural renaissance and language revival agendas, which led to the establishment of Māori studies faculties at universities to a much greater number than in Australia and North America, where Indigenous studies largely relied on individual research foci (Hokowhitu 2). At the same time, the development and considerable success of Māori studies in New Zealand have offered insights and platforms for the development of Indigenous studies in the other territories in return, leading to shared conferences and associations such as the Native American and Indigenous Studies Society (NAISA).

Hokowhitu is one of the scholars who strongly opposes "interpretations of Indigenous worlds and knowledge by non-Indigenous scholars" (3). He argues that the focus needs to be instead on the "lived experiences of Indigenous scholars to provide critical understandings of Indigeneity in relation to ontology (ways of being), epistemology (ways of knowing) and axiology (ways of doing)," because Indigenous knowledges need to be prioritized where "existential experiences of Indigenous peoples and communities" are concerned, that is, questions of how Indigenous peoples "engage, disrupt, and live within the worlds that [they] are immersed in" (3). By extracting critical Indigenous studies from Western knowledge frameworks, Hokowhitu contends, Indigenous scholars enact sovereignty. He expects that

> . . . such an extraction is, of course, never simple, or non-violent as the taxonomies that normalise Western knowledge enable the conditions for the Western academy to lay claims to knowledge itself, and any disruption to that way of ordering knowledge will be contested and attacked. (2)

Western knowledge ordering and the continuance of this order are both confining and violent towards epistemologies outside this framework (Hokowhitu 2). In Hokowhitu's understanding, critical Indigenous studies, "emanat[ing] out of a genealogy of Indigenous, Black, and Brown

scholarship", criticizes "white claims to possession over knowledge itself,"[131] is "grounded in resistance to the multiple forms of violence and micro-aggressions that Indigenous peoples and communities face every day in their neo-colonial realities" and "upholds sovereign claims to Indigenous lands, languages, cultures, ecologies, ontologies, and existentiality" (Hokowhitu 3). His line of argument is supported by Morton-Robinson, who sees "critical indigenous studies [as] a knowledge/power domain whereby scholars operationalize Indigenous knowledges to develop theories, build academic infrastructure, and inform. . .cultural and ethical practices" in order "to challenge the power/ knowledge structures and discourses through which Indigenous peoples have been framed and known" ("Introduction" 5). Both arguments need, of course, to be understood within the context of continued and continual white oppression of and discrimination against Indigenous and racialized peoples and take a strong stance against further interference and for the right of self-determination and sovereignty over their own epistemologies.

These arguments, however, should not be read as a refusal of engagement with white scholars and researchers, as both Hokowhitu and Moreton-Robinson argue for a critical engagement with the concept of *whiteness*. But the engagement from the other directions, by white scholars, needs to be one of respect and from a position of learning, not expertise, because it carries with it a historical legacy of dis- and appropriation and violent transgressions. At this point, I will turn toward the Indigenous concepts of *Country*, and *Dreamtime*, and the legal response by the Australian government in the form of Native title and recent endeavors for treaty negotiations.

2.3.2 Country, Dreaming, Relationality and Native Title Legislation

After defining the term *Indigeneity* more closely in the previous section, as well as explaining how it differs from the concept of *race* and the legal consequences this bears with regard to human rights claims, I will now offer an overview of how land is understood in Indigenous epistemologies, its connection to the ancestors through the stories of the Dreaming. This connection between land and ancestors is also the reason for the capitalization of *Country*. Whereas Western conceptualizations of land and country will remain in lower case, Indigenous understandings of *Country* will be capitalized.

[131] Hokowhitu refers to the nation states of Aotearoa New Zealand, Australian, Canadian and US as "unsettler" states in order to further complicate the claims of possession by those who came to "settle" the territories.

2.3.2.1 Country, Dreaming and Relationality

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ancestral beings and *Country* are tightly intertwined. *Country* is a metamorphosis of the immortal ancestors. As beings of the *Dreamtime*,[132] the ancestors moved through the country and left behind possessions, interacted with other beings, and eventually became stone or mountain ranges, or disappeared into the sky or water. The very shape of Country is tangible evidence of the ancestral being's presence. Aboriginal ancestral beings were not constrained to either one form or one gender and may be strongly associated with one specific element. But beyond the creation of the physical world, ancestral beings also established the moral codes, traditions and habits that Aboriginal people lived by, establishing a deep ontological relationship between Australian First Nations people and Country (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 12). The *Dreamtime* established a strong "ideology of historical continuity" that is "reinforced by kinship systems in which individuals along a descent line bear the same name every second or fourth generation" which has led to an interpretation of time as "continuous and circular . . . at the level of elaborate, explicit cultural ideologies, institutions, and symbols" (Ritz and Ponsonnet 168, see also Kwaymullina). The historical connection, continuity and relationality to and with Country are encased in the stories of the Dreamtime that are in themselves language group specific and diverse. Some overarching *storylines* are known to most, if not all, language groups, but local specificity, detail and additional *story*[133] is added for each group and region (Ritz and Ponsonnet).[134]

Through this interlinking of land and cosmologies as well as land and epistemologies, land then "has both material and metaphorical power for [many] Native communities" (Teves et al., "Land" 59), making land and the environment "the essential aspect of social organization and intellectual development" (Teves et al., "Land" 61–62). In Native studies, land encompasses concepts that Western thought would describe as territory (and especially within the framework of colonial territorial expansion), but also *place* and *home*, which take on much broader meanings that are further determined through language (see Teves et al., "Land" 65; Goeman). Because of its relevance and the spiritual connection to it, land or Country is often a central part of lines of argumentations within Indigenous studies, especially with regards to discourses on sovereignty

[132] The term *Dreamtime* refers to the time in which the ancestors created the world, by shaping the landscape (and becoming the landscape), creating the peoples, etc. The term stems from the translation of Central Australian word *jukurrpa* (Warlpiri language), see Ritz and Ponsonnet.

[133] I use the singular "story" when I refer to stories that make up the ancestral "history" and knowledge of Indigenous communities.

[134] As John J. Maynard (Worimi) points out: Australian First Nations people are "recognized as carrying the longest memory known to humankind" (221).

and self-determination. In those cases, "emphasis on land can be overly essentialist, monolithic, or separated from everyday [Indigenous] life, but it can also be a deliberate strategy to advocate for indigenous and land rights" (Teves et al., "Land" 63; Engle, *Elusive*). Essentialist strategy or not, First Nations and Indigenous connection to land encompasses the spiritual and physical connection to the "entire biosphere", including flora and fauna within their specific ecosystems (Teves et al., "Land" 66–67). It is therefore common for Country to be written as a form of character or sentient being into Australian Fist Nation texts. Examples include the personification of the donkey, the aunts, and the beetles in Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy*. It also informs the close connection between one of the characters, Dance Steel, and the moths that are always surrounding her. The connection finally culminates in Dance Steel being named "moth-er," a reference that fuses two of her identity markers (mother to two the main characters Aboriginal Sovereignty and Tommyhawk steel and custodian of the moths, who are her totem) into one symbolic name (Section 4.3.2).

The land, or Country, is meaningful because of the stories that connect the people to the land. These stories were told orally, through walkabouts in Country, through weaving, sketches, and paintings. They are also told in contemporary stories, in novels and short stories, poems, podcasts and theatre plays: "land is never static, nor are Natives' relationships to it or on it" (Teves et al., "Land" 65). This is why i-Kiribati and African American scholar Teresia Teaiwa suggests that diaspora might be the better framework for Indigenous identity. Different localities may, of course, strongly influence whether or not Indigenous peoples identify with this framework.[135] As Pacific Islander, Teaiwa brings forth in her perspective a long tradition of the ocean as part of what is conceptualized as *homeland*. Notably theorized by Tongan and Fiji Islander Epeli Hau'ofa, this perspective centers the ocean as a connection between the Pacific Islands, as a "sea of islands" instead of "islands in a far sea" (152) that are "much too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the centers of economic growth" (150). Emphasizing the constant movement of Pacific Islanders across the ocean to other islands and the continents, Hau'ofa conceptually opposes the restricting national borders introduced by European and American imperialism and frames Oceania as vast and constantly interacting and expanding (160).[136] The borders of the

[135] Scholars in Australian studies and Pacific studies are divided on whether or not Australia should be counted as part of *Pacific* studies. Pacific Islanders and Māori have a specific travel history with regard to their first navigators reaching their lands bases and a shared epistemology and language family (despite very specific localized differentiations). However, there are similarities in how Indigenous coastal communities in Australia are connected to the Ocean through seafaring and pre-colonial trade (Briggs).

[136] In the disciplinary field of Native studies, "storied relationships to waterways . . . continue to be under explored in critical studies. The use of indigenous languages, which connect land, seas, oceans, and rivers systems in a language other than that of the state are important to be conscious of in our dialogue" (Goeman 85). Headways have been made

nation state and territorial possession are not reconcilable with Indigenous conceptions of land or Country and custodianship.[137]

Let me further expand on this understanding of Country. An Indigenous relationship to land is often conceptualized as *relationality*. Instead of the Western concept of ownership and exclusive control, relationality describes the relationship (sometimes going so far as to include spiritual descendance) and responsibility for land. This is also often referred to as custodianship (see, for instance, Monture Angus). Tonawanda Band of Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman contends that seeing land only as territory, and "collapsing . . . land into property" ultimately "perpetuates the logics of containment" (72), and in this echoes Hau'ofa's warning that seeing only separate islands in the ocean is a rhetoric of confinement to landmass. Goeman elaborates that Indigenous understanding of land lies in opposition to Michel Foucault's conceptualization of *space* as fixed, dead and undialectical (Goeman 73 referencing Foucault, *Power*).

Instead, Goeman contends that

> . . . if we define *culture* as meaning making rather than as differentiation and isolation in a multicultural neoliberal model, then by thinking through *land* as a meaning-making process rather than a claimed object, the aspirations of Native people are apparent and clear. (Goeman 72–73)

In contrast to Native and Indigenous perspectives in which the *interrelation* with land and Country is highly significant, Western legal frameworks and, thus, all Native title/land claims argue from a standpoint of "prior possession." It centers the "occupation *on* the land" and disregards "the importance of land *to* us", in Goeman's words, and she warns that "while this is a strategic move for indigenous peoples, it is imperative not to be caught in this statist ideology" (75). Similar to essentialist perspectives on land and country, occupation and history can be employed as strategy,

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by different Māori, Kanaka Ma'oli and Pasifika wayfinders who have reconstructed travel directions from traditional stories and song. Different projects have included the building of traditional ships and canoes and recreations of the travel over sea. It is thus important to understand that "indigenous epistemologies and cartographies" often "put movement and mobility into the center of attention", whereas "continental thinking" (read Eurocentric, and later Australian- and U.S.-American-centric) poses itself in opposition to islands, as centers to periphery, with a focus on urbanism, intellectualism and sophistication. This in turn influences Indigenous peoples' perception of land through the internalization of colonial concepts of static, local fixedness instead of movement and interconnectedness (Diaz 90–91). Indigenous wayfinding projects (see, for instance J. Tuaupiki) are therefore not only interesting experiments in order to recreate a travel experience, but they actively recenter conceptions of movement, mobility and exchange in Indigenous knowledge systems. For an Australian First Nations example for wayfinding see Briggs.

[137] This understanding is necessary to later interpret the subversiveness in *Praiseworthy*'s plotline, when the main character Aboriginal Sovereignty is prevented from committing suicide because he is rescued by the captain of a refugee boat, only to be promptly apprehended by border patrol agents and placed in a detention center for refugees. The narrative here clearly plays with both the concept of *liminality* (postcolonial studies, Section 2.1.2) and demonstrates an Indigenous refusal to understand land in terms of borders and frontiers, leading this Western concept of property and possession *ad absurdum* by placing the Indigenous inhabitant of the colonized territory in detention for attempting to illegally enter this same territory.

but the holistic and fluid relationality must remain centered within the Indigenous communities. These Indigenous "philosophies of place," which also feature conceptions of homeland and belonging, offer alternatives to Western concepts of political recognition and sovereignty. "Indigenous notions of land and pace are generally grounded in economies of subsistence and communal resource exchange as well as laws based on relational accountability" (Sailiata 306). This conceptualization of land also means that for many Indigenous peoples, borders "are not rigid lines on a map but areas of increased diplomacy, ceremony, and sharing" (Simpson, "Place" 19). Borders thus become areas of contact and positive engagement instead of liminal spaces. In *Praiseworthy*, the refugee boat and the detention center become places of shared human suffering but also of shared resilience and hope (see Section 4.3.4).

Outside the narrative, one strategy to recenter the relation to land within the community are projects of "indigenous mapping" of "storied land" (Goeman 75).[138] These maps then function as educational projects for future generations in the Indigenous community; they can be mnemonic devices (recalling stories connected to place), or they can have political importance. In either instance, "naming the land from a tribal collective memory is one of the most important political and social tools to tie people together in a shared story. Land in this moment is living and layered memory" (Goeman 75).[139] The process of reconstructing these layered memories can often be seen in Indigenous historical fiction that overlaps two chronological timelines that each follow their own protagonists and thereby reveal previously unknown connections between past and present-day. An example of this would be Tina Makereti's *Where the Rēhoku Bone Sings*. Layering the two storylines of the siblings Lula and Bigs (present-day) and Mere and Iraia (past) over one another on their journey to the Chatham Islands (Rēhoku), the narrative explores the deep historical trauma associated with the genocide of the Moriori that used to inhabit the islands in the sixteenth century, and how it traces back to the present day through ancestral lines and cultural remembrance.

Goeman identifies these practices of Indigenous mapping as a central form of "place making," which can in itself be a form of anti-colonial resistance, but more importantly, of sovereignty. She explains that the sacred relationship between land and people, the sense of being

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[138] Goeman here references Susan Fair as an example, but similar projects have been under way with Māori, Hawaiian and Polynesian wayfaring projects and Aboriginal bushwalking in Australia, (see J. Tuaupiki, Vermillion, H. Tuaupiki, and Arvin 7).

[139] As Goeman explains, it "is necessary in Indigenous scholarship to not only address the *meanings* of territories, such as where they are demarcated, but also the *legitimacy* of the settler-colonial governments to determine such meanings" (Goeman 87). This means that every consideration is always both on the material and the ontological/epistemic level and needs to be evaluated for settler-colonial influence and veracity.

rooted in country – of belonging – "are not sacred because they are *there*, but rather they are *imagined into being* and *spoken* from generation to generation. They are carefully attended to through story and the act of remembering and caretaking" (79–80, *my emphasis*). Extending this argument to contemporary literature, the sharing of story and the act of remembering is also taking place through written stories (novels, short stories, or poetry). Indigenous relationality depends on intimate, in-person, respectful engagement, and this aspect is of course radically decreased when reading a story, especially for the uninitiated, for whom sacred knowledge is not intended (i.e., white colonizers without community relation beyond the text). Furthermore, experiencing storied land has a corporeal component, in that the body experiences and interacts with the land, and this physical contact is part of learning story.

The Indigenous body's relationship to the land has a colonial history of (dis)possession as well. Native bodies have been criminalized throughout history, and this criminalization occurs through their relationship to colonial spaces. Deemed as *uncivilized,* their bodies were excluded from *civilized* colonial spaces. Reservations, boarding schools and missions were often established as "places of containment" that enforced the "alienation of the body from land as a life blood" (Goeman 81) as part of the European making of place and the "erasure of indigenous practices of making place" (Goeman 84, see also Lomawaima; Ross; I. Watson). These containment logics also predicated the forced removal of Indigenous children into colonial educational systems: the "rehabilitation of the 'savage' body to proper citizens meant changing relationships to land" (Goeman 81), from a lived and experienced relationality to the abstract concept of space established through nation state legal discourses (Goeman 80–81). Boarding schools and missions especially have been linked with prisons through their concern with disciplining, "containing and surveillance of aberrant bodies" (Goeman 81). Explorations of this theme can be found in Aboriginal life writing such as Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) and Doris Pilkington Garimara's *The Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1996) and often recounts the life on Australian missions in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (see M. R. Griffiths; A. Brewster).

Aboriginal epistemologies do not understand the individual subject as unitary and fixed in the way that Western concepts do. Instead, the spiritual nature of the world is part of belonging to a place, home, Country: the "spiritual world is immediately experienced because it is synonymous with the physiography of the land" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 14–15). Through the removal from these spiritual worlds and traditional Country through dispossession and forced relocation onto missions, which in turn were built on the traditional country of other people, "colonization produced multiple contexts that shaped the construction of Indigenous subjectivities that were and are positioned within discursive formations of history relative to a particular space, country, and

time" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 13). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have taken their connections to and stories about traditional Country with them during the removal. They have also learned about new Country from the traditional owners incarcerated in other missions or reserves, exchanging knowledge and reestablishing connections to Country despite their displacement (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 13). All of these knowledges, spiritual connections and epistemologies shape Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subjectivities and cultural identities today.

To summarize this section, the overall understanding of Country as ancestral being and the concept of *relationality* that sees Country (both land and sea, flora and fauna) and people as interconnected in a relationship defined by constant reciprocity, respect and caretaking (custodianship) described in this section fundamentally opposes Western conceptions of land as territory and territory as possession. This fundamental difference can best be observed in the legal construct of the Native title claim. I will therefore turn to Native title below. I will first explain how Native title came into being and then explicate how it has been deployed by the Australian legal system to dissolve First Nations claims of (territorial) sovereignty.

2.3.2.2 Native Title

After explaining how Australian First Nations conceptions of land as Country fundamentally diverge from Western conceptions of land as territory because they are based on relationality and custodianship as opposed to possession, I will now turn to the *Native Title Act* (1993) to trace how these different conceptualizations of land reveal fissures and inconsistencies in the nation states' discourse of its own legitimization. This is important to illustrate how discourses of power work to produce material inequalities in present-day Australia. It is also important because Native title is an important theme in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literary texts. Wherever Native title is referenced, it is to be understood within the context explained in the following.

The 1992 Mabo decision (Mabo v. Queensland [No. 2]) and the subsequent Native Title Act 1993 have gravely impacted and regulated if not the relationship, then the potential for access and traditional custodianship of Indigenous lands, followed by further specification of Native title in the Yorta Yorta decision. First brought before the Australian High Court by the Meriam people Eddie Mabo, David Passi, Sam Passi, James Rice and Celuia Mapo Sale against the State of Queensland in May 1982, the Mabo Case was the first legal case to award Native title to Torres Strait Islander people and thus overturned the myth of Australia as *terra nullius* prior to colonization (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies n.p.). The High Court agreed that the Meriam people could prove traditional ownership of the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait and were "entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and

enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands" except for the "Islands of Dauer and Waier and the parcel of land leased to the Trustees of the Australian Board of Missions and those parcels of land (if any) which have validly been appropriated for use for administrative purposes" (Mabo v. Queensland [No. 2] n.p.). This title, however, remains "subject to the power of the Parliament of Queensland and the power of the Governor in Council of Queensland to extinguish that title by valid exercise of their respective powers, provided any exercise of those powers is not inconsistent with the laws of the Commonwealth" (Mabo v. Queensland [No. 2] n.p.). Native title is therefore awarded for those areas that have not been otherwise possessed by the government or private enterprises, but the title is also subject to Commonwealth law and state government.

The Mabo decision claims that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people became subjects of the Crown at the moment that the Crown asserted sovereignty over the territory. As subjects, they were then also entitled to protection under the British law with regard to property rights. However, as the common law is "imported," so are the concepts of property and possession it establishes.[140] Mabo never settled the issue that by asserting sovereignty over their territory, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were *originally dispossessed* (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 90). In this sense (of the British colonialist legal system), their property rights never existed prior to them becoming subjects of the Crown. This is the crucial point of Native title and why it can be described as legal fiction. Western legal positions define the boundaries of their own application as starting at the point of dispossession. By refusing to extend its jurisdiction even one second further, it can dismiss the majority of territorial sovereignty claims by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people out of hand.

Furthermore, Native title cannot be mistaken for Indigenous sovereignty. It offers "nothing more than a bundle of rights to hunt, gather, and negotiate as determined by Australian law" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 94).[141] Or, in other words:

> . . . effectively what the High Court did in *Mabo* was invent a rule of extinguishment that did not exist under common law, to allow for inconsistent grants to extinguish native title prior to the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. That is, it invented a rule of extinguishment that allowed the Crown to

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[140] As Goeman points out: "Prescribing the shape of land in colonial history [mapping] was largely done with intent to claim land and make it readable as property; colonial landscaping is concerned with creating familiar environments . . . Necessary to decolonization, sovereignty or self-determination is reclaiming land physically and ideologically. Property, as has been argued by Indigenous scholars and their allies, is distinctly a European notion that locks together . . . labor, land, and conquest . . . As such, property is not just a material, but it is also constructed through social relationships" (Goeman 77).

[141] This effectively illustrates Dene scholar Glen Coulthard's warning that moving the focus of the discourse on Indigenous land claims from claims to sovereignty over the land (including possession) to a discourse of Indigenous *cultural* rights, means depoliticizing these claims. It ultimately means becoming complicit in rationalizing the economic and political interests of the settler nation state.

> retrospectively derogate from the vested rights of its Indigenous subjects . . . The decision affirms that the nation-state's sovereignty by creating in law a hybrid of settlement that diminishes but does not erase *terra nullius*. (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 16)

Following the Mabo decision, the Australian government passed the *Native Title Act* in 1993, which was to define how future Native title claims were to be handled in accordance with the Mabo decision. The *Native Title Act* firmly places the burden of proof for the possession of traditional lands on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As Carole Pateman points out,

> . . . the invasion of terra nullius is a kind of state-of-nature theorizing that denies indigenous modes of social and political organization and wipes clean (in theory and through violence) territories for the enactment of European sovereignty. The focus on the point of acquisition falsely portrays settler colonialism as an event rather than a structure, so that settler contract theory places the burden of proof on Indigenous peoples to justify a distinct and independent package of political and social forms of association, sovereignty and rights. (Pateman 46)

At the same time, "with burden of proof on indigenous peoples, the settler contract implies innocence of both settler society and state" (Lay 92), allowing for a supposedly 'neutral' position from which to judge. This is exactly what Foucault describes as "normative power structures" in application (Section 2.2 and Chapter 3). The legal construct of Native title through the Mabo decision and the Native Title Act allows the state to remove itself from the discussion of the original legitimization of its own sovereignty by claiming supposedly neutral ground. The supposedly neutral ground is, in the terms of critical whiteness theory, the white position of power that remains unmarked and through this unmarked position develops normative power.

In addition to the problem of this fiction of neutrality, what presents itself as most challenging from an Indigenous studies perspective is that the burden of proof is placed on the Native title claimant. Proof must be presented in line "with the white legal structure in courts controlled predominantly by white men" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 16). In practice, this means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can only claim Native title if they manage to prove to a (mainly white) court that they continue to observe traditional customs *on* the land in question and that these laws and customs are the ones connected to this specific land or waters. Furthermore, all of the elements of proof must be "recognised by the common law of Australia" (Compilation No. 49). Proving the observance of "traditional laws and customs" unfailingly means proving authenticity, and even more so, proving *authenticity* according to Western understandings and stereotypes of the *authentic Aboriginal.*

> The logics of authenticity frequently position indigenous ways of being as the ontologies of another time, incompatible with modernity. In modern society, indigenous ways of being appear as hangovers from the past. Indigenous ways of life can only appear in modernity in the form of "tradition," appropriate for symbolic and ceremonial occasions, but not appropriate to the management of economic life, the organization of social relationships, or the practice of government. And given the

> link between the authentic and such frozen ideas of traditionalism (the authentic native does not change), the self-determining agency of indigenous peoples is also questioned and denied (Bell 3–4).

Indigenous authenticity is thus a concept that is highly problematic and rich in racial bias. Furthermore, the *Native Title Act* places determinations of Indigenous identities under the purview of the descendants of white settlers:

> . . . since courts regard the written word as more reliable than oral testimonies, all claimants must be able to substantiate their oral histories with documents written by white people, such as explorers, public servants, historians, lawyers, anthropologists, pastoralists, and police. These documents are often in conflict with Indigenous representations; lawyers and judges usually seek to resolve the disjuncture by introducing the texts or oral testimonies of additional white experts. Thus, patriarchal whiteness sets the criteria for proof and the standards for credibility. (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 69)

As such, Australian legal practice is set up within white epistemologies that exclude Indigenous peoples from equal access *a priori*. In D'harawal scholar Shannon Foster's words: "more value is given to Western records that are written down. But lies can be written down too. Stories can be erased and knowledges concealed from the texts" (285). Nonetheless the written word is set against First Nations (hi)story and used to disprove Native title claims (see Section 2.1.2). This further explains, then, the deep distrust of the legal system by Indigenous characters in novels such as *The Boundary* (2011) by Nicole Watson, but also in all the novels of the corpus of this thesis, *Dancing Home* (2017), *Too Much Lip* (2018) and *Praiseworthy* (2023).

Once we understand the construct of Native title as explained above, it is unsurprising that negotiations for Native title claims often take on tautological and paradoxical forms. This becomes especially clear in the 2002 High Court's decision on the Yorta Yorta title claim. In the judgement to decline Native title, the fact that the Yorta Yorta had claimed in their petition that their land had been illegally possessed by missionaries was taken as the very proof that the land *had indeed been taken* from them and that they could therefore no longer prove uninterrupted possession. In the eye of the law, their Native title claim was extinguished (Members of the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Community v. Victoria). The illegal act of dispossession is turned on its head and interpreted as proof for the loss of rights to this property. In effect, the decision "determined that no native title claims will be successful unless Indigenous people can prove that their native title is consistent with that which existed at the time of the original assumption of patriarchal white sovereignty" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 149). Any and all forced removals that happened afterwards in the name of white sovereignty are not taken as acts of land theft but reinterpreted as proof of the extinguishing of Native title. Only in cases where possession has remained uninterrupted since the arrival of the colonizers can Native title be claimed. As such, the law has no aspiration to restore

justice but to cement the *status quo*. The Mabo decision and the Native Title Act are hailed by the Australian government as moral achievements in recognizing past sins and righting wrongs. In effect, however, Native title claims are used to reiterate *white possession* by an interplay of acknowledging that there was no *terra nullius* while at the same time extinguishing Native title on a case by case basis (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 73).

With regard to the Yorta Yorta decision, Moreton-Robinson explains as follows:

> . . . traditional law and custom in Indigenous societies does contain a normative system of rules, but they are intrinsic to an intersubstantiation of humans, ancestral beings, and land. Indigenous people are the human manifestations of the land and creator beings; they carry title to the land through and on their bodies. Thus, the physicality of Indigenous people is testimony to the existence of particular tracts of country. The relationship between people and their country is synonymous and symbiotic. This is why the connection to land is never broken and why no other Indigenous group claimed, or could claim, Yorta Yorta country. (*Possessive* 84)

However, the question of belonging to Country remains within the interpretative authority of white settlers whose own investments in the Australian nation state critically oppose Indigenous title claims. The connections of relationality and Dreaming that formed the beginning of this section are overwritten and ignored in the white colonial (legal) discourse.

This section has shown how Western conceptions of land as territory and Australian First Nations conception of Country as ancestral relation stand in opposition. In the following section, I will now extend on this explanation of the legal construct "Native title" and explain how the discursive strategy behind it is a prevalent example of what Moreton-Robinson calls *white possession*. In connection, these two sections will lay much of the groundwork for the analysis of narrative strategies in the novels of my corpus because all three novels engage with the concept of *white possession* in different forms and they also all criticize white conceptions of land and land ownership. Lastly, understanding the above-mentioned processes behind the fiction of 'Native title' allows us to understand why the legal system as a whole contains structures of racial bias and why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may exhibit a deep distrust of the Australian legal system in general.

2.3.3 White Possession

Before I turn to a more in-depth discussion of the concept of Indigenous sovereignty in its various forms in Section 2.3.4, I will first more firmly connect property to whiteness and explain how *white possession* is then a deployment of the *property of whiteness*. This is important because once established, *white possession* as a term can then be effectively used in the analysis in Chapter 4

and differentiated from the term *appropriation* from postcolonial theory as it has been introduced in Section 2.1.2.

For the explanation of this connection, I will continue to draw on legal studies. In her seminal essay "Whiteness as Property," African American scholar Cheryl Harris traces how "the *interaction* between conceptions of race and property" led to whiteness becoming an exclusive form of property (1716, 1724). Harris recognizes that, in the North American context, the "systems of oppression of Blacks and Native Americans differed in form – the former involving the seizure and appropriation of labor, the latter entailing the seizure and appropriation of land," but that they were both dependent on "the racialized conception of property implemented by force and ratified by law" (1715). By rendering the original First Nations possession of the land invisible and seizing it for white settlements, white privilege was embedded "into the very definition of property" (Harris 1721). In consequence, "possession – the act necessary to lay the basis for rights in property – was defined to include only the cultural practices of whites" and, in turn, "laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness – that which whites alone possess – is valuable and *is* property" (Harris 1721, *my emphasis*).

It means that whiteness was infused "with significance and value because it was solely through being white that property could be acquired and secured under law. Only whites possessed whiteness, a highly valued and exclusive form of property" (Harris 1724). As Harris contends, whiteness thus constitutes more than just the "physical" entity, it can also be deployed as status, identity, personality or property. While Harris theory is grounded in her analysis of the North American colonies, the underlying mechanisms are the same in Australia. Here as well, property was tied to whiteness and only whites were allowed to own property. Possession as the basis for property rights was acknowledged only for the white practice of settlement. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concept of custodianship was not interpreted as possession, and they were and continue to be (and as the previous section on Native title has shown) excluded from property rights.[142]

Geonpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson draws on Harris' analysis and extends it in her argument that "patriarchal white sovereignty, as a regime of power, operates ideologically, materially, and discursively to reproduce and maintain its investment in the nation as a white possession through a discourse of security" (*Possessive* xiii). She identifies the "central elements of this discourse" as "economic, military, and cultural protection, which are assumed as justified responses because of the threat posed to the nation's security by Indigenous people and asylum

[142] This is not to say that they cannot buy or own property in present-day Australia. This analysis looks at the historical power structures that established inequalities from the moment of dispossession onwards.

seekers. White colonial paranoia is inextricably tied to an anxiety about being dispossessed by racial others" (*Possessive* xiii). In other words, the nation state is a *white possession* not only in the sense of appropriation and ownership (whites claim the nation for themselves), it is also deployed as a power structure that (because it remains unmarked as white patriarchal concept) excludes and criminalizes the racialized other (Indigenous populations, Blacks, People of Color and refugees) by claiming that the nation needs to be protected. Let me retrace this argument and its connection to the previous section in the following paragraph.

In the Australian context, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander possession was rendered not just invisible through practice but negated *a priori* by declaring the country *terra nullius*. However, the same principles of possession and of property (especially property of land) as the privilege of whiteness, and specifically of whiteness *being* property, apply here as well: as "a form of property, whiteness accumulates capital and social appreciation as white people are recognized within the law primarily as property-owning subjects. As such, they are heavily invested in the nation being a white possession" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xix). This is, on a smaller scale, Donna Salter in *Too Much Lip*, who decides to capitalize on the fact that she passes as white and becomes a real estate agent. The novel plays on both the theme of the original dispossession and the experience reality of whiteness as property and property being white.

On a grander scale, the above-mentioned mechanisms are most readily visible in the populist political discourse surrounding the Voice-to-parliament vote in 2023, but also extends to Australian government policies regarding migration and asylum seekers, most notably in the detention centers on Nauru and Manus.[143] This theme, in turn is picked up by Alexis Wright in her 2013 novel *The Swan Book* (see Mausen and Eckenhoff), but also in *Praiseworthy* when the character Aboriginal Sovereignty is incarcerated at a refugee detention camp. These discourses of nation and security center around questions of belonging and un-belonging in Australia, which also lies at the heart of the country's colonial history (see the "indigenization" of the white settler in Section 2.1 on postcolonial theory above). According to Moreton-Robinson, the feeling of belonging is often derived from a sense of ownership (possession) and achievement. Possession is white, as explained above, and achievement is tied to social status and the accumulation of capital, which is generally denied to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Through the "form of property and an organizing principle shaping social relations and economic development"

[143] Moreton-Robinson makes an important distinction between the concepts of "home" and "belonging between Indigenous people and migrants. For her, it is important to note that "there is no other homeland that provides a point of origin or a place for multiple identities" for Indigenous peoples (See Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 17). It is a displacement "in place" that does not cross territorial nation state lines. For a more in-depth view on different Australian policies and how they impacted First Nations Australians, see Baehr and Schmidt-Haberkamp, *Dancing*

that patriarchal whiteness takes in Australia, Indigenous peoples are prevented from generating wealth (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xxii): the "white body was the norm and measure for identifying who could belong . . . [and] whiteness is the invisible measure of who can hold possession" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 5–6). In this sense, then race, and specifically patriarchal whiteness, has forged the law in all the former British colonies (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 81). This connection is not always easy to follow and observe. Literature, however, may draw this connection more easily, for instance, on the character level as with Donna in *Too Much Lip*, or on a structural level such as the strive for economic independence by Cause Man Steel in *Praiseworthy*, which is revealed as wishful thinking through narrative commentary and the character's increasing isolation from his community.

Returning to the example of the referendum above, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia did not receive full citizenship in Australia until 1967.[144] The discourse around the referendum first brought Indigenous poverty into the white Australian public consciousness and "rhetoric of citizenship became a strategy by which Indigenous people could now come under federal government control instead of being primarily the responsibility of state governments" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 154). Instead of at least a rhetoric of equality, the focus on "shared responsibility" and "welfare" thus underlined the hypervisible stereotype of the "impoverished, alcoholic and dysfunctional Aborigine" (see Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xiii).[145] While Aboriginal activists and advocates brought attention to these issues in order to address the neglect and disadvantages faced by Indigenous people in Australia, public discourse quickly subsumed this 'knowledge about' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as white possession. The

[144] The referendum, accepted with more than 90% of the vote, removed Section 127 from the Australian Constitution, from thereon allowing Indigenous Australians to be counted as part of the general census.

[145] The term *Aborigine* is a racist term because it defines the person according to the identity marker of Aboriginality and reduces the person to this definition alone. The same does not hold true for the term *Aboriginal Australian*, because *Aboriginal* is used today to clearly denote an identity. The expression above follows Moreton-Robinson's use of the term, because in this instance, she is referencing the racist stereotype. Whenever she writes about "Aborigines," this is not a reference not to the persons but to the established racist stereotype of "the Aborigine" much like colonial discourse produced "the Native." The term's etymology can be traced back to the Latin *ab origine*, which means "from the beginning" or "from the creation of the world" ("ab origine" n.p.) and was used in the sixteenth century to refer to the people who first inhabited Latium in Italy. In the eighteenth century, it referred to the "ethnic group inhabiting or occupying a country before the arrival of European colonists" ("Aboriginal" n.p.). The term "Aboriginal Australian" as specific identity marker is in use since the early nineteenth century ("Aboriginal" n.p.), but as stated in the introduction above, the discourse now also more frequently uses the term "First Nations Australians" (see "Terminology" n.p.).

rhetoric did not revolve around bringing the first peoples of Australia into the *social contract*[146] of the Australian nation.[147]

Following Foucault's argument that war is a central element in the establishment and continuance of judicial power in a nation state, Moreton-Robinson uses the term *race war* to describe the discursive and governmental structures that define Aboriginality as *less than white* citizens (*Possessive* 155). She argues that the perpetuation of the thesis "that the right to welfare facilitates Indigenous addiction and dysfunction" is in fact a mask for using Indigenous welfare dependency as a core strategy of patriarchal white sovereignty (*Possessive* 163). This kind of "'knowledge' about Indigenous pathology circulates as strategic truth in the race war to rationalize the continuing subjugation of the Indigenous population and encourage non-Indigenous investment in patriarchal white sovereignty" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 168). As long as the stereotypes hold true because they supposedly have a pathological validation, available resources do not need to be redistributed.[148]

In order to address this structural inequality, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and elders called for an Indigenous voice to be written into the Australian constitution in 2017 by publishing the *Uluru Statement from the Heart.* The statement received international attention, and the Australian government promised to realize it in full. However, the subsequent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice referendum was rejected on October 14, 2023, with almost a 60 to 40 majority. The campaign was dogged by misinformation that spread unfounded fears that an Indigenous voice in parliament would threaten white home owners, destabilize democracy and enable the UN to "take over" Australia (Remeikis and Josh Butler n.p.). The populist discourse managed to mobilize the *white possession* of the nation state. A study conducted by the Australian National University since came to the conclusion that while "the data suggests that Australians think that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians continue to suffer levels of

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[146] Social contract theory goes back to the seventeenth and eighteenth century-theorists Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued that men in a society entered into a "social contract" either among themselves or with a chosen ruler or central authority, thus entering the stage of "civilized society" (in contrast to anarchy or prehistoric states of nature), see Duignan.

[147] This has led Aileen Moreton-Robinson to point out that the social contract is and always has been "a means of agreement between white men to live together, make laws, and govern, incorporating white women into the polity as their subordinates through the marriage contract" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 155). In this regard, the 1967 referendum is a strong example of white patriarchal possession.

[148] For further context: Australia was one of only four nation states (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) who refused to ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. Australia first rejected it by claiming that the declaration's endorsement of Indigenous peoples' self-determination stood in opposition to the state's territorial integrity United Nations, and only endorsed the declaration in 2009, when placed under increasing pressure. New Zealand endorsed the declaration in April 2010, followed by Canada in November and the United States in December 2010.

disadvantage that is both caused by past government policies and that justified extra government assistance," "they did not see the Voice model put to them as the right approach to remedy that disadvantage" (Biddle et al. x). Treaty negotiations between Indigenous groups and state governments have since been put on hold and only partially revived (Brissenden n.p.). Nonetheless, this example shows that *white possession* as a power structure is not a relic of the past but continues to take effect in present-day politics. It is therefore all the more important to learn to recognize *how* these structures are implemented and *when* they are deployed. This thesis is one example of such an investigation. Before I conclude this section, I would like to offer two short paragraphs on how the same (sociopolitical) discourses that employ whiteness as a possession also place Indigenous populations and other racialized populations and refugees in relation.

As Moreton-Robinson points out, early whiteness studies by white scholars such as Theodore Allen, David Roediger, George Lipsitz, Ruth Frankenberg, and Karen Brodkin neglected Indigeneity in their work on white identity, focusing instead on issues of "migration, slavery, and the logic of capital" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xix). Especially for the North American context, the focus has been on the racialized effects of neoliberal policies on Black-American, Latinx and Asian American communities, as well as racist immigration policies. What has been neglected, is how these communities themselves are often placed (discursively) in relation to the Indigenous population. This blind spot is addressed within settler colonial critique.

Settler colonial critique of color turns towards questions of settlers of color on land of which Indigenous peoples were originally dispossessed. Instead of focusing on the individual and questions of complicity, it generally investigates how the white concept of land as property leads to commodification and structures of power that elevate one group of people over another. Chicksaw scholar Jody Byrd in *Transit of Empire*, for example, traces how migration ultimately relies on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Targeting migration, in turn, however, is not a solution to the issue. Instead, there is a need for the reconceptualization of the underlying problem of the commodification of land and concepts of possession that mean exclusivist access, offering alternatives of shared use and caretaking (see also Andrea Smith, "Indigeneity"). Indigenous scholars have developed understandings of sovereignty that offer such a reconceptualization. This call for a reconceptualization of the commodification of land and possession leads us back to the beginning of this section, and further to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptualization of Country in Section 2.3.2. What is still in need of definition for this dissertation is how concepts of sovereignty interact with concepts of Country and how they differ from white conceptualizations of property and possession. I will turn to this question in the next section, and

there I will also explain that Indigenous sovereignty is (almost) always tied to Indigenous culture, which connects it back to literature as an artifact of culture.

2.3.4 Sovereignty

As promised above, I will now provide a deeper discussion of Indigenous concepts of sovereignty. The term *sovereignty*, its use and misuse in interrelation to Western discourses of state- and nationhood have been the site of much contention within Native/Indigenous studies. Lenape scholar Joanne Barker in *Indigenous Sovereignty Matters* has traced how the Western concept of sovereignty was deployed in order to justify the occupation and subjugation of Indigenous territories. Moreton-Robinson has demonstrated in "Incommensurable Sovereignties" that "Indigenous sovereignties challenge the philosophical premises of state sovereignty as these different forms do not share the same ontology" (258). As such, the English term *sovereignty* has in part become "a placeholder in the English language for different concepts within indigenous epistemologies" (Simpson, "Place" 19). This means that the use of the English word *sovereignty* always needs to be understood "in relation to [their] own political traditions" and as such can have the meaning of "authentic power coming from a generated consensus and a respect for dissent rather than sovereignty coming from authoritarian power or power-over style of governance" (Simpson, "Place" 19). Sovereignty understood in this sense refers to self-determination. This self-determination extends to both Indigenous "political cultures and non-hierarchical systems of governance" and is used "to mean the maintenance of these relationships through balance, care, and nurturing rather than coercion" (Simpson, "Place" 19). Furthermore, Indigenous sovereignties are not "temporally constrained" to certain time periods of possession, but "are inextricably connected to being in and of our lands" (Moreton-Robinson, "Incommensurable" 259). To summarize, Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty are always land-based (but not territory-based) and serve in their practical application and form (systems of governance) the maintenance of balance in the relationship to the land, the ancestors, and other peoples.

This land-based sovereignty "functions through the logics of relativity finding expression in kin relations, respect, responsibility and obligation that exist outside the logic of capital and familial ties to private property and nation states" (Moreton-Robinson, "Incommensurable" 259). In this definition, she draws on Vine Deloria's concept of relativity that takes the Indigenous worldview of "'we are all relatives'. . .as a methodological tool for obtaining knowledge," by positing that "everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships makes up the natural world as we experience it. This concept is simply the relativity concept as applied to a universe that people experience as alive and not as dead or inert"

(34). Deloria contends that this concept of *relativity* is *reality* "for tribal peoples, as opposed to the reality sought by Western scientists, [and] was the experience of the moment coupled with the interpretive scheme that had been woven together over the generations" (36–37). In other words, he describes how Indigenous peoples relate experiences to their cultural frames of reference. Moreton-Robinson then takes this view on relativity and reframes it into the concept of relationality by foregrounding ancestral and kinship ties that extend beyond the human plane (Moreton-Robinson, "Relationality"). As such, relationality is defined as a major component of Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, "Incommensurable" 259).

Bear Clan Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred contends that sovereignty "is an exclusionary concept rooted in an adversarial and coercive Western notion of power" (*Peace* 53), and that to "frame the struggle to achieve justice in terms of indigenous 'claims' against the state is implicitly to accept the fiction of state sovereignty" (57). He challenges Indigenous communities to conceptualize their own notions of sovereignty that are based in what he terms *cultural resurgence* and that are independent from Western legal definitions ("Cultural" 3–11). In *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* and later in *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson extends this idea of *resurgence* and bases it first and foremost on continued cultural practice and land-based learning (learning *on* the land, learning *from* the land). For Simpson, this constitutes radical political action because it is an "insertion of [in Simpson's case] Nishnaabeg presence" (*Dancing* 12); it creates "a space and place where the impacts of colonialism [are] lessened, where we [the Nishnaabeg] could feel what it feels like to be part of a united, healthy community, where our children could glimpse our beautiful visions for their future" (12–13). In her understanding, returning to (protected) spaces of culture in order to grow knowledge and understanding through immersion is a necessary step in regaining self-determination and empowerment. Ngarigu scholar Jakelin Troy remarks for the Australian First Nations that the "deep emotional connection to Country that cannot be broken . . . seems to connect Indigenous people worldwide. Our countries reach up and touch each other, and our histories are emotionally connected through invasion, resistance, strength, and survival. We have been hunted, but we fought back and we remain" (48). And just like Leanne Sipson and the Nishnaabeg, the Ngarigu, "the ice mob of the Australian Snowies," "are engaging with their deep past connections to Country, using performances of music and dance to assert their nation's ongoing presence" (Troy 43). The assertion of Indigenous presence on traditional land is an act of both resistance and sovereignty.

Some scholars have argued that within Western conceptions of sovereignty, Indigenous claims to land and territory still stand outside the nation state's constitutional framework, because they historically precede them. For these scholars, Indigenous activism remains separate from

activism that mobilizes around key terms such as minorities, civil rights or citizenship (Teves et al., "Sovereignty" 3). For other scholars and activists, however, there has also been fruitful engagement in the field of critical ethnic studies as well as a sharing of strategies with other political rights movements.[149] Within this discourse, *sovereignty* is often used as "English-language placeholder term structuring a vast number of ways Native people have for tens of thousands of years conceived of land in vastly different geographical spaces and in a multitude of different languages" (Raheja 27), while at the same time exploring how it can "be articulated in ways that are both beneficial to the political autonomy of Native nations and legible to the settler state" (Raheja 27). Sovereignty thus recenters Indigenous cultural practices and community, while also allowing inter-communal exchange.

Keeping this in mind, it is unsurprising that definitions of Indigenous sovereignty vary greatly. In his 1994 *Tribal Secrets*, Robert Warrior argues for Indigenous *intellectual sovereignty* as key to Indigenous self-determination. For him, "intellectual sovereignty" is "an open-ended process" that develops over time (97) and can neither be immediately achieved, nor is it static. The term has received positive recognition because it highlights the process of working against the continued mental harm caused by colonialist ideology. The term has also been criticized because it is seen as fostering a form of inner emigration that loses sight of the political fight for land and rights of self-determination (Teves et al., "Sovereignty" 10). Warrior's articulation, however, is more similar to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising*'s "decolonization of the mind" (*Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*) which may form the foundation for any kind of anti-colonial action.

For Scott Lyons, "sovereignty is an ideal principle, the beacon by which we seek the paths to agency and power and community renewal" ("Rhetorical" 449). More specifically, *rhetorical sovereignty* "is the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse" (Lyons, "Rhetorical" 449–50). This definition needs to be read within the context of the colonial history of using the English written word against Indigenous peoples (in the form of dishonored treaties, as well as in the hegemonic education in boarding schools,[150] among other examples), which has left Indigenous peoples with "a persistent distrust of the written word in English, one that resonates in homes and schools and courts of law still today" (Lyons,

[149] For example, the Red Power movement in the United States was informed by the strategies and tactics of the Black Power movements (see also Teves et al., "Sovereignty" 5).

[150] For Lyons, the boarding school stands out as the ultimate symbol of white domination, even genocide, through assimilation in the American Indian experience." (Lyons, "Rhetorical" 449).

"Rhetorical" 449). He classifies the "written word" as a specifically Western phenomenon, qualifying that "if our respect for the Word remains resolute, our faith in the written word is compromised at best" ("Rhetorical" 449). The weight of the oral word thus is emphasized within the statement, whereas the written English word is marked as inherently intertwined in the system of epistemological violence wielded by the colonizers.[151]

Leanne Simpson articulates an *embodied*[152] concept of sovereignty, which is, for her,

> . . . the ability to keep our bodies safe from violence; to use the best of both indigenous and Western medicine to care for ourselves; to define and identify our bodies, sexualities, and relationships the way we see fit; and the capacity to express those identities freely without fear of violence or reprisal. ("Place" 20)

This conception extends to the sovereignty to keep the Indigenous body (and especially the female body as life-bearing) free from contamination in its interaction with the (often contaminated) environment. Leanne Simpson further articulates a *gendered* perspective of sovereignty, which she clearly demarcates from the authoritarian enactment of sovereignty by the nation state. She argues that "sovereignty from indigenous perspectives includes our bodies . . . [and] our minds and our knowledge system" ("Place" 21). This means that sovereignty is not bestowed upon people through a signed document, but "comes from an abundance of healthy, responsible, respectful relationships with all of our relations" (Simpson, "Place" 22). Sovereignty in this sense is a matter of "being in landscape and experiencing one's body and one's voice as part of a landscape – the touch of wind on one's skin, the smells, sounds, and sights of a place" and is a form of experiencing, researching and performing history (McGrath and Rademaker 15). Experiencing Country in this embodied form also means that the experience is gendered (see Andrea Smith, *Native* 255–72; Monture Angus).

At the core of this understanding of *embodied sovereignty* lie the ability and opportunity to "regenerate indigenous languages, philosophies, legal systems, and intellectual systems and to nurture and continue those systems for the always coming new generations" (Simpson, "Place" 21). Sovereignty is tied to cultural revival. But even more, sovereignty is tied specifically to place, because land and Country determine Indigenous epistemologies: "sovereignty for indigenous

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[151] Like African American Criticism, Indigenous scholars have also long developed theory within activist and community contexts, and outside of academic institutions or traditions. Examples would be Simpson, *Dancing*, Simpson, *Always*, and Dudgeon et al.

[152] Theories of embodied cognition "posit that perception and action always need to be considered in relation to the environment and context within which perception and action take place" (Barwick 109). However, in the case of Leanne Simpson, I primarily understand it as "present in the body" and feeling "through the body" in place, in its interconnection with Indigenous epistemologies. I will therefore neither equate nor compare it to Western conceptualizations of embodiment as suggested, for instance, by Caracciolo and Kukkonen.

peoples is not an abstract political concept—it is an intimate, lived concept" (Simpson, "Place" 22). Bringing this understanding of sovereignty as a relationship between Country, the history (and histories) of place and the body together, queer Indigenous scholars have stressed that patriarchy and heteronormativity do not structure this relationship. Instead, they are the logics of the colonial power and, in effect, the white settler nation state.[153] The imaginary of the nation state is both white and hyper-masculine (see Walby). It invariably produces hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, and able-bodiedness (see Sharma 35; Barker, "Rights"), hierarchies that cannot simply be interpreted in terms of Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty and community.[154] This is not to say that these hierarchies do not exist. But where they do, they need to be understood as the results of colonization.

Despite this understanding of gendered hierarchies as products of colonization, discussions around sexual and gender violence in Indigenous communities (see Chapter 3) continue to be hijacked by white hegemonical discourses demanding intervention, policing, and punishment, instead of community-centered approaches that focus on Indigenous perspectives and strategies. Federal and state responses have been criticized intensely for relying "heavily on incarceration as a response to violent crime" (Deer, "Rape Law" 154).[155] After incarceration, offenders then return to their communities, and scholars such as Sarah Deer argue that the separation in a prison system is no solution for the issues of violent behavior in the first place. What is missing, among other things, is "true community accountability" (Deer, "Rape Law" 151). Incarceration only delays the underlying problems if it does not exacerbate them, but it does not address them (see Deer, "Rape Law"; Deer, *Beginning;* Andrea Smith, *Conquest*). Conversely, she argues that self-determination and sovereignty applied in these cases would equal judicial power over their own people, including appropriate punishment, reparation, and reintegration. The alternative to the white judicial system in this context does not equal an absence of justice, but a different and (in Deer's argument) more fitting form of justice.

Broadening the concept of sovereignty even further, Michelle Raheja articulates her concept of *visual sovereignty*. It "takes seriously the importance of sovereignty as it is expressed intellectually, politically, socially, and individually" across a wide range of media, as well as "in

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[153] For examples, see Driskill et al., "Introduction" Finley, Andrea Smith, "Queer", Justice et al., and Rifkin, *Erotics*

[154] Nandita Sharma further argues that any sovereignty project pursuing the establishment of a nation state will invariably depend and build upon exclusionary politics, trying to naturalize their rights of possession. For her, the underlying problem is that anticolonialism has largely been equated to gaining national sovereignty and any idea of a nation is always already ideological (see Sharma 41).

[155] This holds true for both North America and Australia, as visible in the recent changes to criminal law in the Northern Territory (see Middleton).

cultural forms as diverse as dance, film, theater, the plastic arts, literature, and even hip-hop and graffiti" (Raheja 28). Raheja argues that "sovereignty is deeply rooted in the cultural practices of Native people" and this includes embeddedness in "land, linguistic practices, sexual and gender identity formation, and other cultural work, often in ways that not only precede settler colonialism but that circumvent it" (30). It is therefore diminishing the importance of the concept within Indigenous epistemologies to not think about it beyond the constraints of white legal discourse. At the same time, the concept of

> . . . sovereignty is historically contingent. What it has meant and what it currently means belong to the political subjects who have deployed and are deploying it to do the work of defining their relationships with one another, their political agendas, and their strategies for decolonization and social justice. (Barker, "For" 26)

Indigenous peoples in the Canadian territory have been using the term *First Nations* for several decades now in order to reflect their sovereignty in their naming. The term is used less frequently within the US-American context (although "tribal nations" is common) and has gained traction within the Australian context in the last couple of years. The term *nation* in Native and Indigenous studies describes more than simply a shared culture, language, or territory. Instead, these aspects need to be coupled with "intersubjective recognition . . . in order for a social group to become a nation as such" (Lyons, "Nationalism" 173),[156] and is imagined to reflect "the political structure and organizational principles of Native social and cultural experience" (Teves et al., "Nation" 157). Métis scholar Chris Andersen further argues that the term *nation* is to be understood "as a theory (and a claim) to political legitimacy and cultural unity, always already caught on the horns of two opposing sets of social forces," i.e. the reproduction of the culturally unified settler nation and the continual claim to cultural difference ("Indigenous" 180–181). Andersen refers to nations both in Stuart Hall's sense as the end result of claims to cultural unity and in Bhabha's sense of the nations as powerful narrators in order to explain the political and strategic choice for the use of the term within Native studies ("Indigenous" 182).[157]

2.3.5 Queer/Feminist Indigenous Studies

The location of queer and feminist Indigenous studies in the wider field of critical Indigenous studies is problematic insofar as many scholars within the discipline have identified and rejected the structural whiteness of mainstream feminism and queer scholarship and activism. Much like critiques by Black and Chicana feminism, Indigenous women have not seen their experiences and

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[156] The quotation is made by Lyons with reference to Gellner.

[157] Andersen here explicitly references S. Hall, "Question"; Bhabha, *Nation*.

everyday struggles represented within white feminist movements (Barker, "Feminisms"; Barrios de Chungara). Within Indigenous criticism, issues of racialization, colonization and dispossession have often been foregrounded. They call for alliances along "color lines" before "gender lines," because these alliances share the experienced oppression by the majority (i.e., white settler society), an oppression in which white (middle-class) women and self-proclaimed feminists have been complicit (see, e.g., Moreton-Robinson, *Talking*). As a result of this complicity by white feminism, "Indigenous feminism has routinely been denigrated as untraditional, inauthentic, non-liberatory for Indigenous women and illegitimate as an ideological position, political analysis and organizational process" (Green, "Taking" 3). Similar criticism has been addressed to queer studies and queer theory, calling attention to its mostly white, middle-class male subject and the underrepresentation and undertheorization of intersections with racialized and classed identities (see, for instance, Finley; Monaghan 196–203; Driskill 21–34; Morgensen; Muñoz).

For Indigenous women, challenging existing gendered issues of violence and resource distribution within their community often leads to the label *feminist*, which is then cast as an explicit challenge to their authenticity. As Joyce Green notes, the attempt to exclude and silence feminist voices are similar within Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities because both of them work along gendered hierarchies of power (again, I will point out, this is a direct result of settler colonial state interference in Indigenous communities). Moreover, calls for resource and power redistribution always mean that those in (relative) power and resource possession potentially have something to lose. This challenge to their authenticity, to their very identity as being *Indigenous* and ultimately to their right to even speak to their own issues, is an additional challenge for Indigenous women that white feminists do not face (Green 6-7).[158]

However, none of this means that issues of gendered experiences within Indigenous studies have not been addressed. Intersectional analyses have often been part of critical Indigenous studies, but as with all naming-processes, the self-chosen label represents political, theoretical, and activist affiliation as well as the individual's main area of focus. In addition, criticism of Western academia and epistemology is expressed through the rejection of Western labels and the call for different conceptualizations to describe Indigenous positionalities. Nevertheless, there is a growing canon of what Green rightfully calls "powerfully, theoretically informed and politically potent Indigenous feminist voices" (3), but these need to be understood as their own theoretical standpoint, not as a subcategory of white Western feminism:

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[158] I will not extend this comparison to African American feminist thought as this would be far too complex for the topic at hand. For a more in-depth explanation and historical recapitulation for the US-American context see Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class*.

> Indigenous feminism is similar to other feminist positions in its foregrounding of women's experiences and advocacy for women's rights and interest, in is recognition of the gendered and raced nature of social experiences, and in its identification of the oppressive nature of patriarchy. It is distinct from other feminisms in its fundamental familiarity with the oppressions enacted through colonialism and in its formulation of a feminist critique derived from that experience. (Green, "Taking" 5)

In this "fundamental familiarity" that shapes the experience of colonialism as the basis for Indigenous feminist critique, Indigenous feminism parallels Black feminism as standpoint theory (see Hill Collins, "Defining"), but it differs in the defining structure of oppression. For Indigenous criticism, the original dispossession of land (which in turn forms the basis for their land-based knowledge-systems, see Section 2.3.2) is as central as displacement through slavery for African American critique. Both forms of criticism, however, view settler colonialism, slavery, and racism as gendered processes.

Settler colonialism as gendered process, in turn, means that standards and ideals for female behavior have been enforced on Indigenous communities everywhere, not only regulating what is considered to be appropriate conduct for women, but also introducing patrilineal systems of inheritance, including, for example, status recognition in Canada.[159] The latter issue is specific to the North American context because status recognition there is tied to governmental benefits and land rights (at least in the form of Indian "autonomy" within the reservation). Australia is the only settler colonial nation state to never sign a treaty with the Indigenous owners of the territory. Since reservation land thus could not be passed down along tribal affiliation lines, the introduction of restrictive inheritance laws was unnecessary. This does not mean, however, that the effect of the settler nation state is less gendered; it is simply expressed along other avenues, some of which have already been explored above (such as the continued governmental and judicial insistence of calling on Indigenous men as *Native* informants on cultural authenticity as well as the disregard and discreditation of women's testimony in Native title cases). As Larissa Behrendt states:

> The bodies of black women are contested terrain, the spoils of colonial conquest. Aboriginal women, who enjoyed power and respect within their traditional communities, fell to the lowest rung on the socio-economic ladder in colonial society because of the double taint of a subordinated race and a subordinated gender. Through this transferred misogyny many black men have been quick to learn that exploitation of black women was acceptable and quick to forget the status Aboriginal women held in their own communities. Aboriginal women, as primary caretakers of children and significant

[159] According to the Indian Act up until 1985, First Nations status could only be passed down along patrilineal familial lines. Women who married a First Nations man could claim First Nations status for their children. First Nations women who married outside the reservation, however, lost their status as First Nations woman. This rule was successfully challenged in 1973 by Jeanette Lavell and Yvonne Bedard in front of the Canadian Supreme Court (see Green 6-7).

> contributors to the food source and economies of their communities, earned their own power and respect. (Behrendt, "Consent" 364)

Within the Australian context, the relationship between Indigenous and white feminism has been fundamentally shaped by the Bell-Huggins debate. Law scholar Megan Davis has called the debate a "watershed moment" because for "the first time, it publicly exposed important tensions between white and Aboriginal women in Australia" (146). The debate originated from Diane Bell and Topsy Napurrula Nelson's 1989 article "Speaking about Rape is Everyone's Business" in the *Women's Studies International Forum*. In the article, Bell and Nelson call attention to a high prevalence of gender-based violence in Aboriginal communities and call for feminists of all ethnicities to engage with the problem, identify causes and find solutions.

The article has sparked outrage with a number of Aboriginal women who expressed this in a letter to the editors. Jackie Huggins, Jo Willmot, Isabel Tarrago, Kathy Willetts, Liz Bond, Eleanor Bourke, Maryann Bin-Salik, Pat Fowell, Joann Schmider, Valerie Craigie and Linda McBride-Levi challenged the assumptions presented in the articles as a reflection of a white middle-class privilege, which continues to perpetuate the "white imperialism of others' cultures which are theirs to appropriate, criticise and castigate" (Huggins et al. 506). They call white women out for their complicity in the colonial project, stating that their "country was colonised on both a racially and sexually imperialistic in the domestic base" and that "in many cases our [Aboriginal] women considered white women worse than men in their treatment of Aboriginal women, particularly in the domestic service field" (Huggins et al. 506). They further criticize Bell for possibly having placed Topsy Nelson's name as co-author, even though Nelson's role as represented in the article and her commentary in relation to the topic itself is more fitting for a chief-informant. Huggins et al. claim that through this practice, Bell herself is repeating processes of appropriation of expertise, by basically claiming her academic analysis to be "sanctioned" by an Aboriginal elder while remaining ignorant of the underlying power structures and relations (506).[160] Furthermore, outside criticism and attention to intra-racial violence would invariably be misappropriated by racist discourses (Huggins et al. 506), leaving Aboriginal men and women in an even more vulnerable position than before. This criticism is especially pertinent since Indigenous women and girls are the most vulnerable rapes and femicides that transgress racialized lines due to the long history of gendered and sexualized violence of colonization.[161]

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[160] This criticism and the underlying power structures are the reasons the debate is commonly referred to as the Bell-Huggins debate, not the Bell/Nelson-Huggins debate, despite Nelson's name as co-author, an omission that Megan Davis points out as a regular occurrence (146).

[161] In Canada, this has become most visible in the Idle-No-More movement that has since spread globally and addresses the number of missing Indigenous women and girls. For Indigenous women and girls, geographical isolation

In *Talking Up to the White Woman*, Moreton-Robinson has identified Bell's article as an example of the deployment of the "subject position middle-class white woman" who is speaking

> . . . for [Aboriginal women] as the authoritative voice of the all-knowing subject . . . Indigenous women are positioned as uninformed girls who cannot discern theory and develop political strategies, but are positioned as 'women' when [they] write about the same things as white feminists. This positioning is not arbitrary; it is grounded in the historically constructed premise of inferiorisation within the hegemony of white ideology. (Moreton-Robinson, *Talking* 112)

This mechanism of the white expert and often even the positioning as a *white savior* continues today. Moreover, within Indigenous communities, "what constitutes public and private knowledge . . . is contextualised by elders and the kinship relations of the participants involved in the event or circumstances that govern these deliberations" (Moreton-Robinson, *Talking* 121). The positioning of the white experts ignores this practice.

It must be clarified that Moreton-Robinson does not advocate for issues of violence or abuse to be ignored or left unaddressed. But within the historical and current systems of racist states, these deliberations are never free of intersectional power relations and racist abuse, which means that the negotiation of these circumstances should lie within the agency of Indigenous women – the very ones who are posed as passive victims in Bell's argument.[162] Instead of deciding to simply intervene, the basis for a trustful and fruitful alliance would be an earnest engagement with Indigenous research methodologies and the subsequently informed building of reciprocal relations (see Section 2.3.6 on Indigenous methodology, in depth see L. T. Smith).

Following the Bell-Huggins debate, however, white feminists have mostly withdrawn from engagements with Indigenous issues. Some have wanted to be respectful of Indigenous women's spaces and have therefore been careful not to intrude, others may have wanted to avoid debate or possible rebuttal. Regardless of the motivation behind this withdrawal, Megan Davis contends that it has left Aboriginal women in "political and social isolation . . . on issues of policy and law reform that receive no traction in the Aboriginal political domain or mainstream politics" (150). Nicole Watson, in her analysis of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, has identified a profound lack of engagement with the policy from a feminist perspective, which ultimately allowed the crafting of a response that proved both ineffectual in addressing the underlying issue and successful in the perpetuation of racism and racist stereotypes ("Northern").

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also plays a major role in their vulnerability, especially where this is coupled with nearby locations of mining or fracking companies and so-called "man-camps," named for their overwhelmingly male workforce (see Barker, "Introduction").

[162] Bell did respond to the issues raised by Huggins et al. but from a firmly defensive position, not one particularly open to criticism. The whole of the debate is contextualized in Moreton-Robinson's *Talking Up to the White Woman*.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) is often also referred to as the Northern Territory Intervention. The Emergency Response was a reaction to the findings of the 2007 report "Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle: Little Children are Sacred," which was commissioned by the Northern Territory government and alleged rampant sexual abuse and neglect of Indigenous children. The legislation of the NTER declared an exceptional state of emergency, allowing for a number of protective rights for Australian First Nations people to be suspended:

> Among the measures taken were a massive influx of police and (unarmed) military into the respective communities, a suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), a cancellation of the right to prohibit access by non-community members to areas belonging to Indigenous communities according to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth), the abolition of the consideration of Indigenous customary law, compulsory lease (for zero dollars) to the government of Indigenous lands in public areas, the mandatory management of individual social security income, alcohol restrictions and the banning of pornography, and an intended compulsory medical examination of all children in the areas concerned. Billboards were set up at the entrances of 73 prescribed Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory announcing that pornography and alcohol were banned. (Baehr and Schmidt-Haberkamp, "Introduction" 1).

These communities were publicly branded "as spaces of perversion and decay" (Povinelli, *Economies* 54). And while there is no dispute on the fact that Australian First Nations communities continue to be underfunded and underserved, the measures taken with the NTER have been mainly directed at criminalizing Australian Aboriginal adults (and men especially) and not at combatting issues of violence at their core of structural and social imbalance.

In recourse to the Federal Department of Health's analysis, Moreton-Robinson points out that "of the mandatory child health checks revealed that out of the 7,433 mandatory health checks of Indigenous children in the Northern Territory, only 39 were considered at risk of neglect or abuse, and only 4 children were identified as being sexually abused" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 171), which for her shows a disproportionate discrepancy between the allegations in the report and the massive state response. This view is shared by Nicole Watson in her analysis of the legislation who draws attention to the fact that little of the legal measures are actually directed at child protection (N. Watson, "Northern"). While both scholars see the need to address "the linkages between poverty in Aboriginal communities, trans-generational trauma, and heightened vulnerability to abuse" (N. Watson, "Northern" 910), neither sees the NTER as remotely appropriate response.[163] The NTER is only one if one of the most debated examples for structural

[163] Marcia Langton makes a more moderate judgement on the intervention, stating that "while some provisions, most notably additional, long sought-after financing in our communities, are welcome, other aspects of the package have had mixed impacts, sometimes creating more disempowerment, sometimes creating opportunities for social and emotional breathing space" (Langton 5).

violence that has been directed at Indigenous communities in recent years. As multifaceted as the discussion around the intervention has been, it is an even more complex task to translate this violence, which is often only visible in its disproportionate effect, into narrative form.

In addition to criticism of the NTER, Indigenous feminist and queer scholarship have also increasingly complicated white constructions of Indigenous sexuality and the (often violent) deployment of harmful cultural stereotypes such as "the predatory Native man" and "the oversexualized Native woman." As Drew Hayden Taylor (Ojibway) notes for the Canadian context, Native sexuality is often negatively connotated in media representations, and there is a strong need for re-education and combatting of these stereotypes. Similar stereotypes also operate within US-American and Australian contexts, and they leave Indigenous women at a heightened vulnerability for male violence and murder (see Andrea Smith, *Conquest* and Sarah Deer, *Beginning*). As Larissa Behrendt has pointed out, the loss of status that Aboriginal women held in their pre-colonial society has led to the normalization of exploitation and abuse ("Consent" 364). In *Without Reservation,* Kateri Akiwenzie-Dammin traces how Western institutions (and especially the Church) have reshaped Indigenous gender relations as well as their sensibilities about sexuality. Both Akiwenzie-Dammin and Jennifer Denetdale refuse to contain sexuality within bourgeois conceptions of domesticity and the constructed binary of the *domestic* and the *public* (see Denetdale, "Relative" 235).[164] Instead, as Denetdale concludes, feminist and queer scholars continue to "draw upon the scholarship of the 'structure of feeling', of affect, to celebrate Indigenous bodies, thereby refusing to relegate violence to spaces that silence" and they argue "that affect is a crucial component for transforming Indigenous governance, political systems, and other institutions where Indigenous life is made and remade" ("Relative" 235). This "structure of feeling" in the Indigenous context describes the sense of belonging to land and people, irrespective of settler-state impositions. *Belonging* within Indigenous epistemologies is an enaction of resurgence that is expressed through ceremony, dance, and storytelling, which centers feelings against the rationale of territory boundaries.[165]

This turn towards the celebration and intimacy of Indigenous bodies also further dispense with settler nations' narratives of "Indians as always already dead" and predetermined for

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[164] The differentiation of the spheres "private/domestic" and "public" derive from feminist discourses that focus on observations of white middle-class women. White working-class women, Black and Indigenous women (as well as Chicana and other subjects racialized as non-white) have always had to work outside the home, often in manual labor in the fields and later in factories in order to support their families. The distinction is thus to be applied with care.

[165] As Ann McGrath and Laura Rademaker explain: "'Country' being a term in Aboriginal English denoting pride in belonging to certain places and long-held sovereignties. Sites of family and knowledge, they are abiding Indigenous domains . . . Country denotes discrete tracts of ancestral, richly storied and nurtured land" (McGrath and Rademaker 1).

extinction as relicts from another time: "the vitality of Indigenous life, in our telling and performance, refuse tragedy and death as the only stories" (Denetdale, "Relative" 235). At the same time, these stories of Indigenous sexuality bring forth positive representations of love and intimacy and how they can be expressed. This is especially important because, as Denetdale argues, the generational trauma of physical and sexual abuse in residential and boarding schools lies at the heart of generations of violence within Indigenous communities and families and has affected and even altered positive expressions of love and intimacy (Denetdale, "Relative" 235).[166] With regard to the corpus analyzed in this study, this becomes most visible in Melissa Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip*, where the original abuse of the grandfather by white police officers and foremen fundamentally alters the structures of intimacy within the family, making physical and verbal abuse the norm and leaving every member of the family isolated and alone in their pain. As Anne Brewster and Christ Prentice point out: "many Aboriginal women writers' work – in both poetry and fiction – has been preoccupied with exploring the effects of gendered violence . . . It is a dominant theme in Aboriginal women's literature" (181). They additionally note Alexis Wright's first novel, *Plains of Promise* (1997), which narrates effects of transgenerational trauma and Melissa Lucashenko's first novel, *Steam Pigs* (1997), which also contains intimate partner violence and substance abuse.

Returning to feminist scholarship and investigations of gender in critical Indigenous studies, Jennifer Denetdale notes that this form of research has also generated interest in Indigenous masculinities. As examples she offers the studies *Native Men Remade* (Kanaka Maoli values of balance and respect), *Diné Masculinities*, *Masculindians: Conversations about Indigenous Manhood* and *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Identities, Legacies, Regeneration*.[167] Denetdale argues that these studies can be interpreted as interventions that call for a return to traditional values and conceptions of masculinity that extricate themselves from colonialism ("Relative" 234). She also, however, criticizes them for recreating supposed traditional gender roles that unconsciously re-inscribe heteronormative patriarchy ("Chairmen" 9). Denetdale states that so far, "scholars of Indigenous masculinities do not appear to be versed in either gender and sexuality studies or Indigenous feminisms and queer critiques, thereby limiting an understanding of gender and sexuality" ("Relative" 235). For her, scholars have invariably been educated within colonial heteronormative and patriarchal society and – without proper awareness

[166] Violent experiences at residential schools and on missions are often the subject of Indigenous life writings and have brought public and political attention to these issues. For the North American context, one of the best-known examples is Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2021), for the Australian context Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) and Doris Pilkington Garimara's *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1996).

[167] For a perspective on Indigenous masculinities in contemporary First Nations literature see McKegney.

of its manifestations – will be hard pressed to offer visions of masculinities that do not subscribe to the same values. For the literary analysis is therefore important to avoid any essentialist statements regarding Indigenous masculinities. The toxic masculinity exhibited by Ken in *Too Much Lip* and Blackie and Rip in *Dancing Home* is the learned toxic masculinity of white Australian culture.

In a similar vein to Denetdale's warning above, activists such as Diné artist Jolene Yazzie have warned that *tradition* in Indigenous communities is often invoked with the specific intention of rejecting person who do not identify with binary gender norms from the community. Looking back at the Diné creation story, however, she points out that "Diné people have always understood gender as a spectrum rather than a binary," which means that the rejection of LGBTQ+ and Two Spirit people invokes inappropriate colonial settler binary gender norms as supposed tradition (Yazzie n.p.). For the Australian context, most investigations into Indigenous masculinities have developed out of the health services field and concentrate on Indigenous men's mental health, substance abuse and suicide rates, resulting in recommendations for culture-appropriate guidelines for service providers and health care workers. An example for a literary exploration of the topic is Vivienne Cleven's *Bitin' Back* (2001). In the short novel, protagonist and star soccer player Nevil Dooley suddenly begins to dress like a woman, and names himself Jean Rhys. The allusion to the white author of *The Wide Saragossa Sea* (1966) goes mostly unnoticed by the rural community in which he lives, but he is faced with both racist and homophobic reactions by his peers and family. The end of the novel reveals that he is not, in fact, *identifying* as a woman (therefore there is no change of pronouns in my sentences above), but that his cross-dressing was in fact an experiment in order to see how open and queer-friendly his community and family are. The revelation comes just in time to save him from serious harm.

The imposition and often violent enforcement of Western binary gender norms can be traced all over Indigenous histories, with most of the work in the field thus far concentrating on North America. Another example would be Deborah Miranda's investigation of Indigenous peoples and non-binary gender identities in the territories of former Spanish colonies. She contends that the Spanish colonizers targeted and killed non-binary Indigenous peoples, or so-called "joyas," because they did not comply with Christian ideals of gender identities (54–56). This has caused "the strategy within many Indigenous communities of remaining silent on matters of gender diversity as a way of protecting individuals against harassment, physical assault, rape, and murder" (Barker, "Gender" 513). In a different vein, Sarah Deer has advocated for the restoration of judicial authority to tribal nations in criminal cases such as rape, arguing that justice systems dominated by men (and oftentimes white men) re-victimize Indigenous women when they come forward. The

issue of re-victimization has been much discussed within feminist and activist writings but remains inadequately addressed within the Western legal system.[168] Deer contends that Indigenous belief systems and traditional law can more comprehensively address the violence without re-victimizing Indigenous women to the same degree (Deer, *Beginning* 163). She thus strongly rebukes the often-evoked narrative that there would be no persecution, no "law and order" in Indigenous communities if the nation state receded and allowed a return to Indigenous government systems.

Andrea Smith argues for an interdisciplinary exchange of theories between Native studies and queer theory. She argues that the subjectless critique brought forth by queer theory (see also Section 2.2 on critical race theory) can offer a way to "not dismiss identity but structure inquiry around the logics of race, colonialism, capitalism, gender and sexuality" ("Queer" 46), by interrogating the normalizing logics (what is considered to be "normal"?) of heteronormativity. Subjectless critique thus moves beyond mere representation and toleration of a minority by disclosing the underlying mechanisms that define them as "other than normal" (see also Tallie 2-7). Whereas queer theory focuses on the normalizing logics of heteronormativity, queer of color criticism includes the normalizing logics of racism. Adding an Indigenous perspective to the criticism would also address the normalizing logics of colonialism, thus essentially queering "the logics of settler colonialism *and* decolonization . . . in order to properly speak the genocidal present that not only continues to disappear Indigenous peoples but reinforces the structures of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and heteropatriarchy that affect all peoples" (Andrea Smith, "Queer" 62).[169]

Aileen Moreton-Robinson, on the other hand, while supporting the aim of the critique, calls into question whether a true subjectless critique would ever be possible. For her, "queer theory discursively constructs normalization as both object and subject of inquiry. That is, normalization becomes object and subject through queer theory's discursive negation of it within analysis" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xvii). A discussion completely outside of this discursive field then becomes untenable. As with the question of Indigenous studies and Western academic forms of knowledge, the critic can only be aware of her own standpoint and the perspective this offers her,

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[168] Re-victimization within the legal process refers to the systemic problem that women face when they report abuse. It encompasses regular occurring incidents in which the "truth" of the woman's story is questioned, or in which it is suggested that she has (through her behavior, her clothes, by being out late at night, etc.) in fact brought the abuse or violation on herself (so-called victim-blaming). These comments, impressively visualized in the touring exhibition "What Were You Wearing?" by Jen Brockman and Dr. Mary Wyandt-Hiebert (see for example the UN installation in 2020 by the Spotlight Initiative), can occur as a side-remark but which often has devastating effects with regard to trust and trauma response.

[169] Other engagements of queer theory with settler colonial theory include Mark Rifkin 's *Settler Common Sense* and Scott Morgensen's *Spaces between Us*.

but not truly step outside it. This acknowledgement is important to keep in mind when reading Indigenous literary texts from a white Eurocentric position. It means that all research and analysis undertaken in this dissertation is affected by this position, even where I turn the gaze back on the white Western perspective. There are, however, guidelines and further considerations that can be taken into account to mitigate the effects. I will provide an overview of these considerations in the following section.

2.3.6 Indigenous Research Methods

At the beginning of this section, I quoted Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou) who stated that "research" was probably one of the "dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (1). This quote has to be read in context. Smith herself is a distinguished professor at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi[170] and until 2021 was the director of Te Kotahi Research Institute at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. Her words are thus not to be read as anti-scientific sentiment, but as a clearly directed criticism of the Western academy and the research methods for which it claims neutrality and universality. In the previous section on critical race theory, I explained how the Western academic system is based on a history of ideas that is distinctly European. I also positioned myself within this history of ideas in the introduction by differentiating between "white saviorism" (which I reject as a form of cultural appropriation and continued epistemic violence) and "allyship" (which I follow as it is based on a relationship of ethics and mutual respect). Further, I promised to center Indigenous critical voices, and I will strengthen this position of "learning" by giving space to Indigenous research methodologies in the following. These methodologies are culture-specific and decenter the white academy. As they require a deep understanding of the culture in question these research methods are not accessible to me as a white researcher, and they are especially not mine to develop further. This section especially will therefore be one of "listening," not of "defining."

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* laid bare the intrinsic racism and continued colonialism within the academy. She reminds us that the very "people and groups who 'made' history were the people who developed the underpinnings of the state – the economists, scientists, bureaucrats and philosophers" and "they were all men of a certain class and race" which was considered "'natural' because they were regarded (naturally) as fully rational, self-actualizing human beings capable,

[170] Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi is a wānanga, which is a publicly owned tertiary institution in the New Zealand education system providing education within a Māori cultural context.

therefore, of creating social change, that is history" (32). But the other side of the coin was that the "day-to-day lives of 'ordinary' people, and of women, did not become a concern of history until much more recently" (L. T. Smith 32). This makes history a story about power:

> We believe that history is also about justice, that understanding history will enlighten our decisions about the future. *Wrong*. History is also about power . . . It means that there is unfinished business, that we are still being colonized (and know it), and that we are still searching for justice. . . .This in turn requires a theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history. (L. T. Smith 34)

Smith has since been advocating for exactly such a theoretical approach that engages with Indigenous peoples and in turn offers them an engagement with history on equal footing. As she points out, there

> . . . are numerous oral stories which tell of what it means, what it feels like, to be present while your history is erased before your eyes, dismissed as irrelevant, ignored or rendered as the lunatic ravings of drunken old people. The negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization. (L. T. Smith 29)

Smith's analysis is especially relevant because, within the colonial process, orality is always delegitimized. It is always "writing [that] is part of theorizing and writing [that] is part of history. Writing, history and theory, then, are key sites in which Western research of the indigenous world have come together," and always through the Western (white, patriarchal, heteronormative) gaze. The Western academy, she explicates, "has constructed all the rules by which the indigenous world has been theorized, [and] indigenous voices have been overwhelmingly silenced" (L. T. Smith 29).

This means that the "act, let alone the art and science, of theorizing our own existence and realities is not something which many indigenous people assume is possible" (L. T. Smith 29). Recalling Frantz Fanon and his call for Black and Indigenous intellectuals and artists to write a new literature, a new national culture for the new nation (*Black Skin, White Masks*), Smith asserts that at the time of her writing (1999), this "still stands as a challenge" and "while this has been taken up by writers of fiction, many indigenous scholars who work in the social and other sciences struggle to write, theorize and research as indigenous scholars" (29). Smith's analysis has strongly influenced the debate in Indigenous criticism, and her words are still as relevant today as they were 24 years ago. Publications within the social and political sciences, and for both New Zealand and Australia especially in the health sciences, have since increased dramatically, and they have drawn on Indigenous methodologies to do so.

Indigenous methodologies start from a point of cultural immersion and are primarily, culture specific. They regard the protocols, values, and behaviors of their culture as essential and indispensable to methodology. Indigenous methodology regards these as

> . . . 'factors' to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood. (L. T. Smith 15)

The foundational principles are respect and ethics, and while publishing results within academic publications is not ruled out, "reciprocity and feedback" to the community take precedence (L. T. Smith 15). Knowledge is equated to responsibility and needs to be shared.[171] This means that international conferences, meetings and networks established by and for Indigenous peoples and scholars often exhibit a style (habitus) much different from Western academic conferences: "oracy, debate, formal speech making, structured silences and other conventions which shape oral traditions remain a most important way of developing trust, sharing information, strategies, advice, contacts and ideas" (L. T. Smith 14–15). These differences go far beyond the addition of 'just' adding a ceremonial opening to the gathering. They also address the fact that "research is [never] an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (L. T. Smith 5).

Underlying all Indigenous methodologies is thus a deep awareness of power as a structure and power as structuring social relations and discourses. The culture-specificity of Indigenous methods requires a deep understanding of the culture in question that goes beyond mere textual research and that is thus generally not open to community-external researchers without the leadership and guidance of community members. The development and communication of the research methodologies themselves especially must rest in Indigenous hands, and this is particularly true for communities in which some cultural knowledge is inaccessible to outsiders but considered sacred. These research methods are therefore not accessible to me as a white researcher, and I will not attempt to develop or apply them in this thesis. This does not mean, however, that methodologies in the form of guidelines for engagement with Indigenous research cannot be communicated outward, or that publications employing Indigenous research methodologies do not explain these in an accessible manner (where appropriate). I can therefore learn about these methods from Indigenous scholars and activists and remain aware of them. As stated in the introduction, I will engage with them from a position of respect and "learning."

Examples for this would be the University of Otago's Pacific Research Protocols, which include both an explication of the Pacific values that structure the protocols, and list the following concepts as protocol for the continuum from relevance over partnership to governance: 1) The

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[171] This is a clear critique of what in German one would refer to as "Hoheitswissen" and also includes aspects such as an avoidance of, for instance, academic habitus which is in itself structured by Western epistemologies.

research project must be structured so as to maximize the mutual benefit for communities and individuals, 2) the development, cultivation and maintenance of relationships (even after the end of the projects) must be part and parcel of the project, 3) all interaction must be based on respect, "demonstrated th[r]ough humility" and according to the culture-specific context, which requires 4) cultural competency, which first and foremost includes an awareness of how the researcher's own culture has shaped her "beliefs, values, practices" and behaviors. Furthermore, cultural competency presupposes a deep respect for a diversity of experience that can at times be quite distinct from her own, and the active continued learning of cultural knowledge by, for instance, "seeking ethnic-specific and context-specific advice on culturally competent practice" as well as by "understanding the importance of communicating appropriately translated information" back to the community. This means that all research is based on 5) meaningful engagement and the understanding of and respect for 6) reciprocity, 7) utility (to the very community that is being researched), 8) the rights of individual and community participants, 9) a balance of "power, control and involvement", 10) protection, which can include safeguarding Indigenous knowledge and knowledge holders, 11) capacity and capability building and 12) true and overarching participation of the targeted Indigenous population "at all levels of that research project" (University of Otago 11–13).[172] I am applying these guidelines to my thesis by engaging with Indigenous texts from a place of learning (not knowledge), and by focusing my analysis back on my own position of power as it is presented through these texts. The utility then lies in the fact that the position of the normalizing (white) power is made visible so that it might be destabilized as a construct. In order to provide a balance of "power" and "control," I center Indigenous critics and scholars of color in my theoretical texts.

In recent years, culture-specific research methodologies in Australia have included an increased focus on relationships. Drawing on the shared Australian First Nations epistemologies that see a tight interconnection between Country, ancestors, (his)tory, and knowledge, Yuin scholar Stuart Barlo and his co-authors have investigated "yarning" as Indigenous research

[172] The University of Otago here clearly states the following research works as informing the development of their protocols: The Health Research Council of New Zealand: Guidelines on Pacific Health Research (2005); Pasifika Education Research Guidelines: Final Report (2001); Human Research Ethics: A Handbook for University of the South Pacific Researchers (2009) and Solomon Islands College of Higher Education Policy on Applied Research (1990), chosen in part because "all of these publications have resulted not from one individual, but from the thinking of communities of minds from many Pacific places" and thus hopefully representing "a consensus of Pacific thinkers and leaders," nevertheless making "the protocols . . . suggestions, not prescriptions[,] . . . a beginning." (University of Otago 8).

methodology.[173] The English term refers to "a variety of settings to convey communication, learning, and sharing information" (Barlo et al. 41) but effectively collapses many different layers of "yarning" into one word (Barlo et al. 42). As an example from the Bundjalung language, Barlo et al. refer to six Bundjalung words that name different levels of "yarning," increasing in both formality and protocol according to status (elder, community member, children, etc.) and governing shows of respect and courtesy:

> 1. *Junaa* is the most informal type of conversation and simply mean to talk or tell someone something and has very few protocols attached to it.
>
> 2. *Gayirray* is slightly more formal and means "speaking together"; some of the protocols for this type of yarning help govern respect and courtesy. Gayirray is still a familiar type of yarning because it is more informal.
>
> 3. *Junyirri* is used when a meeting is conducted and means "talking together." This type of yarning has some strict protocols that help maintain order in meetings or debates.
>
> 4. *Nyayinggi(rray)* is used to refer to sitting together in circle or having a conversation as a group. *Nyayinggi(rray)* has several strict protocols that allow each person to participate at their level, which can also include children.
>
> 5. *Yahn.gawaymaliyah* is used when an Elder wishes to impart some of their knowledge, and this type of yarn has strict protocols that give complete control of the conversation to the Elder who called the meeting. *Yahn.gawaymaliyah* means "Sit down, listen and talk."
>
> 6. *Gayi* is used in conversation between people (usually Elders) who are at the same level or status. The word *Gayi* means "to speak with." (Barlo et al. 42, my emphasis)

These different settings govern not just how, for instance, Australian Indigenous Knowledge is passed on by the elders to younger generations (*Yahn.gawaymaliyah*), but also how issues and conflicts need to be addressed respectfully and how decisions may be reached. Different language groups may incorporate their own rituals, customs and shows of respect or they may structure the participation (e.g., during *Nyayinggi[rray]*).

I will not attempt to identify the different levels of yarning in my thesis, as I lack the cultural knowledge to do so. But understanding that there are these different levels will allow me to pay attention to aspects of cultural protocols in the text and understand them as references to "something more," and it will allow me to recognize instances when something may remain unnarrated (see Section 2.4) due to these cultural protocols. For example, Melissa Lucashenko's novel *Too Much Lip* implicitly refers to such cultural protocols when Owen explains the shape of

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[173] Barlo et al. conducted a pilot study that centered around the concept of "dignity" for Aboriginal men. Other researchers have focused on yarning as a methodology of empowerment for Aboriginal women or within health care (see Walker et al., also referenced in Barlo et al.).

Mount Monk to the protagonist Kerry as a symbol of colonial violence (see Section 4.1.3). This is a scene in which an elder imparts knowledge to a younger family member, and the interaction between the two is structured as such. Cultural protocols of conflict resolutions are further invoked when Uncle Richard and Chris "sit down" on Country with Ken to address his abuse as a child (see Section 4.1.3), and when Uncle Richard later addresses this abuse with the wider family in the concept of "communal responsibility" (also Section 4.1.3). As a white researcher, I do not claim to know (nor do I need to know) which level of yarning is being narrated in the text. But being aware of these cultural protocols nonetheless allows me to recognize that these are culture-specific forms of imparting knowledge and addressing conflicts, and that I need to understand them as such.

This leads us then to a reading strategy that Knudsen has termed "indigenized readings" in her seminal work, *The Circle and the Spiral.* Knudsen explains that this is meant to describe "the outsider's attempt to read with an understanding of the Indigenous perspective" while at the same time, "a white European critic should not feel at ease with the use of the term 'indigenous' in relation to his or her own interpretations" (3). Addressing the concern that non-Indigenous engagement with Indigenous literature could lead to "undue textual colonization",[174] Knudsen argues that a position of silence with regard to Indigenous literature by non-Indigenous scholars as a path to acknowledge "past paternalisms" of racialized and Indigenous peoples is in effect "nothing less than taking a position of conceited arrogance" (xii). Instead, she sees in such silence only avoidance and an unwillingness to engage in open and critical dialogue. As she states, "old relationships will never change except through dialogue and the exchange of perspectives" and in her own work "attempts to be reflective rather than definitive and . . . deliberately as searching and as process-oriented as the literatures discussed" (Knudsen xii–xiii). As an alternative, she thus opens up an exemplary path of engagement between Eurocentric critical theory and Indigenous perspectives in the form of an *indigenized reading*. Knudsen advocates for locality and cultural specificity in any interpretation of Indigenous literature so that the default "search for difference" woven into the core of postcolonial theory does not overwrite this very difference due to critical orthodoxic predeterminations (xiv). Through locality and specificity, this indigenized reading – paying attention to how Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal or Māori people behave with and move through country, the spiritual world and their community – moves beyond the universalizing tendencies of postcolonial theory that views Indigenous literature through the lens of emancipation from former colonial rule, and beyond the periphery-center binary without claiming an Indigenous

[174] As example see Arun Mukherjee's critique of Eurocentric reading practices ignoring "the epistemological privilege" of the "cultural insider" (Mukherjee 5).

perspective for itself (Knudsen 3). Drawing on Māori and Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and mythology, she identifies symbols such as the circle and the spiral as deeply imbedded within the Indigenous literature of the area. She points out that the "concentric circles of Western-Desert art represent scared Dreaming sites or 'home-centres' . . . and the semi-circles represent ancestors resting or people celebrating Dreamings in their travels from site to site," and "the notion of travelling itself is represented by the connecting lines between these sites" (24). There is thus an interplay between "the circular and the linear," a "double movement," but "the overall composition is cyclic, as, on Aboriginal land, travelling inevitably results in a return" (24). This return to Country is a theme that is carried in all the novels analyzed in this dissertation, and the pathway of the return can be geographically linear (mostly, as in *Dancing Home*), or circular (as in *Praiseworthy*), and can also be observed on the time-line (progression in *Dancing Home*, or non-progression and almost a suspension of time in *Praiseworthy*) or in the story-line (especially in *Praiseworthy*).

Knudsen further claims that contemporary Indigenous novels put "a strong focus on movement, transformation and passage as integral aspects of the indigenous world-views" (25), often containing a rite of passage theme such as the emotional healing for the family members in *Too Much Lip* and the transformation of Blackie into a tree in *Dancing Home*. She thus argues that Indigenous authors revive the storyteller[175] with all the (cultural) responsibility contained in this concept. This means that the storyteller can be communal (often seen in Aboriginal life writings) or the community may also act as protagonist (see Knudsen's analysis of Patricia Grace's *Potiki*). Further, the location of the narrative in relation to the community (both white, but more importantly Indigenous) must be investigated, for this position may often thematize aspects of (un)belonging and told from the *fringe.*[176] For the researcher engaging with the text, cultural competence and a deep awareness of such aspects are fundamental. Many of the cultural aspects have been elaborated upon in this chapter, and I will draw on them during my analysis.

To recapitulate, this section began with a definition of Indigeneity and the specific position that being recognized as Indigenous occupies when we regard the political and legal discourse of human rights, especially the right to self-determination. The latter is not to be confused with the right to self-governance or sovereignty, as the United Nations specifically do not grant the right to

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[175] For Australian Aboriginal life writing the storyteller can also be communal, meaning that the stories are not written by just one person, but, for example, by both mother and daughter (see for further information A. Brewster; M. R. Griffiths; Horakova; van Toorn, "Indigenous"; Jennifer Jones).

[176] The term "fringe" refers to liminal spaces at the outside of society or the community, a space that is often characterized by absences (silences) and violence. It is also referenced in Mudrooroo's 1990 *Writing from the Fringe* and Nene Gare's 1961 *The Fringe Dwellers*.

secession to Indigenous peoples. The section then moved from this definition of what Indigeneity means in a legal sense to the question of what makes up Indigeneity as an identity. As a category of difference (what it is not), it was first defined in relation to raciality, with which it shares overlapping characteristics because both stand in articulation with coloniality and are, to a certain degree, European constructs. Defining Indigeneity according to criteria of difference, however, lends itself to essentialism and risks repeating and perpetuating white Western knowledges *about* Indigenous peoples. It also disallows definitions that are inclusive and that have adapted to life in the present-day world. Definitions of difference are more likely to define Indigeneity according to strict interpretations of historic traditions and negate the opportunity to develop these traditions along with their people. This is where definitions of what Anderson calls *cultural density* offer more complexity. Instead of defining along criteria of either/or, of object/subject, they concentrate on the myriad cultural forms that Indigeneity may take. They also allow for an exchange of ideas with other Indigenous peoples and critical race theory, thus further offering critical perspectives on whiteness as a power structure. This realization ties critical Indigenous studies to both critical race, and, more importantly, critical whiteness studies.

In order to follow this idea of Indigeneity defined along lines of cultural density, Section 2.3.2 turned to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemologies. Central to the understanding of Aboriginal worldviews is their concept of Country, which in turn is tied to Dreaming through relationality. Country is an ancestor who has changed shapes in the distant past, during Dreamtime, and it is not an object of possession. Instead, the relationship is one of reciprocal caretaking, often also called custodianship. Relationality expresses this relationship, but also excludes Country in all its forms, including its flora and fauna. Having understood this as fundamental for Australian First Nations perspectives on land, it was necessary to explore how colonialism and the contemporary nation state disrupt this relationship not only through occupation and land theft, but by laying claim to the right of defining *belonging*. This belonging is negotiated along white structures of power and has been explained with the example of Native title and the subsequent Yorta Yorta decision that revealed Native title as a legal fiction of dispossession. This example laid the foundation for linking possession as the very act of claiming property to the concept of whiteness as it has been defined in Section 2.2.2. It also allows for an understanding of whiteness as property and whiteness as power, which is summarized in the term *white possession*.

With these two concepts of land in mind – that of Country and relationality, and that of land as property and *white possession* – I then returned to Indigenous concepts of sovereignty. The sovereignty of the nation state is a form of *white possession* (Section 2.3.3), but Indigenous scholars and activists have not tired of developing and articulating their own concepts of

sovereignty. Some of these concepts think along Western lines of ownership, but they do not have the intention of further commodification but of resistance and the recovery of true self-determination. Many other concepts of sovereignty are tied to cultural revival and articulation. This includes Leanne Simpson's embodied sovereignty (being on land) and Michelle Raheja's visual sovereignty as intellectual, political, social, and individual expressions of sovereignty in cultural forms such as literature. This also, for instance, includes the expression of Alexis Wright's sovereignty of the mind in *The Swan Book*.

From this overview of different Indigenous sovereignties, I then turned to queer and feminist approaches in critical Indigenous studies. This is important because, as Section 2.2.3 has shown, power (and therefore violence) interacts differently with identity markers and categories of marginalization or discrimination, and differently still where two or more of these markers intersect. So while approaches of critical race theory always need to also question issues of class, gender, (dis)ability and sexuality, so does critical Indigenous studies. Otherwise, as explained in Section 2.2.3, we only ever talk about the most privileged group of people within this category of marginalization. Therefore, the section traced how feminist engagement is located within critical Indigenous studies and which perspectives queer Indigenous scholars have added to the wide-ranging critical discourse. This section also reflected how gender-based violence has affected Indigenous communities and why policies have been ineffective in addressing these issues.

Last but not least, Section 2.3.6 brought all of these different strands together by questioning how a white European woman may approach Australian Aboriginal literature as her subject of inquiry. The section first explained how Western science is complicit in white structures of power and violence. It then turned to Indigenous research methods as a way of counteracting these power structures and the overall goal of establishing an Indigenous-centered methodology grounded in Indigenous epistemologies. The section also stated why this approach is not accessible to white European researchers and that attempting to insert oneself into this discourse would be a form of appropriation and a deployment of white possession. After it became clear that this would not be a feasible approach for this dissertation, I then introduced Eva Rask Kndusen's suggestion of an Indigenous-centered reading of the novels in this corpus. While I do not refer to my interpretation as "indigenized readings," (mainly because the term is, as Knudsen rightfully says, problematic in view of the history of Western appropriation of Indigenous cultural artefacts and knowledges), I nonetheless follow her methodology of a reading that is aware and remains critical of my white European position (see also Klein 12-13).

This section concludes the three major theoretical sections that draw heavily on social, political and legal sciences in order to provide the necessary toolbox for a narratological analysis

of my corpus. The next step will now be to connect these three sections to narrative theory. I will do so in Section 2.4. This next section will show that a) Indigenous novels have the potential to make the often-invisible structures of systemic racism and colonialism visible. Furthermore, by defining power structures that have a harmful or discriminating effect as violence (this will be part of the definition of violence in Chapter 3), Indigenous novels have the potential to make structural violence visible. And b), this section will show that the three novels in my corpus, *Too Much Lip*, *Dancing Home*, and *Praiseworthy* manage to reflect the *white gaze* (both in its racist and colonialist implication), itself defined as a structure of power (Section 2.2.2), back onto itself through the employment of specific narrative strategies. *Too Much Lip* manages to do so by layering various representations of violence over one another and continually changing the referents of victim and perpetrator. This layering of representations of violence also leads to a layering of perspectives that culminates in a network of violence that refuses an easy assignment of "guilt," refusing the *white gaze's* endeavor to "know" the other and pass judgement. *Dancing Home* follows the arch of the Greek tragedy but instead of offering the tragic hero, the narrative centers around the fallible Aboriginal protagonist Blackie who is planning to commit murder. Nonetheless, throughout the narrative and by using Blackie as a focalizer, the gaze is directed to what usually remains invisible in the white discourse about Indigenous populations. Moreover, the novel is prefaced with an activist address to the reader, asking them to start thinking about their own stereotypes and assumptions. Combining these two aspects of the novel, the narrative interacts with the *white gaze* and refuses to let it ignore the connections between racism, poverty, criminalization, and police violence. Last but not least, Alexis Wright's epic novel *Praiseworthy* forces the reader to adjust their reading pace and follow the rhythm of the narrative. At the same time, the narrative is not plot driven, but centers around the town of *Praiseworthy* and issues of racism and violence in myriad form. Over 600 pages long, the novel reads like a suspension of time and opens up a network of interpretative connections that refuse definite interpretation.

2.4 Contextual Narrative Theory and Ideological Critique

The theoretical approaches introduced in Sections 2.1 to 2.3 may all be subsumed under the broader band of *ideological criticism*. Along with Marxist or anti-capitalist and ecocritical theories, they approach disciplinary and interdisciplinary research with a moral/political objective, calling existing structures of power and their effects to the forefront of their analysis and making them visible. In order to do so, they often draw on identity politics, fully aware that there is a dilemma inherent in this strategy, because every invocation of a minority-group identity also reinforces it as a category of difference (Section 2.2). Identity politics often follow a rights-based approach, meaning they pursue equal rights and recognition under the existing laws. Criticism of this approach has been voiced from Indigenous rights activists and has been elaborated upon in Section 2.3. Subjectless criticism as introduced within queer studies and queer of color criticism, as well as settler colonial criticism have tried to move the focus from identity markers to the underlying power structures that define what is "normal," thus opening new lines of investigation (Section 2.3.5). At the same time, investigations of power structures without the consideration of marginalized identity markers are not feasible and the researcher's gaze itself will invariably be influenced by their own position. This chapter will draw on all of these considerations from the theoretical perspective of narratology, connecting the terminology used to investigate how a) an analysis might approach a narrative with a political objective and the epistemology of its concepts and categories with b) an ideological stance or position as may be expressed in a text (on different levels of the narrative) and c) how this stance or position is directed at the ideological position of the (implied) reader. I distinguish between a) and c) and do not collapse them into the category of an implied reader (one who might be theoretically informed and one who might just read for pleasure), because this would render the categories and position of my own approach invisible. Instead, following the warnings offered by both critical race and critical Indigenous studies, I will *mark* the categories of interpretation for their origin (epistemology). I do not only position myself with regard to hierarchical structures of power, but I also position my theoretical toolbox because the latter is neither objective nor neutral (see Section 2.3.6).

From a narratological perspective, all of the approaches introduced in Section 2.1 to 2.3 are ideological criticism and where they are combined with literary theory, they belong in the category of contextual literary theory. For example, even though postcolonial studies frequently make use of literary analyses in their investigation, the overarching approach remains cultural and political, and the same holds true for critical race and critical whiteness theory, as well as critical Indigenous studies. In the following section I will explain how these approaches can be tied more firmly into a narratological analysis. Where we previously discussed colonialism, race, and gender as

structures of violence from an interdisciplinary view with strong foundations in sociology and legal studies, this section will now look upon the same issues from a literary theory point of view and connect the multiple strands. This connection can be most easily established through the term *perspective*. According to Niederhoff, narrative always has "a rhetorical dimension: it communicates views and values" (696). These views and values can amount to a writer's (possible) "ideological agenda" (Niederhoff 696) and therefore determine a consideration of socio-political contexts and positionings in the text. The communication of views and values may happen on different levels of the narrative: It may happen explicitly, for example through the commentary of a narrator, or it may happen more implicitly, for instance, by layering different (character or narrator) perspectives over one another and thus giving one interpretation more prominence than another, or by offering up a completely new perspective that is an amalgamation of the perspectives presented more explicitly. In the following, I will introduce different theoretical approaches that have investigated how *perspective* is narrated in more detail.

I will first define the terms *focalization*, *voice*, and *mood* as proposed by structuralist narratologist Gerard Genette, for whom *perspective* mainly meant *focalization*. I will then turn to Susan Lanser's investigation of how the reproduction or resistance to socio-political hegemonic discourses can be observed in literature through narrative analysis: first, her introduction of the private and the public plane to the investigation of narrative, and then to her investigation of the narrative voice and how the narrator may reveal those hegemonic discourses as *fictions of authority*. Moving from Lanser to Robyn Warhol, I will then offer a closer look at the *engaging narrato*r and the *unnarratable*. While the *engaging narrator* can be interesting for their implicit or explicit commentary on the storyworld and its character, the *unnarratable* allows deductions on the socio-political context of a narrative, by marking the boundaries of what *can* be narrated, and what needs to remain unsaid due to the restrictions of societal conventions and taboos. At this point, any further discussions of *perspective* need a more detailed differentiation between narrator and character. I will therefore introduce Seymour Chatman's terms *center*, *focus*, *slant*, and *interest-focus* in order to clearly distinguish between perspectives as narrated through a character (*focus*) and perspectives that become tangible through the narrative instance, the narrator (*slant*).

Drawing on Caroline Levine's considerations of the connections between *form* and *content*, which pays special attention to the ordering and patterning of elements in a narrative, I will then broaden the view on how ideological perspectives may be transported beyond the instance of the narrator. I will offer a concise overview of recent developments in the branch of postcolonial narratology, as exemplified by Monika Fludernik, Marion Gymnich, Gerald Prince, and Jan Alber, before I turn to two recent theoretical works by Dorothee Klein and James Donahue, who

specifically tied narratological concepts to Indigenous worldviews, mainly, by connecting plot not only to a temporal-causal progression of the narrative, but also by tying it to *place*, and by introducing the term of the *cultural focalizer* (in recourse to Genette), respectively. This return to Genette's *focalization* also requires a return to considerations of character, because in Genette's terms, focalization is always the focalization *through* a character.

Since theoretical considerations of character are manifold, I will concentrate on James Phelan's character functions, the *thematic*, the *mimetic*, and the *synthetic*, and due to this model's limits with regard to contextual analysis, I will further include the concept of the *cultural frame* to the process of sense-making that the reader undergoes when reading a narrative text. This model, while accounting for the socio-cultural context of the reader's knowledge, does not account for how the novels chosen for this dissertation interact with the mechanisms of how that knowledge came to be about (the hierarchical discourse of power that structures this knowledge). The toolbox of Western narratology is brought to its limits when we analyze these narratives. I will therefore connect the narrative concepts of *perspective* and *position* as established in this chapter to the concept of the *white gaze*, which stands in opposition to the gaze of the colonized or the *Black gaze* that were introduced in Sections 2.1 and 2.2. The *gaze*, in this sense, is then a *perspective* that is tied to hierarchical structures of power, both as a *position* by being located within this network or relationality (in the sense of intersectional analysis, not Indigenous epistemologies), and by viewing the (story)world along a *line of sight* that is angled according to these hierarchical positions. Only when we understand that *perspective* in Indigenous literature is part of a system (or discourse) of power and not only *influenced* but *constructed* by it, can we properly analyze the novels in this corpus. In the following I will start by introducing Genette's concept of perspective.

Gerard Genette proposes the following typology for the analysis of narratives: First, he describes the relationship between the story and the narrative (that is, the narration of said story, the discourse) as *tense*.[177] Part of considerations of tense (always as a consideration of the appearance of events in the narrative, i.e. their narration, and their supposed happening in the story) are the *ordering* of events (chronological, anachronological, the use of analepsis[178] or prolepsis[179] and their individual extent), the *duration* of events, which is related to *speed* or what Genette called "*steadiness in speed*" (*Narrative* 87) (is the narrating happening in scenes (i.e. in detail), as summaries, pauses, or are there ellipses) and considerations of *frequency*, i.e., "relations between

[177] Genette takes this category from Tzvetan Todorov, as described in "Les Catégories du récit littéraire."

[178] The recall of events that happened in the past/before the time of the story, or that chronologically belong before the timeline of the story.

[179] The telling of events in the future (in reference to the timeline of the story).

the repetitive capacities of the story and those of the narrative" (Genette, *Narrative* 35), which may concern the singular or iterative (repetitive) narration of an event, but also extends to considerations of how such iterations may differ between one narration of them to the next. In addition to the category *tense*, Genette proposes *mood* and *voice*. For *mood*, Genette turns towards the analysis of "distance" and differentiates between the narration of events – which is always narrated, i.e., "told" to the narratee/receiver – and the narrative of words (*Narrative* 162). For the latter, he distinguishes between 1) narratized or narrated speech, which almost acts as a summary of a statement that a character supposedly uttered, 2) transposed speech, which is the retelling of the uttered (or thought) statement in the words of the narrator, and 3) reported speech, which includes the verbatim repetition of the uttered (or thought) statement (Genette, *Narrative* 171–73).

These three layers then influence the distance that lies between the events (the act of thinking or speaking) and the narration of them.[180] But mood is also a matter of perspective or *focalization*. Differentiating between "who sees" and "who speaks" – the first being focalization, a matter of *mood*, ordering the narrative through the "perspective" that is taken, and the second being the narrator, a matter of *voice* – he distinguishes between the three following forms of focalization: *nonfocalization* or zero-focalization (the omniscient narrator in which "the narrator knows more than the character" (Genette, *Narrative* 189)), *internal focalization* (the narrator is a character and "says only what a given character knows" (Genette, *Narrative* 189)) which can be either fixed (one character), variable (switching between two characters), or even multiple (more than two characters) depending on the number of perspectives that are narrated, and *external focalization* which corresponds to a narrative situation in which the narrator knows less than the character and thus tells the story "from the outside" (Genette, *Narrative* 189–98). Perspective in Genette's sense is always focalization. But other scholars have defined the term differently, and I will return to these concepts of perspective at the end of this chapter.

In addition to *perspective* or *focalization*, Genette also turns towards the analysis of *voice*, which describes the narrating instance in more detail. The narrator is defined by both their narrative level and their relationship to the story. The *homodiegetic* narrator is themselves part of the story, whereas the *heterodiegetic* narrator is not part of the story (Genette, *Narrative* 244–45). The extradiegetic narrator tells the story (of which he is either a part or not, meaning he is either extradiegetic-homodiegetic or extradiegetic-heterodiegetic) in a specific setting and on a different story-level. The classic example here would be the embedded narrative, in which the narrator is sitting in an armchair and reading from a book, which in turn could be either his memoirs

[180] These three forms of "telling" have since been expanded to include free indirect speech and stream of consciousness.

(extradiegetic-homodiegetic) or a fairy tale (extradiegetic-heterodiegetic) and the intradiegetic narrator is narrating on the same level as the story, also either as part of the story (intra-homodiegetic) or not part of the story (intra-heterodiegetic) (Genette, *Narrative* 247–48). Genette's typology has since received much attention, but a comprehensive overview would at this point go beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, I will use the categories as introduced by Genette as foundation for their combination with Indigenous concepts of land, space, and relationality, turning towards a contextual approach to narrative analysis.

In recent years, there have been a number of efforts to more solidly connect and consolidate ideological critique and narratology, resulting in what is most often termed contextual narrative theory. The first combinations in this vein are Sue Lanser's 1986 Essay "Towards a Feminist Narratology", in which she introduced the public and the private plane to Genette's narrative levels. Public narration in Lanser's sense is implicit or explicit narration directed at an external (heterodiegetic) narratee that "evokes a direct relationship between the reader and the narratee and clearly approximates most closely the nonfictional author-reader relationship" (352), whereas private narration "is addressed to an explicitly designated narratee who exists only within the textual world", meaning that the external reader's access to the narration is indirect as if it were "'through' the figure of a textual persona" (352). The distinction of private and public narration can be applied to both third-person (heterodiegetic) and first-person (homodiegetic) narrations on either the extradiegetic or the intra-/metadiegetic level. Lanser further claims that, historically, women writers more often employed private narrative styles than men ("Feminist Narratology" 354-355). Lanser thus integrates the gender of the author into the narrative analysis but furthermore draws on findings from (white) feminist theory that show that men move freely and independently within the public sphere, while white middle-class women are relegated to the private sphere of the home. As Angela Y. Davis reminds us, this distinction between public and private is both raced and classed, as neither white working-class women nor Black women and Women of Color were expected to stay in the private confines of the home in the same sense. Instead, they were (and are) expected to work outside the home or in those white middle- and upper-class homes as domestic servants (A. Y. Davis, *Race*). The distinction between the private and the public narrative is therefore, while gendered, not a useful category for the analysis of novels by Indigenous (female) authors.

In her 1992 *Fictions of Authority*, Lanser then turns towards narrative voice, illustrating how a feminist narratological reading can show that in "fictions of authority, . . . narrators [may] expose fictions of authority as the Western novel has constructed it" (8). She here combines the narratological understanding of "voice" of the narrator (Who speaks in what way?) with the

feminist understanding of "voice" which generally takes a power-critical stance in order to identify which group's *gaze* (see Section 2.2 on critical race theory) is voiced in a specific contextual statement. It thus investigates which discourses of power or resistance are referenced through the narrative voice. In a way, this is a question of representation: Which ideological discourses are represented in the novel? But Lanser is going further than just the level of representation. She illustrates in her analysis of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eyes* and *Beloved* that in Afro-American literature, a narrator may either choose or refuse to accommodate the 'white' gaze, "in effect making [Morrison's] work less bicultural, giving white readers less and less familiar material on which to ground readings that would assimilate her novels to a white tradition and 'universalize' what is historically particular" (Lanser, *Fictions* 138). As explained in Section 2.2.2, one of the properties of whiteness is its assumption of an unmarked (and therefore invisible) standpoint that centers the white perspective (towards other racialized peoples and cultures) as normative and universal. Lanser here contrasts not only differing perspectives, but the historical (and racialized) particularity of an African American novel with the white experience and expectation of universality. Lanser thus shows how narrators and specifically narrative voice can thus disrupt or enforce discourses of power.

While Lanser approaches this question through an argument that is, in effect, based on familiarity (can the white reader recognize the narrative as familiar or as particular to a different racialized position), I would extend this concept and argue that some novels achieve a similar effect by refusing access to (parts of) their narrative. An example of this would be Lisa Fuller's *Ghost Bird* (2019). The novel centers on the two teenaged twin sisters Stacey and Laney. Laney is kidnapped at the beginning of the novel and the narrative follows Stacey's search and eventual rescue of her sister. Throughout the story, Stacey is haunted by the ghost bird, a mythical creature from the Aboriginal Dreaming. The ghost bird, though very prominent in its haunting of Stacey, is never truly described or explained. Neither are the creatures that guard Laney in her prison in a cave on a sacred mountain given form or expressive meaning. Instead, they remain intangible to the (white) reader, who is, in turn, left with a constant feeling of 'missing something' – a layer of meaning – in the story. The absence of this knowledge is marked by the presence of the intangible ghost bird.[181] As the afterword states, the mythical creatures are intertextual references that are only accessible to the initiated – to those with access to sacred cultural knowledge in the community (see also the different levels of yarning in Section 2.3.6 that govern how this cultural knowledge is to be imparted and to whom). *Ghost Bird* thus refuses the *white gaze* which

[181] This layer is further paralleled in the novel because the reader only learns about the story of *one* twin, while the other is absent during most of the story, but the absence is heavily marked *as* absence.

automatically assumes that all information must be accessible for its purview (because the white position is normative and universal).

One might further argue that the narrative plays on this very property of the *white gaze* – the need for knowledge and the assumption that the white position alone can *know* the *other* (see Section 2.1) – and thus reveals it as a structure of power in its moment of disruption. As we will see in Chapter 3, power in its application as force can be a form of violence if it produces harmful effects. If narrators and narrative voice (and in the last example intertextual references that remain inaccessible to those in relative power) can disrupt a discourse of power, they potentially can – in this disruption – also reveal structures of violence. For *Ghost Bird*, the underlying structure of power that is revealed is the assumption of cultural access, and the violence that is most connected to this structure is that of appropriation and theft. And, in fact, the haunting by the ghost bird was triggered by the theft of a cultural artifact by white settlers, further supporting this interpretation. But before I can turn to the analysis of my corpus, there are further concepts in need of definition. Let me stay with the function of the narrator for another moment.

In her article "Toward a Theory of the Engaging Narrator" (1992) from the same year as Lanser's *Fictions of Authority*, Robyn Warhol investigated the strategic use of engaging narrators (a narrator actively engaging with their (implied) audience)[182] by American women writers in order to explicitly foster the identification of the reader with the narrative "you" employed in the text. She argues that engaging narrators – through strategies of narrative intervention – may function as the "authors' surrogates in earnestly trying to foster sympathy for real-world sufferers" ("Toward" 813). Warhol lists five strategies of narrative intervention explicitly: 1) addressing the narratee by a specific name or names, 2) the frequency of addresses to the narratee, 3) the level of irony discernible in the address, 4) how the narrator positions him-/her-/themself with regard to the characters, and 5) the narrator's attitude (implicitly or explicitly conveyed) to their own act of narration ("Engaging" 813–16). These narrative strategies – depending on how they are utilized – can be used to either reduce (distancing) or increase (engaging) the identification of the reader with the narrative "you," and this in turn can be a strategic choice with a political and activist purpose. While none of the novels discussed here specifically address the (implied) reader, the incentive of analyzing (relative) positions between narrator and characters, as well as between different characters is one that echoes intersectionality's call to pay attention to the relationality of positions of power (as power in relation, see Section 2.2.3). This will be incorporated especially into the analysis of *Too Much Lip*, where positions of power shift along racialized and gendered

[182] The engaging narrator goes back to Gerald Prince who posited that the levels of narrator-addresser-sender relationship within a narrative are similar to the narratee-addressee-receiver relationship.

lines of hierarchy in the confrontation between the Salters and the police (Section 4.3.4), also producing different lines of allyship.

Robyn Warhol further paid particular attention to questions of what she termed *unnarratable*, the boundaries of what is narratable at a specific point in time and socio-political context. For Warhol, the *unnarratable* consists of the *disnarrated* and the *unnarrated*. She defines the former as the "telling [of] what did not happen, in place of what did" ("Neonarrative" 221). An example would be the following: "Leslie opened the door to the library. She did not enter." In this case, the *disnarrated* is the fact that Leslie did not enter the library, leaving the reader to speculate about the reason. Leslie could have hesitated to enter the room because she did not want to intrude or as a show of respect. She may also have been prevented from entering because she was sidetracked. The reader's imagination is left to fill in the blanks (depending on the other information already available to them for interpretation). The second instance Warhol counts as a form of the *unnarratable* is the *unnarrated*, which is not a narration by negation but a narration through a refusal to narrate, either by the assertion "that what did happen cannot be retold in words" or the explicit indication "that what happened will not be narrated because narrating it would be impossible" ("Neonarrative" 221). An example would be statements such as "The beauty of the painting could not be expressed in words," or "The attack happened so fast. I don't even know what happened." The last example shows that the *unnarrated* may be intricately linked to narrative representations of trauma, where trauma is presented as absence on the level of the narrative (see Caruth; LaCapra). If trauma is an event that defies comprehension and produces silence, this silence can also be represented in the form of the *unnarrated*. Warhol's interest in the *unnarratable*, however, is driven less by questions of trauma, and more by the questions of its conventions. For Warhol, the *unnarratable* is linked to restrictions imposed by "politics, ethics, and values" ("Neonarrative" 221). As such, it offers a line of investigation when we question the overall socio-political position (as standpoint) and perspective (as line of sight) of a narrative.

The *unnarratable* can offer information about both *standpoint* and *line of sight* to the (implied) reader. The unnarratable also allows for an analysis of how that which cannot be told because of political or ethical concerns, can still be narrated. This is an issue that is most pertinent to Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip,* in which Lucashenko combines narrations and unnarations of violence to address abuse in Indigenous communities. She thus navigates the volatile political debate and inclination of dominant groups to misappropriate the topic for racist populist discourses. As Lucashenko states in an interview with Astrid Edwards, it was "quite a risk to talk about the abuse within the Aboriginal community that the book talks about" and that she had been frightened that she would "get absolutely savaged" for it ("On Too Much Lip" n.p.). This fear is

tied into the context of the continuing effects of the Bell-Huggins debate as established in Section 2.2.5 and the wider racist discourse about Indigenous communities. While violence is an issue in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the topic has been appropriated by white discourses of power (racist, patriarchal, and white feminist), which disregard the effects of intergenerational trauma and racism on these communities and the structural inequalities they face. Further, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices speaking up for victims of violences have also been appropriated by white discourses (for instance, in the form of informants for white experts), and this has caused apprehension of and resistance to discussing intra-community violence with "outsiders." And while Lucashenko did not choose to dis- or unnarrate the violence in the novel as a whole, she still found a narrative structure that allowed her to address the violence as the effects of intergenerational trauma and racism, and that resisted repetitions of the stereotype of the "dysfunctional" Aboriginal person that, as Moreton-Robinson stated, is completely overrepresented in the white Australian consciousness (see Section 2.3.3).

This is a good point at which turn to Seymour Chatman's article "Characters and Narrators: Filter, Center, Slant, and Interest-Focus" for a more differentiated view on what *perspective* means in these contexts, and especially in order to define a more precise terminology to distinguish what Niederhoff calls character or narrator perspectives. As Chatman points out, the term in and of itself has two meanings in its popular usage: That of the "place from which something is seen" which denotes a certain physical location or (in its metaphoric transference) "mental attitude" (Chatman 189). Even more precisely, the term *perspective* describes a position and the act of seeing something from this position. This extended meaning is then transported to the figural level and describes not only the physical position of a person or narrator, but also their temporal and ideological position and the evaluative view this affords them with regard to a specific topic, issue or behavior (190-191). For Chatman, this double meaning lies at the core of the issues of talking about *perspective*, which is often used to describe these "points of view" or "lines of sight" on the level of the character, the narrator, and the text as a whole. He therefore proposes a different terminology that allows for clearer distinctions: Chatman suggests using the term *center* to refer to a character (which is restricted to the "story-time-and-space" [194]) who is "at the center" of the story, much like a protagonist. The story is *centered* on this character, but this does not necessarily mean that events are *filtered* (and this is the second term he introduces) through this character's consciousness. The *filter* in this sense is reminiscent of Genette's *focalization* on the level of character and a character at the *center* of a story can also function as *filter* but also may be narrated through the *filter* of a different character (196). The *filter* is restrained to the character level because, according to Chatman, the "narrator cannot perceive or conceive things *in* that world

[the storyworld], only *about* the world, since for him the story-world is already 'past' and 'elsewhere'" (197). The narrator only tells the story *through* the character chosen as a *filter*.

Nevertheless, a narrator may also have an attitude towards a character or the storyworld in general. Chatman accounts for instances of what Lanser calls *voice* or Warhol's example of the *engaging narrator*, which he would both call "attitudinal functions," in the term *slant* (197). A *slant* "may be expressed implicitly or explicitly" and can provide commentary on the character and the storyworld but must not be interpreted as the character's attitude. *Slant* is solely reserved for the narrator (Chatman 197). The last narrative effect that Chatman describes is that of *interest-focus* (197-198). The *interest-focus* of a narrative can be the *center*, but it does not have to be, for "even a minor character can be interest-focused for a short period in a narrative" (Chatman 197). In an *interest-focused* section of the narrative, the narrator speculates about the interest that would reasonably be ascribed to a character or inanimate object in the story that does not (yet) have the necessary perception or understanding of the storyworld to express this interest. Chatman offers the example of the newborn baby in *Oliver Twist*, arguing that the statements about the baby's relevance to the novel at its very beginning cannot be *filter* or *slant* because the baby "is too small to see or to understand or to have an attitude" (197), and therefore necessitates a fourth category that, in essence, lies somewhat between the narrator's *slant* and the character's *focus*. This is the *interest-focus*. Since the definition of *interest-focus* according to Chatman relies on a categorization and level of "consciousness" ascribed to a character, it is not transferrable to the analysis of Indigenous texts. Remembering the concept of relationality as expressed in Section 2.3.2.1, Country is the ancestors and the ancestors are Country. It is therefore not unusual for Australian First Nations narratives to include the *perspective* of Country, as both the earth and the animals living on it. Since Indigenous epistemologies does not separate Country's consciousness from human consciousness but proclaims a continuing interrelation, a story told through the perspective of Country would need to be considered as *filtered*, not *interest-focused*.

For my analysis in chapter 4 I will therefore use the following terminology: First, I will use the term *focus* or *focalization* when I speak of sections in a narrative that are told by the narrator *through the consciousness of a character*. Second. I will use the term *slant* when I talk about the position of and view by the narrator. This may refer to the mere telling of the story, but it may also include explicit or implicit commentary by the narrator, and it will also include an ideological position if this can be inferred from the telling. Third, I will use the term *perspective* to refer to the narrative text as a whole. I will distinguish between the *position* (which may be a process that positions the text in relation to other texts or presumed reader's, a *positioning*), and the perspective

from that position as a *line of sight*. This paragraph concludes the considerations of character and narrator perspectives for the moment.

What all of the approaches and concepts I introduced above illustrate is that there is no definite relationship between form and function (or form and content, as it were) that is that of the referent and the referee (i.e., Sartre's concept of the arbitrary but socially determined sides of the sign). Instead, multiple forms may correspond to one function, and one form may correspond to multiple functions, and this relationship is further complicated by the fact that form (especially in a narrative) is seldom static and often changes (see Alber, "Introduction" 3; Alber, "Resilience" 293; Alber, "Indigenous" 99). On the other hand, however, "'form' always indicates *an arrangement of elements—an ordering, patterning, or shaping*," and ordering, as we have learned from social and political theory, is always a matter of power, "the stuff of politics," as politics are "a matter of distribution and arrangements" (Levine 3). Levine points out that "political struggles [which I would term power struggles] include ongoing contests over the proper places for bodies, goods, and capacities" and "political power often involves enforcing restrictive containers and boundaries—such as nation states, bounded subjects, and domestic walls" (3). With regard to the analysis of narratives, this means that the form, as well as the ordering of forms is not only not inconsequential, but both the reiteration and the divergence of well-known forms (may this be genre conventions or racial stereotypes) can carry meaning because they either reiterate or diverge from structures of (political) power.

Levine thus identifies five central ideas about form that may guide the analysis: "1) Forms constrain. . . . 2) Forms differ. . . . 3) Various forms overlap and intersect. . . . 4) Forms travel . . . [and] 5) Forms do political work in particular historical contexts." (4-5). This means that forms cannot be considered individually but need to be looked at in their interaction as well. Forms in a novel in this sense may refer to plot structures, differences in narrative style and situation, repetitions, and divergences in repetitions, but also intertextual and intercultural references, and all need to be considered in their relevance with regard to the ideological hegemony expressed in the text. In addition, Levine argues for an incorporation of "bounded wholes," of "temporal rhythms," "powerful hierarchies, including gender, race, class, and bureaucracy," and "networks that link people and objects" into the analysis. This is echoed by Achille Mbembe's claim that bureaucracy is a tool for colonial domination:

> . . . colonization was one of the central mechanisms through which the European pretension of universal domination was made manifest. It was a form of constitutive power whose relationship to land, populations, and territory brought together the three logics of race, bureaucracy, and commerce (*commercium*) in a way that was new in the history of humanity. In the colonial order, race operated as a principle of the political body. Race made it possible to classify human beings in distinct categories supposedly endowed with specific physical and mental properties. Bureaucracy emerged

> as a tool of domination, and the network linking death and commerce operated as the fundamental matrix of power. Power henceforth made the law, and the content of the law was power. (*Critique* 57)

Levine's call to pay attention to the ordering of things, to the structure of the networks linking people to objects and (to also includes Foucault's discourse theory, see Section 2.1.2) the structures of power that form this order. In this interpretation, order can also become a form of violence where the order has a harmful effect on people, a definition that I will elaborate on in Chapter 3. For now, what stands out is that especially the idea of bounded wholes, for which Levine among others uses the nation state as an example, and the idea of looking at networks can be easily linked with Indigenous criticism and approaches from critical whiteness theory. Here as well, the discussions of the nation state and concepts of sovereignty that redefine or counter Western "bounded wholes" and the concept of relationality that offers a very different structure of belonging than the idea of Western individualism can be tied into representations of networks, boundaries and relationships to kin and Country in Indigenous literary texts.

Scholars such as Monika Fludernik, Marion Gymnich, Gerald Prince, and Jan Alber have also been calling for a more comprehensive development of *postcolonial narratology*. As Gerald Prince points out, narrative strategies have long been used within postcolonial analysis, e.g., by investigating the perspectives presented in the narrative or as investigations of master- and counter-narratives. In this context, the term perspective is no longer restricted to Genette's "focalization" but also includes "socio-political implications" and possible "ideological agendas" (see Niederhoff). A complete synthesis of narrative and postcolonial theory, however, has not yet been presented. Gerad Prince investigated how the classical concepts of postcolonial theory, such as *hybridity*, the *other*, and (colonial) power structures, may have "possible narratological correspondents" (373). Drawing on classical narratological categories[183] such as investigations of spatial and temporal arrangements not just within the text but also as increasing or decreasing distances "between narrator, narratee and characters" (374), investigations of the use of pronouns and their homogetic or heterogetic referents, as well as the utilization of first-, second- or third-person-narrations, as well as we-narrations (first-person-plural) or multiperson narration, he points out that these categories are not unique to postcolonial narratives, nor is it his intention to define those. However, he stresses that "without altering any definitional boundaries, the *accentuation* . . . of characteristics . . . would foster the (classificatory) study of texts in terms of the ways they

[183] As Monika Fludernik points out, classical narratologists like Gerard Genette and Franz Stanzel defined narrative "on purely formal grounds, focusing on the close reading of texts," which means that ideological and contextual concerns would only be part of the story's interpretation, "but not of its formal construction" (Fludernik 194).

utilize such characteristics" (374, *my emphasis*). While the aim of this thesis is not one of classifying Indigenous literatures, the idea of accentuation of different narratological devices leading to distinct readings of the narratives, deeply resonates. Instead of incorporating postcolonial key concepts, however, I will draw on the key concepts introduced by critical Indigenous studies, and here especially on those of Country (Section 2.3.2), sovereignty (Section 2.3.4) and relationality (Section 2.3.2).

Returning to recent examples of contextual narratological approaches, I will shortly refer to Jan Albers analysis of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children*. In this analysis, Alber pays close attention to the functioning of narrative beginnings and illustrates how devices such as analepsis, repetition and re- or de-narration produce, in fact, a multiplicity of narrative beginnings, which in turn can be linked to a representation of a "pluralist worldview and . . . tolerance of heterogeneity" ("Midnight" 123). This pluralist worldview may then be further supported through the use of intertextual references and other stylistic devices such as cinematic narration (Alber, "Midnight" 131-133). Additionally, Alber illustrates how character constructions may give a novel an overall allegorical structure that can be connected to the political situation of the country. This analysis links to Fredric Jameson's theory of the "national allegory," to which I will return later in this section. To conclude his analysis of *Midnight Children*, Alber then illustrates how the ending of the novel shows how the reader is left with a sense of ambiguity ("Midnight" 135).[184] He thus extends on the list of narratological concepts that may be utilized for a better understanding of postcolonial texts by concentrating on different parts of the whole (the beginning, the overarching allegory, and the ending), echoing Levine's suggestion that the "arrangement of elements" (3, see also above) may carry additional meaning. The beginning and ending of a story are always prominent positions and as such likely to be subject to the effects of power, offering an example of Levine's suggestion that power and order are always connected.

The authors presented in the last two paragraphs have provided an exemplary and detailed if not complete list of narratological concepts that lend themselves to contextual interpretation, and which I therefore draw upon in my analysis. For example, my analysis of both *Too Much Lip* and *Dancing Home* will start with a close reading of the novels' beginnings and the frames of reference that these beginnings open up for the interpretation of the novel as a whole. For now, however, I will turn towards Dorothee Klein's and James Donahue's adaptations of the narrative concepts of plot structure and focalization, respectively, and how they developed them through engagement with Indigenous literary texts.

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[184] For further analysis of how ambivalence can be narrated in a novel such as David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*, see Alber, "Indigeneity" 165–70.

Dorothee Klein in her 2021 *Poetics and Politics of Relationality in Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Fiction* goes one step further and investigates how narrative concepts need to be adapted when they are applied to Aboriginal Australian literature. She argues that with regard to plot, for example, the causal and temporal arrangement needs to be expanded to also consider spatial relations. As Country is such a central concept within Indigenous and especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemologies, it also has an ordering effect on the narrative structure and offers cohesion in Kim Scott's *Benang* and *That Deadman Dance*. Instead of conforming the narratological analysis of Indigenous texts to Western theory, she thus investigates how Aboriginal Australian novels redefine those narratological concepts in turn.

In a similar vein, James Donahue has approached the concept of *survivance* as a form of Indigenous cultural revival and continuing resilience as introduced by Anishinaabe critic and author Gerald Vizenor through a narratological lens. Drawing on Genette's concept of *focalization*, he investigates how North American First Nations literature narrates stories of survivance through what he terms *cultural focalization*. Moving beyond the category of the individual narrator, he argues that novels such as James Welch's *Fool Crow* clearly localize narrators not only in relation to the story level and to other characters, but through language, knowledge sharing and perspective, which are also clearly localized within their culture – be that First Nations or white American. This offers an additional dimension to the analysis of the narrator that allows for a more specific investigation of issues of oppression and colonial violence. Understood in this sense, all the novels in this thesis have cultural focalizers representing either First Nations or white Australian perspectives. Comparable to Lanser's idea that literary texts by non-white authors resist the *white gaze*, I understand Donahue's cultural focalizer as a tool to "extend" or "unsettle" the perspective of the white reader. My analysis below moves beyond this extension or defamiliarization and looks for the structures of (relative) power that are revealed through this defamiliarization.

For Donahue's concept it is important to note that cultural focalizers in these Indigenous novels are complex and multifaceted, and not one-dimensional representations of cultural stereotypes. I will return to this shortly by referring to James Phelan's character functions. Staying with Donahue for the moment, however, his approach shows that cultural focalizers offer access to an Indigenous (fictionalized) community for the non-Indigenous reader, thus revealing the white colonizer's supposed truths about Indigenous peoples as racialized fictions of power and conquest. This idea of offering cultural perspectives that discredit or at least complicate the hegemonial white discourse is of course not new within criticism. For example, in her essay "Unspeakable Things Unspoken," Tony Morrison critically reflects on her own narrative constructions for her novels

and the political and ethical reasonings behind that. Donahue is simply the first to place these considerations within the specific discipline of narratology and name it *cultural focalizer*.

Drawing on feminist narratology and intersectional analysis, Donahue further investigates how these novels reveal white "fictions of authorities" (a term introduced by Susan Lanser). Where feminist narratology had thus far concentrated on gender and – to a lesser extent but growing in its body of work – sexuality, Donahue here uses the toolbox of feminist narratology within the racialized and gendered settings of North American First Nations literature and uses it in connection with the underlying theme of survivance and how it is expressed not only on the content-level but also the level of the narrative discourse. He thus connects intersectionality and experiences of suppression and discrimination to the multiperspectivity in Leslie Marnon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*, offering an example of not just feminist narratological investigation, but a practical example of furthering a field of intersectional narratology. This theoretical literary approach can be linked back to Moreton-Robinson's analysis of white privilege and *white possession* (see Section 2.3.3). Where Moreton-Robinson's analysis takes place on the material and discursive level of society, Donahue connects it specifically to narrative theory.

Returning now to James Phelan, I argue that Western theories of narratives are often revealed as insufficient by Indigenous literary texts. Phelan categorizes characters and fictional narratives into three groups.[185] Firstly, he considers characters to be mimetic if they "work as representations of possible people" (12). Similarly, if a fictional narrative imitates "reality" (what he describes as "the world beyond the fiction," 216), this narrative is also mimetic. He broadens this narrow definition by amending that mimesis in this sense especially refers to "the set of convictions" that are historically and culturally located, "by which imitations are judged to be more or less adequate" (216). In my understanding of Phelan, this definition would include speculative fiction as long as the process by which the component of the narrative that makes it speculative is believable according to cultural and social conventions. This understanding would also allow for narratives that contain Indigenous realism to be considered "mimetic," because the "magical" content in these narratives is believable within the framework of Indigenous epistemologies.[186] However, I would

[185] Phelan considers the mimetic, the thematic and the synthetic as three components of a character or narrative that are always present at the same time. I would argue that depending on our interpretation, we tend to foreground one of these components over the others in order to determine what a character or narrative "means." Although they may all be present, one may take precedence over the others.

[186] Indigenous realism refers to what is often also termed "magical realism" and describes magical or speculative elements in Indigenous texts that are taken from or are variants of Indigenous epistemology and cultural beliefs. The term has been discussed extensively in postcolonial literary theory, and "magical realism" has been criticized as a form of "cultural authority" over and exoticization of Indigenous cultural beliefs (see Slemon). Nonetheless, the term remains in use (see e.g. Takolander) and has at times been broadened to include non-Indigenous literatures as well

argue that mimesis is essentially a Western concept. Going back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, it focuses on the relation between text and reality through its level of similarity and divergence. Within Indigenous epistemologies, however, story is relational and a form of connection between peoples, ancestors, and Country (see Section 2.3.2). It is both a story, a history, and a reaffirmation of this continued relationship. Describing this interconnection through the category of "imitation" would fail to transport a key concept of Indigenous storytelling.

Secondly, Phelan categorizes characters to be thematic if they are constructed as representations of larger groups or ideas (12). If a character has an "ideational function," and – on the level of the narrative text – if a component takes an "ideological position," this would be the "thematic function" (Phelan 219). Approaching a text through the lens of postcolonial narratology as suggested by Alber, Prince, and Fludernik above, would thus be an investigation of the thematic function of a text or character in Phelan's terminology. A particularly good example for a thematic function would also be Frederic Jameson's "national allegory." According to Jameson, in the postcolonial text, "the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the third-world culture and society" (69). Whereas Jameson's claim has been criticized for its reductionism (see Section 2.1.2 and more specifically Ahmad, "Jameson"), Phelans approach would allow a more nuanced and selective interpretation. Nonetheless, I remain skeptical that the thematic function would do narratives justice that, such as Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*, refuse to offer a clear interpretation and that instead leave much concealed in ambiguity. If anything, in these cases, one might say that their thematic function is their call for proper engagement with the narrative and for the reader to come to their own conclusions (as, for instance, Paul Collis asks explicitly in *Dancing Home*, see Section 4.2.1).

Thirdly, Phelan speaks of synthetic characters (13). A character's synthetic function is in their work as "artificial constructs within the larger construct of the work" (Phelan 13). The "constructedness" of a character or text becomes the "object" of investigation. However, this function focusses the analysis on the construction on the textual level. It does not yet connect how the text would show such constructedness on a meta-level. That is to say, while the category of "constructedness" is most useful when regarding texts through the lens of contextual narratology, and especially when investigating how the construction of categories may support the application of power in harmful ways (thus turning these categories into instruments of violence), it needs to be directed into a slightly different direction. The question would be, how does the text on a

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(see, e.g., Zamora and Faris). Melissa Lucashenko uses the term "Indigenous realism" and describes it as "just one way of seeing the world that [she] has access to" (see Astrid Edwards, interviewing Lucashenko, "On Too Much Lip" on *Too Much Lip*). For a location of Indigenous realism in the genre of speculative fiction see Saunders 8–9.

character or content level reveal the constructedness of, for instance, *white possession* (see Section 2.3.3), and of colonial and racist discourses on an even larger scale (see Sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.2)?

The limits of Phelan's model of character functions mentioned above have also long been noted within the discourse of literary theory. For example, cognitive literary theory has made several attempts to include a reader's position in the analysis, especially by including the concept of cultural models into the analytical toolbox. Cognitive literary theory is a postclassical approach in literary theory that focuses on the "nexus of narrative and mind" (Alber, "Cognitive" 1) and "zooms in on the interaction between narratives and the readers' mental processes in concrete context" (2). Cultural models are a form of cultural knowledge. Mainly, they are the "shared cognitive schemas established through repeated experience within a particular culture" (Vaeßen 3, in recourse to Strasen, *Rezeptionstheorien;* Strasen, "Cultural"). Cultural models are thus "mental representations" of cultural knowledge (Vaeßen 36). They add socio-cultural context to earlier theories such as Stuart Hall's reception theory[187] or reader response theory as developed by Wolfgang Iser,[188] offering a better understanding of how meaning-making takes place.

Information in a text interacts with frames and schemata that describe how knowledge is stored in a reader's mind. Information from the text is processed *bottom-up* and supplemented by knowledge stored in those frames and schemata *top-down* in order to produce the meaning of a text. Cultural frames (as specific instances of cultural models) are part of those cognitive frames and therefore also shape the understanding of the text during the reading process. In reading literary texts from the same cultural background, the information revealed through the text in the bottom-up process only slightly differs from the information superimposed in the top-down process. The information on both sides largely overlaps. When reading literary texts from a cultural

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[187] Stuart Hall differentiates between three types of readers (or audiences). Firstly, a dominant reader (or audience) accepts the message of a literary text without question. Secondly, the negotiated reader (or audience), while critically engaging with the text and asking questions about aspects that do not (completely) align with their personal beliefs or values, still generally agrees with the message of a text. And thirdly, the oppositional reader (or audience) finds the message of the texts incompatible with their own beliefs and values, thus rejecting the message of the text. Hall's reception theory has influenced different theories of cognitive literature (S. Hall, "Encoding").

[188] Iser introduced the concept of the implied reader in a shift away from the idea that reading is merely a form of information processing wholly reliant on the text. Instead, he argues that reading is an active engagement with the text and the literary work in its realization comes into existence in the virtual space between the physical text and the actual reader. In order to describe the processes according to which meaning is construed, he introduced the implied reader who follows the "gaps" or "blanks" that a text offers on a thematic or structural level and that are in turn leave a network of instructions for the implied reader to follow. These underlying instructions built into the text for the implied reader then allow the actual reader to comprehend the text. However, the actual reader as a person also brings their own historically and socially located experiences and knowledges into the interpretation of the text and is therefore to be considered separate of the implied reader. Considering the two directions from which information and interpretation is brought into the process of comprehension, the literary text then takes virtual form in the space between the physical text and the actual reader.

background that differs to a large degree to that of the reader, it can be assumed that the information from the text offers little or no overlap with the information from the cultural frame. In its most extreme form, this leads to incomprehension of the text by the reader. In less extreme forms, it causes a constant readjustment of mental representation as the information from the text is merged with the information from the cultural frame.

I argue that this theory of text comprehension and cultural frames is pushed to its limits where the narrative as a whole turns the *gaze* back on how Western cultural frames in their hegemony are structures of power, and, furthermore – as structures of power that discriminate peoples along racialized and gendered lines of division – as a form of violence.[189] In this case, the cultural frame does not suffice, because the narrative not only interacts with the cultural frame in the merging of the understanding of the character or content, but in fact interacts with the cultural frame itself by revealing the frame to be inconsistent (see Section 2.1.2 on the production of the colonial subject and the capitalized *Other*) and unstable in its references (see Section 2.2.2 on the instability of the racial category of "whiteness"). It could thus be said that these narratives interact with or at least aim at the meta-level of Western narrative categories, causing not only hesitation or defamiliarization in the reading process (which could then be compensated by reorganizing the knowledge that was supplied top-down to make it fitting to the new information), but revealing the knowledge that is provided top-down as the results of a discourse of power. They thus reveal that the *perspective* (both as location and line of sight) with which the white reader approaches a text is located in and constructed by discourses of power, it is a white or European *gaze*. The narratives further offer (on different levels of their narrative structure) a perspective that counters or refuses this *gaze.* This refusal can be interpreted along the lines of *writing back* as introduced by postcolonial studies, but this interpretation would not do its justice, because the refusal goes beyond that. Instead of just blocking the *white gaze* (as a line of sight), it reflects the *white gaze* onto itself to reveal its own constructedness. As explained in the section on critical whiteness theory, this reflection back onto itself means that the *white gaze* is no longer unmarked and can no longer claim universality. It therefore unsettles its central and normative *position*. And this last part is why this reflection also goes beyond the level of "recognizing oneself in the other" (see construction of the Other in Section 2.1.2) and Lacan's mirror episode. The *white gaze* is revealed as a construct just as embedded in discourses of power as the *Black gaze* and the *gaze* of the

[189] As I explained in Section 2.2.3 on intersectionality, race and gender are not the only categorical lines along which discrimination occurs. However, with regard to my corpus and this analysis, race and gender are the two main categories according to which discrimination and violence are deployed, especially when gender is understood as performance according to Judtih Butler and therefore also contains an element of sexuality through the normalization of heterosexuality.

colonized. The novels thus claim a position of power *about* the *white gaze* and a view on whiteness as racial construct.

To summarize, my thesis has two central arguments. First, I argue that Indigenous novels have the potential to make the otherwise invisible concept of structural violence visible. This is a connection that will be established in Chapter 3, because we first need a tangible definition of structural violence in order to properly connect it to the concepts of colonialism and structural (or systemic) racism I explained in Sections 2.1 and 2.2. Secondly, I argue that the novels specifically chosen for analysis in this dissertation manage to employ the very categories that the "Western" and Eurocentric (often white) *gaze* deploys to *know* the *other* (to link the terminology back to postcolonial theory in Section 2.1.2 and Althusser's and Foucault's definitions of ideology in Sections 2.1.1 and 3.3) to subvert this *white gaze* onto itself and destabilize its position of universality and normativity. This can be observed by paying attention to the narrative strategies employed by these novels and how they are used to transport the text's *perspective* (as ideological *standpoint* and subversive *line of sight*).[190] At the same time, while the Western concepts of narratology allow for a description of what is happening on the textual level, the concepts themselves may at times be revealed as insufficient and Eurocentric.

This may, of course, also initiate processes of self-reflection in the reader and even a readjustment of the mental representation of this cultural frame in the reader's mind, but this second part of the process is currently beyond the scope of this dissertation.[191] Instead, I will focus on the narrative strategies in the text and how they continually invalidate the supposed truths (and at this point I refer back to the discussion of racism in the scientific discourses of colonialism in Section 2.1.1 and 2.3.6) that make up the white European gaze. I will focus on the narrative strategies on the textual level and not a possible reader's response, because the latter – in my opinion – shifts the focus away from an overall critical engagement with structural violence and cultural hegemony as presented through Australian First Nations perspectives to the white individuum and their personal (if in the case of empirical studies quantifiable) response to the text. While highly useful to ask questions about empathy and how morality may be influenced through

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[190] This is not to say that the situation model does not reflect how information on the level of the cultural frame is shaped by power structures according to e.g. Foucault. Quite to the contrary, Schneider explicitly references this relationship in Chapter 2 and calls for its consideration in the development of a theory that aims to provide a universal understanding of character reception (82-84). Instead, I argue that the novels in my corpus (through their deployment and subversion of Western narrative strategies) manage to not only engage with a reader's cultural frame on the level of text reception (i.e. understanding the text) but reveal how the process of understanding is in itself shaped by power structures.

[191] For an empirical exploration of how cultural or racist stereotypes may be altered through reading literature from a cognitive literary perspective, see Sopcak et al.

literature (see Sopcak et al.), empirical literary studies is not an approach that centers Indigenous perspectives and epistemologies in their own right, but one that mostly uses Indigenous literature as one example of a marginalized perspective that may influence a cultural stereotype.

The question that results from all of these considerations would be, how does a specific narrative structure the layering of information or different forms of focus, slant and other narrative elements offer a *perspective* on the level of the literary text in its entirety?[192] This last question is one that is pertinent to this dissertation. Not because I am trying to assign the novels in my corpus a definite overall perspective, but because the narrative strategies used to reveal different perspectives are of particular interest. Let me offer the following connection. The concept of perspectives ties into the concept of the "gaze" as it has been introduced in Chapter 2. In that chapter, a subject's identity is constructed through the *gaze* of the symbolic *Other*. It is a *form of perspective*. But not only that, the *gaze* is a reflection and, in this reflection, lies recognition. Remembering Said, Spivak and Lacan, for the colonized, it is the perception of the self through the eyes of the colonizer that allows them to recognize themselves, which connects the concept of the *gaze* to structures of power (see Section 2.2.3 on intersectionality). The *gaze*, in this sense, is a *perspective* that follows a line of sight steeped in a *structure of power*. In Chapter 2.2, I also I referred to Cornel West who as early as 1982 identified the Western "normative gaze" as a form of hegemonial power. As a power structure that discriminates and is in its effect harmful (systemic racism in Section 2.1), the "normative gaze" is an instrument if not a form of violence (Chapter 3). Chapter 2.2.2 introduced critical whiteness theory as an approach that turns this Western "normative gaze" back onto itself to learn how it is in itself a structure that perpetuates racism. All of this leads back to my above-mentioned claim that the narratives analysed in Chapter 4 not only function on the narrative level but instead interact with a reader's cultural frame in general and Western narrative categories in particular on a meta-level.

To recapitulate this section, I first defined Genette's terms *focalization*, *voice*, and *mood*, before I turned to Susan Lanser's introduction of the private and the public plane to the investigation of narrative, which proved insufficient for an intersectional analysis of Indigenous literature because they are based on *white* feminist distinction between the private and the public societal sphere. I then introduced her suggestion of investigating the narrative voice of a text for how it may reveal hegemonic discourses. I then turned to Robyn Warhol's concepts of the

[192] This perspective of the text in its entirety is part of literary interpretation, but it is not to be confused with "intention" that ties back to the real or implied author. Intention can only be incorporated into the analysis in such form if, e.g., an author has made explicit remarks about his literary work elsewhere. And even in this case, the text in its production (see the footnote on Iser's reader response theory) may still differ from the intention claimed by the author.

*engaging narrato*r and the *unnarratable*, before I returned to Seymour Chatman's reading of Genette, introducing the terms *center*, *focus*, *slant* and *interest-focus* for a better distinction between character perspectives (*focus*) and narrator perspectives (*slant*). The most relevant reminder to this thesis as offered by Chatman was the separation of *perspective* into *position* and *line of sight*, which I included into my terminology for the analysis as follows:

> 1) *Focus* or *focalization* will refer to sections in a narrative that are told by the narrator *through the consciousness of a character*.
> 2) *Slant* will refer to sections in a narrative that are told by the narrator without use of a focus. Slant refers to both the position of and view by the narrator on both the literal and the figurative level.
> 3) *Perspective* will refer to *position* and *line of sight* of the narrative text as a whole.

This definition of terminology was followed by a small jump in topic, as it turned away from the character and narrator as specific narrative instances and to Levine's considerations of connections between *form* and *content*, as well as the ordering and patterning of narrative elements. This opened up a wider field of investigation for the question of a text's *perspective* as has been demonstrated, for instance, by scholars in the field of postcolonial narratology, such as Monika Fludernik, Marion Gymnich, Gerald Prince and Jan Alber. Afterwards, I further introduced the theoretical findings by Dorothee Klein and James Donahue, who tied a narrative's *plot* to Indigenous conceptions of place and the *focalizer* to their cultural specificity and location, respectively. The term cultural *focalizer* required a return to both the concept of *characters* and their function (in recourse to James Phelan) and the concept of *cultural model* (in recourse to Strasen and Vaeßen). This theoretical overview showed that none of these concepts are sufficient to describe how *Too Much Lip*, *Dancing Home* and *Praiseworthy* interact with what critical whiteness studies have declared the *unmarked white position* and the *white gaze*. I therefore connected the narratological term *perspective* as both (ideological) *position* and *line of sight* to the concept of gaze, which allows me to analyze the novels of my corpus with regard to their position (as locality and process) and line of sight along the hierarchical lines of sight of a network of (relative, discursive) power. This investigation will reveal that the novels in Chapter 4 more than *write back* to the colonial center but instead claim their own position of authority over *whiteness* as a marked racial construct.

Before I enter into the analysis of my corpus, I must now tie the theme of violence more closely to this very claim. I have already mentioned the term "structural violence" in my theoretical chapters above. But I have yet to offer a distinct definition. I will do so in Chapter 3, thereby establishing this overall connection to the title of this thesis. Last but not least, I would like to note

that in the analysis of the three contemporary novels in Chapter 4, I will draw on the narrative concepts and strategies presented in this chapter as needed. Each novel is analysed within its specific context and with regard to the narrative strategies that are used in order to convey different forms of violence and how they thus make the invisible power structures of structural violence visible. Not all narrative strategies will be used to the same degree, and I will refrain from claims of universality here as well. I agree with Jan Alber on his assessment that there are multiple possible applications for a specific narrative strategy in the pursuit of different ideological points of view. I am not interested in providing a universal categorization or mapping of these possible uses but am focused instead on their specific use as tied to my topic of investigation in the three novels below.

3 Theory – Part II - Categorizing Violence – Violent Categories

After the extensive discussion of postcolonial theory, critical race and critical whiteness studies, intersectionality and critical Indigenous studies in Chapter 2, and the attempt to link all of these cultural, sociological and political perspectives into literary theory through the lens of contextual narratology in Section 2.4, in this chapter, I will turn to an overview of (mainly sociological) theories of violence. While the change of focus may seem abrupt at first, violence is one of the central categories of analysis for this dissertation and this chapter is necessary to a) offer working definitions for the textual analysis in Chapter 4, and b) to further clarify how colonialism, racism and gender as presented in Chapter 2 are tied into conceptions of violence.

Defining *violence* continues to trouble social and legal theory as well as psychology due to its complexity. Existing definitions often offer an enumeration of different forms of violence but can seldom offer a conclusive description. Categorizations may follow a difference in perpetrators, i.e., interpersonal or collective violence, or it may use the victims[193] of violence as point of reference, i.e., child abuse. Violence can also be traced along the lines of effects that a certain kind of violence causes, i.e., physical or mental harm, or it may be classified according to intentionality and agency (i.e., manslaughter and murder; passive and active violence). In addition, violence in real life is seldom completely confined within the lines of these definitions, but it may transgress, and more than one category may be applied at the same time. The following definitions are therefore not exhaustive.

To structure this chapter, I will first offer some rudimentary definitions of different forms of interpersonal violence, which is also often termed *direct violence*. This definition is necessary to then distinguish it from what Johan Galtung has termed *structural violence*, often also termed *indirect violence*. Structural violence is often invisible in its form but can be traced in its effect. It is also the point of connection between this chapter and the previous chapters. As will become clear in the respective sections below, colonialism and racism (as well as ableism, sexism, and heteronormativity) in their systemic form are, in fact, variations of structural violence (refer to Section 2.1.1 to see colonialism defined as a *structure*, not an *event*).

[193] Depending on circumstance, reports, activists and people affected by violence choose different terms to identify themselves or others affected by violence. The term "victim" is widespread and often used especially in official data collections and statistics on violence, but it has a passive connotation that chips away at a person's agency. Another term that is often used is that of "survivor" which foregrounds the person's agency but has also been criticized for turning stories of violence into stories of valorization and heroism. Whenever I refer to people affected and subjected to violence, I will follow their self-chosen descriptor where possible.

Once this connection is established, I will then turn to Foucault's theory of the legitimization of violence (and especially state violence). Any definition of violence needs to be tied to the question of its legitimization within societal structures. Different legal systems in different societies condone or reject specific forms of violence in various contexts. Examples would be legally sanctioned executions (death penalty), legal constructs such as the citizen's arrest (which at the very least violates the right to freedom of movement of the detainee), but also phenomena such as what Foucault has termed *biopolitics*, the policy decisions that determine not only who is allowed to live, but who is allowed (or left) to die. Policies within this realm would be abortion rights (see Section 2.2.3 above, also A. Y. Davis, *Race* 210–18), euthanasia, but also regulations about access to health care (insurance) and the distribution of health care providers in, e.g., rural areas. All these categories may overlap, co-occur, or intersect, which makes any approach to violence studies multifaceted.

This interrelation between force, power, and politics is what Foucault also terms biopolitics. Biopolitics, when employed specifically to marginalize certain groups of people according to class or identity markers, is tightly interwoven with Gorgio Agamben's *bare life*, which I will introduce in Section 3.4. By this point we have moved firmly from varying definitions of violence to the processes according to which this violence is applied. Additionally, Judith Butler's *precarious life* offers new categories in which we can think of the effects of this violence, and Section 3.5 offers additional concepts of violence especially applicable within the postcolonial and race-critical framework of this dissertation in the form of epistemic, environmental, and slow violence. Epistemic violence offers another direct connection back to Section 2.3 because it is a theoretical concept that specifically addresses the oppression of Indigenous knowledge systems through the domination of Western epistemology and the multifaceted effects this has on Indigenous communities. This form of violence will be most visible in the analysis of Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy*, but it is also woven into the questions of witnessing, truth-telling and documentation that are touched upon in Melissa Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip* (especially in the scene where the police visit the Salters' house).

3.1 Personal or Direct Violence

Starting with the most visible form of violence defined in this chapter, *personal* or *direct violence* encompasses two forms of *interpersonal violence*, differentiated according to the relationship between perpetrator and victim as either *intimate partner violence* or *community violence*, the specific form of *self-directed violence*, and *collective violence*. I will shortly introduce all four concepts below.

3.1.1 Interpersonal Violence

The World Health Organization defines *interpersonal violence* as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, by a person or a small group of people against another person or small group that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (World Health Organization, p. 83). This definition tries to cover a lot of ground. By including both the terms "force" and "power," it addresses physical actions or behavior as well as the abuse of other kinds of power. This definition thus covers both an intentional strike and a supervisor's intentional misuse of power over an employee if that results in psychological harm. As Hamby notes,

> . . . the inclusion of the word "power," in addition to the phrase "use of physical force," broadens the nature of a violent act and expands the conventional understanding of violence to include those acts that result from a power relationship, including threats and intimidation. The "use of power" also serves to include neglect or acts of omission, in addition to the more obvious violent acts of commission (Hamby 169).

The WHO-definition also covers any actions or behaviors that do not actually achieve the "intended" result of harm but nevertheless have a *high probability* in achieving harm. Even the attempted murder of another person would thus be considered violence, even if the intended victim escapes unharmed. It remains important to note, however, that the WHO-definition here strongly ties violence to *intent* (see Hamby), which means it is perpetrator-focused, whereas other legislations (such as German antidiscrimination law, for example) link it to "effect," which means that it has different requirements for proving its occurrence in a court of law. Interpersonal violence for the WHO is divided into intimate partner/family violence (further divided into intimate partner violence, child abuse and elder abuse), and community violence and is thus ordered along the degree of familiarity between perpetrator and victim.

Psychologist and Co-Founder of the APA Journal *Psychology of Violence* Sherry Hamby considers the WHO-definition of violence as one of the "stronger existing definitions of violence that is an influential example of the public health approach" (169). However, she sees a fundamental omission of violence's "elements of being unwanted and nonessential" (169). Both, according to Hamby, are critical for any definition of violence. Parrott and Giancola (2007) further call for a clear distinction between aggression/violence and anger or hostility. Hamby takes this distinction into account and offers the following definition of violence: "Violence is nonessential, unwanted, intentional, and harmful behavior. Violence is a subset of aggressive behavior that is most usefully distinguished from aggression by its nonessential nature" (Hamby 177). In comparison to the WHO-definition, Hamby thus includes an element of the victim's agency (wanted or unwanted, meaning that there is either (active) consent or not). The distinction of

essential and *non-essential*, on the other hand, would be tied to a consideration of ethics, though it would certainly allow for a distinction between *violence* and, e.g., a doctor cutting into a patient's body for surgery.

Sociologist Johan Galtung approaches his definition of violence from the perspective of peace and conflict studies. He describes as violence behaviors such as "lies, brainwashing, indoctrination of various kinds, threats, etc. that serve to decrease mental potentialities" ("Violence" 169). By tying violence to *potentiality*, Galtung includes any behavior that prohibits or negatively affects a victim's ability to realize their full agency.[194] In this logic, influence can also be considered violence as soon as it harms the person affected. In these cases, Galtung distinguishes "between the negative and positive approach to influence. Thus, a person can be influenced not only by punishing him when he does what the influencer considers wrong, but also by rewarding him when he does what the influencer considers right" (Galtung, "Violence" 170). This means that, according to Galtung, a behavior is defined as violent either by its intent or its effect, or by both. What we would call positive reinforcement in child-raising would not be considered violent, because while clearly intended to influence a child's decision-making progress (and at an especially vulnerable stage when behavioral patterns are still being established), in its usual application it is not intended to do harm. An example would be the reward of having dessert after dinner, if the child has eaten their vegetables: eating the vegetables does not cause the child harm and rewarding this behavior is therefore not a form of violence. I need to add the second part of the sentence, and it needs to be considered carefully, because extensive research on eating disorders over the last few years has shown that such rules – if applied (unintentionally) harmfully – can cause anxiety and body-issues. If we thus change the example to one where the child is told to eat only very low-calory food for dinner and the reward is half an apple (and no more, because fruits contain sugar), we can easily see how the influence may cause long-lasting harm. This example still differs, of course, from one where, e.g., harmful behavior towards others is consciously encouraged and rewarded. If a parent were to praise a child for bullying another, we can clearly see the problem of a positive approach to influence that is nevertheless harmful, yet "easier to see" in this case does not equal "stronger effect." One might argue that the unintentional but harmful influence with regard to eating habits in example two could potentially be more

[194] This definition then also includes instances such as restriction of movement: "for one thing is to try to destroy the machine (the human body) itself, another to try to prevent the machine from functioning. The latter can be done in two ways: denial of *input* (sources of energy in general, air, water, and food in the case of the body), and denial of *output* (movement) (Galtung, "Violence" 175).

harmful to a child than the learnt behavior of a bully.[195] Everything thus always needs to be considered in context.

There are different forms of interpersonal violence depending on the relationship between perpetrator and victim: intimate partner violence, community violence, self-directed violence, and collective violence.

3.1.1.1 Intimate Partner Violence

A specific form of interpersonal violence is *intimate partner violence*, often also termed *domestic abuse*. Whereas the latter term is more generally known, the qualifier "domestic" strongly associates this form of violence with the private realm, and more specifically with established couples and marriage. "Intimate partner violence" broadens the term to include former as well as short-term intimate partners: "Intimate partner violence is behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours" (World Health Organization, p. 83).

Statistically, women are more often victims of intimate partner violence and an estimated 27 percent of women have experienced "violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by a cohabiting partner since the age of 15" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Partner" n.p.).[196] An estimated 17 percent experienced intimate partner violence (including cases in which both abuse and violence were reported, and sexual violence is included with 6.2 percent of all women).[197] According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 15 percent of men have experienced violence, emotional, or economic abuse by a partner they cohabited with, and 5.5 percent reported experiences of physical or sexual violence by their partner. There are strong concerns that these numbers are underreported due to fears of not being believed, gender-stereotypes, rape myths[198]

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[195] In these examples, we are specifically looking at the children who are being influenced, not at aspects of how violence might be passed on or multiplied.

[196] For the collection procedure and reliability of the data please refer to the Australian Bureau of Statistics directly.

[197] These statistics are notoriously hard to collect, especially since understandings of sexual violence within partnerships are shaped by cultural expectations and stereotypes. For example, the criminalization of marital rape has only been recognized as recently as 1997 in Germany, 1981 in New South Wales, and 1994 in the Northern Territory (see Australian Women's History Network).

[198] Rape myths refer to statements about what constitutes rape or sexual assault that are highly prevalent within the community and that in context make up one part of what has been termed "rape culture". Rape myths contain statements (or variations thereof) such as "If you take him home from the bar, you need to sleep with him" or "You said yes by letting him undress you and cannot change your mind later," as well as "a woman must sleep with her husband when he requires it, regardless of her own wishes." All these statements are aggressor-centered and cater to a myth of "availability" of the desired (especially female) body in which the responsibility of repelling sexual advances is shifted to the desired body. These myths redefine what "consent" means or the manners in which it is given in order

and questions of fault and encouragement, re-traumatization in the reporting and judicial system, economic dependencies, or other factors. So where gross numbers of intimate partner violence are expected to be much higher than reported – fear of repercussions or of not being believed, insufficient support structures, financial dependency, or re-traumatization during the reporting as main deterrents for filing official reports with the police – perceptions of masculinity and the fear of being ridiculed for not defending themselves or seen as "unmanly" set additional barriers for men for reporting abuse.[199] This is an aspect that also influences Own Addison and Ken Salter in *Too Much Lip*. Neither man reports the sexual violence they experienced, and while my analysis will illustrate that gender is not the determining factor for this decision, it nonetheless intersects with other structures of subjugation to promote their silence.

Statistics also show that both with regard to intimate partner violence against women and against men, the perpetrators of physical and sexual violence in (hetero- and same-sex) partnerships are overwhelmingly male (Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Partner" n.p.).[200] However, most of these studies remain one-dimensional with regard to intersections of identity markers. Statistics regarding gendered violence often make use of the binary gender system because depending on the size of the data sample, data for non-binary or transgender persons are often not statistically significant and are then often either excluded or subsumed within the binary system.[201] These studies have also only recently started to incorporate sexuality, meaning that they incorporate an analysis of how many men or women within the data sample report violence within same-sex partnerships. Exemplary studies into violence against LGBTQIA+ people show that they are disproportionally affected by violence in general (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, "Violence"; Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Standard").

Similarly to gender and sexual orientation, race also has an exacerbating effect on intimate partner violence, while lack of trust in the police and the legal system as well as a lack of access to resources exacerbate the underreporting of violence. Indigenous women and girls are especially

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to alleviate the responsibility of actually ensuring consensual engagement. They shift the power balance from the start. The pursuer is no longer required to ensure that his advances are wanted but can supposedly assume that they always are unless explicitly told otherwise. For a study on the prevalence of rape myths in the Pacific see Amin et al. For an excellent essay on consent and power abuse see the Chapter "Coda: The Politics of Desire" in Srinivasan.

[199] For a detailed intersectional analysis see A. Brewster and Kossew 35–38.

[200] Statistics that single out emotional abuse differ in this regard, here women perpetrators are more common. Data depends on how it is collected and how overlap between different forms of violence is assessed.

[201] This is partially due to the fact that more dated studies still use the binary gender system in their survey, which means that comparisons or statements about developments and progressions can only be made within the binary system, and later studies often run into concerns of data privacy when the data sample of nonbinary individuals is too low to guarantee anonymity.

vulnerable to gendered violence and the history of structural violence and abuse by state governments and institutions (including the police), which

> . . . often means there is a reluctance and mistrust by First Nations women in reporting gendered violence and abuse perpetrated against First Nations women and children to police and other government departments. First Nations women fear removal of their children, misidentification as the predominant aggressor and criminalisation often stemming from misidentification or crimes committed in the context of seeking to numb the pain of intergenerational trauma. (Women's Legal Service NSW, *Submission* 21, 4 quoted in Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee 80)

Harmful stereotypes continue to impede access to justice, and misidentifications and criminalization will be especially severe when the intersection "woman, Indigenous" accuses the intersection "man, white" due to how these stereotypes reinforce existing power-imbalances.

Refugee-status or non-citizenship in the country of residence also constitute an especially vulnerable position. Fear of deportation or the dependence of residency on a partner with citizenship lead to almost no reports of intimate partner violence or any kind of violence (A. Brewster and Kossew 7–10). The UN Human Rights Council has urged governments worldwide to address this issue and provide both information and support structures for refugees affected by violence. As this succinct overview shows, data on its own only ever tells half the story, and, especially in areas where violence and the vulnerability to violence are concerned, an intersectional analysis is paramount.

3.1.1.2 Community Violence

Community violence according to the WHO defines interpersonal violence that occurs within a community between people that do not have a close relationship with one another or, in fact, no relationship at all. This means that the perpetrator (or a small group of perpetrators) is a stranger or just an acquaintance of the victim. This definition covers, e.g., a robbery, the spontaneous eruption of a bar fight between individuals, but also an (attempted) home invasion. This list is of course by no means comprehensive, but merely exemplary, and shows that community is a category that covers all interpersonal violence that does not fit into the categories of either intimate partner violence or self-directed violence (see directly below), but that is also not considered collective violence. Community violence differs from collective violence (see below) by its lack of instrumentalization and organization for a political, social, or economic objective.

3.1.2 Self-Directed Violence

Another specific form of personal violence is *self-directed violence*. For the World Health Organization, all violence that a "person inflicts upon himself or herself" is self-directed violence

and can be further "categorized as suicidal behaviour or self-abuse" (83). Statistics for self-directed violence show higher numbers among minority groups and in Indigenous communities. Statistics on Australian First Nations people show that suicide accounts for 4.6 percent of all deaths among First Nations people, with a significantly higher rate of suicide for men (6.5 percent) than women (2.5 percent) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Suicide* 61). First Nations men and women have a suicide rate of 2.6 and 2.5 times that of non-Indigenous men and women, respectively, and younger ages are particularly affected: "For those aged 0–24 years, almost a quarter of all deaths (22.0%) were by suicide. For those aged 25–44 years, 19.2% of all deaths were by suicide" (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Suicide* 67). Causes for self-directed violence vary. Once again, however, race, gender and sexuality and the accompanying structural disadvantages and discrimination show a correlation with a higher number of attempted and successful suicides. These correlations are made visible in *Praiseworthy*, where the beach is a popular suicide spot for the town's children. Another example would be the daughter's suicide in Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors* (1990).

Mental health has been identified as one of the largest fields of action against the discrimination of Indigenous peoples worldwide. It has also been tied to experiences of racism. A literary example for this connection is the mental fatigue experienced by most characters in Nicole Watson's *The Boundary*. As a response to these issues, Indigenous communities in Australia, New Zealand and North America have been working on incorporating cultural protocols into the treatment of Indigenous people, especially with regard to mental health issues. What is common among these protocols is the inclusion of elders into the treatment, furthering a combined approach of spiritual and physical forms of healing that include both Indigenous knowledges and Western medicine.[202]

3.1.3 Collective Violence

Where interpersonal violence is perpetrated by individuals, "collective violence is the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group – whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity – against another group or set of individuals in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives" (World Health Organization 83). This definition is problematic as it does not, indeed, offer a proper definition of *violence*. Instead, it rests on the "instrumental use of violence" at its core. *Instrumental* suggests that the definition once again includes a form of *intentionalism*, but neither the use of force nor power are specified.

[202] See Danto and Zangeneh; Jocelyn Jones et al.; Huriwai et al.

Other definitions of violence differentiate between situational and organized forms of collective violence. Situational collective violence is a spontaneous behavior, where "something in the immediate situational environment triggers a group to violent action" (Delaney n.p.). Delaney offers the example of "a barroom brawl, [where] one group of patrons interprets messages sent by another group as a form of disrespect and feels it necessary to retaliate physically" (n.p.). As by the underlying definition of collective violence, it is the temporary or long-term identification with this group that, in contrast to my bar brawl-example above, categorizes this violence as *collective*. Situational collective violence is also an important topic of investigation in political theory, especially in the form of studies into triggers for spontaneous eruptions of violence, e.g., during protests and demonstrations.[203] The brawl in the bar in Durrongo in which Blackie is critically wounded in *Dancing Home* is an example for situational collective violence and explores how a situation may escalate when the underlying potential for violence (*latent violence*, see Section 3.2) is high enough.

In addition to spontaneous collective violence, Delaney categorizes organized collective violence, made up of both the general category of organized collective violence and the more specific category of institutional violence. As such, "*organized collective violence* is planned violent behaviour" that in contrast to "institutional collective violence" is "unauthorized or unofficial and lacks government approval" (n.p., emphasis in the original). As such, a pre-planned lynching or gang rape[204] would fall under organized collective violence, but "a country fighting a war, a state's national guard putting down a riot, or a SWAT team attacking a barricaded suspect" would fall under institutional violence (Delaney n.p.). It is important to note, in this context, that *authorized* does not equal *justified*. The use of violence, on the one hand, and the legitimization of that use, on the other, are at the very core of violence studies (Galtung, "Cultural" 291).

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[203] For an overview on the field of violence and peace studies see Dwyer, Dietrich, also Apter.

[204] For both a lynching and a gang rape there are underlying societal and political structures (racism, sexism) that are tied to the exercise of power over a person or persons with specific identity markers that move it from the category of community violence to the category of collective violence. Discussions around such cases are often fierce and highly emotional because the definition along lines of community violence or in the case of intimate partner violence as "individual cases" means a depoliticization of the discourse. This reverberates e.g. in discourses that name the killing of a wife or female partner as either "family dramas," which leaves it firmly on the sensational but personal level, or "femicide", which establishes the connection to existing patterns of oppression and the very high number of women's deaths resulting from intimate partner violence that amount to a statistic that can no longer be explained away as circumstance. As mentioned, multiple times within this dissertation, categorizations and naming do not only carry meaning, but they carry power.

3.2 Structural or Indirect Violence

Johan Galtung first introduced the term *structural violence* to describe how (or better "that") the complex system of societal, institutional, and ideological structures may cause harm to certain individuals or groups of people. This form of violence is often harder to observe than direct violence since it is generally tied to the denial or inhibition of access to resources. Galtung defines violence as the effective prevention of individuals from "realizing their potentialities" ("Violence" 170). He introduces the terms *actual* and *potential* levels of fulfillment, or the actualities and the potentialities of a human being. If there is general *potential* for human beings in contemporary society and with current advances in medicine to reach an average lifespan of 80 years of age, the lack of provision of the resources necessary to reach that age falls under Galtung's definition of violence. He is less concerned with severe illnesses and medical causes of premature deaths in and of themselves, but with the causal relation between a lack of access to preventative measures or curative procedures (due to regional distribution and mobility, financial means, or availability of health care, or due to bias in the assessment by medical professionals) and premature deaths. For if these resources were to be distributed equally, many of these deaths would be preventable (Galtung, "Violence" 169). I will return to this specific point in my analysis of Blackie and his limited access to medical care in my analysis of *Dancing Home* in Section 4.2.4.

The "general formula behind structural violence is [thus] inequality" (Galtung, "Violence" 175) and as such structural violence is connected to instances of direct and indirect discrimination. Resources such as education and literacy, access to health care services and affordable living are unevenly distributed, often along racial and class lines, but also between rural and urban areas. But "above all, *the power to decide over the distribution of resources* is unevenly distributed" (Galtung, "Violence" 171). Government bodies continue to be made up by a fairly homogenous group of people (especially in leadership positions) – in Western countries mainly white cis-men from an affluent economic background and higher education – that does not, in fact, reflect the diversity of the general population. Since a homogenous group of people also tends to bring a homogenous range of experiences and thus perspectives to the table, the likelihood for change initiated by new insight is reduced. This view on homogeneity and heterogeneity in a group does not relate to literary theories of cognition, because it does not refer to the question of *how* new information is introduced and how this introduction may initiate change. Instead, it refers to the *likelihood* of new information being introduced to the group (at all) when opportunities for exchange are limited to people with similar experiential backgrounds. This would be what is commonly referred to as a *social bubble*. In and of itself, this is unproblematic. However, on the level of structural violence and the body politic, this will pose the question how people who remain

unaffected by the racializing effects of supposedly neutral policies will become a) aware of and b) motivated to change these effects. Galtung's response is sobering. He observes that both structural and personal violence lead to a reproduction of more structural and more personal (what the WHO termed *interpersonal* and *self-directed*) violence. Most especially, the reproduction of structural violence may happen unintentionally. Galtung further cautions that few cases of violence are ever truly part of only one category. Instead, he argues that in cases of personal violence, the "pre-history of the case or even the structural context" often lead to an element of structural violence ("Violence" 178). This consideration becomes especially important as we talk about the statistical prevalence of violence in specific social groups.

As we take a closer look at both structural violence and occurrences of collective violence motivated by religion or political ideology (i.e., against racialized individuals, people of a certain gender or sexuality),[205]

> . . . a causal flow from cultural via structural to direct violence can be identified. The culture preaches, teaches, admonishes, eggs on, and dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural, or into not seeing them (particularly not exploitation) at all. Then come the eruptions, the efforts to use direct violence to get out of the structural iron cage, and counter-violence to keep the cage intact. (Galtung, "Cultural" 295)

What Galtung describes here is violence not only as a specific event or occurrence, but a process that adapts and changes according to circumstance or that reacts to a stimulant. Especially regarding structural racism, sexism, heteronormativity and ableism, it is important to pay attention to the surrounding cultural mechanisms that define violences as *normal* or *natural*. Culture can develop violent forms when it negates or perpetuates inequalities that cause individuals or groups of individuals harm. These are the "normalizing power structures" that the subjectless critique of queer theory (see Section 2.3.5) have identified and criticized, and that, according to this definition, are violence. Indigenous (but for instance also Black or Latinx) Literature can make these "normalizing power structures" visible. That is not to say that *all* Indigenous literatures do so. For example, Anita Heiss' literary work (with the exception of the novel *Bila Yarrudhanggalangdhuray*) has largely been classified as "commercial fiction" or "Chick Lit" and she has repeatedly been criticized for "not being Black enough," an issue on which she writes extensively in her memoir *Am I Back Enough for You?* (see also Heiss, interviewed by Astrid

[205] Institutional and direct violence are strongly connected insofar as direct violence can develop out of a general (learned) justification of marginalization and discrimination within structural violence. In turn, a large number of instances of direct violence that are not properly addressed can over time turn into structural violence, because once again, normalization takes place. For a more complex analysis of how direct and indirect violence interact and depend on one another, please refer to Srinivasan.

Edwards, "At Home" and "Black Enough"). In this case, the accusation of "not being Black enough" ties directly into the question of representation; representation of *identity*, but also representation of *perspective*. The allegation is that in writing commercial fiction, Anita Heiss does not aim to transport a perspective that carries political relevance.[206] Representation of identity and perspective can be intertwined, but in my understanding, a representation of *identity* offers additional information on a person or community and may have the effect of broadening cultural frames or stereotypical perceptions. This would be the level that Paul Sopcak's empirical studies aim to understand and which I referenced in Section 2.4. Representation of *perspectives* as defined in this dissertation (Section 2.4) aim at the transportation of (ideological) values, but, more importantly, offer the opportunity to turn the focus back on the *normative gaze* (of the hegemonial ideology) that as a *normalizing power structure* (see the connection between the *colonial gaze* and the *Black gaze* drawn in Section 2.2 on critical race and critical whiteness theory) is a form of violence according to the definition provided by Galtung above.

Let me expand further on these *normalizing power structures*. They assign value to human beings according to their identity markers (or through placeholders that refer to these identity-markers, e.g. by referring to citizenships instead of race), and they construct a "steep gradient," "inflating, even exalting the value of Self [in-group]; deflating, even debasing the value of Other [out-group]," opening the door for structural violence to "start operating" (Galtung, "Cultural" 298). Moreover, this assignment of value will likely

> . . . become a self-fulfilling prophecy: people become debased by being exploited, and they are exploited because they are seen as debased, dehumanized. When Other is not only dehumanized but has been successfully converted into an 'it', deprived of humanhood, the stage is set for any type of direct violence, which is then blamed on the victim. This is then reinforced by the category of the 'dangerous it', the 'vermin', or 'bacteria' (as Hitler described the Jews); the 'class enemy' (as Stalin described the 'kulaks'); the 'mad dog' (as Reagan described Qadhafi); the 'cranky criminals' (as Washington experts describe 'terrorists'). Extermination becomes a psychologically possible duty. (Galtung, "Cultural" 298)

Galtung here basically describes the colonial, neo-colonial and racializing processes of *othering* and its surrounding discourses from a violence-centered perspective.[207] The connection between

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[206] The novel *Hibiscus Coast* by Māori author Paula Morris (Ngāti Wai) would be a similar example from the Aotearoa New Zealand context. As an art thriller centering around the protagonist Emma Taupere, the novel offers a female Māori character with Chinese ancestry (representation) but does not lend itself to an analysis of a broader (sociopolitical) perspective. The same does not hold true for Morris' novel *Queen of Beauty*.

[207] Angely Y. Davis investigates the racial discourses surrounding rape charges against Black men. The trope of the Black man raping white women is widespread and was often fabricated to justify lynchings over the centuries of Black oppression in the United States; nowadays it has become almost universal (A. Y. Davis, *Race* 188).

[207] As she warns, the "myth of the Black rapist has been methodically conjured up whenever recurrent waves of violence and terror against the Black community have required convincing justifications" (A. Y. Davis, *Race* 173). In

the assignment of value to human beings as *human* and as *livable* life (or in Judith Butler's terminology as "grievable life") has also been investigated by Gorgio Agamben in his theoretical analysis of *bare life*. I will return to both Agamben and Butler in Section 3.4.[208]

In his analysis, Galtung goes one step further by differentiating between latent and manifest violence. In "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," he explains that manifest violence, may this be on a personal or structural level, can be observed. The observation is complicated by "the theoretical entity of 'potential realization'" but it is nonetheless possible ("Violence" 172), e.g., by a closer analysis of the data for the medium life span of different ethnic groups to return to the example mentioned above. Latent violence, on the other hand, is something which is not there, yet might easily come about" (Galtung, "Violence" 172), which makes it much harder to observe and identify:

> . . . since violence by definition is the cause of the difference (or of maintaining the nondecrease) between actual and potential realization, increased violence may come about by increases in the potential as well as by decreases in the actual levels. However, we shall limit ourselves to the latter and say that there is latent violence when the situation is so unstable that the actual realization level 'easily' decreases. For personal violence this would mean a situation where a little challenge would trigger considerable killing and atrocity, as is often the case in connection with racial fights. (Galtung, "Violence" 172)

Expanding on the example introduced by Galtung, latent violence thus describes the underlying potential for extreme violence for people affected by racism if or when they (even only slightly) challenge hegemonic (white) authority. An example of this from the literary corpus would be the analepsis in *Dancing Home*, where the protagonist Blackie is retelling his experiences as Aboriginal Australian boy in an almost all-white secondary school. Due to his experience of racism in the secondary school he ultimately gives up on excelling academically and remains within the

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the United States, as in almost all Western nation states, figures for interracial rape make up only a very small percentages of reports, whereas intraracial rape charges make up more than 90% (A. Y. Davis, *Culture* 43).[207] And in those cases of reported rape across racial lines, the perpetrator is most often male and white. Davis traces this back to times of slavery, in which slaveowners claimed the rights as "direct expression of their presumed property rights over Black people as a whole" (*Race* 175). She further states that "one of racism's salient historical features has always been the assumption that white men—especially those who wield economic power—possess an incontestable right of access to Black women's bodies. Slavery relied as much on routine sexual abuse as it relied on the whip and the lash." (*Race* 175). As such, then, rape has never been an expression of an individual white man's sexual urge, but it was an "institutionalized pattern" in which it fulfilled its role as "a weapon of domination, a weapon of repression, whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women's will to resist, and in the process, to demoralize their men . . . a weapon of mass political terrorism (A. Y. Davis, *Race* 23–24). This analysis is, in fact, easily transferable to the Australian context and the abuse and assault that was common both on missions and in white households, to which Aboriginal girls were sent as domestic servants.

[208] To see which mechanisms of cultural violence Galtung identifies in neoliberal conceptions of the "meritocracy" (Galtung, "Cultural").

racist confines of sports, where he is both allowed and expected to excel. At the same time, his teammates verbally and physically abuse him during practice and games (Collis 15). Another example would be the careful way in which Jackson and his friends navigate the police whenever they're "driving while Black."[209] The latent violence of a police stop for the Aboriginal Australian Jackson greatly differs from the latent violence in a situation where a white Australian man is stopped by the police. Because Black men are still culturally framed and stereotyped as overly aggressive, their behavior is interpreted along a different scale of supposed threat, and this underlying bias influences the vehemence in its supposed counteraction by the police. As statistics show, police stops of Black drivers escalate at a much higher frequency and with much higher brutality than police stops of white drivers (see Sorin). The latent violence – the potential (here not in Galtung's sense of potential and actualization, but just "potential") and probability for "considerable killing and atrocity" – for Black and Indigenous people is extremely volatile and dangerous.

By the time we look at latent violence and its possibly horrendous realization, the original discourses that assigned value to specific human beings and no value to others and its accompanying direct violence has already been forgotten: "direct violence is forgotten, slavery is forgotten, and only two labels show up, pale enough for college textbooks: 'discrimination' for massive structural violence and 'prejudice' for massive cultural violence. Sanitation of language: itself cultural violence" (Galtung, "Cultural" 295). Once again, we are looking at normalization and cultural transformation that makes violent structures palatable or supposedly invisible. We see here a reciprocal relationship as political activism is working to attract attention to and redesign such structures.

Looking back at Galtung's definition of cultural and structural violence as the (often institutionalized) perpetuation of inequalities, it is easy to see how colonialism as an ideology, a practice, a process – especially in its intersection with racism, sexism, heteronormativity, classism, and ableism – produces colonial violence. All the theoretical chapters above lay the contextual foundations for different forms of violence, be that direct or indirect, personal, or structural, latent, or manifest.

The reactions to colonial violence can be manifold. According to Frantz Fanon, colonial violence produces *counter violence*, especially in the form of revolutions or guerilla warfare. This is the violence exhibited by anti-colonial movements that challenge the (military) power of the colonizing state in their pursuit of liberation (Fanon, *Wretched;* Fanon, *Black*). Examples such as

[209] The phrase "driving while Black" has gained momentum within the #BlackLivesMatter-movement across North America after a series of police killings of Black citizens who were initially stopped due to racial profiling practices.

the Indian Mahatma Gandhi have shown that liberation can also be achieved through radical nonviolence. Success depends on the circumstances, however, and especially the state of authority, power and control that (still) rests with the colonizing power at the time in question (see Arendt; Judith Butler, *Frames*). Other forms of violence that are reactions to colonial and continued racial violence can be defined in terms of vertical and lateral violence. At the core of both lies the trauma inflicted on Indigenous families and communities due to the use of colonial and racial "violence as a proxy for power" in Australia "and in other countries that share a history of colonisation and displacement" (Langton 1). As such, "vertical violence involves responses that are usually, though not always, disproportionate, and dysfunctional, such as attacks on police officers, vehicles and stations. Anyone in a position of authority may be a target, as settlement battles are replayed" and they can be direct responses to the abuse of power by the targeted officials, but they can also be arbitrary with regard to the specific target, the reaction often exacerbated by alcohol or drug use (Langton 1). However, the consequence is often "that the nurses and teachers retreat, police officers are evacuated for a period of time and the gangs take over these townships, exacerbating the lawlessness, anarchy, crime and lateral violence – violence against their own" (Langton 1).

Both vertical and lateral violence as described here are usually forms of direct violence (though the widespread statistics can be attributed to the consequences of structural violence, i.e., colonial and racial violence), but they are defined along the lines of the target or victim of the violent act, who are either part of the marginalized group or part of the marginalizing group. Calling on the approach of intersectionality at this point, I will include another point for consideration. The term *lateral violence,* as explained above, suggests a horizontal power relationship between the perpetrator and the victim of violence. However, it most often runs along the same hierarchical lines of power and abuse along which vertical forms of violence show statistical relevance. As I explained in Section 2.3.5, colonialism brought gender hierarchies and heteronormativity as a normative concept to Indigenous communities. This means that these hierarchies also exist in these communities which lead to the effect that even lateral violence is often directed "at the most vulnerable members of the family: old people, women and [especially] children" (Langton 3). In other words, where the opportunity for (obvious) vertical violence is removed, for instance, because nursing staff and police retreat from an area, different (yet similar) power structures fill the vacuum that is left behind. Langton also refers to these gendered (patriarchal) power structures as "*big bunga* politics" (Langton 1–2).

3.3 The Legitimization of Violence and Biopolitics

In section 2.2 on postcolonial theory, I shortly introduced the concept of ideology according to Althusser in order to shed additional light on the interplay between colonial institutions and the dissemination of (binary) constructions of colonizer-colonized, civilized-savage, and the underlying (or developing, depending on the contextualization within the history of racism) racialization of non-European peoples.[210] Althusser's approach to ideology and the underlying power focuses on the power and agency of the state.[211] Max Weber has termed this the state monopoly on violence (see chapter 2.1 above). In a similar vein, Michel Foucault has investigated how the modern state employs violence to discipline its subjects. For Foucault, the "right of life and death" in premodern times belonged to the sovereign, but it was "dissymmetrical" because the "sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing" (where sovereignty is threatened either by outside (war) or inside (death penalty or incarceration) forces), which means that in the end, it is "the right to *take* life or *let* live" ("Right" 259). The modern state, on the other hand, now presents this power of death as "the counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (259), which means that wars are now no longer in defense of the sovereign, but "on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized . . . in the name of life necessity" (260).

The arguments for war often rest on morality, on the defense of the nations' values and way of life. At the same time, these values are mobilized in nationalist discourses that define who belongs to the nation and who does not (for Foucault, of course, this especially refers to the policing of sexuality), and thus also who receives aid and who does not.[212] The power of the sovereign nation state is thus no longer just the "right to *take* life or *let* live", but the "power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death" (Foucault, "Right" 261). This is Foucault's concept of biopolitics in its most essential form.

As we will see below, the state's power over life and death is thus often one that is non-spectacular, structural, almost invisible to public perception. Literature, however, can make this power visible. For example, Clare Coleman's *Terra Nullius* manages to reveal the dehumanization

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[210] And of course, from a critical whiteness perspective, the racialization of the white European as well, just at this point and often until today in its "unmarked" form.

[211] See also S. Mills 33–52.

[212] This is especially visible in discourses around refugees and asylum seekers as well as welfare reforms, revolving around the questions of which lives should be protected and which should not, and on which characteristics rests the distinction (race, sexuality, gender, etc.).

and cruelty embedded in colonialist oppression. The novel as a whole is an allegory of the occupation and subjugation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. What seems to start as historical fiction, including references from the colonial archive about the progress of the territories' frontier wars, is suddenly revealed as futuristic science fiction halfway through the story. The narrative leads the reader (or, in Iser's words, the implied reader) on a false trail to the assumption that the colonizers in the story are white and British and the colonized are First Nations Australian. Further along in the storyline it becomes apparent, however, that earth has been invaded and colonized by an extraterrestrial species. The *colonized* in this novel are both white and First Nations Australians, and they are both subjected to the brutalist regime of the colony. So where the interpretation of the novel as historical fiction at first allows for a reading that defines Aboriginal Australians outside the white Australian nation, the switch in (perceived) genres suddenly defines a new, more threatening *outsider* that requires a redefinition of loyalties and with that a new definition of whose life is to be *fostered*.

Foucault further defines power as a process: "I believe that power is not built up out of 'wills' (individual or collective), nor is it derivable from interests. Power is constructed and functions on the basis of particular powers, myriad issues, myriad effects of power. It is . . . [a] complex domain" (Foucault, "History" 188). Instead of equating power to the "problem of sovereignty," he argues that

> . . . between every point of a social body, between a man and a woman, between the members of a family, between a master and his pupil, between every one who knows and everyone who does not, there exist relations of power which are not purely and simply a projection of the sovereign's great power over the individual; they are rather the concrete, changing soil in which the sovereign's power is grounded, the conditions which make it possible for it to function. (Foucault, "History" 187)

This view certainly moves beyond Althusser's analysis of the interpellation of ideology, and, more importantly, shows how power structures are deeply imbedded in the social fabric. Foucault believed that "the great fantasy is the idea of a social body constituted by the universality of wills. Now the phenomenon of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals" ("Body" 55). Combining this with Galtung's definition of violence stated above that understands violence as the establishment or perpetuation of inequalities according to identity markers, we see how deep structural violence – in the form of unequal application of force or constraint – may reach. This becomes even more evident when we turn to Foucault's definition of the political, in which he proposes that "the set of relations of force in a given society constitutes the domain of the political, and . . . a politics is a more-or-less global strategy for co-ordinating and directing those relations" ("History" 189). Force, in this sense, is the "momentary expression" of power, which in turn means that "every power relation makes a

reference . . . to a political field of which it forms a part", and leads him in effect to agreement with the statement "everything is political" (Foucault, "History" 189).[213] This understanding of power relationships, the application of force and its overall connection to the political forms the basis of my analysis of instances of violence (as the abuse or misapplication of power) in the novels in Sections 4.1 to 4.3.

First, however, I will continue to elaborate on this connection between power relationships and the political by turning to Agamben's concept of *bare life* and Judith Butler's *precarious life* in the following section.

3.4 Bare Life and Precarious Life

Foucault's concept of biopolitics, explained in the previous section as an investigation into how power shapes and regulates the human body according to the interrelation between force, power, and politics (see in detail Foucault, *Birth*), builds the foundation for Giorgio Agamben's concept of "bare life." In his seminal work *Homo Sacer,* Agamben looks to Greek philosophy, distinguishing between *"zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings" and "*bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group" (15). Bare life refers to the biological life as the focus of political power, as "bare life in politically qualified life" (Agamben 20), meaning that power (especially the sovereign power of the state) qualifies which life is "bare." Considerations about the "quality of life" (Buchanan n.p.) fall by the wayside.

Judith Butler extended this line of thought in the concepts of *precarity* and the *grievable life*. For Butler, life fundamentally relies not on an individual being's "drive to live," but it is socially and politically conditioned (*Frames* 21). Socially and politically conditioned means that through perception and/or policy, some lives are framed as living, while others are not:

> . . . to be a body is to be exposed to social crafting and form, and that is what makes the ontology of the body a social ontology. In other words, the body is exposed to socially and politically articulated forces as well as to claims of sociality–including language, work, and desire–that make possible the body's persisting and flourishing. The more or less existential conception of 'precariousness' is thus linked with a more specifically political notion of 'precarity'. (Judith Butler, *Frames* 3)

Lives that are not framed as *living* (in Agamben's sense the *bios*) are then *precarious*, with *precarity* describing the "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury,

[213] For further insight into "political violence" see Apter.

violence, and death" (Judith Butler, *Frames* 25). Indigenous lives are precarious; the precarity of Indigenous lives, not just in Australia but worldwide, is caused by the legacy of colonialism and institutionalized racism. Precarity further describes conditions under which certain populations are especially vulnerable to random state violence, a situation often additionally amplified when the state is the highest level of judicial power to appeal to for protection and support (Judith Butler, *Frames* 26). The precarious life is, however, not Agamben's *bare life*, for it still rests within the social and political bond of the nation state. Bare life is defined as existing outside state-law, configured as being in a space defined by "the withdrawal or absence of law" (Judith Butler, *Frames* 29).

In the Australian context, the refugees placed in the detention centers on Nauru and Manus would be considered *bare life*, willfully detained outside the Australian state territory and for an indefinite time (Refugee Council of Australia, "Australia" n.p.). Indigenous peoples, however, would be considered *precarious lives* since they still rest within the nation states' judicial system, even if in a "state of radical exposure," especially if at the mercy of "illegitimate legal coercion itself, or the exercise of state power freed from the constraints of all law" (Judith Butler, *Frames* 29) as some critics have claimed during the Northern Territory Intervention. The distinction between bare life and precarious life does not, however, automatically lead to the conclusion that the life in question is one to be protected (Judith Butler, *Frames* 2). According to Judith Butler, for a life to be "apprehended as injured or lost" it first needs to be "apprehended as living" (*Frames* 1). This does not automatically extend to either the *precarious* or the *bare life*, because this life is most often framed as *other*, and – especially within nationalist frameworks – "likeness" (*you* are similar to *me*) lies at the foundation of solidarity. This very mechanism of the *white gaze* is laid bare in Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy*, when the Indigenous character Aboriginal Sovereignty ends up in a refugee detention camp on an island outside Australia's national borders.

According to Butler, life is only grievable if it is framed as similar to the (national) subject. Precarious lives are not: "how I am encountered, and how I am sustained, depends fundamentally on the social and political networks in which this body lives, how I am regarded and treated, and how that regard and treatment facilitates this life or fails to make it livable" (as opposed to merely "existing" but also as vulnerable to constant injury) (*Frames* 53). Butler gives the example of gender, but similar mechanisms are of course in place for constructions of race, able-bodiedness and sexuality: "the norms of gender through which I come to understand myself or my survivability are not made by me alone . . . I am already up against a world I never chose when I exercise my agency" (*Frames* 53). Precarious life is already socially and politically constructed as *non-*

grievable, independent of the subject's own agency, and, in turn, the precarious subject learns to understand itself through this construction as well.[214]

Another philosopher who has since developed Foucault's concept of biopower and biopolitics is Achilles Mbembe in his seminar work *Necropolitics*. By *necropolitics* Mbembe refers to the (especially racialized) biopolitics that are explicably geared towards the management of death:

> . . . as a rule, such death [that of Agamben's bare life or Butler's precarious life and for Mbembe especially visible in the deaths of climate change refugees] is something to which nobody feels any obligation to respond. Nobody even bears the slightest feelings of responsibility or justice toward this sort of life or, rather, death. Necropolitical power proceeds by a sort of inversion between life and death, as if life was merely death's medium. . . . Such death has nothing tragic about it. This is why necropolitical power can multiply it infinitely, either by small doses (the cellular and molecular modes) or by spasmodic surges—the strategy of "small massacres" inflicted one day at a time, using an implacable logic of separation, strangulation, and vivisection, as we see in all the contemporary theaters of terror and counterterror. (Mbembe, *Necropolitics* 37)

The death of precarious life is neither tragic nor mourned, leaving the public with a general feeling of indifference. While Mbembe here specifically refers to instances of terror and counterterror, his viewpoint is also applicable to everyday life and, for example, becomes visible in the high statistics of Black and Indigenous peoples in custody. As the 2021-2022 report on *Deaths in Custody in Australia* has shown, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration rates are disproportionately higher than non-Indigenous incarceration rates: Whereas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up only three percent of the population in Australia, they comprise 32 percent of the prison population and almost 20 percent of deaths in prison custody (McAlister and Bricknell 7, 12).[215] As long as they are framed as individual events, "unlucky happenstance" but not as structural violence, necropolitics persevere. Mbembe further argues that "to a large extent, racism is the driver of the necropolitical principle insofar as it stands for organized destruction, for a sacrificial economy, the functioning of which requires, on the one hand, a generalized cheapening of the price of life and, on the other, a habituation to loss" (*Necropolitics* 37–38). It is precisely this "habituation to loss" that is challenged by many of the Indigenous narratives below.

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[214] For a comparison also see the concept of *internalized racism* in Section 2.2.

[215] For a more in-depth analysis of the statistics, their context and limitation for interpretation please refer to the study directly.

3.5 Epistemic, Environmental and Slow Violence

Based upon these different structures of inequality (structures which we have now successfully defined as forms of violence), I will now briefly mention three more conceptions of violence, mainly those of epistemic, environment and slow violence. As with all other definitions of violence, these categories are not clear-cut. Instead, they strongly intersect with other structures of inequality and violence (see Section 2.2.3 for a definition of intersectionality in relation to structures of inequality).

The first concept I would like to draw attention to is the concept of *epistemic violence* that has been used widely within postcolonial criticism. The term "epistemic violence" goes back to Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and describes the global power imbalance with regard to epistemology, the question of "what counts as knowledge", especially in academia and the sciences (and how they are used in justifications for the subjugation of *others*). Whenever we look at epistemology and the value it is ascribed especially within academic settings, we must therefore also consider subjugating processes and structures as manifestations of epistemic violence. This concept then denotes as violence all that Linda Tuhiwai Smith has identified as Eurocentric academic epistemology in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (see section on critical Indigenous studies above) and that has been used to devalue Indigenous and other non-Western knowledge systems.

The second concept I will turn towards is that of environmental violence, not least because it has received increasing attention within the last two decades. The concept relates to the growing social, economic, and environmental inequalities produced by both the overall acceleration of climate change on a global scale, but also by instances of environmental pollution on a local level, which threatens the lives and livelihood of affected communities and populations.

Environmental violence also covers the displacement of Indigenous populations in the name of establishing nature reserves and conservation areas (Nixon 36). The latter case of course also carries elements of colonial violence, as well as economic violence where displacements cause additional financial strain on communities. Colonial occupation and dispossession went hand in hand with the introduction of foreign flora and fauna into the colonial territory. Most notably crops brought along on the ships, such as potatoes, but also breeding stock, such as sheep, and rodents that made the long journey to the colonies as stowaways. The introduction of these foreign species has caused significant upheaval in the existing ecosystems. One of the most well-known cases would be the examples of the rabbit plague on the Australian continent that is referenced in Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*, but also the endangerment of the Kiwi in New Zealand through the introduction of predators such as rats or possums. The term *ecological*

imperialism was first introduced by Alfred Crosby in his 1986 *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900 – 1900.* Western efforts to mitigate the ecological consequences of colonialism are often highly problematic, prove to be ineffective, or cause even more environmental harm (see Audra Mitchell).[216]

In 1982, Benjamin Chavis called specific attention to the racialized component of environmental violence and termed it *racist environmentalism,* defining it as "racial discrimination in public policy making, as the deliberate targeting of people of color communities for toxic waste and hazardous waste facilities, as the exclusion of people of color from public policy making" (n.p.).[217] Chavis here addresses not just the disproportionate effect of environmental violence on BIPoC communities, but also their structural exclusion (and thus the exclusion of their expertise) from policy making, both for the policies that were cause for pollutions and those that tried to address them.[218]

Environmental violence also always contains multiple layers of subjection as scholar Malcom Ferdinand has shown in *Decolonial Ecology.* Ferdinand draws attention to contemporary failures within environmentalism,[219] which address the environmental pollution and resource extraction but do not properly address the existing power structures within societies and (neo)colonial political and economic relations that cause great imbalance in how peoples and communities are affected. He argues that

> . . . the colonial ecology of racial ontologies . . . always links the racialized and the colonized to those psychic, physical, and social-political spaces that are the world's hold. This is true whether it is a matter of the paces of legal and political non-representation (the enslaved), the spaces of non-being (the N****),[220] the spaces of the absence of logos, history, or culture (the savage), the spaces of the non-human (the animal), the spaces of the inhuman (the monster, the beast), the spaces of the non-living (camps and necropolises[221]), or, if it is a matter of geographical locations (Africa, the

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[216] For example, the Rabbit Proof Fence in Australia proved ineffective within only a few years of its construction, and novels such as Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* present a highly critical perspective on the establishment of national parks to the detriment of the peoples previously living on the territory.

[217] Original speech from 1982 is also quoted with slight variance in A. Y. Davis, "Foreword"

[218] A striking example for environmental racism would be the Flint water crisis and its handling by public officials, described in detail in A. Y. Davis, *Freedom*.

[219] Ferdinand defines environmentalism as the "set of movements and currents of thought that attempt to reserve the vertical valuation of the environmental fracture (assigning higher value to the human and lesser value to the planet, the environment and nature) but without touching the horizontal scale of values, meaning without questioning social injustices, gender, discrimination, political domination, or the hierarchy of living environments and without concern for the treatment of animals on Earth" (5).

[220] Ferdinand here specifically uses the word to call attention to its construction as "other." I will nonetheless refrain from repeating it here (especially with regard to my own positioning) and will refer to the original source.

[221] Necropolises are the (urban/township) centers where Mbembe's necropolitics are concentrated.

> Americas, Asia, Oceania), of habitat zones (ghettos, suburbs) or of ecosystems subject to capitalist production (slave ships, tropical plantations, factories, mines, prisons). (11)

These relations are continually underestimated, understated, and concealed, causing him to name it a "colonial ecology" (21). For Ferdinand, at the heart of any activism or policy-making that addresses environmental violence lies an intersectional analysis of the legacy of colonialism.[222]

In order to allow for a more extended analysis of environmental violence and its effect on local communities, Robert Nixon has coined the term *slow violence*:

> . . . by slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility. (2)

The expectation that violence must be spectacular stands in contrast to the "relative invisibility of slow violence" (Nixon 2), which Nixon develops out of Galtung's definition of structural violence and a shared "concern with social justice, hidden agency, and certain forms of violence that are imperceptible" (Nixon 10). For slow violence, the triggering event (or a number of triggering events) and its effect are temporally distant and not restricted to just one body[223] (Nixon 3). Nixon uses "slow-motion toxicity" as an example, explaining how the toxin needs to accumulate in a body before clinical symptoms present, while at the same time the contamination may spread to other bodes (Nixon 3).

Nixon also does not restrict slow violence to just environmental violence (although it is of course highly applicable and examples are plentiful), but he also includes examples of domestic abuse, generational trauma and posttraumatic stress: "crucially, slow violence is often not just attritional but also exponential, operating as a major threat multiplier; it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded" (3). This, in turn, offers a "major challenge" for representation: "how to devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects", especially in a time "when public policy is shaped primarily around perceived immediate need" (Nixon 3). These stories lie at the core of political and environmental activism and the novels chosen for analysis in this dissertation offer some representational examples (though within immediate political discourse and lobbying, the representational challenge is

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[222] For an Indigenous perspective on how Native and Indigenous communities have been disproportionally affected by environmental violence, see LaDuke; Andrea Smith, *Conquest;* Churchill.

[223] This is not the human/animal body, but the spatial conception "body"; such as "body of water" but also different layers of the soil, etc. Human and animal bodies are of course also spatial conceptions.

especially one of brevity and immediate impact).[224] Because it takes effect over longer periods of time and the increasing pace of *fast capitalism*, "violence, above all environmental violence, needs to be seen—and deeply considered—as a contest not only over space, or bodies, or labor, or resources, but also over time" (Nixon 8). By this he means that how time functions – conceptualizations of what is "present," what is "past" and how or if it is remembered, greatly factor into our perception of violence *as* violence, because otherwise "both the causes and the memory of catastrophe readily fade from view as the casualties incurred typically pass untallied and unremembered" (Nixon 8–9). Our contemporary world is too fast-paced, due to what Nixon calls "our contemporary politics of speed" (Nixon 11), causing our attention spans to decrease and for those casualties to get lost in the flood of information we can no longer process properly.[225] This means that the "casualties of slow violence—human and environmental—are the casualties most likely not to be seen, not to be counted" (Nixon 13). And yet, in

> . . . a world permeated by insidious, yet unseen or imperceptible violence, imaginative writing can help make the unapparent appear, making it accessible and tangible by humanizing drawn-out threats inaccessible to the immediate senses. Writing can challenge perceptual habits that downplay the damage slow violence inflicts and bring into imaginative focus apprehensions that elude sensory corroboration. The narrative imaginings of writer-activists may thus offer us a different kind of witnessing: of sights unseen. (Nixon 15)

These "sights unseen" are not reduced to environmental slow violence and deaths due to environmental pollution or displacements. Nixon also explicitly names domestic abuse, cases in which

> . . . violence may be life threatening but slow, bloodless, and brutal in ways that are not always immediately fatal: a broken nose constitutes a different order of evidence from food or access to medical treatment or human company withheld over an extended period. A locked door can be a weapon. Doors for women are often longterm, nonlethal weapons that leave no telltale bloody trail; doors don't bear witness to a single, decisive blow. In many cultures, moreover, rape isn't defined as rape if it is inflicted by a husband. And in some societies, a rape isn't rape unless three adult men are present to witness it. As the journalistic chestnut has it, 'if it bleeds, it leads.' And as a corollary, if it's bloodless, slow-motion violence, the story is more likely to be buried, particularly if it's relayed by people whose witnessing authority is culturally discounted. (Nixon 16)

There is, in fact, little to either add or explain with regard to this rather long quotation. Nixon provides an illuminating insight into this issue. Furthermore, his intersectional analysis shows that

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[224] For a brilliant example of how close artistic (literary) expression and political lobbying can be linked, see Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner 's "Poem to my Daughter" at the 2014 Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Climate Summit and her 2018 Video-Poem "Anointed."

[225] See Kevin Bale for the treatment of what he calls "disposable people" in Kevin Bales' *Disposable People. New Slavery in the Global Economy*.

there are communities and parts of the population whose witnessing authority is more easily discounted than others. At the same time, however, as the different analyses of the Northern Territory Intervention have shown above, the witnessing power is contested not just from outside the community, but also within communities, and it is discounted depending on the overarching political goals. As such, as Moreton-Robinsons has pointed out, supposed Aboriginal dysfunction and violence is made hypervisible within Australian mainstream society, but the intersecting aspect of racist violence and its subjugating effects at the root of it is not. I therefore follow Nixon's caution that while the writer-activist's role is to be honored, it should not be glamorized: "this role requires incessant compromise and incessant reinvention, particularly given the rapid changes in the technological and geopolitical climate in which writers must act" (42–43). I will argue in my chapter on Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy* that her writing suggests an eternal suspension of time which can be interpreted as both a representation of slow violence and as narrative rejection of the speed of fast capitalism.

4 Textual Analysis: Australian Aboriginal Literature

This chapter will turn towards the analysis of three contemporary Australian Aboriginal novels. All three novels have been chosen for their unique strategies in narrating the intersecting effects of structural violence: the network, the allegory, and the complex system of relationality. Whereas the first two novels approach intersectionality from the perspective of the individual subject position and employ individual characters to render structural violence visible, I argue that the third novel – Wright's *Praiseworthy* – approaches structural violence as a multitude of intersecting systems of oppressions in the form of subjugating discourses and the *others* they produce. While the first two novels narrate from the individual to the structural level, Praiseworthy narrates from the structural level to the individual, and each approach offers varying degrees of interactions with what I have termed the structural violence of the *white gaze* (see Chapter 2).

First, Melissa Lucashenko's novel *Too Much Lip* will offer up an example of how to narrate a network of violence. In this section, I will explore Melissa Lucashenko's novel *Too Much Lip* through a narratological and intersectional lens. I will examine how the narrative weaves a complex web of interconnections at both structural and thematic levels to depict the widespread occurrence of violence in Indigenous communities, while simultaneously resisting and deconstructing harmful racist stereotypes. The novel accomplishes this by continuously shaping and unsettling the distinctions between "victim" and "perpetrator" (Section 4.1.1), by invoking identity categories only to later challenge and complicate them (Section 4.1.2), and by drawing a connection between the three Indigenous male characters – Owen, Ken, and Brandon – within the broader context of Country, land-based healing, responsibility, and caregiving (Section 4.1.3). Furthermore, the novel brings attention to imbalances of power and systems of oppression, illustrating how shifting alliances emerge along these lines of domination. Finally, all these narrative strategies are embedded within the ever-present "white noise" of violence reported across the country (Section 4.1.4). Collectively, the narrative constructs a network of interconnected forms of violence and their intersections, portraying how deeply embedded and systemic violence is within the white settler nation-state.

Second, it will present an analysis of Paul Collis' *Dancing Home*, which uses its plot structure and intertextual references to Shakespearean tragedy to tell an exemplary tale of the effects of police violence. This chapter analyzes *Dancing Home* through the lens of classical tragedy, focusing on its plot structure in Section 4.2.1 and drawing comparisons to Freytag's pyramid and Aristotle's *Poetics*. I argue that the novel uses a stylized, regulated narrative to expose the systemic violence of racism and classism – interwoven with hypermasculinity and gender – in contemporary Australia. Blackie, as an allegorical figure, is not doomed by personal flaws but by

his social position as Indigenous, male, and poor. The novel critiques Western myths of merit and economic success, not by rejecting the white gaze outright, but by reorienting and expanding its scope. Building on this, Section 4.2.2 examines Blackie's character as a reinterpretation of the Aristotelian tragic hero, whose societal "fault" enables antagonist McWilliams to falsely criminalize him. Section 4.2.3 then reads McWilliams and Blackie as symbolic opposites through the lens of *Macbeth*, illustrating systemic police bias and contrasting views of sovereignty. Finally, Section 4.2.4 explores the allegorical role of Doctor White, showing how healthcare access, like policing, reveals the layered structural violence Blackie faces due to his intersectional identity.

Third, I will take a closer look at Alexis Wright's most recent novel *Praiseworthy* and explain how the novel interrelates environmental violence with colonialism and structural racism. In this section, I will examine Alexis Wright's novel *Praiseworthy* through both a narratological and intersectional lens. I will demonstrate that the novel's narrative style resists rapid reading, and that the slower reading pace is essential for understanding its complexity. I argue that *Praiseworthy* deliberately utilizes frequent instances of ambiguity and complexity to convey an anti-colonial and anti-racist perspective (Section 4.3.1). Additionally, this complexity serves as a structural manifestation of the concept of relationality (Section 4.3.2). The novel also foregrounds the material and psychological repercussions of the Northern Territory Intervention, explicitly framing it as an instance of racist structural violence (Section 4.3.3). This violence operates both within and beyond the white nation-state, constructing the non-white *other* in Indigenous communities as well as among refugees arriving by boat. Consequently, *Praiseworthy* portrays the Australian nation-state as a white possession, asserting that it is not territorial borders but racial boundaries that define the nation (Section 4.3.4).

4.1 Pandemic Violence: Melissa Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip*

In this section, I will analyze Melissa Lucashenko's novel *Too Much Lip* from a narratological and intersectional perspective. In the following, I will first explain the structure of this section and then provide a concise overview of previous scholarship on *Too Much Lip* as well as the content of the novel.

In this section, I will show how the narrative constructs a network of interrelation on the structural and thematic level of the novel to narrate the complex issues and high statistical occurrence of violence in (especially) Indigenous communities while also countering harmful racist stereotypes *about* these communities. The narrative achieves this by constantly constructing and destabilizing the categories "victim" and "perpetrator" (Section 4.1.1), by invoking and then relativizing identity categories (Section 4.1.2), by constructing a parallel between the three male Indigenous characters Owen, Ken, and Brandon, and exploring this parallel in the context of Country, land-based healing, responsibility and care-taking (4.1.3), and by drawing attention to power imbalances and registers of subjugation, as well as the shifting lines of allyship that form along these lines of domination, before finally embedding all of these narrative strategies in the "white noise" of violence reported all over the nation (4.1.4). As a whole, the narrative constructs a *network* of interrelations of different forms of violence and their points of intersection, representing how entrenched and "pandemic" violence is in the white settler nation state. This network is a narrative strategy that *marks whiteness* in the novel and that resists the epistemic violence of white (Western) appropriation. By constantly invoking and then destabilizing the categories of "victim" and "perpetrator" but also of "whiteness," the narrative resists the *white gaze* that constantly attempts "to know" the *other*.

Despite receiving the Miles Franklin award in 2019, Melissa Lucashenko's novel *Too Much Lip* has since received little critical attention. As Alice Pung speculates, this might have to do with the fact that her novel has been proclaimed as "not a 'literary' voice" (n.p.). She points out that "Australian literature is still very selective about including the lower classes"[226] and while it "has always hailed working-class men's stories, beginning with the bushman poets," "Indigenous women's 'yarns'" rate at "the very bottom" (n.p.). The only published criticism on the novel is a chapter in Kathrin Bartha-Mitchell's *Cosmological Readings of Contemporary Australian Literature. Unsettling the Anthropocene* that engages with the novel's mobilization of Indigenous

[226] This is not to say that First Nations Australian literature does not portray Aboriginal poverty. For an analysis on how poverty is negotiated through humor in Dot Collard's *Busted out Laughing* and Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, see (Alber, "Humorous").

sovereignty through its thematic use of water and Country. The analysis of the novel in this dissertation will be the first to engage with the narrative through the lens of intersectionality, violence, and narratology.

Melissa Lucashenko's 2018 novel *Too Much Lip* centers on the protagonist Kerry Salter and her family in Bundjalung country in the North of New South Wales. Kerry returns to her home town of Durrongo on a stolen Harley with a blue backpack full of money. The money stems from an armed robbery that Kerry's girlfriend committed and ultimately leads to the downfall of the town's corrupt white mayor. Upon her arrival in Durringo, Kerry is intent on only a short visit to say goodbye to her dying grandfather before she plans to ride north to Queensland. The short visit turns into a permanent return, but only after the family reunites in their struggle against the construction of a prison on their ancestral lands (Ava's Island) and after addressing the legacy of colonialism and violence that has left its scars on all members.

4.1.1 Three Beginnings – Layers of Intersecting Power Dimensions

In this section, I will analyze the three beginnings of the novel, namely the epigraph, the prologue, and the beginning of the main story. The epigraph pertains to the trial of an Aboriginal woman who shot her would-be rapist in 1907. It opens up a context of gender-based colonial violence, and – in combination with the afterword – frames the narrative as a whole. It is part of the peritext (see Genette, *Paratexts*), thus not yet the beginning of the narrative discourse. The second beginning is a prologue, a short story about the Aboriginal youth Owen Addison who is raped by a group of police officers after winning a boxing match against a white opponent. As such, it is the beginning of the narrative discourse according to Leander (15-17). This prologue opens up the context of race-based and police violence and is later revealed as partial origin-story for the violence directed by Owen at his grandchildren in the novel at large (a beginning of the *story*, according to Leander). It contrasts with the epigraph due to the sex of both the perpetrators and victim (both male), and in its interracial sexual abuse. The third beginning of the novel is the discursive beginning of the main storyline that the novel follows and that begins with the arrival of Kerry Salter in the town of Durrongo. This third beginning centers on Kerry's relationship with her abusive brother Ken. It focuses on gender-based violence and Ken's toxic masculinity and therefore shows intra-racial dimensions of domestic violence. As we learn in the afterword, this relation partially echoes the epigraph.

My analysis will show how each beginning opens up a different dimension of racial and gender-based violence, setting up multiple layers that destabilize automatic assignments of the categories "victim" and "perpetrator." Instead, they complicate these categories by exchanging the

referents of the categories, with the victim becoming a perpetrator and producing another victim who may become a perpetrator. This is generally referred to as a "cycle of abuse" and the novel thus builds up a network of possible referents and meanings that refuses easy binaries of "good/bad" and "innocent/guilty." The only clear assignment of blame that the novel allows is that colonial and racist violence lies at the origin of violence in Australian First Nations communities today. All other assignments of the categories "perpetrator" and "victim" are constantly complicated and relativized. Since one of the defining mechanisms of the *white gaze* is the assignment of categories for *others*, meaning the claim to knowledge *about* the *other* that lies at the core of Western discursive power (see Sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.2), this network of relativity refuses the *white gaze*. Not only does the narrative destabilize the categories of "victim" and "perpetrator," it refuses to allow the Western perspective (here specifically as line of sight) to find its target. Instead, this line of sight is constantly redirected (in the network of relative assignments of "victim" and "perpetrator") until all that remains as clear referent is the original white violence of colonization. It thus reveals not only colonial violence but the *white gaze* as a form of epistemic violence (see Section 3.5 for the definition of "epistemic violence" according to Spivak and Smith). This section will analyze the three beginnings in their chronological order (both in regard to discourse-time and story-time).

Upon opening the book and after the dedication and acknowledgements, the reader first encounters an epigraph that is a quote from the Brisbane Telegraph from 1908. This quotation opens up a context of gender-based colonial violence, and – in combination with the afterword – frames the narrative as a whole. This is what Genette refers to as a peritext, which is placed "next to" the narrative text (the story) and functions as commentary "on the text" by specifying and emphasizing its meaning indirectly (Genette, *Paratexts* 157). The epigraph stands as follows:

> *She was charged with shooting the accused, who in giving evidence against her, made no secret of what his intentions were towards the woman. She, he said, was only a gin, and he could do what he liked with her.*
>
> 'District Court, Criminal Sittings,'
> *Brisbane Telegraph*, 31 January 1908.[227]

While the reader at first assumes that the epigraph centers on the inter-racial rape of an Aboriginal woman, the afterword reveals the perpetrator to be an Aboriginal man, changing the (relative) position of power of perpetrator and victim. The afterword also informs the reader that the woman accused in this quotation was Lucashenko's grandmother, a Goori woman who shot her attempted rapist in the hip and was subsequently arrested in 1907. However, before I further explain the

[227] Quotation from the District Court Proceedings in 1908.

additional information provided in the afterword, I will take a closer look at the wording of the epigraph.

First, The word "gin" is both a racial and misogynist slur (which opens up a racist and gendered dimension to the suggested hierarchies of power in the relation between the accused and her would-be rapist) and references the exoticized and eroticized availability of the Black female body for the (especially white) man (see the hypersexualization of the Black female body in Section 2.1.2 and gendered violence in Section 3.1.1). The availability pertains not only to the 'male gaze' in the sense that the Black female body is always available for sexualized appraisal, but it further pertains to the physical availability of the body for sexual desire. This physical availability is a direct material effect of the intersection of racism and sexism. The Black female body is therefore constructed as 'unrapeable.' As Ami Srinivasan in *The Right to Sex* and Andrea Smith in *Conquest* explain, the concept of "rape" presupposes the sexual attack on a body that *can be violated*. But a body that is constructed as always available *cannot* claim violation (it cannot *claim* at all, due to its objectification). Due to this construction, then, "brown and black women in places of white domination have often been considered, owing to their supposed hypersexuality, unrapeable" (Srinivasan 103). The epigraph above therefore shows a worldview that echoes this "white domination." It is therefore easy to assume that the would-be rapist is white. At the same time, the concept of the "unrapeable" Black female body would also mean that this form of violence is highly unlikely to be brought before a district court (because the social construction of racism and sexism is also embedded into the justice system, see Section 2.2. on systemic racism, 2.3.3 on Moreton-Robinson' *white possession* and 3.2 on Galtung's structural violence). It is also highly unlikely to be reported in the newspaper at the beginning of the twentieth century, when white hegemony and racism (due to the white Australia policies) were even more prevalent than today.

And, in fact, as we learn in the afterword, the would-be rapist is himself also Aboriginal. The fact that he echoes the white racist worldview is thus presented as an instance of internalized colonial racism and sexism, and the normalization of gender-based violence that – in this case – is then directed against a woman of his own 'race.'[228] I use the term 'race' in this instance because both Lucashenko's grandmother and the would-be rapist are marked as racialized and this bears meaning for their position within the social body and the power that they may or may not have

[228] I here specifically use the term because we are currently moving within the discourse of critical race theory and intersectionality.

access to.[229] The echo of "white domination" mentioned above is therefore important for the interpretation of this epigraph. It emphasizes that colonial violence lies at the root of many social, economic and health issues that are prevalent in Indigenous society worldwide and disallows an interpretation of the man in the epigraph as the racist stereotype of the 'dangerous and aggressive Black man' (see Sections 2.1.2 and 2.2 on cultural stereotypes, colonial discourse and the use of binaries according to Said). This does not negate individual responsibilities or transgressions. However, discussions of culpability, responsibility and preventative measures always need to be context-specific and must not be generalized. I am pointing this out because as a narrative strategy, the power relations between the situation in the epigraph and the one I will analyze in the prologue shift, allowing Lucashenko to construct a narrative that manages to fictionally represent the multitude of issues of violence against and within Indigenous communities without opening the door for racist misappropriation and stereotyping.

To summarize, the afterword and the epigraph frame the narrative like two bookends, but this is not immediately visible to the reader until after they have finished reading the novel. The afterword changes the meaning of the epigraph retrospectively. At the first reading, the quotation from the epigraph would most likely be interpreted as a stereotypical occurrence of white settler violence against an Aboriginal Australian woman. The afterword changes the meaning of the epigraph, turning the frame into a different layer, much like the overlap in a kaleidoscope that may only minimally shift in meaning, but that in the overall construction destabilizes stereotypes and their supposedly obvious referents. It thus plays on the underlying mechanism of white discourses of power that immediately assign categories and meaning to everything *other* than white (see Section 2.2.2 on the unmarkedness of whiteness).

Furthermore, Lucashenko states in the afterword that "virtually every incidence of violence in these pages has occurred within my [Lucashenko's] extended family at least once" (318), a statement that shows that the fictional representation of the violence in the novel is neither exacerbated nor invented. Instead, it is one chosen form to transport lived realities and cultural perspectives to a wider audience. In combination with the other two beginnings of the novel, the epigraph refuses easy answers to contemporary questions of violence in Aboriginal communities, while always leading back to different instances of colonial and racist violence from the past (and present). To strengthen this argument, I will therefore now turn to the second beginning of the novel, Owen's prologue.

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[229] This is a discussion that is highly emotionally charged, rich in complexity and for which there is no easy solution, see Langton and M. Davis.

The narrative text opens with a retrospective prologue that looks back on fourteen-year-old Owen Addison in 1943, the grandfather of the novel's protagonist Kerry Salter. Owen is sent to Queensland to compete in a boxing fight. The narrative opens as one of zero focalization with a heterodiegetic narrator that, after a couple of sentences, evolves into internal focalization through the character of Owen Addison.

> It was Owen's first time in the big country town that thought it was a city. The boy had never heard a tram line rattle along a paved street, never before seen a raised boxing ring waiting for him empty and ominous under blazing electric light. The number of whitefellas in the world was a revelation. Dugai burst out of every door, their pale faces staring at him, strangers to a man. The great yellow hope, he heard one of them say to the flash piece of mutton hanging off his arm. Owen swallowed. At home his enemies were clear: Reverend O'Sullivan, the gunjibals, the Welfare. But where was the snake hidden in this particular paddock?
> There.
> Over in the corner, a stout gunjie with a flaming red beard. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 1)

The first two sentences spotlight Owen's vulnerability through lack of experience: it is his "first time in the big country town" and he had "never before seen a raised boxing ring waiting for him empty and ominous" (*Lip* 1). The "big town" or urban environment is a space of unknown dangers. In literature it is often used as a trope to foreground the feelings of (especially young) characters who are overwhelmed or lost. The use of "the boy" at the beginning of the second sentence creates distance between the narrating voice and the character, constructing a parallel to the distance felt between oneself and other people in an unfamiliar environment and underscoring this feeling of 'being lost.' The distance is diminished, however, as the focalization zooms in all the way to free indirect speech, Owen asks himself "but where was the snake hidden in this particular paddock? There" (*Lip* 1), returning some agency to the fourteen-year-old. Owen is not naïve but fully aware of the danger in which he finds himself, surrounded by "whitefellas" (*Lip* 1). The use of the word "dugai" (*Lip* 1) in reference to the "whitefellas" clearly positions Owen as Aboriginal Australian, although no specific kinship ties are explained. It also illustrates his awareness of this position in an urban setting that is white in the majority.

Owen is not just aware of the possibility of danger, he knows it to *be* there, actively searches for it and finally identifies it in the form of the "stout gunjie with a flaming red beard" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 1). The term "gunjie" means policeman in South Western Aboriginal languages (Korff n.p.), and Owen identifies the policemen as his known enemies back home along with the Reverend O'Sullivan (who functions as a *pars pro toto* for Christian missionaries and church officials) and "the Welfare" (Lucashenko *Lip* 11). The enemies that Owen identifies here clearly fall into the category of white institutionalized power structures that have been used extensively to control the Indigenous population in the colonies. The history of missions (as well as the

Protestant and Catholic church) with regard to the education and training of Australian First Nations and the occurring racial subjugation and violence makes the reason for naming the Reverend as "enemy" quite obvious (see Section 2.1 on the role of missions in the colonies, and the concept of epistemic violence in Section 3.5). The same holds true for the role of the police as the executive of governmental power and their historical role in frontier violence and the confinement of Aboriginal Australians to the missions. The "Welfare" here refers to social services that during the White Australia policy between 1910 and 1970 systematically removed thousands of children from their families "by means of force, duress, or irresistible coercion . . . from their indigenous families, in order to be relocated in government or church institutions or white foster homes", a practice that is considered "assimilationist eugenics, derogation or disregard for indigenous culture, and outright racism, combined to construct a state intervention aimed at eradicating, above all, Aboriginality itself" (G. Jones 163).[230] The setting of Owen's retrospective at 1943 falls precisely into this period and explains his absolute distrust of white figures of authority.

Within the first two paragraphs of the novel, the reader is thus drawn into what Donahue has termed "cultural focalization" (Donahue, "Focalization").[231] It is a clear construction of a culturally positioned *perspective* (as position located in the Aboriginal community) that will be continued, elaborated and complicated throughout the development of the story and that operates counter to the white perspective that is hegemonic in Australian (and Western) culture (perspective as a line of sight). In Chatman's sense of the term perspective, both *filter* and *slant* are culturally positioned as First Nations Australian.

Melissa Lucashenko is one of only a few authors to explicitly address sexual violence against Aboriginal men. For what follows, Owen's apprehension of the danger emanating from the policeman is the gang rape of Owen by the very same police officer and his colleagues after the boxing fight. The violence after the fight is foreshadowed by the police officer's warning to Owen before he steps into the ring: "You might be thought something pretty over the border . . . But the last coon that got too handy round here swung for it. Got that?" (Lucashenko *Lip* 2). The term "coon" is a racist slur, and to "swing for it" is a reference to the lynching practice of hanging Black

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[230]Ali Gumillya Baker and Gus Worby remark that "Aboriginality, in particular, is an increasingly unstable term and is sometimes used in the plural to suggest multiple perspectives and life experiences" (20).

[231] According to Donahue, cultural focalization means that the narrator (focalizing through a character or as narrative voice) is culturally positioned in relation to the story level and (other) characters. The cultural focalizer may be achieved through the use of Indigenous languages, but also through the sharing of cultural knowledge and (ideological) perspective. In cultural focalization, the focalization is culturally (often also racially) marked. Donahue does not differentiate between *focalization* and *perspective* in the sense that Chatman introduces, but instead primarily draws on Genette's terminology, collapsing the two into one another.

slaves from trees, clearly warning Owen that he will be punished should he win the fight. As such, lynching is a specific form of racial violence (see A. Y. Davis, *Culture* and *Race*). What turns this warning into a foreshadowing of sexualized violence is the use of the word "pretty," which within heteronormative discourses (which would have been and still is hegemonic in white Western cultures) would not be used to refer to men or boys. Within these discourses "pretty" is reserved for women and girls and carries a connotation of sexual desire. On the other hand, "handsome" would be the equivalent for men and boys. The use of the word here thus signals a transgression of gender lines (within heteronormative discourse), with the young boy becoming an object of desire in the *male gaze*.[232] This verbal transgression of gender lines is later paralleled in the physical rape. At this point in the story, Owen, however, does not yet see this parallel. He simply expects to be lynched if he wins the fight (Lucashenko *Lip* 2).

An additional layer of threat is added when the policeman asks if Owen is "the next Jack Johnson" (Lucashenko *Lip* 1), meaning the African American heavyweight champion of 1908. Whereas Owen's handler Mr. Lewis, a "banana farmer" who "knew nothing about gunjies"[233] and who refers to Owen as "half-caste" (Lucashenko *Lip* 1–2), does not really react to the comparison, Owen immediately thinks of the riots that followed Johnson's win in the title fight against the white Canadian Tommy Burns in Sydney in 1908 (Abella et al., "Jack").[234] The fight between Johnson and Burns took on the symbolism of a race war long before the bell rang, "touch[ing] on white anxieties that were shared across the globe" (Cochrane n.p.). In fact, police intervened in the fight shortly before the knockout punch by Johnson so it would not be televised to the viewers. Instead, the victory was only witnessed by those present in the stadium that day, but it nonetheless sparked riots among the white population in response (Cochrane n.p.). This is the context that Owen immediately references; the racism and the immediate danger of physical violence directed not just at Owen but at all Aboriginal and Black people in town.

Owen's rape by the policemen itself is not explicitly narrated, but it is made clear:

> Owen survived the retribution that followed his victory. He went home a hero, stunned by the new kinds of violence in the world, and refusing point blank to satisfy any of Mr Lewis's questions about

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[232] Like the *Black gaze* and the *white gaze* explained in Sections 2.2.2, the *male gaze* is a metonymic short-hand for underlying power structures, in this case gender and heteronormativity, and the observations from a specific subject-position, in this case the white man (imbued with additional authority as a police officer).

[233] To know nothing about gunjies in this context means that Mr. Lewis is most likely white positioned and has not been subjected to racist police violence and, moreover, is in a position that allows him to remain ignorant of such violence.

[234] Jack Johnson received new attention after he was pardoned in 2018 by Donald Trump for race-related charges from 1913. Jack Johnson had been charged with violation of the Mann Act after he crossed state lines with his white then-fiancée Lucille Cameron (Abella et al., "Jack").

> his shattered face, his bloodied legs. He had understood early in the night that the price of his life would be silence. (Lucashenko *Lip* 3)

The "new kinds of violence" refer to the sexual nature of the attack, since Owen is already very much acquainted with physical violence (not least because as a young Aboriginal boxer he is pitched against much older and bigger opponents). The more specific reference, however, is his bloodied legs. The violence itself is eclipsed through an ellipsis, and only the effects are narrated. It is what Robyn Warhol has termed the "unnarrated," that which cannot be narrated due to the restrictions of societal conventions (see Section 2.4). The ellipsis in turn mirrors the mandate for silence: "the price of his life would be silence" (Lucashenko *Lip* 3).

Silence, in this instance, is its own form of violence. Not being able to address the trauma and seek out the confidence of another for fear of retribution means there is no justice, but furthermore also no emotional support. Silence is a common reaction to trauma. Trauma is defined as an event that disrupts causality and evades description. In order to tell "what happened," one must be able to narrate a story that at its core relies on causality. If this causality is disrupted (because the event is incomprehensible), the result is often silence (Caruth; LaCapra).

From an intersectional perspective (see Section 2.2.3 on the concept of intersectionality), the violence perpetrated against Owen follows the axes of three dimensions of (relative) power: race (white violating Black), age (grown men and the fourteen-year-old boy), and gender (men violating a man). The last dimension does not refer to the typical portrayal of a homophobic hate crime, and neither is it suggested that Owen is bisexual or gay. I therefore do not consider it to belong to the dimension of sexuality. Instead, the rape is an enactment of power (as rape is always about power, not sexual desire), and more specifically an enactment of toxic masculinity intersecting with racism and the age dimension. As explained in Section 2.2.3, intersectional analysis according to Crenshaw shows that power enacted along different axes of hierarchies produces different effects depending on how these axes intersect. In this case, the racism interacts with sexism and the (relative) powerlessness of boyhood to produce the (supposedly) emasculated Black man through rape. The scene is further complicated by the fact that the white men are police officers, invested with additional institutionalized (white, male, colonial) power. The rape is therefore an enactment of power along multiple dimensions. As such, the positioning of Owen, his rapists, and the corresponding identity categories assigned to victim and perpetrator in the epigraph and in the first chapter of Kerry's story all draw attention to these multiple axes of power, their intersections, and the various forms of violence they produce as an effect.[235]

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[235] There are further aspects of economic and institutional power (with severe psychological consequences) through the threat of removal by social services: "Owen's job was clear. Keep the gunjibals away by winning in the grimy

Owen represses the violation and continues to do so until his death. This is also foreshadowed in the last paragraph of the novel's prologue:

> . . . and when Owen died, a very old man in a house faraway to the south, there were seven decades of agony caged in him, held down by liquor and a steely pride, and by various acts of bastardry his family could never quite manage to forget. But he had held one thing dear. Since the night the sergeant locked the cell door behind them, laughing with the other white men waiting there, nobody – not his wife, nor his brother, nor any of his descendants – would ever see Owen Addison cry. He had left his tears behind on the cracked cement floor of a Queensland watch house. (Lucashenko *Lip* 3)

Rhetorically, what stands out here is the frequent use of words referencing cold and extremely hard materials; the (iron) "cage," "steely pride," the "cell door" (also made of steel or iron), and the "cement floor" that is cracked much like Owen's face is shattered after the attack. They all hold down the "decades of agony" at Owen's core. But they also repress his vulnerability (represented in the synecdoche of the tears he left behind "on the . . .floor," a spatially low point that also represents his helplessness and powerlessness in the situation) and his ability to form loving and genuine connections. The agony pressed down so tightly nonetheless needs a pressure release, here in the form of alcohol abuse and "acts of bastardry" against his family. Owen's trauma is thus positioned as (one) point of origin for intergenerational trauma and the following abuse of and in his family, and the rhetorical devices in this passage underline the centrality of this scene for the entire story.

This is the setting (the first two beginnings) against which the main story of the novel (the third beginning) evolves. The family dynamics of the Salter family do not immediately reveal just how entrenched in secrets and silence they are, although some aspects are visible right from the start. The photos on the TV tell "their ancient family-approved lies" (Lucashenko *Lip* 15), and the first chapter illustrates the first fissures. Kerry's oldest brother Ken, "six foot two and heavy with muscle", who'd "stacked on the weight since he got out" of prison (*Lip* 12), is on his third beer at eleven in the morning, pretending that is perfectly normal but keeping a keen eye on the number of beers still left in the fridge until payday (*Lip* 14). From the start, he is presented – by the heterodiegetic narrator with internal focalization through Kerry – as both unpredictable and violent. Kerry is constantly observing him and remains at attention to the slightest shift in his

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tents of country towns, by boxing his way to the title . . .. By being the native pride of Rivertown, so authority had no excuse to come hunting down his sisters and him" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 2). Owen is not just fighting for himself or as a chosen career, but because it is the only way to ensure that his family is not ripped apart. This motivation also sheds light on why he steps into the ring even after the policeman's threat. He is left with no avenues of escape or recourse.

attitude, running a constant theory of mind of Ken's current mood.[236] Narratologically, this is achieved through the internal focalization through Kerry and the supposed switch in focalization that is revealed as theory of mind. At first, Kerry is looking at Ken, which means the reader is following her gaze to him, or more specifically, the beer bottle in his hand. Kerry's gaze is deixic, and the narrator highlights this point of view ("*Her* brother hesitated for a split second, a hesitation so brief it would have been invisible to *anyone not a Salter*," *my emphasis*, 13). After Kerry's gaze has reached Ken, the focalization seems to switch to an internal focalization of Ken, offering explanations for his actions and his reasoning ("Ken wanted Kerry to drink with him," *Lip* 13-14). When he suddenly flips the beer bottle (14), the focalization seems to jump back to Kerry as a focus, revealing that the focus through which the story was told (internal focalization through Kerry) never changed. Instead, the narrator zoomed in on Kerry running constant theory of mind of her brother.

Kerry's behavior is typical for victims of (domestic) abuse; the constant observation of a possible aggressor, staying alert for any change in behavior that would require them to try and defuse the situation or find shelter. Ken holds "the monopoly on anger in the Salter family" and Kerry observes that he is "literally twice [her] size," which puts her "instantly on high alert" even though she can't "see Ken busting her up today" (Lucashenko *Lip* 15). Nonetheless, she remains on alert, her body tensing up or freezing whenever Ken makes sudden movements or noise, thus generally "walking on eggshells" (*Lip* 20). Kerry is also careful not to trespass on what Ken perceives to be in his area of power, she chooses her phrasing very carefully: She "might take [her nephew Donny] for a swim later," "placating Ken with *might*. *Should take him* would have worked, too. Not *will* though," for "all actual decisions about Donny, even tiny ones, were Ken's to make" (*Lip* 20), and she expects a violent reaction for even the tiniest suggestion of disrespecting his authority. Kerry's expectation of physical (i.e., direct and interpersonal) violence from Ken is made clear from the beginning of the novel, whereas other relationships reveal their underlying violence only later in the story.

To summarize, the three beginnings of the novel layer multiple relationships of violence over one another, and they each shift the category of victim and perpetrator along intersecting lines of power. The epigraph first suggests an instance of sexualized violence crossing racial and gender lines (the white man raping the Aboriginal woman), only to be revealed in the afterword as an example of internalized misogyny and heteronormative gender roles. This imported

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[236] Theory of mind is a term taken from cognitive narratology that describes how characters "develop working hypotheses about what [other characters] are thinking, inferring interior states from speech and external behavior, just as one does in everyday life" (McHale 820 referencing Zunshine, see also Alber, "Cognitive" 12–13).

heteronormativity (see Section 2.3.5 on heteronormativity and colonial violence) is then in itself revealed as a myth in the prelude when Owen is raped. The rape occurs within gender lines but across racial lines (white men raping an Aboriginal boy), adding additional dimensions through the abuse of authority (age, institutionalized power). Last but not least the violence hinted at in Ken and Kerry's relationship at the beginning of the novel's storyline is one of domestic abuse that remains intra-racial but that is still gender-based. It echoes white gendered hierarchies and – through the epigraph and the prelude – is marked as originating from the violence of colonization. The intersectional layering of these different instances of direct violence destabilizes the idea of the 'one' perpetrator, showing the Black man Owen as both victim and perpetrator, and offering this realization up for parallel application to the Aboriginal perpetrator in the epigraph and foreshadowing Ken's abuse by his grandfather. This also opens up the topic of the cycle of abuse (the victim becoming perpetrator and producing another victim who may become a perpetrator), and at the origin of the cycle lies the violence of colonization and racism. This is the only clear assignation of blame that the novel allows. All other assignations of the categories 'perpetrator' and 'victim' are constantly complicated and relativized. In all instances, the focalizers are always clearly positioned as cultural focalizers (Donahue), but also as gendered (relating back to Lanser's "fictions of authority" although she does not use the same terminology, see Section 2.4). I will illustrate this with a few more examples in the following section.

4.1.2 Kaleidoscope of Relationality – Complexity Subverts Overgeneralization

The first section of this analysis demonstrated how the novel plays with different intersection dimensions of (relative) power and how this is represented in the narrative through the refusal to provide clear referents for the categories "victim" and "perpetrator." This section will show how the destabilization of these categories is supported throughout the main story, by building a network of possible referents, thus refusing overgeneralizations and stereotypes through complexity. Specifically, this section will illustrate how different identity categories (especially race but also gender and sexuality) are constructed for the four Salter siblings, Kerry's boyfriend Steve, and the next-door neighbors, only to be immediately relativized, leading to a "kaleidoscope" of "relative" skin color and a network of (possible) relations that challenges racist and heteronormative discourses (see colonial discourse in Section 2.1.2).

The main character, Kerry Salter, rides into Durrongo on her Harley. She has just split up with her long-time girlfriend, Allie, who was arrested for armed robbery and is on remand in Brisbane Women's Correctional Center. The blue backpack Kerry is bringing with her contains the money Allie stole during the robbery. Allie is characterized as both impulsive and violent, with

a bipolar disorder, and it remains open just how involved Kerry was in the robbery beyond running away with the money. Kerry is positioned as being poor and as a possible criminal, with an additional past stay in prison. She refers to herself as "gay" (Lucashenko *Lip* 193) and a "dyke" (11, 46) but questions her sexuality during the course of the novel as she falls in love with Steve, a heterosexual man. Kerry is a good example for how social constructions of sex, gender, and sexuality overlap. As Judith Butler states in *Gender Trouble*, in which she stresses that gender is performative where it "produces cultural signification" (192). This refers to the conceptualization of "gender roles" in society and the behavior and outward experiences that are associated with "being a woman" and "being a man." Kerry riding into town on a Harley, for instance, transgresses these conceptual lines, because the riding of a powerful motorcycle is usually associated with "maleness." The word "dyke" also references this transgression, because it was originally a slur against lesbian women that demeans their femininity, judging them for acting "too male." The term has since been reclaimed by gay and lesbian women as a form of empowerment, but its history is still important in this context. Butler further states that if we understand gender as the performance of cultural significance "there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction" (Judith Butler, *Gender* 192).

What is important to understand in this quotation is that Butler refers to the *construction* of gender roles and the ordering of different behavioral attitudes or appearances into identity categories as supposed *universal truths*. She argues that we cannot clearly claim that there is one true category of being "a woman" or being "female" when the sorting of these attributes as either female or male is arbitrary. Her postulation of gender as a construct does not postulate that gender is in fact a social category (just like race) or that it has no material effects (such as identity markers, whether they are ascribed or self-chosen). Similarly, the social "performance" of gender in this sense (on the level of the sign, the signifier that is culturally clustered into gender roles) does not negate biological sex.[237] Butler simply reminds us that the way that we culturally define gender is an artificial category.

Since cultural constructions of gender in the Western ideological system are hegemonic in their binary form and include the heteronormative attributes of "woman desires man" and "man

[237] Sex is also a category that is more complicated that the binary of male-female. Depending on the aspects you are looking at (hormone level, primary or secondary reproductive organs), it sometimes needs to be categorized as more of a continuum than two extremes (see Rippon 228–30). At the same time, sex is not considered widely enough in medical research, for example, with often detrimental effects on women's health (see Criado-Perez 195–216).

desires woman," identifying as "queer" also always defies gender roles (see, e.g., queer of color criticism in Section 2.3.5). This does not automatically mean that other attributes of gender performance also transgress these gender norms.[238] A gay man can still perform what is expected of the gender role "man" in its culture-specific context (allowing him to 'pass' as cis-man), but he will always transgress this role in its referent "desire for the opposite sex."

Returning to Kerry Salter and *Too Much Lip*, Kerry transgresses the social category of "woman" not only in her sexuality (which in itself is not definitive but changing) but also in her "performance" of male-ascribed behavior (riding a Harley).[239] Moreover, the fact that Kerry's sexuality is changing from gay to (possibly) bisexual disallows a reading that essentializes queerness. Essentialist understandings of identity categories (for instance, queerness) often lead to the establishment or reinforcement of stereotypes.[240] Because characteristics are understood to be "innate," they are not understood in terms of Butler's performance, leaving less room for variation. That is to say, the more I understand something (e.g. queerness) in opposition of 'it is *a*, but not *b'*, the less I understand it as 'it can be *a*, or *b*, or an equal combination of *a*+*b*, or lean towards either *a* or *b* with components of both.' This can be observed both in the original meanings of the homophobic slurs "dyke," "fairy" or "queen,"[241] which tried stereotyped 'gayness' along the binaries of 'male/female' and resistance from the queer community has been strong. 'Being gay' does not mean that a woman simply 'acts like a man' or a man 'acts like a woman.' 'Being gay' has no specific 'readable' attribute and Kerry's character refuses to be stereotyped.

In the above-mentioned example, the same mechanism of "assigning categories to 'others'" by the community in (relative) power is at play as it is in racial stereotyping and questions of Indigenous 'authenticity' (see Sections 2.1.2 and 2.3.1 on *othering* and the connection between hierarchies and binaries). I therefore do not find it surprising that Kerry does not communicate her new-found sexual identity to the (implied) reader at the end of the novel. I argue that it is precisely *not* the point for the (implied, white) reader to figure out *what* she is (and this word choice hints precisely at the underlying issue of the Western gaze's constant need to assign categories, thereby often dehumanizing the person under "investigation" as "object") but for her to be a representation

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[238] Gender roles are gender norms where specific gender roles are normative.

[239] Other examples are Kerry's self-assessment before she breaks into the council-chambers, concluding that dressed as she is, "she was any gender, any dark race" (150). On the one hand, the statement strongly echoes racist assumptions about criminality, on the other hand, it also highlights that assigning gender from an outside perspective is unreliable.

[240] At the very least, studies in psychology on social stereotypes have found a statistically significant correlation between essentialist beliefs (the belief that a person's attributes are permanent and unchangeable) and social stereotypization, see Pereira et al., and Bastian and Haslam.

[241] These slurs have all since been reclaimed by the queer community.

of a Bundjalung woman who defies easy categorization (and therefore stereotypization and overgeneralization).

This refusal of stereotypes and overgeneralization is not unique to Indigenous literature. It can also be observed, for instance, in Gloria Anzaldúa's poetry. As one of the great voices of feminist, Chicana and queer poetry and activism, Anzaldúa also defies conceptions of "queerness" that overgeneralize and produce static stereotypes (see Garber 80). Just like Anzaldúa, Lucashenko "mobilizes [identity] categories – race, gender, sexuality – that have been essentialised by both claimants and assailants" (Garber 80 in reference to Anzaldúa, but also applicable to Lucashenko) and destabilizes essentialism through plurality. This is further supported by the choice of Kerry as the character through which the heterodiegetic narrator focalizes throughout much of the novel. The narrator chooses to switch to an internalization through other characters for shorter passages (to Donna, for instance, 25-27), but choosing Kerry for most of the narrative allows him to narrate the story from a position that is affected by multiple intersecting lines of domination: gender, sexuality, race and class. This position then also allows for a marking of the dominant discourses (sexist, heteronormative, racist and classist), because the focus (in Chatman's terms) looks back at these discourses of power and may reveal their harmful effects through the character's (figurative, as in metaphorical/ideological) *position* and *line of sight*. This is another example of what Donahue has termed "cultural focalizer" (see Section 2.4).

The mobilization of these different categories of identity as quoted above can also be observed as we turn to the other three Salter siblings. Kerry's brother Black Superman is also a gay character in the novel. Where Kerry's sexuality is changing, his is represented as stable throughout the novel. Black Superman and his partner Josh are raising two Aboriginal children that are distant relatives who were removed from their nuclear family by social services (called "Childstealers," 77). Black Superman and his partner intervened and became their legal guardians.[242] I will return to the two children, Brandon, and LubLub in Section 4.3.3. For now, my analysis concentrates on Black Superman.

Black Superman came out to his family at the age of fourteen and was beat half to death for it by his grandfather (Owen Addison, referred to by everyone as "Pop," Lucashenko *Lip* 75). After the beating, he soon left town and is living with his partner in Sydney. Black Superman is relatively wealthy in comparison to his mother, Kerry, and Ken, working what would be considered a

[242] "Foster father" or "foster parents" is a *white* term and would not be appropriate in this context. Black Superman and his partner take the children in because they are considered mob, they are family. Australian First Nations kinship systems do not revolve around the nuclear family and Western conceptualizations of *family* and *fostering* therefore do not apply in the same way.

middle-class "government job." Like Kerry, he only intends a temporary return to Durrongo for his grandfather's funeral. Both Black Superman and Kerry experienced the small rural town as being homophobic in their youth, and they do not expect this attitude to have changed in the years they were away in the city (opening up a dichotomy between rural and urban land-/cityscapes). Contrary to their expectations, however, Uncle Richard, an Aboriginal elder and their mother's sister, anoints Black Superman "as Pop's successor" and as the new community leader (*Lip* 85). This proclamation is supported by several older community members who are present at the funeral. As Kerry observes: "it's 2018 and Patterson finally gets over a bit of its homophobia" (*Lip* 85). The dichotomy of 'rural' and 'urban' and the suggested parallel to the stereotypes of 'backward/homophobic/older generation' and 'progressive/queer-friendly/ younger generation' are therefore deconstructed as soon as they are mentioned. Black Superman is placed in a position of power and characterized by his competent leadership, not reduced to his sexuality.[243] The structure of the narrative does not allow for an overdetermination of who is homophobic, the referent changes from instance to instance, disallowing immediate judgement.[244]

Similarly, references of ethnic identity and the assignments of racialized categories are presented as unstable in the narrative. At this point, it is important to differentiate between ethnic identity and race. Ethnicity is a category that is more applicable when we are talking about group or community identification, as well as belonging (see Section 2.3 for the concepts belonging and "Country" in Indigenous studies and 2.2 on the definition of "race"). Racialized groupings are precisely that – *racialized* by outside forces and power dynamics. The shared experience of being racialized and being subjected to racism, can of course give rise to a community dynamic and a feeling of belonging, but here the determining factor is then not a shared culture, language, and community of practice (ethnicity), but the categorization as differentiation from the unmarked dominant cultural group (most often white in the anglophone context). In *Too Much Lip*, Different constellations call into question just who is considered "Black," "white" and "mob," and by whom.

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[243] This does not mean to say that Black Superman is unaware of the deep-seated homophobia in society at large. Instead, he and Kerry share a special bond due to their shared experiences of non-conformity to heteronormativity.

[244] Whereas Black Superman's sexuality and gender (homosexual man) are constant throughout the novel, Kerry's sexuality changes, and both she and her nephew Donny are represented as non-conforming with regard to heteronormative perspectives on gender. Donny is also characterized by what would be considered feminine character traits: For Ken he "was a social liability in Durrongo: too quiet, too gentle" (29) and Donny is therefore afraid of his father (85). He is the target of much of his father's ire because Ken understands masculinity in terms of physical strength and the willingness to use it, which in turn must be met with respect and deference. Donny's love for botany and computer games, his soft-spokenness do not conform to these expectations of what would be termed toxic masculinity. In Kerry's eyes, she needs to "hug him and love him up until he remembered who he really was. Until he somehow found somewhere it was safe to be Donny" (29). Donny is still in the process of finding himself, a process that is inhibited by his father.

Whereas Black Superman and Kerry are clearly positioned as Aboriginal in both identity (in this case self-identification) and skin color (*read* as Black),[245] Ken and Donna are presented as having a lighter skin color. Ken is still read as Black by the people in his community (also due to the fact that he was born there and the community is small) and he self-identifies as Aboriginal. However, this identity is destabilized later on in the novel when he meets the shark Doc at Ava's Island, an episode which reveals him as the descendant of not only great-grandmother Ava but also Cracker Nunne. Ava is pregnant when she runs away from Cracker Nunne's station (a pregnancy that results from Nunne's rape of her). At the river she is prevented from crossing to the Island by the shark Doc and promises her (Doc) the blood of her pursuers in exchange for safe passage. As Nunne and his men fail to enter the water, allowing Ava to escape, this debt is not paid and remains open until the present day. In the end, it is only Ken who can pay the blood-debt because his totem is the shark, and his veins carry both Bundjalung and Cracker Nunne's blood. This relationship was unknown to all four Salter siblings, and – revealed to the reader only at the very end of the narrative – relativizes all their racial categorizations retrospectively. This does not mean that the relativization affects their Aboriginal identity. It relativizes the social construct of racist categories and opens up the definition of what can be 'considered' Black beyond the essentialist stereotype. This of course echoes Brodkin's, Jacobson's, and Roediger's analyses of race as an unstable category that is constantly subject to change depending on its local and historical position (see Section 2.2.2). It also echoes Frankenberg's assertion that "whiteness" as a race is always a construction, depending on the power hierarchies in which it is embedded (see Section 2.2.2). After these three (relative) categories of Blackness, I will now illustrate how Donna's white-passing complicates the category of whiteness.

Donna left her hometown and her family at the age of sixteen after a traumatic fight with her grandfather and her mother. She reluctantly returns to Durrongo as the real estate agent "Martina Rossi," only agreeing to the temporary assignment because she is promised a promotion at her firm in Sydney as a reward. She has no intention of contacting her family while she is in town until she accidentally runs into her sister Kerry. In her new position, Donna works for the local real estate agency that belongs to the corrupt mayor of the town, Jim Buckley. Buckley intends to use her as a scapegoat for a lucrative deal: having only recently been voted into office, Buckley holds the deed to the land surrounding Ava's Island on which the new prison complex is to be built. Since he significantly influenced the location of the prison in his position as major and stands to

[245] Reading here refers to perception in personal interaction. Gender, ethnicity, able-bodiedness or sexuality cannot be accurately guessed just by looking at a person, but people automatically make assumptions about these identity markers, nonetheless. This is called "reading" in order to highlight the subjectivity of the assessment.

gain monetarily from this deal, he is in danger of being convicted of corruption. Donna is therefore placed in his office as intermediary and scapegoat. Her signature and reputation are supposed to protect him from closer inspection.

As mentioned above, Donna has taken on the name "Martina Rossi," also assuming the Italian Australian identity that the name suggests. Her lighter skin-tone allows her to pass as white. She keeps her 'real' ethnic identity hidden from her colleagues and can even almost fool herself into believing that she *is* 'white.' However, the illusion is not complete. While her colleagues suspect nothing, Donna is constantly reminded of her Aboriginal identity, even as she tries to suppress it: "Nobody in real estate knew she was black; there were some days she almost forgot it herself. But each morning when she woke and looked in the mirror at her Mediterranean skin and dark eyes, she remembered. And so every sale was powered by a deep vein of Aboriginal fear" (Lucashenko *Lip* 235). The Aboriginal fear here can encompass a range of things, from economic dependency and fear of poverty to insecure housing and the fear of a family being ripped apart by social services.[246] The lived experiences of being subjected to structural and individual racism still continue to shape Donna and fuel her fears of losing the privilege she has gained by passing as white.

Nonetheless, the passing-as-white has allowed Donna to emotionally separate herself from her family and the violence she was subjected to by both her grandfather (Owen Addison) and – in different forms – her mother. As comes to light in the second half of the novel – and functioning as the catalyst to finally exposing the deep-seated networks of violence in the family – Donna was raped by her grandfather when she was twelve years old, and it is suggested that he continued to rape her in regular intervals until she left home at sixteen. The vaginal rape at age twelve was preceded by other forms of sexual assault (i.e., forcing Donna to perform oral sex) long before that. In addition to the trauma of sexual assault, Owen Addison threatened to kill Donna's siblings and her mother if she ever told a soul about the abuse. So Donna kept quiet until, at sixteen, she broke from the pressure and stabbed him with a pair of scissors (Lucashenko *Lip* 246).

The violence directed at Donna by her grandfather is both interpersonal and direct, and classified as family violence with the added dimension of sexual violence. Both the actual violence and the threat of bodily harm or death to her and her family are forms of violence (see Section 3.1.1 on the definition of interpersonal violence and the threat of violence as defined by the WHO).

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[246] The novel notes that homeownership is exceptional for Aboriginal people in Durrongo and there was only a very small window of time where it even became possible; largely due to Pop Owen Addison's standing in the community and his term serving for ATSIC as commissioner (Lucashenko *Lip* 87). Kerry therefore still expects to be turned down for a lease on an apartment when she encounters Donna at the real estate office in Patterson (185).

Donna is further subjected to emotional violence because her grandfather intentionally isolates her from the rest of the family, ensuring that it remains impossible for her to voice her violation and pain, and leaving her an outsider in her own family. The trauma for Donna is severe, and this trauma finally erupts in a burst of self-preservation when she is sixteen, when the repression of the trauma, fear and pain can no longer be maintained. She stabs her grandfather in the kitchen, in the presence of her mother, Pretty Mary. Her mother, unaware of the sexual abuse, is unable to comprehend the reason for the attack and holds Donna solely responsible. Compounding the trauma, Pretty Mary strikes Donna and throws her out of the house. Instead of wondering why her daughter would suddenly attack her grandfather, Pretty Mary focuses on the immediate violence visible to her in that moment. It is only the present attack she can focus on, leaving the wider network out of sight.[247]

Donna's stabbing of her grandfather could be categorized as a form of counter violence, or more commonly, self-preservation. However, due to the delay in her reaction, it would most likely be prosecuted as its own instance of violence (with mitigating circumstances) before a court of law, because Western legal systems generally only allow for a very small timeframe between attack and counterattack for it to be considered justifiable. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss in depth how the law is structurally predisposed to put undue burden on survivors of sexual abuse and how its Western patriarchal make-up fails to adequately consider the effects of both trauma and structural violence in defining what 'the correct response' to such an attack would be. But I discussed how Western legal concepts fail to account for Indigenous legal perspectives (including perspectives on gender-based violence) in Section 2.2 (especially with regard to Native Title legislation in Australia) and various studies have further investigated how rape narratives function both in- and outside the courtroom (see, for instance, Ehrlich, Gunne and Brigley Thompson, Deer "Rape Law", Marcus as read by Mardorossian). I can well imagine that in Donna's case there would be questions as to why she did not tell her mother or the authorities or even a social worker about the abuse, as well as suggestions that she could have asked for help from (mental) health professionals or called a sexual abuse hotline.

However, these questions fail to consider how violence intersects along multiple axes of (relative) power to produce a multifaceted effect on the individual who is affected. They reflect an imagined (and one dimensional) ideal that fails to consider that Donna is a young teenaged girl in

[247] Pretty Mary's reaction is echoed in her immediate denial when Donna reveals the past abuse at the family gathering towards the end of the novel (248). Refusing to believe the accusations and turning the blame on Donna instead is the seemingly easier solution for Pretty Mary. The disbelief allows everyone to continue as they were. Accepting Donna's accusation, however, unsettles the self-image that the family has of themselves.

rural Australia who has already experienced structural disadvantage and racism, as well as sexism and significant emotional and physical harm (see above). All these different dimensions of power and (violence) intersect in her lived reality, leaving her in (relative) powerlessness on multiple fronts and supporting a deep distrust of all those positions of institutionalized authority to which one might refer her. She illustrates the effects of intersecting dimensions of violence in her inability to turn to anyone for help. So the questions that should be asked here are, why would she turn to anyone in her family when all she has learned so far is that violence must be kept quiet? And why would she turn to the authorities that have a long history of removing children from Indigenous families in pursuit of racist goals?[248] The novel presents various different forms of violence that are all nonetheless interconnected and exacerbated if not introduced throughout the process of colonization. Violence in this narrative is never static but a kaleidoscope of different categories, perpetrators and victims/survivors, allowing for representation without simplification.

After Donna leaves Durrongo at sixteen, she becomes addicted to drugs and ends up with an abusive partner in Sydney (Lucashenko, *Lip* 238). Eventually, she manages to escape and – through a program for women who are victims of intimate partner violence – becomes sober, eventually applying for her real estate license. Her change of name is a caesura that intends to put all the violence and trauma firmly behind her.[249]

> With each new commission Donna was fleeing a little farther from Durrongo, still running from the troopers, hurtling through, the scrub with her barefoot great-grandmother towards Ava's Island. With each sale she managed to push down a little further her terror of ever again having to rely on another human being for safety. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 235)

Her new job offers both economic independence and security, as does passing as white. White privilege offers protection from discrimination and exclusion, as well as access to overwhelmingly white professional networks. The real estate agent "Martina Rossi" becomes a symbol for Cheryl Harris' concept "whiteness as property" (see Section 2.3.3 for the definition and its extension into "white possession" by Moreton-Robinson).[250] The irony is not lost on Donna's family, either:

> . . . the family took a second to digest this. Then, as the rags-to-riches story sank in, they slowly began to chuckle, and then the chuckles grew into gales of laughter. A black Goorie woman, in charge of white people's housing! Telling dugais where they could and couldn't live! And, best of all,

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[248] And further: already traumatized, why would she make herself even more vulnerable by addressing the violation without the assurance of support? We live in a society in which rape or sexual abuse – even sexual harassment – continues to carry great stigma for the person affected by it. Unless explicitly taught otherwise, why would a person affected expect anything else?

[249] That this strategy is not successful can be seen in the reference to her alcoholism (189).

[250] Donna still has to deal with the sexism and Good-Old-Boys networks at work, but it is no longer an intersection of sexism *and* racism.

> making good money off the back of it, too – driving a red sports car. You wouldn't read about it. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 239)

The power relation is here (partially) turned on its head. However, this is only possible precisely because of Donna's lighter skin color and the privilege of being able to pass as white.[251] It is also her experience and role in real-estate that ultimately averts the danger of Jim Buckley building a jail on ancestral land, preventing the family from accessing Ava's Island.[252] Donna is the one who sends evidence to ICAC, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, setting the investigation in motion that ultimately leads to his arrest (Lucashenko, *Lip* 305–07). It is Kerry's backpack with the money from her ex-girlfriend's robbery, stolen from her by Jim Buckley when she first came to town, that lends itself as evidence for Buckley having taken bribes to rezone the land close to Ava's Island to allow for commercial development.[253] The two aspects (the backpack and the access to Buckley's real estate records), brought to town by two sisters with very different life-experiences, eventually allow the victory of the Salters.

One might argue that Donna's ability to pass between the Aboriginal and the white world[254] allows her to not only *learn* but effectively *wield* what Audre Lorde famously called the "master's tools" (Lorde, *Master*). Whereas Lorde warns that these tools could never be used to take down the oppressing system, the novel suggests a different outcome: "Maybe you could dismantle the master's house with the master's tools, after all" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 308), as exemplified by Donna's role in Jim Buckley's take-down.

Donna's lighter skin color also carries meaning in a different setting. After learning of Donna's and Ken's abuse, Kerry remembers a hunting trip with her grandfather and realizes that skin color played a determining role in the amount of violence he directed at his grandchildren. Both she and Black Superman, the two Salter siblings of darker skin color, were seldom the recipients of their grandfather's anger: "Black Superman had something mysterious in his eye that made Pop pull up with him, too, so maybe it was to do with colour after all; the two of them were much darker than Ken and Donna. It was all very confusing" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 64). The beating

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[251] For further context on the interconnection between whiteness and socio-economic status, see Twine.

[252] I will return to the importance of Ava's Island shortly.

[253] The backpack was stolen on Country, right where the jail was supposed to be built, and the resolution of the conflict also takes place in the same spot.

[254] Postcolonial studies would refer to a character such as Donna as "liminal." Within the context of critical race and Indigenous studies, however, this reference becomes problematic. Whereas the movement between two worlds is a sign of liminality, we are in this specific context looking at a person's skin color and racial attributions by outsiders based on this skin color. This carries the danger of reinforcing the social construction of racism even as the novel both draws attention to it and aims to undermine racist assumptions. Much like Bhabha's concept of *hybridity*, liminality in this specific context needs to be approached with caution.

that Black Superman was subjected to when he came out as gay to his family (see the beginning of this section) is an exception to this pattern. It is not caused by Owen's internalized racism but by his internalized homophobia (which is a result of patriarchal and heteronormative colonialism) and offers another example of how violence interacts differently along the various hierarchies of (relative) power. This differentiation also ties into Owen Addison's trauma from the prologue (see Section 4.1.1), which he passes on to the next generations, continuing the cycle of violence.

After these three constructions of 'Blackness' (Kerry, Black Superman and Donna), I will now turn to a construction of 'whiteness' in the text. Kerry's boyfriend Steve is introduced as "dugai," as white, but not as "full-blood *whitenormalsavage*" with "proper dark brown eyes like [Kerry's] own. Colour a bit like [Ken's son] Donny, that yellow, some sort of wog" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 66, emphasis in the original). In this first meeting, Kerry immediately tries to categorize Steve in order to evaluate whether or not she – as a Black woman running alone on a stretch of the road in a rural area – is safe with him (see Section 3.1 for statistics on the vulnerability of Indigenous women). And while she remains suspicious at first, she slowly learns to trust Steve over the course of the story. This is also in part due to the fact that throughout the narrative, Steve consistently proves himself to be aware of his white privilege.

Steve continually sides with the Salters, even against the (white) police (see Section 4.3.4) and positions himself as an ally. During a trip out to Ava's Island to scatter Pop's ashes, Steve also ensures that Ken is not caught on camera driving his truck through the construction fence that obstructs their access to their ancestral lands. Just before Ken impulsively hits the gas, Steve disables the camera, causing Ken to ask, "You sure you're white, brah?" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 129). Steve reiterates that he is "full-blood Scot, me. Irn-Bru running in me veins" before adding "except for a little bit of Spanish" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 129), which is to explain his slightly darker complexion that Kerry observed during their first meeting. But much like Kerry first likening Steve's color to Donny's, she suspects that there is more to Steve's "Spanish" ancestors: "'Spanish, yeah, right . . . Musta been more Spaniards in Australia than there was in Spain, back in the day" (*Lip* 129). Kerry of course here references the White Australia policy and the effects of the Stolen Generations. Light-skinned Aboriginal children were placed with white families in order to raise them as white Australians (see Perkins 164–168). Many of these children were not told about their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ancestry, so it is easy to infer that Steve might have been one of these children (or a descendant of one) and been told about the "Spanish" in his blood to starve off further questions.

The possible Aboriginal ancestry does not – by far – make Steve Black, first because he does not self-identify as Black and second because he was raised as a white man. However, his lower-

class upbringing and his travels have shaped a mindset that allows him to connect with the Salters and Kerry specifically (despite her resistance):

> . . . Steve was a pure merino. He had learned a bit from the Murri and Thai fighters he'd trained alongside for years on the Coast. Had the brains to just shuttup and listen when anything Black came up. That was a plus. And he had the rare knack, too, of deferring to Ken's alpha bullshit without becoming lesser, or losing his inner balance. There was something about him that reminded Kerry curiously of Uncle Richard. A solid way of knowing who he was in the world and accepting it, neither shame of being born a whitefella nor silly about it. Whenever Kerry put casual, mocking shit on Steve for being a dugai and a coloniser he would flummox her by agreeing. Then add, the Poms dispossessed my mob too, of course, and plonked us here on someone else's country. To enjoy the fruits of our genocide, Kerry quickly pointed out. It's called the Caledonian River, pal, not the Albion. And once more he just said, you're absolutely right, your mob's loss was my mob's gain". (Lucashenko, *Lip* 123)

Steve manages to navigate the pitfalls of an extremely violent history by acknowledging it without letting it affect his own identity. He therefore finds a way around the incessant need of what Moreton-Robinson calls protecting "the possessive white self from ontological disturbance" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 51). Steve's identity is not tied to his status or place within the Australian nation state. In fact, there are no instances in the novel where he defines himself in terms of national sentiment except for the tracing of his Scottish ancestry. But his belonging in Australia is not charged with (white) possession of the territory and state. On the contrary, he recognizes the dispossession of the traditional owners without offering platitudes or non-realistic resolutions. He is able to endure differentiating experiences and positions without immediately needing to consolidate them into one harmonized conglomerate. This allows the necessary space for vulnerability, resentment and anger that need to be acknowledged before any kind of solution can present itself.

At the same time, Steve's experiences of poverty while growing up allow him to connect with Kerry on a different level. Where Kerry places "Black" and "white" in opposition, they both share the identity markers of lower-class. Kerry expects that she needs to explain to Steve why she can immediately spot two children at the market who are obviously going hungry and waiting for scraps from the hotdog-stand:

> It was a shamejob to go explaining how blackfellas lived. Even if dugais believed you, they were full of useless fucking genius suggestions on how to climb out of poverty. Like it was simple. Like it didn't suit the powers that be to keep poor people scrabbling in the shit, keep their attention off the rich world's sparkling goodies in case they got any bright ideas about grabbing some for themselves. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 119)

Kerry expects to be lectured (by white privilege), but instead, Steve shares experiences from his own poor upbringing. Whereas his experiences still differ – they intersect with his whiteness, heteronormativity, and male gender in contrast to her racialized, queer, and female identity – the

remaining similarities in understanding poverty still manage to build a bridge over Kerry's emotional walls. She can acknowledge that he felt like an outsider in a different way.

Furthermore, while positioned as Kerry's male protector (from Ken's violence), Steve does not conform to hypermasculine behavior (i.e., toxic masculinity), and he especially does neither support nor mirror Ken's posturing. Steve clearly states that he will physically defend Kerry, if necessary, but despite his training as professional fighter, he never uses this to his advantage. On the contrary, he tries to de-escalate the situation and manages to avoid physical altercations entirely throughout the novel. Steve thus also presents a counter-image to Owen Addison, who – also a professional (if not voluntarily) fighter – turned his violence against his own family. In this sense, Steve is not only presented as a not-quite-white character, but also as a man who does not conform to expectations of toxic masculinity, serving as counterpoint to attempts at essentializing either category.

Despite these positive properties, Kerry cannot quite let go of her resentment of his whiteness. She continues to draw attention to his colonial inheritance, positing it as opposition between herself (the colonized) and Steve (the colonizer). This theme is repeated multiple times throughout the novel. Instead of going on the defensive, however, Steve takes her accusations in stride. Moreover, he does show signs of resentment for Kerry's incessant needling. I would argue that Steve is aware that the constant dissonance he experiences whenever his position as descendant of white colonizers on stolen land is pointed out, is not comparable to the continual experience of racism that Kerry and her family face whenever they leave their Black community and interact with the white world. Throughout the novel there is only one instance where this bickering threatens to turn into actual conflict, when Steve realizes that Kerry uses her microaggressions to create emotional distance. Once he realizes the motivation behind these constant remarks, he does not hesitate to call her out. This, in turn, triggers a moment of self-reflection in Kerry that ultimately allows her to acknowledge her feelings for him.[255] Steve thus manages to suggest a path through what Moreton-Robinson has termed the "ontological disturbance" of the white self (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 51). She argues that the continual reminder of how a (white) person continues to benefit "every day from being tied to a nation that has and continues to constitute itself as a white possession" and originates in Indigenous dispossession (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 52), threatens the white self. As such, living on

[255] At a different point in the novel, shortly after Donna's revelation about her abuse, the reader learns that Kerry has also been raped, and possibly multiple times. The sentence is almost a side note, hidden in Kerry's internal struggle to accept Donna's accusations as truth: "But it wasn't black men who had raped her, no, no, no" Lucashenko (*Lip* 247). This may further explain Kerry's reluctance to date and emotionally invest in a "dugai."

stolen lands as descendant of white colonizers is more traumatic for the self-image than, for example, the history of slavery in the United States. Because as long as "there is no direct family and material ties" to the "institutions and reproduction" of slavery, it is "easy to extricate oneself from [this] history" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 51–52). The same is not true for the white Australian who lives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and continues to live with white privilege. The colonial history is therefore repressed and this repression "operates as a defense mechanism to protect one's perception of self and reality from an overwhelming trauma that may threaten one's self-image" (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 51 in recourse to Frankenberg, *Displacing* 6). Instead of repressing this history, Steve simply acknowledges it whenever it is mentioned and endures this moment of "disturbance" without resistance. At the end of the novel, Steve is even invited to go bush with Uncle Richard, a ritual that contains sacred elements. But through his connection to Kerry and his respectful behavior Steve has proven himself able to navigate the Black social space. It is thus not always only skin color that determines who is considered "mob."

Next to Steve and the example of white and male allyship he represents, there is one more (unstable) construction of whiteness I would like to draw attention to. The family living next door to the Salters is first introduced as

> . . . the hogans with the Aussie flag on the gate, the rebel flag of slavery on their F100. Whitefellas. Red sunburn over ugly old tats. Blue eyes like boiled fish staring blind up at a dead sky. Dumb to everything not them or theirs. But normal too. Super, super normal. Whitefellas were everywhere in the shire, everywhere she went. This wasn't Logan, this was Durrongo, where dark skins were few and far between and *whitenormalsavages* ruled. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 50, emphasis in the original).

The image of the racist redneck with the confederate flag is easy to spot.[256] The tattoos in this context hint at neo-Nazi mindsets. These political affiliations are generally 'normalized,' have become – or from the perspective of critical race theory always have been – hegemonic and popular without regard for the underlying racialized violence they represent. The very fact that the individuals displaying this flag are not – and are not expected to be – aware of its racist history, is also part of what is considered "white privilege." It requires a certain level of (relative) power for an individual to be able to remain unaware of power hierarchies, because it presupposes that they have not yet been negatively affected by it to the point that they notice a structural disadvantage. This is to say that as a white middle-class person, I may choose to engage with the topic of racism,

[256] Even within the Australian context the confederate flag of the slave-holding American south is a well-known political sign, especially exhibited by right-leaning working-class rural populations.

but I may also say "I do not care" – a privilege that does not apply to people who are affected by it daily.

In Durrongo, the majority of the population is white, supporting a homogenous "bubble" of white experiences. Dissonances and disturbances of this homogeneity are rare (despite the novel centering on the Salter family). Kerry condenses her experiences of racism and into the term "whitenormalsavages." The term marks whiteness in its normativity. It also turns the racist trope of the Indigenous 'savage' (see Section 2.1.2 on binaries within colonial discourses) on its head by applying it to the settler-colonizer. Moreover, I argue that it can be read as a foregrounding of the structural violence entailed in establishing *white* as *the norm*, declaring any and all deviation from the white norm as *abnormal*, or *aberrant* (see also chapter 2.2). As such, the term is a form of rhetorical sovereignty as introduced by Scott Lyons (see Section 2.3.4). Kerry uses the word frequently throughout the narrative (when the heterodiegetic narrator internally focalizes the story through her) to highlight instances in which whiteness exhibits power (what Moreton-Robinson has called "white possession," and which finds itself applied in the *white gaze*). It is therefore not only whiteness that is marked in the novel (e.g., through its cultural focalization in Donahue's terms), but it is the structural power of whiteness that is marked in its dehumanizing and violent effect. By refusing to let whiteness remain unmarked, this structural violence is made visible, as are the categories of universality and normalization (white*normal*savages). This ties back into Ruth Frankenberg's analysis of "whiteness" (Section 2.2.2) and calls to mind Chinua Achebe's challenge that Indigenous writers "may write in English for [they] intend to do unheard of things with it" (*Morning* 7, see also Section 2.1.2).

Kerry frequently uses the term "whitenormalsavages" to refer to the next-door neighbors. As with all forms of categorization in the novel, however, this reference is also destabilized during the course of the story. The neighbors, Savannah, and her parents, eventually discover that they have at least one Aboriginal ancestor in their family tree. With this discovery, they suddenly become invested in Indigenous activism. Savannah is dating Ken, and they show up with matching T-Shirts reading "Protect Our Sovereign Waters" to a gathering at Pretty Mary's house, aligning themselves with Indigenous political activism. And suddenly, identity markers become even less definite for the different characters: "Ken, like every other Salter, knew with crystal clarity – had always known – that the waters around Ava's Island belonged to their Bundjalung mob. Just exactly who constituted that mob, though, and who now fell outside of it, was a little less clear than it ought to be" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 206). To Ken, the idea of including Savannah into who he considers "mob" is appealing, whereas Chris – one of Ken's cousins – openly rejects the idea that Savannah and her parents may now be "Black" just because they found one Aboriginal ancestor.

Ken's mother, Pretty Mary, disagrees: "Nah, one-drop rule," she reminds him, "if their family was here before Captain Cook rocked up, then they blackfellas and that's an end of it" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 205–06). She clearly references the racist policies of white Australia that were geared at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assimilation and extinction (see, for instance Section 2.1.2 for criticism of Bhabha's term *hybridity,* 2.2 for the *ethnicity paradigm*, and 2.3.4 on the White Australia policies). However, the "one-drop rule" was applied to slaves from African descent, not to Indigenous populations. As Chadwick Allen points out with regard to the North American context:

> Local, state, and federal policies have subjected African American citizen of the United Stares to an exclusionary 'one drop' rule of racial identification that emphasizes their non-European heritage; but local, state, and federal policies have subjected American Indian citizens to an inclusive standard of 'blood quantum' or 'degree of Indian blood' that emphasizes instead the admixture of European and other blood-lines. A standard of racial identification, blood quantum originally served as a device for documenting 'Indian' status for the federal government's purposes of dividing and subsequently alienating collectively held Indian lands. Blood quantum enshrines racial purity as the ideal for authentic Indian identity. (Allen 176)

Similar mechanisms for proving "authentic Indigenous identity" are at play in Australia's legal system, when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people claim Native title (see Section 2.3.2.2). The racial coding has worked slightly differently, because Australia was less dependent on the slave-trade for manual labor and instead brought white convicts to the colony. This lessened the need to verbally distinguish between 'Black slaves' and the 'Black Indigenous population.' This also explains why the reference "Black" is often used for First Nations Australians in Australian discourses and narratives. Nonetheless, Patrick White connects these aspects of different constructions of so-called "miscegenation" as follows:

> . . .whilst the one-drop rule has meant that the category 'black' [i.e. African ancestry and slavery] can withstand unlimited admixture, the category 'red' [in the Australian context Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people] has been highly vulnerable to dilution. This is consistent with a situation in which, whilst black labour was commodified (so that white plantation owners fathered black children), red labour was not even acknowledged (so that white fathers generated so-called 'half-breeds' whose indigeneity was compromised). In Australia, the structural counterparts to African slaves were white convicts, which has meant that racial coding and questions of emancipation have operated quite differently between the two countries. Where the respective Indigenous populations have been concerned, however, there are substantial similarities between the racial calculations on which official policies have been placed. (Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism* 1–2)

Pretty Mary's reference to the "one-drop rule" opens up this broader intertextual reference. At the same time, her statement can also be interpreted as another rebuke of the *white gaze* that tends to essentialize the categories *white* and *Black* or *Indigenous*. Following this line of interpretation,

even one drop of a different ancestry "deconstructs" the self-ascribed white identity, revealing the latter as an increasingly fragile construct.

In the Salter family, opinions on the matter of ethnic identity diverge strongly, but what the discussion foregrounds is once again the overall destabilization of identity categories. These categories are both indispensable to enable the expression of a shared experience or to demarcate how and where experiences differ due to different intersections of identity markers. But identity markers are also relative, fluid and contested. As such, "identity categories can provide both a space for political action as well as frameworks by which we become intelligible to ourselves and others" (D. Richardson 23). This assessment is not specific to one identity-category but applies to all of them.

Character	Possible intersections of identity categories and power hierarchies					
Kerry	urban	woman (non-conforming to stereotypes)	gay, queer (possibly bisexual, pansexual...)	(lower) working class, criminal record	Black Bundjalung	instrumental in incriminating mayor Buckley
Black Superman	urban	man	gay	(upper) middle class	Black Bundjalung	Community leader
Ken	rural	man / toxic masculinity	straight	working class, criminal record	'less Black' Bundjalung	Spiritual/ cultural significance (shark totem)
Donna	urban	woman	straight	middle class	white-passing Bundjalung	instrumental in incriminating mayor Buckley
Steve	cosmopolitan	man (non-conforming to stereotypes)	straight	working class	'less white' ally	
Savannah and her parents	rural	nuclear family	hetero-normative	working class	white (white-normal-savages to allies)	

Table 1 Characters and Possible Intersections of Identity Categories and Power Hierarchies

Before I summarize this chapter, I offer the table above as an overview of the different identity markers at play for the four Salter siblings, Steve, and Savannah and her parents. This table is not definitive nor is it static. It merely tries to offer a more condensed overview of the different identity positions ascribed to the characters.[257] Remembering Levine (Section 2.4 on the

[257] This ascription of character attributes goes beyond Forster's consideration of "flat" and "round" characters Forster 103–18, because character complexity is not at the core of its effect. Neither do Phelan's character functions

relationship between form and function), none of these categories are represented as "bounded wholes" and therefore resist the "political power" that so often enforces "restrictive containers and boundaries [including] . . . bounded subjects" (Levine 3). Instead, all subject positions are described relative to one another, building a network of relationality. This network of relationality can be interpreted in the sense of intersectionality, as relative positions of power, but also in the sense of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemologies, as the interrelation of all living beings. It refuses stereotypes and overgeneralization through complexity, by thinking, in Crenshaw's terms, in heterogeneity (see Section 2.2.3), offering a kaleidoscope of relationality along different axes of intersecting power.

In all, this section analyzed how the four Salter siblings, Kerry's boyfriend Steve and the Salters' next-door neighbors are constructed through different identity categories (subject positions) throughout the narrative. It followed Kerry and Black Superman's construction as Black Bundjalung and queer community members, and their relationship to their "less Black" siblings Ken and Donna. The analysis illustrated how the categories "race" and "gender" are complicated and destabilized by being invoked and then relativized in comparison to other characters in the novel. One example of this destabilization was Donna's white-passing in the real estate world in both Sydney and Durrongo. Her and Ken's lighter skin color was also linked to the sexual abuse perpetrated by their grandfather Pop Owen, and his internalized racism and repressed trauma. On the example of Kerry's boyfriend Steve, I then illustrated how Steve's racial identity is also constructed as "not-quite-white" while his self-identification as white Australian man remains a stable category. At the same time, he is a counterpoint to Ken and Owen's toxic masculinity, consistently aware of the (relative) power of his white male position. Finally this section took a closer look at the Kerry's term "whitenormalsavages" and its construction as both condensed counter-narrative to the racist and colonialist construction of the "Native savage," but also – and more pertinent to the topic of this dissertation – its marking of whiteness as normative power and as epistemic violence in the harmful application of this power (whitenormal*savages*). The choice of Kerry as internal focalizer, through whom much of the story is told, further supports this 'marking' of dominant discourses due to her intersectional subject position. Overall, this constant construction, relativization and destabilization of identity categories establishes a network of

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do the Salter justice. While they could be considered mimetic characters in their representation of heterogeneity in (First Nations Australian) communities, their positioning along (relative) axes of power could be considered more of a synthetic function, while the ascription of changing and interrelating identity-categories refuses their interpretation as "thematic" characters. The main issue is that both Forster's and Phelan's approaches focus on character constructions (in and of themselves) and their individual functions, disregarding the overall effect of the *network of characters* as its refusal of the *white Western gaze's* automatic intention to assign stable categories.

possible referents for those categories. In their multiplicity and heterogeneity, they therefore refuse the *white gaze* that constantly attempts to wield epistemic power by *knowing* the *other*.

After this Section gave more room to Kerry, Black Superman and Donna and their analysis, the next section will return to Ken Salter. Ken is introduced as angry, abusive and an alcoholic, as well as a symbolic character for toxic masculinity. The narrative repeatedly draws parallels between Ken, his grandfather Owen Addison, and Brandon, the young boy for whom Black Superman and his partner Josh have taken on guardianship. I will turn to this parallel in the following section and connect it to the concept of land-based healing (from violence).

4.1.3 Breaking the Cycle – Land-Based Healing

The first two sections of this analysis focused on representations of individual instances of violence (Section 4.2.1), how these instances overlap (different perspectives, offered on both the level of focus and slant, but especially differing in their assignments of the categories "victim" and "perpetrator"), and how identity categories and subject positions of the characters in the novel are first invoked and then destabilized, establishing a network of relativity. This section will now focus on intergenerational trauma, which describes the transmission of personal and cultural trauma from one generation to the next. I will illustrate how Lucashenko's narrative opens up an additional network of interconnected violence, by paralleling the violence and trauma experienced by Owen Addison (see Section 4.1.1) with that of his grandson Ken Salter, and then the young Aboriginal boy Brandon, who is Black Superman's ward. All three characters are *Indigenous* and *male*, and cultural stereotypes of hypermasculinity intersect with racist violence not only on the level of *harm* but also on the level of *healing*. Additionally, one can interpret the three generations – grandfather, grandson, and (adopted) great-grandson – along the dimension of *age*. Although all three characters experienced trauma as children, the narrative ties *age* to *responsibility* with regard to the continued perpetuation of violence in Indigenous communities. As such, this Section is also informed by intersectionality as analytic, even if this is less obvious than in the previous two sections.

Further, in the construction of the parallel between the three characters, Country plays a central role because it signifies and symbolizes the interrelation of the different generations, reaching back from the ancestors to the present-day Bundjalung mob and into future generations. At the same time, interpretations of what Country symbolizes (and how it is cared for) change between Owen, Ken, and Brandon. While Owen looks at Country (Mount Monk) and sees his ancestors refigured into an instrument of colonization (Country violently turned against him), the reestablishment of connection to Country in its most embodied form – by sitting down on the

ground – is the catalyst for Ken's healing process. Connection to Country as the foundation for healing from trauma (colonial, cultural and personal) is also a theme that is carried on into Brandon's generation, as he is integrated into the Aboriginal community in Durrongo, thus restoring hope in his future. In order to illustrate this connection, I will turn to a more thematic analysis in the following passages, centering on representations of Country. First, I will turn to Owen's interpretation of Mount Monk as the violent fist of the white man, then I will illustrate how Ken's 'grounding' in Country initiates his healing process, and then I will turn to Brandon's 'return' to Country and its significance for the context of the Stolen Generations in Australia.

As stated in the analysis of Owen's prologue in the first section, the violence to which Owen Addison was subjected to throughout his life has left deep psychological scars and is the point of origin for a cycle of violence that is passed on from one generation to the next. It therefore not only affects Owen but through him his whole family as well. Throughout the novel, the reader learns about multiple additional injustices and attacks against Owen. These episodes are usually narrated through embedded stories woven into the other characters' dialogues. Most often, his daughter Pretty Mary but also his son Uncle Richard reveal additional information about Owen's life to his grandchildren (explicit figural characterization according to Pfister 250–52), allowing for Kerry and her siblings to establish new connections in their memories of their grandfather and a deeper understanding of his life. Owen is retrospectively developed into a more rounded character (in Forster's terms) and his violence is contextualized into colonial violence instead of (simply) personal violence. While Pretty Mary and Uncle Richard already knew of this context, Owen's death functions as a catalyst that allows for these additional stories about him to also be revealed to his grandchildren. The knowledge-sharing is extended to the next generation through storytelling.

For example, Kerry learns that winning the Silver Gloves (the boxing match in the prologue) may have saved Owen's family from the "Childstealers" (meaning his younger siblings were not removed from their home and placed with white families). But his boxing career and dreams of winning the Golden Gloves are cut short when he loses an eye to Cracker Nunne's stock whip after giving him 'too much lip' (Lucashenko *Lip* 166-167). Andrew 'Cracker' Nunne is the white foreman on the local station and established as a symbol of the violent white colonizer. To his white townspeople, Nunne is a "noted philanthropist and only son of the first white settler in Durrongo" (*Lip* 155), but to the Aboriginal population in the area he is known to be "pretty flash with a stockwhip" known to "crack the eye outta ya head any day of the week . . . Plenty of one-eyed Goories round ere back then" (*Lip* 165). This dichotomy in how Nunne is perceived shows how deeply entrenched the racism (as a form of systemic violence, see Section 2.2 and 3.2) was at

the time and the legacy it still holds in present-day Durrongo. The fact that Owen refused to back down despite Nunne's reputation, is a trait that connects him to his granddaughter Kerry, who also says about herself that she is always giving "too much lip" and cannot keep quiet in the face of injustice (*Lip* 32, 203). Both characters echo the irony in the title since those who define just what "too much lip" is are the white Australians whose legitimacy on stolen ground is highly contested throughout the novel (see Section 2.3.4 on Indigenous concepts of Sovereignty).

Aside from this parallel between Kerry and Owen, the narrative connects Owen most strongly to his grandson Ken. The latter is described as Pop's mirror image, and his aggressive behavior parallels him to the point that Pretty Mary accidentally mistakes Ken for Owen (Lucashenko *Lip* 145). But I will return to this parallel shortly, I will turn to the story of Mount Monk that is embedded in a memory Kerry has of her grandfather (analepsis).

The embedded story about the sacred mountain illustrates that the violence that Owen has been subjected to after his boxing match and in his encounter with Cracker Nunne are not to be interpreted as individual instances, but – in the light of the frequency at which racist violence occurs in the novel – as systemic racism and structural violence (Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2). The individual instance of direct violence is supported and allowed by the racist and institutionalized structures of colonialism (see Section 2.2.1 and 3.2).

As Owen explains to Kerry, the ancestral storylines embedded in the sacred Mountain have been interrupted by the settler-colonial reality. Colonization has interrupted the traditional relationship of respect and custodianship and is thus a form of epistemic violence (Section 3.5). Holding up his closed fist against the shape of the mountain at the horizon, Owen elaborates:

> "Maybe it was a dog to begin with, or a doob, for that matter. But make no mistake. That mountain's a *fist* now, girl," Pop told [Kerry], letting his arm drop. He looked at her in anguish. "It's a gunjibal's fist waiting for us mob to step outta line, waiting to smash us down. We livin' in the whiteman's world now. You remember that."
>
> Pop ground his smoke out against the sole of his boot and stood up, rifle in hand. He looked down at Kerry and something in his expression, some glint of long-buried rage, made her flinch away. She pushed down a sudden idea of his rifle swinging around to meet her fragile skull. Another bleeding hole. Another body on the ground. Stupid. A flogging with the strap, yeah . . . but Pop would never have used a rifle on his own son's children. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 64)

The history of the mountain – understood as an ancestor in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemologies – has been irrevocably changed through colonial violence (Section 2.1). The landscape has been appropriated by "the whiteman" and turned against the traditional custodians. It is a "gunjibal's fist" just "waiting" for Aboriginal peoples to "step outta line," to step out of the very lines that the "whitemen" have drawn (i.e., constructed) in the first place. Here, the term "whitemen" further functions as synecdoche for the white population. While common usage (as

generic masculine) would include women, trans- and non-binary people under this use of the term "men," I argue that it can be read as gendered in the context of this novel. As I explained above, colonialism is both a racist and a patriarchal structure (see Section 2.1 and 2.3 above). In addition, the novel makes a number of references to gendered forms of violence, to the "pandemic" of domestic abuse by male family members (Lucashenko *Lip* 247, see Sections 2.3.5 on gendered violence in Indigenous communities and Section 3.1.1.1 on intimate partner violence) and generally calls heteronormativity often enough into question that reading "whitemen" as "generic masculine" would fail to acknowledge the narrative's complexity and potential.

Returning to the quotation above, the racialized relationship Owen describes is not based on equal footing and neither does it suggest just application of the white law. The white men draw the lines, they decide on 'right' and 'wrong' and thoughts of navigating this system unharmed as a non-white body are unrealistic (see Section 2.3.3 on the concept of white possession). The white men are 'just waiting' for the smallest mistake and will invariably react immediately and violently to any perceived transgressions. The "fist" thus symbolizes a system of tyranny, embedded into the ancestral Country. The reinterpretation of the land thus also becomes a form of epistemic violence (Section 3.5).

The violence represented in the fist – the ancestor turned weapon – is mirrored by Owen, who, standing in front of the mountain and turning towards Kerry, suddenly seems terrifying. Just like the mountain he has been turned into a weapon; first for the whitemen's amusement as a boxer at the age of fourteen, and then subsequently through his trauma into his family's abuser. In the quote above, the rifle is especially highlighted and contrasts the fist. While Owen may use the rifle for hunting game, a rifle directed at Kerry and her family, at Black peoples in general, carries additional meaning. The rifle here represents the colonial and frontier violence of the early occupation, the military superiority of the white settlers, and the genocide it inflicted on Indigenous populations not only in Australia but worldwide (see Behrendt, "Genocide", Section 2.3.3 on white posession and 3.3 on the legitimization of violence according to Foucault). Due to this context, turning a rifle on her own family is beyond comprehension for Kerry. And while the reader gains no insight into Owen's consciousness (after the prologue Owen is only narrated through the internal focalization of another character or by explicit figural telling), he also refrains from turning the rifle on any of his grandchildren.

The reason for this restraint is twofold, I argue. For one, it is the echo of colonial violence mentioned above. Two, using a rifle would let us conclude that the intention is to kill, not only wound. But the cycle of violence that Owen perpetuates is the presentation of deep-seated and repressed trauma (see Caruth; LaCapra). Owen turns the inner pain outward, the anger desperately

needing release. The release of his anger is an uncontrolled emotional response that turns the feeling of absolute helplessness (being physically overpowered by the police officers and later on being powerless to seek justice) into a feeling of absolute (if temporary) power. As explained in Chapter 3, violence and power are tightly interlinked, and the former can be the visible effect of the latter. Owen reclaims his power by inflicting pain on the body of another human being, and especially on bodies than are 'not as Black' as his (see Section 4.1.2). Due to the source of his pain and anger, the infliction of violence takes the form of direct physical contact, immediate impact, and effect. The rifle, on the other hand, represents a clinical and distant form of ending a life. It is not only the weapon used by the white settlers during colonization and a symbol of their military superiority. In this story in the narrative, and through the layering of stories within stories, the rifle also becomes a symbol for the white disregard of Indigenous lives in general. The rifle offers distance between cause (pulling the trigger) and effect (the death of a person) much like structural racism in its systemic form is distanced from its violent effects on racialized peoples.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Ken is a replica of his grandfather. He also turns his repressed trauma outwards and into violence against his family members. The cause of Ken's trauma is parallel to Owen's, and he is even more determined in his repression than Donna. Viewed through an intersectional lens, this is another point where multiple lines of oppression overlap (see Section 2.2.3 on intersectionality and 3.2 on discrimination as structural violence). It is not only Owen's sexual violence, but also Ken's gender (and his steadfast identification with hypermasculinity) that produces his silence. He is therefore understandably the most outspoken and aggressive about rejecting Donna's accusations against her grandfather. Accepting her abuse means accepting that his abuse might have been real as well, drawing it out of the invisibility and silence of repression. The more that Donna's abuse is accepted as truth, the more Ken loses control over his anger, until Pretty Mary accidentally refers to him as "Pop" multiple times (Lucashenko *Lip* 145). Her slip of the tongue further strengthens the parallelism between grandfather and -son.

Ken's anger finally culminates after the family dog Elvis is killed by Jim Buckley.[258] Set on exacting revenge, Ken grabs the rifle (turning the Master's tool back on him, see the story about Mount Monk above). The scene is focalized through Kerry's perspective (focus), who is hiding under the house, watching as her Uncle Richard deescalates the situation.

> Uncle Richard and Chris glanced at each other and did a surprising thing, both of them sinking down in the middle of the lawn with no words needed. The two of them folded cross-legged onto the dirt

[258] Buckley kills Elvis with a shot to the head and leaves him on the Salters' veranda as a sign of intimidation. This offers parallels to my analysis of the rifle as symbol of both colonial violence and the distance between cause and effect in structural violence. It is further a play on racist lynching practices, in which the victims were often left hanging in public spaces as a threat to the Black community.

> as though choreographed, as though some magnetic force had drawn them earthward a dozen steps away from Ken. Uncle Richard slowly opened his palm above the burnt grass. Ken didn't accept the invitation. He remained standing, the rifle dangling now in his right hand, the barrel parallel to the ground. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 273)

Uncle Richard and Chris are the first to seek the connection to Country, literally grounding themselves. Connection to Country in this sense is not restricted to 'going bush.' Country is everywhere, and even the front yard of the Salters' house is traditional Country. It may not be a traditional site for teaching or learning or a sacred place like Mount Monk, but it still offers cultural grounding and in this is a form of resistance (see also survivance in Section 2.4), resembling elements of Leanne Simpson's land-based healing and embodied sovereignty (Section 2.3.4). By lowering themselves, Richard and Chris also physically deescalate the situation, placing themselves in a spatially subordinate (spatially, not hierarchically) position that clearly signals an interest in talking. They do not engage with Ken's aggression on the same level, but they switch planes to foster an emphatic connection and conflict resolution. This is further supported by the narrative through a change in register. Whereas up to this point, Ken was mainly repeating phrases that would fall into the register of "posturing," "fighting" and "hypermasculinity," Richard switches to a register that foregrounds emotion:

> "Okay. Okay. My nephew, you need to listen to me now. I love you, you know that. That's never gonna change. And you're right. I do believe Donna," Uncle Richard said heavily, waiting for Ken to lift the rifle and fire. Because God only knows. He took a big breath. "I believe her because I've got good reason to, Kenny. And I reckon you do too. It wasn't your fault, son." (Lucashenko, *Lip* 274)

What becomes clear in this paragraph is that the secret of the grandfather's abuse was not quite as secret as Ken and Donna thought, even though none of the adults acted on their suspicions. Ken is as much a victim of sexual assault as Donna.

As Uncle Richard points out, the cycle of abuse is entrenched in the whole family, no one has remained exempt, although it has affected some more strongly (and more violently) than others. However, the abuse is not just one person's fault, everyone carries responsibility: parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins (Lucashenko, *Lip* 270). Uncle Richard foregrounds the kinship ties, the aspect of belonging to family and community. Family is defined beyond the constraints of the Western nuclear family unit. And therefore, if a child exhibits violent behavior, everyone connected to the child "owns that problem" (*Lip* 270). So even though Richard is the one taking on a position of authority and guidance in this instance, the responsibility also lies with him for not taking action earlier. In contrast to Ken's register of individual opposition, aggression, and isolation, Uncle Richard here foregrounds the interconnections (relationality) of the larger kinship group, the belonging and the mutual respect and caretaking that characterize this network. It is

within this network that the process of healing from colonial and epistemic violence may begin.The scene also shows that Western concepts of justice and punishment do not foster this healing process. Instead, it is a different form of connection and responsibility-taking that leads to a resolution, and which is in line with Sara Deer's contention that Indigenous belief systems and traditional law can address violence in Indigenous communities more comprehensively (see Section 2.3.5).

In this sense, the narrative suggests that the death of the grandfather acts as the catalyst to invoke the next step in the healing process. This is the point in the narrative where every member of the family is called upon to take on responsibility for ensuring that the cycle of violence does not continue. The trauma is most concentrated on and around the figure of the grandfather, and with him gone, the next generations can start working through their own trauma and towards a healthier family dynamic. Both Donna's move to Sydney, the experiences she makes there, and the self-worth she ultimately finds (one may argue that it is not yet substantial or entirely healthy, but it *is* there) allow her to confront her family in her own right. Similarly, Black Superman and Kerry needed time away from Durrongo, much like a rite of passage, before they can now truly return home (to Country). In this, Lucashenko takes recourse to a common theme in First Nations Australian literature: having to leave the homeland and live life elsewhere for a while before the characters are open to a true return to Country, to where they belong. This rite of passage allows them to truly experience 'belonging' and to reintegrate into the kinship network with a deeper cultural and spiritual understanding. The narrative connects all of these different strands in this scene on the Salters' front lawn and sets up Ken as the nexus for future change.

What also becomes clear in this understanding of communal responsibility is that Owen Addison is represented as a victim as much as a perpetrator. Without excusing Owen's actions, Uncle Richard points to the harsh reality of the cruelty that Owen himself was subjected to:

> "Pop Owen," Uncle Richard said quietly. "Cold comfort, or maybe none at all. But terrible things happened in his life. Things that warped him, Ken. He never talked about it much, it's easier to drink than talk. But he was hurt bad. Not a couple times. Again and again and again. Being taken away, never really knowing his family, the shame of that. Then the mish, O'Sullivan, and all the rest of the scum that the church protected. The station, too. He lost his eye, lost his dream. Some of that pain had to go somewhere. There's no shame to you in it, my nephew. It wasn't your fault. Not Donna's fault either. You were the innocents in it all." *Ah, Christ,* thought Kerry, swept by a tide of wild knowledge. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 275)

This passage acknowledges the harsh reality of violence in context. Uncle Richard stresses that neither Ken nor Donna carry responsibility for their abuse. At the same time, he refuses to hold just one person responsible for it either. The complexity of the situation complicates the assignment of one-dimensional concepts of cause-and-effect, and this complexity needs to be

acknowledged. By foregrounding the interrelatedness of violence in the historical context of colonialism, he manages to acknowledge complexity without silencing the inflicted pain. In this sense, trauma is acknowledged but not turned into an excuse when resulting in violent behavior. This sentiment is further echoed by Black Superman in a different setting. At Pretty Mary's birthday party, he acknowledges that much of the violence in Aboriginal families (especially with regard to children) is trauma, but he also clearly calls for people to start taking responsibility for breaking this cycle (Lucashenko *Lip* 218). The acknowledgement of the pain and the reassignment of responsibility from the victim to the wider kinship circle finally allows Ken to let go of his anger:

> Ken swayed where he stood, his mouth opening and closing. Every thought but one left him. He upended the rifle where he stood, turned himself into the Unknown Soldier; For a long moment he didn't move. Then, quivering, he sank slowly down onto his good knee. Leaned forward over the barrel, his head bowed, his body shaking. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 275)

In this instance, Ken becomes a symbol for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders affected by the ongoing effects of colonization and racist violence.

The statue of the Unknown Soldier mentioned in the quotation above is introduced earlier in the text when Ken and Savannah are protesting the land development in the council chambers. The statue is "exactly three millimeters broader in the nose and fuller in the lips than standard and had been bothering white Patterson" ever since its erection (Lucashenko *Lip* 140). Statues and graves of the Unknown Soldier usually refer to the fallen soldiers that could not be identified in one of the two world wars. The general connotation of a soldier in the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) is that of a white Australian or New Zealander. But both Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men served in the world wars, a fact that is often overlooked or ignored in the national imaginary.[259] The Black features of the statue clearly disrupt the *white possession* of the Unknown Soldier. In this second instance, however, the symbol of the Unknown Soldier is extended even further. For neither Ken nor his grandfather have served in the armed services, Ken turning "himself into the Unknown Soldier" opens up the reference to every Indigenous man who has become a victim of the ongoing intergenerational violence of colonialism.[260] Both the sculpture and Ken's likeness represent repossessions of the white national narrative.

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[259] For an exploration of how memorials and monuments are tied into the white national consciousness, see Savage.

[260] The statutes of the Unknown Soldier usually represent men and are read as men. The symbolism is therefore gendered, leaving the servicewomen and the women who have suffered under both colonialism and its after-effects of domestic violence invisible. I would argue that the narrative offers this reading because it regularly intersects gendered perspectives into the discussion (like Savannah calling out that the "Goorie woman" needs treaty as much as the Goorie man" (Lucashenko *Lip* 205), pointing out that the men talking politics are mirroring patriarchal structures.

This scene is the starting point for Ken's proper healing process. It is clearly grounded in Indigenous, land-based epistemology and is followed by a man camp on traditional Country that focusses on "love," allowing Ken to let go of his anger and find his way back to himself. A similar development is initiated for Brandon. As mentioned above, Black Superman and his partner Josh take in Brandon and his sister LubLub when social services threaten to remove them from the community. While white perceptions of family and relations would consider the two children 'distantly related' to Black Superman, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptions of family consider them 'mob,' interlinked in kinship ties, and therefore family. Brandon is presented as both deeply traumatized and extremely protective of his younger sister. The sibling's background is only revealed in small glimpses (usually 'told' by Black Superman or the narrator), but they include grog parties and drug abuse, as well as a dangerous stepfather (217-218, 222). Specifics are not narrated (another instance of Warhol's unnarratable, in the form of omissions) but Brandon's own violent behavior is linked to his childhood experiences (by Black Superman and the narrator). After Owen and Ken, representing the past and the present generation, Brandon is thus another victim-about-to-turn-perpetrator, representing the future of the cycle of ongoing abuse.

Living in the city with Black Superman and Josh provides Brandon and LubLub with stability and care. However, this support system is revealed to be insufficient in relation to the trauma the two siblings experienced when Brandon tortures the neighbor's cat and social services are called. The threat of Brandon being taken away from Black Superman and Josh becomes imminent. At the same time, the situation threatens to overwhelm Black Superman and Josh: "Sis, they reckon Brandon's got signs of schizophrenia. Like, saying all this weird shit, that he wasn't killing the cat, he was killing his stepfather. And so now Josh is freaking out about it all, he doesn't know if he's up for being a parent, and I'm kinda freaking out too" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 222). Instead of giving in to their fear, however, Black Superman and Josh eventually move back home to Durrongo, to be on Country and to be with mob. The hope is that surrounded by family, Country, and culture, they will be able to save Brandon and provide the necessary support for him to heal.

The narrative does not allow for a complete retreat into the Indigenous community as a solution – Brandon is still under supervision by social services and required to see a psychiatrist twice a week. But it stresses that an upbringing that keeps him separated from his own culture by living in a big city is certainly *not* going to help him heal. Most of all, Brandon needs a wider support system to provide him with the security and grounding that he has been missing, and for which Black Superman and Josh have been trying to make up on their own, with only occasional visits to Durrongo: "Everyone knew Brandon was troubled, but they thought they'd got him in

time. Eleven was young enough, just young enough, if you put a lotta love into a hard-headed kid. Maybe" (Lucashenko *Lip* 198). The doubt ("maybe") that they will, in fact, be able to save Brandon is still there after the move home. But as Josh observes: "A tortured cat was a tortured cat, and he [Josh] was proper sorry for it, yeah, but a Koori kid stolen away was something else altogether. Brandon ripped away by FACS was a picture that solved exactly nothing" (*Lip* 198). This quotation clearly connects Brandon with the wider issue of child removals from First Nations Australian communities ("a Koori kid stolen . . . was something else altogether"). But before I pay more attention to this connection, I would still like to remark the following. The narrator in *Too Much Lip*, through different instances of internal focalization and their combined perspective, contextualizes and evaluates all instances of violence in relation to the underlying issue of colonization and continuing structural disadvantages (structural violence). What becomes clear is that while Brandon's violent behavior needs to be acknowledged and addressed, removing him from the first trustful relationship with adults and to his culture he has had, cannot be the solution. It will not, in fact, help him heal from the trauma he has already endured. The removal would simply compound the trauma, and everyone in the family understands this. Brandon's violence needs to be acknowledged, but even more so, it needs to be treated as a symptom of past injustices and not as an incident isolated from a history of intergenerational violence and trauma. As such, he is another example of how violence in *Too Much Lip* is always tied back to its origins, explained but not excused.

This history of intergenerational trauma also ties this analysis back to the above-mentioned context of the Stolen Generations in Australia. As explained in Section 4.1.2, the Stolen Generations refers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that were removed from their communities and placed with white nuclear families as part of the assimilationist policies in the nineteenth and twentieth century in Australia. As the report into the Stolen Generations ("Bringing Them Home") by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in Australia stated, the removal of children by social services was a deeply racist practice. For one, in

> . . . contrast with the removal of non-Indigenous children, proof of 'neglect' was not always required before an Indigenous child could be removed. Their Aboriginality would suffice. Therefore, while some removals might be 'justifiable' after the event as being in the child's best interests, they often did not need to be justified at the time. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Commonwealth of Australia n.p.)

Furthermore, it was "common practice . . . simply to remove the child forcibly, often in the absence of the parent but sometimes even by taking the child from the mother's arms" and leading to severe cultural trauma that still strongly resonates in the present (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Commonwealth of Australia n.p.). The children were almost always

placed with white families, and "alternative Indigenous carers were rarely permitted to perform their child-rearing obligations" because Australian First Nations "kinship obligations were misunderstood or ignored by most administrators, government and non-government" (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Commonwealth of Australia n.p.). As such, the fact that Brandon and LubLub were placed with Black Superman and Josh suggests a better awareness of kinship ties and a less racist practice in the placement of the children, but the immediate threat of them being taken away again shows this supposed progression to be extremely precarious.

In addition to the trauma to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, the "Bringing Them Home" report also clearly states the negative effects of the child removals on the mental health and social well-being of the children themselves. Overall, children removed from their communities were more likely to have lower self-esteem, have been arrested more than once in a five-year period, are less likely to be well-educated and are more likely to be unemployed (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Commonwealth of Australia n.p.). This has been partially explained by their complete cultural and familial dissociation. "Often the removed children of a family were placed separately or, where placed together, their identities and kinship were not divulged. A number of witnesses spoke of finding out much later that they had been in the same home as one or more siblings" (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Commonwealth of Australia n.p.). Without the familial and cultural "grounding" that children need in order to feel that they belong, it is therefore no wonder that the "effects for the children removed ranged from psychological harm to loss of native title entitlements" (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Commonwealth of Australia n.p.). Brandon thus becomes a symbol (though not necessarily a determining allegory) of the effects of racist violence on the Stolen Generations.

All of this trauma is still very much present in all of the Salters' minds. Brandon can be seen as the most recent victim of the cycle of violence that continues to renew itself through displacement. If displacement is one of the root causes of this violence, healing is only possible where kinship ties and ties to Country are intact and characterized by mutual respect and caregiving. And in cases where a person's traditional Country and kin cannot be found, they find a home in a different community, are welcomed on another mob's Country. The wounding caused by removal remains, but it is lessened and a path to a healthier future becomes possible, even if it cannot always be actualized. Throughout the narrative, none of the Black characters are presented as one-dimensional, or as stereotypical evil or good. The characters are always multidimensional, and complexity complicates snap judgements, allowing for multiple truths to stand side by side

without the attempt to excuse one with another.[261] The systematic avoidance of excusing violent and harmful behavior is also a central theme of the novel. Taking responsibility for one's own role in the continuance of the cycle of abuse (either by actively continuing it or by not actively stopping it from repetition) is essential to allow for the healing process of others to begin.

This becomes most prominent at the funeral set up for the murdered family dog, Elvis. As much as the character Owen is connected to the issue of repressed trauma, aggressive eruptions of violence and silence about the past, Uncle Richard is the gentle but stern caretaker who finally guides those repressed emotions to the surface. As he remarks to Donni, "us mob gotta learn to cry when we're sober, might stop us killing each other" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 297), clearly linking the interpersonal violence in the community to the repression of pain. The substance-abuse he hints at ("when we're sober") is an anesthetic that may temporarily release some of the pressure, but it only dulls the pain temporarily without treating the underlying cause. It is also an ongoing issue throughout the narrative: the alcoholism of Owen Addison, Pretty Mary and Ken, Donna's cocaine habit, grog parties and drug use in the wider community, all serve as temporary (and illusionary) fix.

Elvis's death serves as an access point for the emotions that lie underlie all the pain and anger in the family. Whereas it was impossible for some family members to properly grieve Owen (e.g., in the case of Donna), Elvis carries none of the adversary and trauma that are connected to the late patriarch. Crying over Elvis's death is much easier and allows for emotional walls to crumble. The family can unite in their grieving. Uncle Richard uses this level of emotional connection to finally address Owen's sexual abuse with the whole family:

> "We had to grow hard just to survive, had to get as hard as that ol' rock sitting there. But the hardness that saved us, it's gonna kill us if it goes on much longer. People ain't rocks. Donna, bub [Ken], it was terrible wrong what was done to you. Criminal. But he's gorn now. So all we can do is apologise for not listening. What happens next, well, that bit's up to you."
>
> "Don't ask me to forgive him!" [Donna] told Uncle Richard, eyes flashing with rage.
>
> "Nobody's asking that of you, bub," he replied. "That's not what today's about." (Lucashenko, *Lip* 295)

The grieving process is about finding access to the underlying pain behind the wall of anger and bringing it to light so it can properly heal instead of continuing to fester. "Forgiveness" does not enter this process, only apology does: "We aren't talking about forgiveness. That's the dugai way.

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[261] The same does not hold true for white characters in the novel. Both Jim Buckley and Seargent Nunne are represented as one-dimensional. I would argue that this is also part of what Donahue turned "cultural focalizer", or an extension thereof, because it counters the habit of white canonical literature that often represents black characters as one-dimensional while focusing on the complexity of the white characters.

But can we at least keep on going as a family?“ (Lucashenko, *Lip* 295). Uncle Richard clearly distinguishes between the apology as a recognition of hurt and violation and the concept of forgiveness, which in its true form (and not just a performance of politeness) does not immediately follow an apology, and furthermore, cannot be demanded. Accepting an apology is not equated with forgiveness, and the expectation that it would be is clearly marked as “white” behavior, “the dugai way” (295). This clear distinction between effective healing and “the dugai way” opens up the context of reconciliation in the Australian national context. As such, the clear statement of the scene is that for healing to begin, old pain and grievances must first be brought into the open and then acknowledged, as much on the personal plane for Ken and Donna as on the national plane with regard to the colonization of Australia and centuries of racist policies against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But this acknowledgement does not equal immediate resolve or forgiveness. Donna is allowed to remain angry, and that anger is allowed room in the process of healing, and the same has to be allowed in the national process of reconciliation.

The parallelism of this scene to the Rudd-apology is noticeable. It is not the sole allegorical meaning of this episode, but I will nonetheless elaborate on this context shortly. Kevin Rudd was the first Prime Minister in Australia’s history to publicly acknowledge the racist legacy of the Stolen Generation and apologize to Australian First Nations peoples for the unjust removals in 2008. His speech has since been termed the “National Apology,” and while the first part of his speech was completely focused on apologizing for past injustices without trying offering excuses or justifications (acknowledgement of responsibility), the then moved in what the passage above termed “the dugai way.” Rudd “requested” the acceptance of the apology and immediately moved the topic of his speech to Australia’s future and the determination “to close the gap” between the structural disadvantages of Indigenous peoples in comparison to the white majority (Rudd n.p.). The speech left no room for the acceptance of the apology (which followed by Indigenous representatives after the speech), but moreover, it left no room to acknowledge the emotional response to the apology on the side of the recipients. The speech minimized the moment of the “ontological disturbance” of the white self (see Section 4.1.2) by claiming the moral high ground (this generation acknowledges the injustices of the past, in which it was not personally implicated) and “moving on.” Moreover, by moving to a discourse of “closing the gap” it centers the view on the Indigenous “disadvantages” and the “deficit” they need to compensate to meet the “white standard.” The speech makes no reference to the privilege of whiteness and how white Australians

continue to benefit off these same structural inequalities, offering an incomplete path forward to reconciliation (see further Hand and Dominello).[262]

As such, both Steve (Section 4.1.2) and Uncle Richard offer different examples for engaging with past injustices that are not driven by the need to appease the consciousness of the implicated subject. In the scene quoted above, Uncle Richard explicitly differentiates between apology and forgiveness and allows Donna and Ken space for their anger even after the apology. The novel thus offers a different example for communal healing that is based on empathy and caretaking, focusing on the needs of the injured subject over the implicated subjects' need to restore their self-image. Lucashenko thus foregrounds Indigenous concepts of sovereignty, relationality and resistance that counter the effects of colonial and epistemic violence, systemic racism and its actualization in acts of interpersonal violence.

In summary, this section showed the parallels between the characters Owen, Ken and Brandon, the trauma they lived through and possible pathways to "work through" this trauma through land-based healing. It traced how Owen's relationship to Country is one of opposition, because after his rape he interprets the ancestral Mount Monk as white fist. Country is turned against him through white occupation and white possession. This relationship is echoed in his parallel to Ken, who at the beginning of the narrative is exhibiting behavior that aligns with toxic masculinity: his need to always be in a position of power (especially with regard to women and people whom he considers to exhibit supposedly "female" behaviors such as his son Donny) and his need to exert this power over others (in the form of violence). Like Owen, this violence stems from the sexual abuse he suffered as a child and escalates into a highly volatile situation on the Salters' front lawn, where he is holding his grandfather's rifle, ready to shoot anyone who opposes him. This escalation marks a turning point in the novel, as well as in Ken's character, when the literal grounding in and on Country offers a pathway to healing. Owen and Ken's violence and individual pain are contrasted by Uncle Richard's culturally centered approach to caretaking.

I then analyzed how the narrative further contextualizes this scene with regard to Kevin Rudd's "National Apology," the differentiation between the acceptance of an apology and forgiveness, and the history of the Stolen Generations. I further explain how Brandon, as the youngest of the three characters paralleled in this section, becomes a symbol for the Stolen Generations and the multifaceted effects of these racist policies. As such, this section is less obviously linked to intersecting lines of discrimination themselves, although a point can be made that all three characters are Indigenous and male, and the analysis therefore takes place at the

[262] For studies on the topic of reconciliation in Australian literature, see, for instance, Teichler. For an overview of Australian First Nations points of view on "reconciliation" in Australia, see Newman.

intersection of *Indigeneity* and *gender*. I have shown how stereotypes of hypermasculinity intersect with racist violence both on the level of *harm* and on the level of *healing*.

Where this section focused on the intergenerational trauma as an effect of intersecting lines of subjugation and the cultural trauma that is transmitted from one generation to the next, the next section will focus on the representation of police violence and the specific circumstance of latent violence as it intersects with race and gender.

4.1.4 White Noise – A Few Notes on Latent Violence and (De-)Escalation

While the last section was more focused on the effects of intergenerational cultural and personal trauma and healing processes aided and initiated by Country, as well as the historical and political context of the Stolen Generations and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's "National Apology", this last section will tie this history of racist policies to contemporary instances of institutional violence and continuing racist violence as it affects Australian First Nations communities. Where Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 focused on intra-community violence, Sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 center on inter-community violence, especially institutionalized racism. For this last step in my analysis, I want to pay special attention to one confrontational scene between the Salters and Durrongo police that is important to understand the novel's representation and interconnection of latent violence, imminent danger, and strategies of de-escalation, and how it is further embedded into a network of ever-present violence. This network of violence, representing the statistical occurrence of instances of violence in Aboriginal communities, all ties back into the intersecting axes of domination and subordination introduced through colonialism, and the establishment of this network is a narrative technique that brings this intersection into focus. This "backdrop" of white violence is both the initial cause for the 'pandemic' infecting the community, and on constant repeat at such high frequency that it all but turns into a background hum of 'white noise' (giving rise to this section's title).

My analysis of the scene between the Salters and the police will be split into two parts in an attempt to provide a better understanding of how the category of latent violence changes from domestic and gendered violence to racist and police violence, but also how the applied strategies for de-escalation change from appeasement to documentation, with lines of solidarities and allyship reacting to the intersecting axes of domination as well. I will then show how this scene is further embedded within a wider network of violence narrated throughout the novel, the 'white noise.'

The first part of the scene that I will be looking at takes place in the Salters' kitchen during Pretty Mary's birthday party. The celebratory mood of the party (including a fairly mellow Ken)

shifts after the children break a bottle of rum in the kiddie pool that had been designated as a cooler for the alcohol that night. Black Superman's foster-child LubLub has a panicked reaction to the smell of the rum – having been at too many grog parties at far too young an age. Brandon reacts protectively, pulling her into his embrace, but a first sign of building trust towards Black Superman emerges when Brandon allows his foster parent to take LubLub from him for comfort. Black Superman, despite his exhaustion, is presented as a steady guardian for the children. He takes the responsibility of caring for and protecting his younger sister off Brandon's shoulders, signaling at the same time that it is no longer Brandon's job to do so, but that Black Superman also understands and respects that the change demands trust that cannot be instantly given (220). With regard to his sister, Brandon has not had the luxury to be a child; so Black Superman does not brush his concerns aside where she is concerned.

Whereas Black Superman and Brandon make progress, Ken is presented as being extremely vulnerable for the very first time. Hiding under the house, he cannot bear to hear LubLub's cries: "The sound of kids in pain touched a raw nerve in him; it always made him want to hit out, and do something – anything – to stop it" (Lucashenko *Lip* 219); "LubLub's misery grated on Ken like fingernails on a blackboard. It was all he could do to stop from jamming his fingers in his ears like a kid himself" (*Lip* 220). Both comments, narrated as third person narration from Ken's perspective (heterodiegetic narration with internal focalization), reveal that the child's cries trigger emotions in Ken that go beyond an appropriate reaction to the situation at hand. This hints at underlying trauma. This vulnerability, once pushed aside, however, leads to aggressive overcompensation. Invariably, the family's conversation turns to Donna's revelation about her grandfather's abuse. At this point in the story, Ken's abuse has not yet become known, and he refuses to give her allegations any credit, vehemently attacking anyone who dares to say differently.[263] An argument with Kerry ensues, who has finally had enough of his bullying:

> "So hang on, let me get this straight. Donna's a womba bitch cos she stabbed Pop, but Brandon's not crazy, after nearly drowning an animal the other day?" Kerry challenged . . . "Oh, that's right. I forgot. Women are always crazy when we don't do what men want. . . . And yet you magically know it all. You realise calling women crazy is control-freak shit, eh?" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 225).

Kerry calls Ken out on his obvious sexism. But more than that, she makes the connection between sexism and exercise of power: Ken's statements are directed at establishing his control over his sisters and his mother. He uses the trope of the "crazy woman" to devalue Donna's claim to truth

[263] At this point the reader of this dissertation of course knows that Ken's resistance stems from his own suppressed trauma. Acknowledging Donna's accusations as truth means acknowledging his own sexual abuse.

and calls Kerry a "little girl," trying to ban her from the conversation among adults.[264] Where he is not able to establish the more powerful position verbally (rational – irrational; adult – child)[265], he turns physical. The one person giving him pause is Steve, who, as a trained martial arts fighter, would actually be able to overpower him. He assumes a kindred spirit in Steve, or at the very least a man playing by the same kind of rules. However, Steve tries to diffuse the situation first through humor (also, in fact, playing on sexism), and then by asking Kerry to leave. Violence is a last resort, but he is committed to stopping it should Ken escalate the situation:

> "Nobody cares what you think ya "know," ya smart-mouthed bitch," snarled Ken. Then he swivelled to address Steve, who was leaning against the sink. "Ya wanna keep ya missus quiet, pal. Teach her some fucken respect, or else I will." The room fell completely silent. A moment of decision had arrived.
>
> "Ah, ya said it yourself, bro," Steve made light of Ken's threat. "Bitches be crazy!"
>
> All the women except Kerry laughed in relief, much louder than the quip warranted. Their laughter was a plea. It said: c'mon Kenny, chill. See the joke, man. Steve doesn't want to punch on. There's no need for any blueing, not tonight.
>
> "Not in this house they don't," said Ken, unsmiling. "You wanna shut her up, I'm telling ya. Or I'll hold you responsible for the stupid fucken shit that comes outta her mouth." (Lucashenko, *Lip* 226)

The women's reaction in the room is not surprising. They are trying to diffuse the situation, and much like Kerry at different points throughout the novel (for instance, Lucashenko *Lip* 22), hope that moving the perceived threat into a context of amusement or joking (never at the expense of the aggressive party, however) will avoid confrontation. Physically unable to stop the air of mounting violence in the room, this is one strategy that remains for them. Kerry, on the other hand, remains confrontational. It can be assumed that she, for one, registers the sexism inherent in Steve's reply that "Bitches be crazy," which is aimed at diffusing the situation on Ken's terms, not at setting his sexist worldview straight. And for two, she has long recognized that appeasement will not change the cycle of aggression and violence that is at constant repeat in the house. What has changed, however, that for the first time, she is not fighting this battle alone but has Steve as an ally[266]: "*This one's on my side,* she thought, in astonishment. For once in my damn life, I'm not

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[264] For a historical review of "craziness" and its sexist attribution of women, take the etymology of the word "hysterics" as an example, which is taken from the Greek word *hystera*, womb (Criado-Perez 224–26).

[265] The hierarchy of course echoes the binaries identified in colonial discourses. The categories and the intention behind it (the establishment of a hierarchy) are the same. Discursive practices in the pursuit of subjugation may draw from the same patterns be it in the service of sexism or racism.

[266] Steve can be understood as an ally both on the gendered and the racialized front. He supports Kerry by lending her his physical strength as security. For true allyship, understanding differences such as physical strength or differences in how one is perceived – statistically, men as strong and capable, women as vulnerable – is key. It allows for the ally to use their "privilege" supportively.

kicking against the pricks alone" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 204). The first confrontation is thus a domestic one, and highly volatile at that. The latent violence is at an extremely elevated level and about to erupt. It is also a gendered conflict in which the men hold the power, and the women can only try to diffuse the situation through laughter, reliant on a trained fighter to step in and set limits to Ken's aggression.

Just as the confrontation between Steve (as proxy for Kerry) and Ken is about to turn physical (or, in other words, as the latent violence is about to be actualized), police officers arrive at the Salters' house, marking the second part of the scene. The officers are there to question the Salters – and Ken in particular – about Jim Buckley's dog that has had "FUCK MAYOR BUCKLEY" and "NO PATTO PRISON" (231) tattooed on her skin.[267] Buckley specifically sent Sergeant Tony Nunne, the great-grandson of Cracker Nunne (see Section 4.1.2), to the Salters, because he is "not after a quiet word in Ken's ear this time" (183). Instead, he wants a confrontation and show of power:[268] "Senior Sergeant Tony Nunne . . . stood on the veranda, hands braced on his hips, an overwhelming confidence filling his person. This confidence came from growing up the son, grandson and great-grandson of the district's pioneers" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 228). During the preceding birthday party, Owen Addisson's suffering at Cracker Nunne's and Father O's hands (the latter locked him in the morgue with the dead for a whole night at the age of fourteen) is recapitulated, and thus still present in the reader's mind when now the great-grandson is standing on the Salters' veranda.

The first thing that Zippo does, one of the cousins, is take out his phone to start recording the encounter (Lucashenko *Lip* 231). Phone recordings of police encounters have become an act of self-preservation for racialized people in recent years. It is a form of bearing witness and of documenting evidence with the specific intent to later use it in trial if necessary. Zippo taking out his phone is a noticeably clear signal that none of the Black people in the house take this encounter lightly and are aware of the potential for deathly escalation (see also Amy McQuire's analysis of the *Black Witness*, Section 1).

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[267] Ken is, in fact, responsible for the tattoo. The narrative draws a parallel between Ken's abuse of the animal by tattooing her skin as an act of revenge against Jim Buckley (everything is subordinated to *his* feelings, *his* anger), and Brandon's attempted drowning of the neighbor's cat (as an assumed transferal of pain and fear of his stepfather onto the cat, the latter of the two he can control).

[268] The police visit is set in motion in chapter twelve but does not actually take place until chapter fifteen. Since Buckley specifically gives the order that this has "top priority" (183), the reader must assume that the distance (reading time) between initiation and action is purposeful. The temporal distance does not correspond with the story time. The arrival of the police officers is then much more surprising in chapter fifteen, because no longer necessarily in the back of the reader's head and therefore unexpected.

The recording ensures that white officers cannot use the often used and highly subjective (as well as biased) excuse of "feeling threatened" to justify shootings of Black men and women. The evaluation of their actions falls no longer solely under the authority of the police officers involved and their colleagues at the scene but are later seen and judged by others as well. Moreover, these videos are often uploaded to social media and shared widely to ensure that public outrage will hold the police accountable. Zippo's recording in this scene fulfills a similar function of a safety net as Steve did for Kerry in the previous one. However, it does not answer one threat of violence with another threat of violence (which is the underlying security that Steve provides: He would get physical, and he has the training to overpower Ken). On the contrary, the recording as "bearing witness" forces the police officers to keep their aggression on the verbal level or otherwise risk their careers. This allows for a verbal back and forth – in which the Slaters soon gain the upper hand – while lessening the likelihood of the manifestation of physical violence. The situation is nonetheless extremely dangerous. This is exemplified when Black Superman returns into the house from the backyard and the "cops swung around, instantly suspicious of an unanticipated black body in their midst" (Lucashenko *Lip* 239). The "Black body" is charged with racist connotations of violence, aggression, and irrationality (see Section 2.2 and the binaries of postcolonial theory in Section 2.1.2). These connotations (unconsciously) influence all evaluation of said "black body" by the "white body."

In this confrontation, the Salters resort to humor as well. Other than in the first scene, however, where the lines of solidarity were drawn between the women and Steve on one hand (solidarity in trying to deescalate the situation) and Ken on the other, humor is now not employed to diffuse the situation. Instead, it is aimed at the white police officers and used sarcastically. Most interestingly, they precisely use those racist biases as the basis for their taunts. Instead of the criminal, stealing, uncultured "Black body," they turn it into the criminal "white body" of the stealing colonizer:

> "You gotta understand – we don't know about stealing. That's your department," interrupted Black Superman loudly, as he made his way back upstairs. "You wanna go talk to whitefellas if ya wanna know about stealing." The cops swung around, instantly suspicious of an unanticipated black body in their midst. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 229)

Here is what follows next:

> "Darnt. I feel sorry for whitefellas, going around thieving all the time. They need help. Shame nobody ever tries to get em back to their culture." Black Superman shook his head in deep, patronising sorrow.
> "I blame the parents," interjected Zippo from the back of the group.

> "Yeah, bruz, true, eh," Ken said to Black Superman. He chastised the cops. "You mob wanna take these whitefellas round here up to the city, Show em some of their sacred sites. Shopping malls and factories and shit."
> "And for God's sake, can't ya get em back to their old ways? Give em some workshops on how to hang, draw and quarter people. And witch burning!" Black Superman had hit his stride. "Ya can't go past a bit of good old-fashioned witch burning to turn a troubled white kid around!"
> "They wouldn't know how to begin to use people as slaves on cattle stations, these days," Pretty Mary added. "You'd need to teach em that part, Nunny."
> "How to invade other people's countries and murder em, and call it civilisation. . ." Ken couldn't remember when he'd enjoyed himself this much.
> "Child-stealing 101," Black Superman nodded enthusiastically. "Interventions for fun and profit."
> "Globalised capitalism for the one per cent," Zippo called. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 230)

The lines of solidarity clearly follow color lines, with the white police officers on one side and the Salters on the other. Steve firmly allies with the Salters, joining in on the taunting and sarcasm. Unable to exchange taunts with the Salters on the same level, Sergeant Nunne switches tactics. He taunts Pretty Mary for her black eye:

> "But has someone given ya a smack, Mary? Wouldn't have been this bloke [Ken], would it?" Pretty Mary was struck dumb. Nunny smirked at the *Sexy Senior* sticker heaving on her chest. "Wanna lay charges, Mary? No? You'd just cop it twice as bad once he got back home, wouldn't ya?" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 231).

The taunting encapsulates precisely why many women – both white, but especially racialized women – do not trust the police with their abuse (see also McGlade, "Aboriginal"). Nunne is revealed as misogynistic (on top of the racism he exhibits above), utterly belittling Pretty Mary's injury, and moreover, undermining her as a person. With regard to power hierarchies, what is revealing is that Nunne – once he cannot engage with the group's taunts in a verbal manner – goes after a person he perceives as most vulnerable, the woman with the black eye. He is clearly not at all interested in resolving any kind of conflict or (in comparison to, for instance, Steve) lending his authority and strength to a more vulnerable party. All in all, the scence play on what Philomena Essed has pointed out in her analysis of Hannah Arendt's concept of communicative power: The "consciously or unconsciously felt security of belonging to the group in power, plus the expectations that other group members will give (passive) consent, empowers individual members of the dominant group in their acts or beliefs against the non-dominant group" ("Everyday" 182). Nunne expects to find a new ally on the battered Pretty Mary, thus reestablishing or consolidating his feeling of "being in the majority." Instead, he is presented as most interested in using and abusing his power where possible.This is further supported by an earlier remark, when, in the middle of the highly charged confrontation, he refers to Ken's cousin Helen as "Pretty girl" (Lucashenko *Lip* 229). He makes this statement after he turns to Ken, "still smiling" (*Lip* 229). Within this context it is easy to see that the remark is a threat, not a compliment. First, referring to

the grown woman as "girl" reveals an underlying sexism.[269] Second, directing the supposed compliment at Ken instead of Helen completely disregards her as a person and objectifies her. Third, placed in the middle of a confrontation like the one presented here, the statement becomes a threat. It is a reminder that the bodies of women are vulnerable. And this counts doubly for the bodies of Black women, for "the bodies of black women are contested terrain, the spoils of colonial conquest" (Behrendt, "Consent" 364). As Judy Atkins states succinctly: "the invaders saw two things of value – the land and the women. One was seized for permanent possession; the other was used and discarded" (Atkins 22). With Nunne constructed as direct descendant of the "first pioneers," this threat (of violence, of rape, of death) is not to be taken lightly and immediately causes Ken to become alert:

> . . . the taser lay, hard and smooth and poisonous, beneath the fingers of Nunny's right hand, and Ken knew it. As he stared into the sergeant's face, noticing the deep crevices falling away from his enemy's pale grey eyes, Ken felt the lash of Cracker Nunne's stockwhip rippling down through the decades, snaking towards his grandfather's face. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 232)

In both instances, Nunne tries to use the women as means to an end to taunt the men into physical aggression first – so that his answering violence can then be justified. In the end, his strategy is not successful, with Zippo "still filming" (*Lip* 233), resulting in the police officers leaving without any new information or arrest. More importantly, however, the police leave without an eruption of violence that could have ended in one or more deaths.

In light of this scene and the underlying violence that threatens to erupt at the slightest provocation, it also becomes clear why, when Ken later stands in the front yard and waves the rifle around (just before his sexual abuse is revealed and Uncle Richard manages to diffuse the situation), *not* calling the police is Ken's only chance of survival: "Ken yelling again, pacing, throwing the rifle around. He looked like a lunatic. If Steve had stupidly called the cops that'd be it. No other excuse needed: bang bang bang! *Oh my God, they killed Kenny*" (Lucashenko, *Lip* 274). This is a truth that people of color learn early on in their life, and one that only "white bodies" have the luxury of not learning at all.

The shift in this scene – from one form of latent violence to another – can be considered as another instance of layering in the network of violence that is narrated throughout the novel. In fact, throughout the narrative, violence is represented in the novel with consistency and at a high frequency. The story unfolds against a backdrop of a constant report of violence. The radio or the

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[269] These references are extremely common, but their prevalence is an indicator of just how entrenched this form of (often also benevolent) sexism is in society.

TV will be on in the background and there will be news stories running on the royal commission into child abuse:

> Donna sat on the unmade bed with dark rings beneath her swollen eyes, not really watching the morning television. Scrolling under images of lawyers and their clients outside a Sydney courtroom was news from the royal commission. Scores more victims of priests and sports coaches and teachers were coming forward to break their silence, to be heard at last. One cluster of faces were from out west, where a very highly paid school principal had just been revealed as a serial predator. Donna clicked the television off *People just ain't no good. S*he didn't call that news. (Lucashenko, *Lip* 254–55)[270]

The characters in the novel barely listen to these reports if at all, and their emotional reactions remain unnarrated. The reports of violence are little more than white noise, constantly present and very much woven into the fabric of their everyday lives. As a narrative strategy, however, these reports running in the background also build a backdrop against which the violence of the main story needs to be interpreted. The "priests and sports coaches and teachers," and especially the "very highly paid school principal" will most likely be read as white Australians. For one, because higher paying positions and positions that require a university degree are still staffed by a white majority. Secondly, the race of the perpetrators is not marked – always an indicator that they are, in fact, white. The story of sexual and physical abuse in the Salter household thus takes place against the backdrop of a national crisis of child abuse in white Australia. Further tempered by the history and the trauma of colonialism, the narrative thus nonetheless manages to avoid becoming "*the* Australian Aboriginal story" about violence and child abuse. Instead, it remains just "one" story without lending itself to overdetermination and overgeneralizations (see Section 4.1.2)

Other examples of this "ever presence" of violence are not reduced to reports on the radio or the television. It includes connections that are made by the characters (narrated through internal focalization, filtered through their consciousness). For instance, when Donna explains *why* she stabbed their grandfather and the trauma of her abuse, Kerry attempts to reconcile this information about her grandfather with her own mental image of him. At the same time, she remembers her time at Brisbane Women's Correctional Center:

> . . . oh, the chicks in BWCC were full of stories, nearly every last one of them, black, white and brindle. They laughed about it sometimes, the fucking *pandemic* of it [*my emphasis*]. Boyfriends and husbands. Fathers and stepfathers. Uncles. Cousins. The great pulsing cock of the world that beat time in all their lives" (Lucashenko 247).

This remembrance allows her to separate her immediate personal denial of the abuse from the general knowledge that sexual abuse is often invisible but extremely present. The pandemic of

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[270] Kerry listens to a similar report on the radio on page 259.

violence, the contamination of everyday life with structural violence in the form of sexism, racism, or heteronormativity, but also with interpersonal violence in the form of (sexual) abuse, is woven into the very fabric of the novel. It has reached such level of normalization that most characters never outwardly notice or react to it.

As such, choosing Kerry as a focalizer – due to her subject position – allows the narrator to notice both individual instances and the constancy of sexist, racist and heteronormative discourses, and violence. Similarly, Black Superman's subject position as both Black and gay also afford him a greater sensitivity to power relations and (possibilities of) its abuse. Another example would be their evening stroll past the town's pub. Kerry knows that on a Saturday night, the policemen will be over at the bar to check out the teenage girls, an observation that points out the intersection of sexism and institutionalized patriarchal power. Walking along the road across from the pub, she is immediately the recipient of wolf whistles:

> . . . a raucous wolf whistle filled the air, and Kerry stiffened in her stride. She didn't look across the road to the pub. Wouldn't give them arseholes the satisfaction. Next to her, Black Superman spun on his heel, shaded his eyes, and then blew an extravagant kiss to the invisible observer, jerking his hand upwards only at the very last moment into two savagely upright fingers. Loud laughter erupted from the Droughtmaster Bar (Lucashenko, *Lip* 73).

Much like the pseudo-compliment "pretty girl" by Nunne in the scene above, the wolf whistle is a form of objectification and carries an inherent danger. It is a reminder of the (relative) power along both gender and race-lines, resulting in the "unrapeable" Black body (see Section 4.1.1 in combination with the learnings from intersectionality following Crenshaw in Section 2.2.3). Kerry further recognizes this significance, because she is also a survivor of sexual assault, as she states elsewhere in the novel (247). In that instance, her own rape is barely alluded to. The reader may merely infer it because she unsuccessfully tries to attribute the danger of sexual assault with *white* men only (another instance of Warhol's *unnarrated*) and must finally admit that Donna's accusations against her grandfather are too substantive to be anything but true. In this context, violence is once again narrated as constant background noise, woven into the everyday fabric of the character's lives and infects one generation after the next. The cycle of violence, originated in the original act of colonization and dispossession and continuing in racist policies and as systemic racism, sexism, and heteronormativity, is a narrated as a *pandemic* network in Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip*.

Before I move on to the next novel, I will recapitulate my analysis of *Too Much Lip*. The first section (Section 4.1.1) illustrated how three beginnings of the novel (the epigraph, the prologue, and the beginning of the story) shift the category of "victim" and "perpetrator" along intersecting lines of power by layering multiple relationships of violence over one another in each

"beginning." Where the epigraph fist suggests an instance of sexualized violence crossing racial and gender lines (the white man raping the Aboriginal woman), it is later revealed as an example of internalized misogyny and heteronormative gender roles. Heteronormativity is then revealed as a myth in the prologue when male police officers rape Owen. While the rape occurs within gender lines, it crosses the lines of heteronormativity and male stereotypes. Further, the violence crosses racial lines (white men raping an Aboriginal boy) and adds additional dimensions of violence in the form of institutionalized power. These two instances of violence are then further complicated by the Salter sibling's relationship that hints as domestic (gender-based) violence. While this last instances also remains within racial lines (like the rape in the epigraph), it echoes white gendered hierarchies. In their composition, and by destabilizing the category of the "one" perpetrator and the "one" victim, these three beginnings mark colonization as the origin of the violence in the novel.

In the second section, I then analyzed how the four Salter siblings, Kerry's boyfriend Steve and the Salters' next-door neighbors are constructed through different identity categories (subject positions) throughout the narrative. While Kerry and Black Superman are constructed as Black Bundjalung and queer community members, Ken and Donna are constructed as "less Black" – not with regard to their community affiliations but primarily with regard to their skin color. I illustrated how this perceived difference affects Ken and Donna's experiences of their grandfather's abuse. Overall, this section showed how the narrative constantly calls up and then deconstructs category-assignments of "race" and "gender" by positing each character in complex relation to other racialized and gendered characters. One example of this was also Donna's ability to pass as white in Sydney's real estate community, and the internalized racism that affects her mental health. The Salter siblings as different constructions of "Blackness," were then contrasted by the characters Steve and Susannah. I illustrate how the narrative marks these characters as *white* and how the category *white* is as complicated as the category *Black*. This leads to the destabilization of *whiteness*, the category that is central to the functioning of racism because it is *normalized* and usually remains *unmarked*. This *marking* is most concisely visible in the term "whitenormalsavages," which Kerry uses to refer to white people who are unaware of their own privileged position and who (consciously or not) perpetuate systemic racism. Overall, the choice of Kerry (and her intersectional subject position) as internal focalizer for the narrative allows for a consistent *marking* of dominant discourses due to her. The constant construction, relativization and destabilization of identity categories constitutes a network of referents for these identity categories that resembles the destabilization of the categories "victim" and "perpetrator" in Section

4.1.1. In their multiplicity and heterogeneity, this network therefore refuses the *white gaze* that constantly attempts to wield epistemic power by *knowing* the *other*.

Where Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 focused on how the narrative destabilized categories and their assignment by the *white gaze* through a network of multiple and changing referents, sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 illustrated how the novel narrates *violence* as an ever-present network. At first, I illustrated how the characters Owen, Ken, and Brandon parallel each other, and how this parallel demonstrates the effects of cultural and intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities. This analysis also included the identification of Brandon as a symbolic character who ties the family's intergenerational trauma explicitly to the Stolen Generations. Along with this focus on intergenerational trauma, this Section also focused on intergenerational healing. I illustrated how the narrative suggests ways to "work through" trauma in a culturally grounded way, by recentering Country and community (a form resembling Simpson's embodied sovereignty and land-based healing). This was first illustrated through Owen's embedded narrative about Mount Monk, which I interpreted as a symbol for colonial occupation and – both territorial and cultural – dispossession, and then through the episode of Ken with the rifle, in which Uncle Richard deescalates the violence through "grounding," by sitting down on Country. I also provided a close reading of Uncle Richard's explanation of the difference between "responsibility," "apology," and "forgiveness," and tied it to the overall context of to Kevin Rudd's "National Apology." Finally, I demonstrated how Brandon, as the youngest of the three characters paralleled in this section, is constructed as a symbol for the Stolen. Overall, this section focused on the intersection of *Indigeneity* and *gender*, and illustrated how Western stereotypes of hypermasculinity intersect with racist violence both on the level of *harm* and on the level of *healing*.

After focusing on the interconnection between violence, generations, healing, and forgiveness, Section 4.1.3 returned to a more visible intersectional analysis of a scene of latent violence and police violence. I chose the confrontational scene between the Salters and Durrongo police in which the register shifts from a threat of gender-based and racist violence to racist violence intersecting with conceptions of hypermasculinity to show how alliances form along these lines of subjugation. This illustrated how different forms of (threatened) violence produce different effects depending on the power hierarchies they rely on – even if perpetrator and victim remain the same. As such, this scene offers another example of how the narrative constructs a complex network of interrelations that only becomes visible through intersectional analysis.

This complex network is further strengthened by the constant repetition of additional violence in the "background" of the story's action. The high statistical occurrence of violence in Indigenous communities (tied in its origin to colonial violence) is further contextualized by news

reports on the radio or television, where sexual abuse or murder all over Australia, and not only in Indigenous communities, are recounted. Characters such as Donna and Kerry listen to these reports but show little if any emotional reaction. They have become so used to violence that it is little more than "white noise" in the background, offering the last example for how Lucashenko constructs complex networks of interrelation in her novel *Too Much Lip*.

4.2 Police and Structural Violence – Paul Collis *Dancing Home*

In this section, I will analyze Pail Collis' novel *Dancing Home* from a narratological and intersectional perspective. In the following, I will provide a concise overview of previous scholarship on *Dancing Home*, as well as an overview of the structure of this section. An introduction to the content of the novel will follow in Section 4.2.1, because that section will explicitly focus on the novel's plot development.

Published in 2017 and despite winning the David Unaipon Award in 2016 for the best script by a previously unpublished Indigenous writer, Paul Collis's novel *Dancing Home* has as of yet received no attention by literary scholars. In contrast to Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy* and Melissa Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip*, even reviews in literary journals or newspapers have been almost nonexistent. This dissertation therefore offers the first critical engagement with the novel.

Section 4.2.1 will analyze the novel's plot structure and compare it to the rigorous structure of the Greek tragedy. Specifically, I will tie the plot and its stylized development to Freytag's pyramidal structure of the tragedy. By doing this I will show that *Dancing Home* utilizes its plot development to make the structural discrimination and violence of racism and classism (in this case intersecting with aspects of hypermasculinity and therefore gender) in present day Australia visible. I argue that the analysis is best served by using Aristotle's *Poetics* instead of more recent theories of, for instance, Shakespearean tragedies (despite intertextual references) because Blackie serves as an allegorical character who is destined to fail due to the circumstance of his subject position – Indigenous, male, and lower-class – and irrespective of his individual character traits (as the individual is understood from the eighteenth century onwards). I further argue that by structuring the plot in such a form, the narrative reveals Western conceptualizations of merit (and especially of economic success through merit) as myths. While the novel illustrates this through parallels and the characters' allegorical functions, the narrative does not refuse the *white gaze* in the same way as Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip* or Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy*. Instead of refusing the mechanism of the *white gaze*, the narrative redirects it and broadens its field of perception.

Continuing this line of argument, Section 4.2.2 centers on the character Blackie and illustrates that he is not portrayed as the "typical" hero of the Aristotelian tragedy but as a reinterpretation. Instead of the "fatal flaw" (hamartia), Blackie's "fault" in the eyes of society at large is his subject position. This specific subject position allows his antagonist McWilliams to falsely accuse him of criminal acts (including murder). As such, Blackie then is narrated as an allegory for the Black, poor man in Australia who is statistically overrepresented in the prison system. Section 4.2.3 will further strengthen this argument by investigating the novel's intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. I argue that by concentrating on McWilliams as Blackie's

antagonist, and by narrating Blackie and MacWilliams as allegorical characters, the novel portrays bias and harassment as deeply entrenched in the police system and a form of systemic racism. In addition, I will trace how the intertextual reference to *Macbeth* introduces and strengthens the contrast between regicide (the illegitimate murder of the legitimate ruler) with tyrannicide (the legitimate murder of an illegitimate ruler). But where *Macbeth*, due to its historical context and the rise of individualism in the eighteenth century concentrates on questions of individual morals, *Dancing Home* collapses the king and the tyrant into one character: McWilliams. Depending on the individual position (and awareness of how power structure's shape the individual's subject position) and perspective, McWilliams is both the exemplary police officer (*white gaze*) and the tyrant (*Black gaze*), representing the moral issues of the contemporary Australian nation state and its exercise of sovereignty and state power (the "legitimization of violence" as stated by Foucault, see Section 3.3).

Complementing this analysis of plot development, character construction and interrelation, and issues of sovereignty, I will then add to it an analysis of the allegorical function of the pharmacist "Doctor White" as representation of the (white) health care system in Section 4.2.4. I will show that the pharmacy is Blackie's only option for seeking medical help, and that this is less determined by his status as a (falsely accused) fugitive and more a result of his lack of socioeconomic status (and the general lack of sufficient health insurance in Indigenous communities). Drawing on the definitions of structural violence from Chapter 3, this allows me to interpret the scene in the pharmacy and an allegory for structural violence that intersects with Blackie's subject position in multiple ways. I will further illustrate how this same subject position elicits the volatile response of the police officers in the police station upon Blackie's arrest by drawing attention to Blackie's conscious decision to project non-threatening and non-violent behavior and the police officers' inability to see beyond his outward appearance as a Black man.

4.2.1 Structures of Tragedy – The Plot

The novel *Dancing Home* by Paul Collis is a particularly good example to illustrate how plot[271] structures can be used to convey and support contextual interpretation. Structured along the plot development of a Greek tragedy, the novel plays with genres and preconceived assumptions. In this section, I will illustrate how the novel uses the rigorous structure of Greek tragedy (as the epistemological origin of the Eurocentric history of ideas) to echo the structural violence in

[271] The term *plot* describes the causal and temporal ordering of the events and characters' actions in a story and lies between the level of "the events of a narrative on the level of story and their presentation on the level of discourse" (Kukkonen n.p.).

present-day Australia. In contrast to what Knudsen has described as Indigenous storytelling in circular or spiral plot structures, Collis chose a plot structure that is steeped in European tradition and highly stylized. I argue that his plot development can be best described by drawing on Freytag's pyramidal structure of the drama (Freytag 114–15) and Aristotle's theory of the tragedy. In contrast to more contemporary theories of tragedy – and especially of Shakespearean tragedy, which is intertextually referenced in *Dancing Home*[272] – the narrative's focus is not the individual character and their psychological depth as it is understood after the rise of individualism in the eighteenth century. Instead, the main characters in the novel function as symbolic characters that illustrate how the structural violence of systemic racism will hinder their (socio-economic) success regardless of individual intelligence or capabilities. The rigid plot structure echoes the rigidity of a racially biased system and thus makes structural violence visible and reveals the Western capitalist discourse of meritocracy as myth. This section will also show that Collis's narrative does not quite interact with the *white gaze* on the same meta-level as Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip* and Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy* in revealing the underlying mechanisms of the *white gaze* (see Sections 4.1 and 4.3). Instead, the *Dancing Home* focuses on making the invisible visible, and the narrative's plot enhances this endeavor. I nonetheless argue that the novel moves beyond the "writing back" of postcolonial theory (as defined by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, see Section 2.1.2) by shifting the "center" to an Indigenous perspective (through a "cultural focalizer" in the sense of Donahue, see Section 2.4).

Before I enter into an in-depth discussion on the plot structure, it is useful to this analysis to take a closer look at the beginning of the novel. For instead of an epitaph or a prologue, Paul Collis (Barkindji) precedes his debut novel with a direct address to the reader: "Dear Reader, I invite you to be a player, to be 'active' in the novel *Dancing Home*. Take sides. Be involved in the ideas I've written into this book. Think about poverty, power, privilege, suicide, and Aboriginal deaths in custody" (Collis , preface). While the sender of the preface must generally not be conflated with the author of the novel – much like a first-person narrator may not be confused with the author – the sender of the preface is constructed as authentic and authorial (see Genette, *Paratexts* 181), allowing for the reader to attribute the message to the implied author of the novel. The address itself is a call for engagement, for both immersion and critical reflection. It is also a political statement incorporated in a request for action.[273] Throughout the novel, Collis skillfully and

[272] For examples for contemporary approaches to tragedy and drama, see Snyder, Kastan and Burrow.

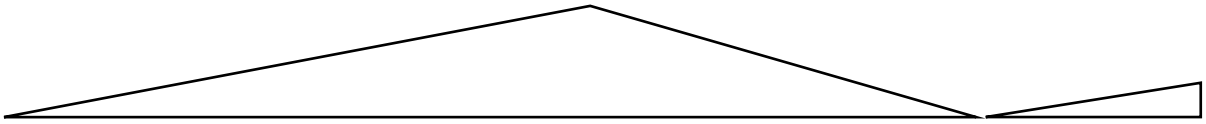
[273] Genette defines the "preface" as any kind of introductory text "consisting of a discourse produced on the subject of the text that follows or precedes it" (Genette, *Paratexts* 161) and that therefore functions as "peritext" (as it is written "next to" the text, see Section 4.1.1).

consistently interconnects the effects of poverty, the abuse of power and racism on the Aboriginal community. Police violence, incarceration and depression are consistent themes in the novel. At the same time, the narrative's perspective (focalization) and the structure of events (plot) enhance the message the narrative transports (see also Alber, "Introduction" 3; Alber, "Resilience" 293; Alber, "Indigenous" 99).

The novel is written in two parts with sixteen chapters, whereas the first part comprises five, the second part eleven chapters. In the analysis below, I argue that the last chapter fulfills the function of an epilogue, opening up the interpretation of the plot structure into three sections overall with five chapters each. Part one (Chapters 1-5) comprises of the drive from Sydney to Dubbo, which serves as an introduction to the characters in the car (Blackie, Rips, and Carlos) as well as their criminal background. The tension rises with the decreasing distance to their destination (Blackie's home town Dubbo) and culminates in Blackie's return to Country, symbolized by his dance on ancestral Country (Collis 57-60). Part two (Chapters 6-15) takes place in Dubbo, with the tension arc continuing to rise until it escalates in a bar fight in Chapter 10, which denotes a cesura. The bar fight can be interpreted as the novel's climax – not because the action centers around this bar fight or because the reader could anticipate it happening, but because this is the point at which Blackie sustains his life-threatening injuries. Knocked unconscious by other Black men (the mob), the severity of his injuries is not immediately apparent. Like the effects of structural violence, the effects of his injuries are delayed and life-threatening only because medical care is insufficient. Blackie's unconsciousness after the fight foreshadows his death in custody in chapter 15. In Chapters 11 to 15, Blackie reconnects with his family, and more of his back-story is revealed (see Section 4.2.2). Blackie also visits a pharmacy to buy medication for his injuries, a visit that can be interpreted as an allegory of the failure of the health care system for racialized peoples (Section 4.2.3). In this section, Blackie's hopelessness and desperation continue to grow and thematically it is connected to the systemic racism he has experienced from an early age. This desperation leads to his decision to turn himself in to the police and his death in custody in the same night. Finally, Chapter 16 serves as an epilogue, recounting one of Blackie's friends driving out of Dubbo. While driving away from the town, lightning strikes a nearby tree, and Rips realizes that Blackie has *become* the tree. This adds an element of Indigenous realism to the story, and once again highlights Blackie's connection to Country. The transformation of Blackie into the tree is a symbol of the Indigenous concept of relationality, and of ancestors becoming Country (see the concept of the Dreaming in Section 2.3.2.1). As such, it offers an element of hope, or at the very least, perseverance.

Part I	Part II		
Chapters 1-5	Chapters 6-10	Chapters 11-15	Chapter 16
"Act I"	*"Act II"*	*"Act III"*	*Epilogue/Chorus (?)*
Road trip from Sydney to Dubbo (Blackie, Rips, Carlos)	Arrival in Dubbo, bar fight, arrival at Dot's and Blackie's injury	Blackie's search for medication, return to Dot's, Blackie's arrest	Rips and Tegan leaving Dubbo, Blackie is in the tree/ Blackie *is* the tree
Return to Country, dancing on Country	Kinship-Ties, unconsciousness foreshadows death	Hopelessness, predetermination	Indigenous realism; spirituality, hope, relationality

Gustav Freytag's pyramidal structure applied to the novel's plot development:



Introduction | rising tension | climax | falling tension | catastrophe | Epilogue

Table 2 Plot Structure in Dancing Home

The novel follows the tension arc of a classical tragedy, and more especially Gustav Freytag's pyramidal structure (Freytag 114–15), as illustrated in the table above. This interpretation is further supported by an intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1623) in Chapter 12 (165) and underwritten by an almost satirical musical theme through a number of intertextual references to rock and country songs of the seventies and eighties.

In contrast to Shakespearean tragedies, the plot structure is not symmetrical, which is also indicated by the two Parts of the novel that each contain a different number of chapters. This asymmetry can be seen as a further aspect of visualizing systemic racism. Where Lucashenko's novel uses a *network* of violence as narrative representation, Collis uses an *accumulation*. Individual instances of racism (and classism for the novel is *centered* – in Chatman's terminology – on lower-class characters, and these two categories of subjugation intersect) accumulate before they are understood as a *systemic* problem (see Section 4.2.2). This is represented in the slower build of the tension arc in the first half of the novel. Further, by including Chapter 16 as a form of epilogue, the pyramidal structure does not end with the catastrophe but offers a reinterpretation in line with Indigenous epistemologies.

However, I would not describe Collis' use of the tragedy as Indigenous appropriation. For one, from an intersectional perspective, I consider appropriation as a form of adoption of cultural practices from a *position of power* and along a subjugating hierarchy. I would therefore argue that there is no such thing as Indigenous appropriation of Western cultural practices or artifacts. The novel may be considered as a form of *writing back* to the European center as suggested by postcolonial theory, and my analysis would certainly support such a reading. However, as I stated in Section 2.1.2, the concept of *writing back* according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin continues to center Eurocentric worldviews. Reducing the analysis of the novel to these questions of cultural difference (see Section 2.3.1 on Anderson's concept of "cultural density" as counter proposal to the concept of "cultural difference") also echoes white "exogenous disciplinary knowledges that have been produced *about*" Indigenous peoples (Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* xv, *my emphasis*, also quoted in Section 2.3.1, explicating the concept of "white possession"). This is especially problematic when we consider that most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia today are at least bicultural. Instead of focusing on these cultural differences (which always carry connotations of cultural tradition and authenticity), I would like to focus on what the narrative reveals about *whiteness*. In this sense, it is no longer *writing back* (to the center) but writing knowledge *about* whiteness, thereby marking it as such.

In comparison to both Lucashenko and Wright, the use of a tragic plot structure is not quite as effective in revealing the *mechanisms* of the *white gaze*. Where Lucashenko refuses the *white gaze*'s need to assign categories (and thus produce knowledge *about* the *other*) by constantly exchanging the identity categories in a network of victims and perpetrator until only the original violence of colonization and racialization remain, and where Alexis Wright refuses the reader's fast-paced reading reminiscent of fast capitalism as well as the *white gaze*'s search for singular truths through complexity and ambiguity, Collis's narrative does not quite interact with the white gaze in this meta-level. Instead, the narrative focuses on making the invisible visible, and the narrative's plot enhances this endeavor. After this overview of the general plot structure, I will now turn to a close reading of the content and show how the plot structure enables broader contextual reading.

The storyline of the novel follows the protagonist Blackie on his road trip home to Country in Dubbo and the events in the town of Dubbo that follow after. The novel is narrated by a third-person narrator, or in Genette's terms, by a heterodiegetic narrator who frequently focalizes through the protagonist Blackie. Blackie has been recently released from jail in Sydney and is traveling in a stolen car with his former cell mate Rip (Koori, a Black man from the western district) and the white Carlos. The road trip from Sydney (presumably Silverwater Correctional

Complex) takes the three men through the suburbs to the Blue Mountains, Katoomba, Lithgow, Bathurst, Lucknow, Geurie and Dubbo.

The novel starts *in medias res* two hours into the five-hour journey from Sydney to Dubbo and the first chapter, named "Travel Plans," is packed with foreshadowing references. The white Carlos is driving and was chosen for the task specifically for his white skin color. Carlos is boasting about his (sexual) conquests, and Blackie, sitting on the passenger seat, is ready to throw him out of the car for it. However, he reigns in his temper, counting "everything he could until he ran out of patience counting" (Collis 3). Much like Kerry's pursuit of running in *Too Much Lip*, the counting echoes anger-management strategies likely to be taught in prisons. Right from the start, Blackie is introduced as a man with "a short temper at the best of times. [And t]hese were not his best times" (Collis 4). Getting into a fight with Carlos, however, is not an option:

> If Carlos did the driving, Blackie figured there'd be less chance of them being stopped by Highway Patrol, for Carlos, although of Spanish extraction, looked like a whitefulla – straight nose, fair skin, wearing brand-name clothes, and all the hallmarks Blackie reckoned of white people. Blackie and Rips were dark. . .Dark-skinned dark characters. There's no mistaking them two that they were not Kooris. And a Koori driving a Commodore in these country towns looks like a sure pinch by cops who assume that the Holden Commodore is the car of choice for Koori car thieves. Blackie smiled to himself now that his plans were in action. (Collis 5)

Blackie chose Carlos as a driver specifically for his white skin color and middle-class appearance. Blackie and Rip expect to be subjected to racist profiling by the police if they are "driving while black" (see Section 2.2.1). Since the car they are driving is stolen – at least in this instant confirming the otherwise racist stereotype of the "black criminal," they need to avoid being stopped by the police. However, the wording of this passage shows that the stolen car is nonetheless a secondary concern: "the sight of any police car freaked him out. Better to stay out of their way, he figured . . . And of course, there was the little matter of the stolen car they were in to consider" (Collis 8). For Blackie and Rips, the police always represent danger, and this danger is primarily irrespective of Blackie and Rip's (criminal) behavior. Instead, it is the reality of their skin color, racist structures within the police and police procedures, and has been learned by experience. The scene illustrates Philomena Essed's claim that "racism is more than structure and ideology" but instead "a process [that] is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices" (Essed, "Everyday" 177).

This interpretation is further substantiated when the narrative more closely describes the police officers. Still focalized through Blackie's perspective, the narrative continues as follows:

> Police crept around slowly in their car, checking for odd things and 'strange fruits': for people ragged, drugged up, ripped off, acting reckless. They were on the lookout for people who moved too fast. And for people who moved too slow. And they kept an eye out for people who weren't moving at

> all. Their experienced scanner-eyes roamed over the street for out-of-place people up to no good. Those whose luck had run out. (Collis 9)

The quotation calls attention to a very narrow definition of "normal" or "unconcerning." Everything else is cause for suspicion. The quotation also contains a heavy dose of irony. Blackie ascribed to the police an attitude of superiority. They see themselves as experts in identifying criminal elements. That expertise is arbitrary, because it remains a matter of "luck" whether someone is identified as being suspicious. The narrative uses juxtaposition to achieve this effect. The word "police" would not normally be associated with the sinister "creeping." Instead, as public servants tasked with enforcing the law, verbs describing their movements would be connotated with visibility and assuredness. The description of the people they are looking for produces a similar effect: "ragged" is a descriptor of an outward appearance, someone "roughly unkempt," "wearing tattered clothes" or simply "worn-out from stress and pain" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary n.p.). Suspicion is validated here by class descriptors. Appearance does not equal behavior and being poorly dressed (in the literal sense of the word), should not be grounds for suspicion by the police. The reality, however, is quite different. From the other three description of "strange fruit" only being "drugged up" should be actual cause for suspicion (though not more since it would need to be further investigated whether the person is truly drugged and not ill), but as it is immediately followed by "ripped off" – the very inversion of criminal behavior – even "drugged up" could be reevaluated, especially when the last descriptor "acting reckless" strongly moves behavior away from intent. The combination of all four fosters an understanding of people failed by society – the system, if you will – who do not have the socio-economic resources to enter the white middle class that is here defined as "normal." The next three sentences – structured in parallel – drive this point home: With "experienced scanner-eyes" the police are looking for people who move "too fast," or "too slow," or "not at all." The definition of "unsuspicious" and "normal" becomes narrow and highly regulated, completely reliant on the officer's experience.

On a secondary level, the description plays with the legal definition of "lawful" stop-and-frisk practices. Stop-and-frisk describes the police procedure of stopping, identifying, and searching people on the street or in public spaces. Legally, these stops need to be justified by concrete grounds for suspicion, which in turn are exemplarily named as "suspicious behavior." The emphasis here lies on "behavior" not "appearance," for the latter would fall under the heading of racial or ethnic profiling (if it is influenced by ascriptions of ethnicity, race, or religion) or other kinds of biased profiling and is discriminatory and a human rights violation. In practice, however, supposedly suspicious behavior is often named as an excuse for a stop that is in essence based on

explicit or implicit racial bias.[274] This is also part of what legal scholar and expert member of the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues Hannah McGlade (Kurin Minang Noongar Nation) has referred to as "coded racism" (McGlade, "First" n.p.): implicit or explicit bias justified by secondary (proxy) characteristics and coded into the practices and policies of institutions. In this form, racist practices and procedures are extremely hard to prove for individual cases. Instead, proof is most often found in numbers and investigated statistically.[275] In this shape, it is a kind of structural violence according to Galtung (see Chapter 3).

Within this context, Blackie's omission of mentioning skin color as a reason for police stops is notable. In the passage above, the reader learned that Blackie chose Carlos for his white skin color as the driver for their trip to Dubbo. And just after, the reference to Blackie's skin color returns:

> The cops, dressed in sharp blue shirts, wearing even sharper haircuts, drove past in the opposite direction, slowly, owned the street. They checked Blackie's car out as they did . . . The cops drove by unconcerned, though they missed their target group by inches, though they might as well have missed Blackie by a mile. They missed, that's all that mattered to the black man. (Collis 9)

The sarcasm is still strong, with the description of the "sharp blue shirts" and "even sharper haircuts" of the police officers who "own the street." The repetition of "sharp" – carrying the meaning of "dressy" or "elegant" in its combination with outward appearances, but opening up associations of "cutting" or "piercing" for both knives and pitches of voice (Merriam-Webster) – and the inversion of the officers "owning" the street instead of protecting and serving the community. As with Blackies moniker, "Blackie, AKA the black man" (Collis 4), the wording at

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[274] With regard to prevalence, a 2019 joint study by the Harvard University, Yale University and the University of Sydney showed that more than 80 percent of white Australians showed bias against Indigenous Australians (Shirodkar). Exemplarily, the Diversity and Inclusion plan of the New South Wales Police Force 2020-2023 claims a "culturally and linguistically diverse" workforce of 11.6 percent and 3.1% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. For neither group is a differentiation given of how these percentages pertain to administrative staff and officers, respectively, which is usually an indicator that the level of diversity is much higher within the administrative sector than the officer sector (see also the distribution of women members of staff in administration and among officers) (see New South Wales Police Force 8–9).

[275] For further context, also see the study of the United Nations' Working Group on Arbitrary Detention: "Random drug testing and stop and frisk practices can be used as ways to identify drug users or those with drugs in their possession, with the aim of arresting them. These practices are a marked departure from the requirement of probable cause for legal searches and considerably diminish the human right to security of person. Who is to be tested or searched for possession of drugs can be a highly subjective decision, often based on a person's physical appearance, gender, age, race, ethnicity or their status as a migrant or a sex worker. Drug testing or searches without probable cause can be directed at groups in certain geographic areas, including parks or street locations, entertainment venues or near drug treatment facilities. A high number of arrests for drug-related offences may be used in some States as an indicator of successful law enforcement activity. People who use drugs may also constitute an easy target for law enforcement officials who may, in some States, be subject to arrest quotas" (Working Group on Arbitrary Detention 3).

the end of this quotation highlights that Blackie is as much a symbolic character as an individual protagonist, a synecdoche (*pars pro toto*), or at the very least set up as one example for the Black experiences of life in Australia. The text can thus be interpreted as an allegory, but I would argue that the allegory functions less on the level of the individual character. Instead, the allegory illustrates that societal barriers (as a form of structural and racist violence) prevent success for racialized peoples because their merit will never be appropriately recognized or rewarded. As such, Collis' *Dancing Home* counters white fictions of authority (in the sense of Lanser). This also ties in with the role of the tragic hero as the exemplary figure with whom the audience empathizes and through whom it experiences catharsis (i.e., the purification of excessive passions which enables a person to henceforth act more ethically), but I would argue that this parallel is extended and reinterpreted. I will explain what I mean in more detail.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, I will draw on Aristotle's *Poetics* for this explanation because I argue that the abovementioned societal barriers function regardless of individual characteristics, motivation or aptitude, and intelligence. The psychology of the individual protagonist in this novel is not relevant to his (lack of) success. This is further supported by the fact that Blackie is not the exemplary tragic hero, an argument I will make in Section 4.2.2. According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, tragedy concerns itself with "an imitation in verse of characters of a higher type" (Part V, n.p.) and "endeavors, as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit" (Part V, n.p.)). The latter has in literary theory been referred to as unity of time.[276] Aristotle's definition of the tragedy as focused on action first and the character as secondary also supports the interpretation of "Blackie, AKA the black man" as symbolic for Black men in general:[277]

> . . . for Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character. (Aristotle n.p.)

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[276] Unity of time and unity of action, to which Aristotle refers to in Part VII and VIII of the *Poetics*, have been identified as the central characteristics for tragedies according to Aristotle's theory.

[277] The representation here is gendered. It is a specific male-focused story that is told here. For even though black and Indigenous women are also overrepresented in the prison system and their mass incarceration is a topic of social activism, the story told in *Dancing Home* is focused on the experience of the intersection of "man" and "black," which is different from the intersection of "woman" and "Black" or "Indigenous", see chapter 2.2.3 on intersectionality. Nonetheless, Judy Atkinson points out that while much "has been written about the impact of the Australian criminal justice system on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men", only little has been written about "its impact on Indigenous women", leaving blank spaces in the scholarship that need to be filled.

The character "subsidiary to the action" suggests a certain exchangeability of the character, if not for a completely different character but at least for one similar enough.[278] In this light, then, Blackie becomes as much a representative for Black Indigenous men as an individual. In *Dancing Home*, the character is "subsidiary to the action" as far as he is subsidiary to structural disadvantage due to his racialization and thereby subsidiary to *white* action.

This allegorical function of the character Blackie also echoes in Aristotle's claim that "it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity" and "to express the universal", not "the particular" of history (Part IX, n.p.). Whereas this quote has been often used as prompt to discuss the function of literature in general, I would like to link it up with the representation of violence and discrimination in the novel. For as much as Melissa Lucashenko's *Too Much* Lip is a representation of the network of violence surrounding and infiltrating Indigenous communities still living with the effects of colonization, *Dancing Home* is an exemplary story of how violence and systemic racism affect a life and the (statistical) likelihood of what may become of a person faced with these adversarial circumstances.

Approaching the novel from this perspective, the "plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy" (Aristotle n.p.). The tragic action should "excite pity and fear", where the relatable main character is affected by "unmerited misfortune" (Part XIII, n.p.): "the character between these two extremes – that of a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty" (Part XIII, n.p.). What Aristotle here describes are his thoughts on what makes a character relatable to the audience, which in turn he considers the precondition for the emotions of pity and fear. As Vinje points out:

> . . . it is important to have Aristotle's definitions of pity and fear in mind to understand why a wicked or evil person would be unsuitable. While pity concerns someone who suffers undeserved misfortune (περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιόν ἐστιν δυστυχοῦντα), fear is felt towards someone who is like ourselves (περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον) . . .. A thoroughly bad person would obviously not suffer undeservedly, and would not be a person similar to the average person. Hence, this kind of person does not qualify as a protagonist of tragic poetry. (Vinje 584)

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[278] It is important to note at this junction that Aristotle's *Poetics* far precedes the rise of individualism in the British Renaissance. Characters are here not individual persons with their own unique experiences, talents and emotions, as understood in present-day culture. Instead, they function as character-types that resemble the people in the audience but are functions and moral representatives more than persons. This also explains why it does not contribute to my analysis of Blackie by questioning "the role played by the human will in determining the ultimate destination of the soul in heaven or hell" (Burrow 17), which Burrow determines is one of the central lines of argumentation considered in Shakespearean tragedies.

Since pity and fear are the foundations for a moment of catharsis, I would argue that in contemporary discourse, it is less a feeling of pity (feeling *for* a character, which according to Suzanne Keen includes a certain feeling of superiority), but more of a feeling of empathy (feeling *with* a person, which allows for a connection based on mutual respect). If we were only talking about pity in the sense of Suzanne Keen, there would be no feeling of fear for the character (or of ending up in circumstances similar to them), because the emotional distance (fueled by a feeling of unassailability in the superior position) is too great.[279]

The "unmerited misfortune" is not brought "about . . . by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty" (Aristotle Part XIII, n.p.).[280] This error or frailty has also been translated as *hamartia*, and

> . . . most modern scholars view ἁμαρτία [hamartia] as an error of judgement for which the tragic hero cannot be blamed. Still others claim that ἁμαρτία refers to a range of failures, so that it is up to the poet to decide how the hero comes to ruin. Another, currently less widespread, interpretation is that ἁμαρτία is linked to a flaw in the hero's moral character and that he is at least partially responsible for his misfortune. (Vinje 582)

The last interpretation is often dismissed, nonetheless Vinje follows this "but with an important modification: rather than explaining the hero's weakness as general weakness of will (ἀκρασία)", Vinje argues "that the tragic hero is blinded by temper (θυμός) or by a pursuit for fine, good and desirable things—that is, by what may be labelled 'qualified' weakness of will" (Vinje 583). This qualification can be found in a "weakness of will (ἀκρασία) . . . triggered either by temper (θυμός) or by a desire for fine, good and choiceworthy things," meaning "that the tragic hero gets blinded and overlooks important particular facts when angry or when pursuing fine and desirable things—

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[279] Suzanne Keen has shown, however, that identification and empathy can be only tenuously linked to a change of behavior (i.e. altruism) in the reader. She differentiates between sympathy (feeling pity for someone) and empathy (feeling with someone) and clearly states that a reader's experience of "either empathy or personal distress" does not equal "reciprocation in the aesthetic response" (212). She elaborates that though the reader "may feel intense interest in characters, . . . incurring obligations towards them violates the terms of fictionality" (212), especially since there has been no "specific set of narrative techniques . . . verified to over-ride the resistance to emphasizing often displayed by members of an in-group regarding the emotional states of others marked out as different by their age, race, gender, weight, disabilities, and so forth" (214). This means that while a narrative may evoke an empathetic reaction in the reader, this cannot yet be linked to an actual change of behavior in the "real-world". While a complete overview of empathy studies and affective cognition would go far beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will nonetheless point to Keen's above-mentioned warning that the positioning of the reader in the real world will influence how willing and/or able to empathize they are. Thus, because it is a matter of interrelation, the gendered, classed and racialized position of characters and narrators, as well as their sexuality and (dis)ability may influence the subjectively perceived degree of identification, empathy and sympathy of the reader.

[280] Discussions of this error or frailty, often also translated as *hamartia*, have taken up much space within literary theory. It is general consensus that committing this error, the hamartia, does not make the character morally reprehensible, and the hamartia must evolve out of the action in a pitiable fashion (Lurie 284).

such as victory, honour and wealth" (Vinje 589) and this ultimately leads to his downfall. Since he is still – generally speaking – of good character, the misfortune is unmerited and pitiable.

This theory of tragedy is of course the epitome of Eurocentric, Western literary theory, because in contrast, Indigenous storytelling follows a different set of rules and plot lines are more likely to be circular, likened to a spiral (see Knudsen, Section 2.3.6 on the concept of indigenized readings), or in some cases, a helix (Wright, "Writing Carpentaria"). Performances are highly regulated, but are related to dance and ritual, to embodied memories of the landscape. The tragedy is a specifically Western concept, steeped in Greece epistemologies and poetics. Nonetheless, Collis here makes use of the Western concept and reinscribes it for his own purposes. As such, Blackie is certainly a different prospect from the character of high morals (yet not flawless) that Aristotle calls for. As a recently released drug addicted convict who is planning to murder a police officer, Blackie at first seems to support every stereotype portrayed of Black men by a racist society. Throughout the novel, however, Blackie's character becomes much more complex.

Overall, the first chapter foreshadows the tragic events of the novel in several ways. For example, "Driving in silence, Blackie and Carlos were lost in their own thoughts, and lost to the continuous white line" (Collis 15), and while direct textual interpretation refers to the line of cocaine Carlos and Blackie just snorted, the context also refers to the "white line" of the settlers.

In (unconsciously) racist discourses, the "Blue Line" is often used as descriptor for the police, suggesting that they stand between what is considered "proper" society and so-called "criminal elements." The descriptor is highly problematic because it is a divisor and over-simplifies the complexity of drug addiction, racist structures, poverty, and incarcerations. The word choice "white line" echoes this usage and is further highlighted by the novel's chapter titled "White Lines" (Collis 29). Collis here draws continued attention to the socially constructed demarcations and (border) lines drawn between what Agamben calls "livable life" and "bare life," with white middle class Australian citizens clearly belonging to the first category and poor, Black, and otherwise racialized people belonging in the second.

This context is further strengthened when Carlos and Blackie both see

> . . . a white swan, with his beak over the neck of a black one, in a violent struggle in front of the colourful garden gnomes. The black swan fought back, flapping its wings, lashing out with its feet, trying to fly away, screaming to the gnomes for help. But the white swan had it in its grip, hard. And it looked as though it was not going to let go regardless of gnomes or anything else. (Collis 16)

The analogy clearly stands for the continuous oppression and fight for survival by Indigenous people against the white majority, most prominently the police. It also foreshadows Blackie's personal fight against McWilliams. The analogy offers at least hope for survival, however, even though "Blackie didn't look back to see the black swan escape, a little worse for wear and tear

from the fight, but still alive and kicking" (Collis 16). The swans remind Blackie of the violence he has been subjected to from white people, and he turns his anger on Carlos when he accuses him as follows: "You whitefullas sure fucked my country. Youse fucked her alright" (Collis 17). Whereas Carlos was clearly considered to be on Blackie's side up until this point, connected through their status as former convicts and their shared hatred and fear of the police, the swans reignite Blackies anger (further heightened by drugs (Collis 13)) towards the injustice he and his people have faced and he does not count Carlos as an ally. Carlos' white skin is the reason he was chosen to accompany them on the trip, after all, not a deeper connection or mutual understanding. This superficial connection between Carlos and Blackie also foreshadows Carlos' betrayal of Blackie and Rip when he discloses their location to the police to reduce his own charges.

To summarize, in this section I illustrated that *Dancing Home* makes use of the rigorous structure of Greek tragedy in order to represent structural violence of Australian present-day society on the textual level. It thereby chose a plot structure that emanates from the heart of European theoretical thought (e.g., the revival of Greek philosophy in the classical movements of the 18th century) instead of structural elements of Indigenous storytelling (such as circular or spiral plot structures). In order to illustrate this, I referred to Gustav Freytag's concept of plot development in the tragedy, as well as Aristotle's theory on the tragedy. I further explained that drawing on Aristotle instead of more recent theoretical approaches to tragedy is fruitful in this context, because the narrative does not center on the tragic hero Blackie as an individual character and his psychological depth as it was understood after the rise of individualism in the eighteenth century. Instead, "Blackie, a.k.a., the Black man" serves as an allegorical character who is destined to fail not due to individual characteristics, intelligence or morality, but because as a Black man he is caught in the rigidity of structural violence that subjugates individuals along intersecting lines of domination (for instance, race and gender). The argument of Blackie as allegorical character will be extended in the following section.

4.2.2 The Tragic Hero – Circumstance and Failure

In this section, I will show that, in *Dancing Home*, Blackie is not portrayed as the "typical" hero of the Aristotelian tragedy. Instead, the novel takes the blueprint of the tragic hero and reinterprets it in light of a society that is racist and classist in structure and in which "fate" is determined by the often-insurmountable obstacles for racialized and otherwise marginalized people. These structural obstacles (i.e., structural violence) complicate and often prevent participation and inclusion in society. The protagonist Blackie in *Dancing Home* is positioned as male, Indigenous, and poor. All three lines of subjugation *intersect* and "predestine" the path he takes in life. Blackie

thus becomes an allegory for the Black, poor men in Australia that are statistically overrepresented in the prison system, more likely to die young, and more likely to become addicted to drugs. By situating Blackie as the Aristotelian tragic hero (and not the Shakespearean tragic hero), the narrative firmly assigns the responsibility for this development not to the individual (Blackie) but society's structural inequalities (systemic racism). In the following, I will illustrate this through a more in-depth look at the character Blackie as he is represented in the narrative. I will demonstrate that his individual psychological disposition, his morality, and his intelligence are, in fact, irrelevant in light of the intersecting hierarchies of racism, gender, and class.

First, Blackie grows up as an intelligent young boy who excels in school. He has an exceptionally good memory and receives a scholarship to a private academy. The description reads as the ideal example for the Closing-the-Gap report (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) and No-Child-Left-Behind policies (Northern Territory Government). An Indigenous star student receiving all the best advancements to supposedly "make something of himself" and "rise beyond circumstance" (or at least, what would be considered as advancement in the *white gaze*, meaning socio-economic advancement). What these policies often overlook, however, and what Blackie becomes painfully aware of, is that the scholarship is moving him from a familiar environment with classmates he can relate to (meaning, similar experiences and backgrounds, and this includes experiences of being Indigenous in rural Australia), to a school with a predominantly white and affluent student body. The only other students marked as non-white are a few New Guinea students, who are tied to their own kinship group. Blackie observes their interaction with the white students and soon realizes that while at first "their friendly nature was infectious and all were highly valued across the entire school", the "white boys tried to get to 'take them home', to show their parents and locals theses exotic black people from the north" (Collis 14). The boys are being objectified and exoticized, "paraded around as some kind of circus act" (Collis 14). Blackie soon feels doubly isolated: for not belonging with the tight kinship group of New Guinea students nor to the white student body, and neither does he receive the same attention since he is but a *local* – less exciting – Black boy. The scene mirrors the exhibitions of Black and Indigenous men and women in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and the movement of primitivism in art, music, and literature in the early twentieth century (see Section 2.1). It describes an instance of Philomena Essed's everyday racism, where micro situations add up to social reality on a macro level (see Collis' aggregation hypothesis) and underlying structures on the macro level are reproduced in social interactions on the micro level (see Circourel's representation hypothesis) to combine into systemic racism (Section 2.2).

Once Blackie understands the racism underlying their treatment by the white children at school, Blackie becomes more perceptive towards other and often violent instances of racism in his everyday life:

> Blackie came to find racism on the sporting field – ". . .take that, Boong!," and another knee in the back almost broke Blackie in two. . . . Yes, Blackie was called a black bastard, a n[*****], a coon, a monkey, on the field, and by some people on the sidelines. And the racism was there in the classroom too. When honour days were awarded for academic achievement and behaviour each month, Blackie never got one. At seventeen years of age, Blackie stopped trying to win the prizes of honour days, and instead, concentrated on sports. (Collis 15)

Despite the verbal and physical abuse by his teammates, sports is an area where Blackie has a chance to excel. The colonial racist stereotype of an enhanced "physical prowess" and "sporting ability" of Indigenous peoples – and especially men – is in full force (Ashcroft et al., *Keywords* 55–56). This is a connection that I established in Section 2.1.2 (on the concept of hybridization and the criticism of the term), and it is an intersection of two subordinating hierarchies of power (see Crenshaw's intersectionality in Section 2.2.3). The same racist bias prevents Blackie from excelling academically, and rationality and intelligence continue to be attributed to white people, leaving Blackie fighting the odds and unable to win. This is an example of the toll that racism as a structure of violence takes on the people who are affected by it. It is also an example of everyday racism as defined by Philomena Essed in Section 2.2. Blackie is faced with a constant barrage of "individual racism" that in its constant repetition (see the aggregation hypothesis by Collins as interpreted by Essed in Section 2.2) reveals itself to be systemic and therefore a structure of violence (for the definition of systemic and structural violence according to Galtung see Section 3.2).

As a result, Blackie retreats into himself and cannot even bond with the New Guinea boys over these shared experiences of racism, since he never knew whether "the Nui Guinea boys knew that they were 'on show' or not," but either way "the racism was there" (Collis 15). There is an obvious silence surrounding the experiences of racism in the school, which can be connected to the overall issue of the invisibility of structural violence. Direct acts of violence are visible, but individual acts of racism are not always immediately understood as acts of violence. This connection can only be established once racism is understood as an underlying structure of social hierarchies that in turn are reproduced on the micro level of everyday interactions (see the representation hypothesis as interpreted by Philomena Essed in Section 2.2).

Imagining this constant barrage of aggression and rejection that Blackie faces, it is not surprising to learn that "when he finally completed sixth form, he'd had enough of the competition, isolation, and education, and returned to his nan's place in Dubbo and drifted towards laziness and

delinquencies. A first-rate education virtually down the drain" (Collis 15). What is explained here is not yet the internalization of racism as explained in Section 2.2.1, because Blackie is still able to link his lack of academic success to the obstacle of the racist bias present in the school system. However, because Blackie experienced racism with such frequency and in a place where he had previously excelled and felt safe, his overall perspective on interracial interactions has changed, leaving him disillusioned.

The text contrasts this feeling of disillusionment with the phrasing of the last sentence, "A first-rate education virtually down the drain," which might as well have been uttered in a disparaging fashion from a white and privileged perspective. The sentence seems to fault Blackie for not "making something of himself." In combination with the abovementioned understanding of how racism works as a structure of violence, however, it can be interpreted as sarcastic mimicry (to include Bhabha's term from postcolonial theory) of the *white gaze*. Moreover, it is an example of the white hegemonic discourse of the "dysfunctional" and "lazy" Aboriginal person, what Moreton-Robinson has defined as a discourse of "white possession" (see Section 2.3.3). It is the institutional racism that causes Blackie to drop out of school. His story shows both aptitude and ambition thwarted by constant exclusion and an inhospitable environment. In the end, Blackie returns home disillusioned with the myth of reaching success through merit.

The trope of the (racialized) individual despairing of society and slipping through the net is very present throughout the novel and serves as a backdrop for the interpretation of Blackie's character. Blackie as a focalizer of the narrative continually gazes upon the people on the street that are often overlooked in everyday life, such as the early morning customers in front of the chemist's: "desperate-looking characters looking poor, weak and craving . . . waiting for the shop to open. They were waiting to get their morning fix too – methadone their go" (Collis 7). Methadone is an opioid that is often used as a substitute for heroin in programs that support drug addicts through their withdrawal and on their way to recovery. The people in front of the chemist are likely drug addicts attempting to combat their addiction.

Blackie further states that the

> . . . long few hours after midnight had them twitchy, anxious. Battle scars on their arms, hidden under long-sleeved shirts, cut deep into them, the result of uncounted journeys with 'Irene,' holding stories of strange new places of light and dark, the slobbering, where the greatest high is found. But now, the battle-scarred slobs held their pain in their scratchy arms, crossed and tucked aways from the world of bright-eyed people walking past without saying hello. (Collis 7)

It becomes clear that Blackie does not judge them for their addiction. He foregrounds their fight, their "battle" and their invisibility to passersby. Where the police would see criminals, he finds

"slobs" who are plagued by their addiction and looking for a short reprieve from their reality.[281] Collis thereby also sets the world-wide "war on drugs" (fought by the police against drug cartels and addicts alike) into a different perspective. The actual "battle" is fought by the addicts in this scene, and they certainly do not receive support from the police. The UN Human Rights Council recently released a statement calling for an end to the alleged "war on drugs" and for member states worldwide to restructure drug policies with a focal point on human rights. They referred to data "and experience accumulated by UN experts [that] have shown that the "war on drugs" undermines health and social wellbeing and wastes public resources while failing to eradicate the demand for illegal drugs and the illegal drug market" (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner n.p.). By focusing on the punitive side and the perpetrators, these policies are unable to address the core of the issue: the rising demand for drugs and the reasons behind it. The reasoning of the UN is that only by diminishing the demand one will be able to dismantle the drug market. Furthermore, according to the UN experts,

> . . . these policies, many of which are gender blind, have also had a profoundly negative impact on the world's most vulnerable people including minorities, people of African descent, indigenous peoples, children and young people, persons with disabilities, older persons, people living with HIV/AIDS, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, homeless persons, sex workers, migrants, the unemployed and ex-convicts. (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner n.p.)

Statistically, the most vulnerable people in society will be most susceptible to drug use. By piling on punitive sentences, which always also carry further financial strain and a diminishment of further employment chances, vulnerabilities are exacerbated and turn into a spiral of despair without exit. For example, in "the United States, individuals from low-income backgrounds tend to plead guilty, especially for lesser offences such as possession of small amounts of marijuana, so as to be released from detention facilities because they cannot afford to pay the bond" (Working Group on Arbitrary Detention 4). From this perspective, the victims of society's neglect and structural violence (racist, sexist, homophobic and heteronormative structures, and practices) are further punished for their despair. The solution, then, would be to concentrate efforts on making these people *less* vulnerable in the first place: by restructuring institutions and welfare policies with perspectives informed by intersectionality.

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[281] The "journey with 'Irene'" is most likely a reference to the song "Goodnight, Irene", an American folk song that has been performed by multiple artists over the years and is generally traced back to Blues musician Lead Belly (see Lornell). The song lyrics tell the story of a man who is saying goodbye to his love at the end of the night, promising he'll see her "in [his] dreams." As such it is an intertextual reference to a temporary dream world in which everything is better than in reality.

The 2021 study "Arbitrary Detention Relating to Drug Policies" of the UN Human Rights Council Working Group on Arbitrary Detention points out that the

> . . . war on drugs may be understood to a significant extent as a war on people. Its impact is often greatest on those who are poor, but also frequently overlaps with discrimination in law enforcement directed at vulnerable groups. This has been referred to as the intersectionality of different forms of discrimination, which reinforces disadvantage. (Working Group on Arbitrary Detention 8)

In combination with the heightened vulnerabilities, these biased and discriminating practices then lead to the overincarceration of racialized peoples in the prison system: these "same policies also propel detrimental practices such as racial profiling and sustain the scheme of systemic and structural discrimination affecting those made vulnerable and marginalized communities, especially people with multiple intersectional identities" (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner n.p.). Ruth Frankenberg reminds us that "formal politics are, of course, also racialized", by which she means that political domains are racialized: In "the popular imagination, crime is 'black,'" and at the same time, those (and what) is in need of "protection against crime [is] coded 'white'" (Frankenberg, "Local" 7).[282] As Foucault points out: "in 1820 it was already understood that the prisons, far from transforming criminals into honest citizens, serve only to manufacture new criminals and to drive existing criminals even deeper into criminality" (Foucault, "Prison" 40).[283] Jail time usually carries with it large financial burdens and on the permanent record simultaneously restrict a person's ability to return to a financially solvent life. This holds especially true for people who start out in poverty to begin with.[284]

Blackie drives past the drug addicts in front of the chemist, and the narrative portrays solidarity between the addicts "lent against the windows, puffing madly on cigarettes, hating the light" and Blackie, who "saw them there, leaning. He gave them a nod, the car moved past. One broken-down guy looked up from looking down, and gave Blackie a half-smile" (Collis 7–8). The parallelism "lent" and "saw them . . . leaning" ties Blackie to the addicts while also highlighting Blackie as a focalizer. At the same time, the narrative constructs a chasm between the group in the shadows in front of the chemist and the other people on the street: the "bright-eyed people"

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[282] The same applies to immigrants that are culturally coded as "brown" or "yellow", whereas "'black' *and* 'brown' people are draining the welfare system; and 'white' women want abortions. And finally, 'Americans,' [or in the respective context 'Australians'] but not foreigners, deserve jobs. As usual, 'red' people–Native Americans of the mainland and Hawaii–were entirely absent from the . . . discourse" (Frankenberg, "Local" 7).

[283] This also explains why in stark contrast to his experience at the white private school, Blackie feels right at home in prison (Collis 37). It is not a reference to his character, his culpability (which at this point is completely made-up) or a moral reason to detain a "criminal element to prevent further harm", but the production of a structurally biased and in its effect structurally violent system.

[284] For an overview of the British prison system, see Alber, *Narrating* 15–36.

walking past. As Blackie observes: "on the surface everything looked bright in Katoomba. . . . Bright colours on shop walls, bright buildings, shiny glass windows reflecting brightness back onto the street. Sunshine everywhere. Sunshine bounced off leaves turning them to silhouettes, hiding their green identity from view" (Collis 7). The overenunciation of brightness and sunshine leaves the reader skeptical and suspicious. It reveals the bright pictures as nothing but window dressing, an interpretation supported by Blackie drawing attention to the fact that this "wasn't his town, so he didn't care less how people treated each other there. He just wanted to get through the place as quick as possible" (Collis 7). The brightness turns blinding and instead of illuminating the people and town life in Katoomba, the lights turn the leaves into a silhouette, a shadow, of themselves. Their portrayal is one-dimensional to the point where nothing, but the outline is still visible.[285]

This contrast is further developed when Blackie "checked himself out [in the visor's mirror], comparing himself to the neatly dressed kid who had just flashed across the road. There was bad history written all over his own face, and the future all over the boy's" (Collis 12). As one of the bright people – and I would argue that as such the reader would be justified to interpret the boy as white – and "neatly dressed," a marker that in the story clearly at least marks middle-class, the boy also has a "bright" future. Blackie, on the other hand, is marked by his history, his experiences. This can of course be attributed to his age – he is a man, not a boy, with the experience of years in prison – but the juxtaposition and the context allow for a wider interpretation: opportunities are greater for white, middle-class boys than for Black, poor men:

> [Blackie] checked his face, looking at memories written into wrinkles. Wrinkles and lines, highlighted by dirt, told tales of deeds of a life lived. He examined closely his eyebrows and top lip – more scars there. His knuckles, battered, wore scars too . . . He tried to con himself he was too old to look pretty. He was no schoolboy with schoolboy hope, but just an old blackfulla without anything much going for him. (Collis 12)

Once again, disillusionment drips from the description. The contrast is intensified when, three pages later, Blackie recalls his time as a student at the all-white private school. The picture of the

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[285] The novel *Dancing Home* portrays several characters with drug addictions that fall into the definitions of vulnerable groups offered by the United Nations (above). Besides Rip, Blackie, and the people in front of the pharmacy, there is also Blackie's friend Crusoe, who was born with spina bifida and who received insufficient care for the condition, which has forced him to live in constant pain. Crusoe commits suicide by drug overdose "at the grand old age of twenty-one" (Collis 44–45). Spina bifida is a birth defect in which the spinal canal does not completely close during the development of the fetus. Usually (depending on the severity), the infant's spinal canal can be closed surgically after the birth, though this may require more than just one operation as the spinal canal grows along with the developing child. It is a serious condition that needs to be monitored throughout the child's life. In Crusoe's case, however, the surgeries remained incomplete, and the monitoring is insufficient. He serves as an example how negatively health can be influenced by poverty (especially where it intersects with other marginalized identity markers such as race) until death seems like a relief.

"memories written into wrinkles" is contrasted with the mental picture of the pretty schoolboy full of hope.

At a later point in the novel, Blackie's cousin Dot further explains Blackie's disillusionment with the white and inherently racist system:

> Blackie was born to lose the battle, and the war it seemed. Just the way it is sometimes. But that fact never stopped him from trying to get things right though, either. He'd written to ombudsmen and to newspapers. Complained about being 'verballed' and abused by different police officers. But nought came of it. So he gave up looking for help and justice from the system. (Collis 121)

The reader learns that the assessment from the first chapter, Blackie's drift to "laziness and delinquencies" (Collis 15) after leaving the private school falls short of the truth. Instead, Dot strengthens the picture of a Black man failed by the system and abused by those in power whenever he calls them out on their discrimination – or whenever the opportunity happens to present itself. The police violence is both consistent and random throughout Blackie's life and he is not the only Indigenous man affected.

> [Dot] knew the police hated Blackie, just as she knew that they despised most black men who refused to buckle under their bullshit. She had seen the damage they dished out to her father, and to her uncles and cousins. Cut eyebrows, torn ears, bleeding skulls, fractured knuckles and twisted knees, all injuries of race and race fights that Dot had been called on through the years to dress for her people. At all hours of the day and night bloodied and broken 'brothers' and 'sisters' dropped in for help from the compassionate one – Dot. She'd stitched her people back together and then the cops would tear them apart again. Coppers broke their bones in their effort to break the black man's spirit. (Collis 120)

Whereas the novel focuses on police violence against Black men, Dot suggests that women are not exempt from brutal attacks (for a more comprehensive analysis of the portrayal of gender-related violence see the next section). Much like public discourse, the novel primarily focusses on the male victims of police violence. Where the narrative shows the effects and singular instances of racist police violence, Dot offers the broader context and names it: She talks about "injuries of race" and "race fights" (120). Once again, Blackie's experience is highlighted as *one* example of many.

Reading the novel through this lens, it is easy to draw parallels between Blackie's downfall and that of the tragedy in the Aristotelian sense. Both tragic heroes inevitably fail in their endeavors due to external circumstance. In this case, I do not mean the above-discussed question of *hamartia*, the fatal flaw, but the role of fate (or the fates) in Greek tragedy. Even aware of his destiny (or precisely because of this awareness), Oedipus still follows the path of destruction and murder that was foretold. In *Dancing Home*, it is not fate as a predetermining supernatural force that causes Blackie to fail, but it is the circumstance of his birth. He is born as a Black Aboriginal man in

Australia, into a lower-class family, and despite his intelligence and willingness to work hard (in academia and sports), he runs up against a biased system and racist individuals in privileged positions that leave him no avenue for success and, ultimately, survival. In this sense, society in its racist structures takes the place of fate. Other than the immovable fates, however, the novel in its activist core (see the novel's epitaph "Take sides. Be involved") demands that society changes.

Building on the analysis of the plot structure of *Dancing Home* in Section 4.2.1, in this section, I demonstrated how the novel reinterprets the tragic Aristotelian hero. Instead of finding a fatal flaw in the hero's character, the narrative illustrates that the structural disadvantages in a racist, sexist and classist society such as Australia set up Indigenous lower-class men up to fail, regardless of their individual character or intelligence. The protagonist Blackie in *Dancing Home* is positioned as a character on which all three lines of subjugation intersect, predestining his early (violent) death. This has allowed me to interpret Blackie as allegory for the Black, poor man in Australia who is statistically overrepresented in the prison system, more likely to become addicted to drugs, and more likely to die young than the average (white) Australian citizen. I further claimed that by presenting Blackie as allegory, the narrative firmly assigns the responsibility for his death not to the individual (Blackie) but society's structural inequalities (systemic racism). This is further supported by the parallel between the plot structure of the novel and the plot development in the Greek tragedy according to Gustav Freytag (see Section 4.2.1). Since the novel in addition to its parallels to Aristotelian tragedies also references the Shakespearean tragedy *Macbeth*, the following section will illustrate how this intertextual reference further supports my intersectional analysis.

4.2.3 Questions of Sovereignty and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

In this section, I will illustrate how the novel's intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* shows that bias and harassment are deeply entrenched into the system of the Australian nation state. I will also show how the concepts of regicide and tyrannicide as portrayed in *Macbeth* contrast with the same concepts in *Dancing Home,* ultimately revealing that the consequences of white hegemonic (and masculine) power – symbolized in the police officer McWilliams – is the perpetually incarcerated Black man. Shakespeare's Macbeth is first referenced in the second half of the novel. After Blackie has arrived in Dubbo and before the police arrest him, Blackie quotes the three witches from the opening scene of *Macbeth* (Collis 165). Leaving the pharmacy, Blackie sees three dark figures "huddled under the gum tree" across the road:

> *Where shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain?* Blackie remembered from the play.
> Blackie recalled the ghost's prophecy to the gullible 'would-be king.'

> *Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn*
> *The power of man, for none of woman born*
> *Shall harm Macbeth.*
> '*So foul and fair a day I have not seen!*' Blackie whispered as he remembered more from Shakespeare's great tragedy. (Collis 165)

As Blackie watches the three figures through the rain, one might interpret this as the "next meeting" of the three witches. The following sentences continue to quote from the opening scene however, in which the witches' prophecy goads Macbeth into murdering the king for his own gain. If we read this scene as the witches speaking *to* Blackie, this draws a parallel to Macbeth and foreshadows his death. Blackie has come to Dubbo to kill McWilliams – for all intends and purposes the epitome of the white masculine colonizer and his abuse of power – and dies in his jail cell. Unlike Macbeth, Blackie does not successfully commit regicide.[286] But as in the case of Macbeth, his death can be understood as a form of execution. Furthermore, by changing the first word in the quote, from "when" (see Shakespeare, 858) to "where" (Collis 165), the narrative supports its allegorical function. While "when" would suggest a passage of time, of possible development and evolvement (towards a more just society), "where" suggests an ever-present repetition regardless of (historical) time or place. This interpretation can be applied to the three "witches," who are later revealed to be homeless Indigenous men, and to Blackie's death in custody.

Blackie's arrest at the hand of McWilliams is an abuse of power. McWilliams is fueled by anger and jealousy and looking for a promotion by arresting Blackie for the fire-bombing of a police station seven years ago:

> McWilliams knew that nothing short of an air-tight and full confession admitting total responsibility for the fire-bombing (almost seven years ago) on the station would put Blackie away for life, regardless of the truth . . . He'd have his promotion and power, but equal to that, he'd finally be able to say that he'd beaten the black man for good. (Collis 194)

Blackie is in fact innocent of the fire-bombing because he was home with the flu that night – an alibi that Dot can corroborate (Collis 197). This poses Dot and her family (her partner Fingers and her children) at risk of harassment by McWilliams, especially since the cops have also found a connection between Fingers and Rips: "now that the cops had [Finger] in their sights, they'd hassle and harass him and his family at will. Fingers also knew that it would be the kids that would be the most vulnerable and susceptible to the cops' callous behaviour" (Collis 196–97). To protect

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[286] I would argue that this word also applies to the planned killing of McWilliams for he symbolizes the British colonizer and in the wider context, the Crown, or at the very least has assumed the role of unassailable white privilege and (corrupt) authority. McWilliams is also referred to as Crown Sergeant who "thought he was King Shit" (Collis 34).

his family, Blackie confesses to the police station bombing: "All the charges, save the stealing a motor vehicle, were bodgie. Both cop and crim knew it, but no one else knew it, and that's what mattered most to McWilliams" (Collis 199). What becomes clear in these passages is that police harassment is not only common, but also part of the system. Fingers is immediately aware that even if he might be able to stomach and resist constant police checks, his children will be the ones most affected and influenced by their treatment. As for McWilliams and Blackie, the statement shows a clear bias in the judicial system. Instead of the underlying assumption of "innocent until *proven* guilty," neither of the men expects due diligence as far as proving Blackie's involvement goes. For one, McWilliams is in a position of power to influence any further investigation, but also, the likelihood of anyone even questioning Blackie's confession or demanding corroborating evidence is non-existent. Bias and discrimination along with harassment are so entrenched into the system that it barely if ever registers as discrimination to the people perpetrating it. For those affected, on the other hand, the consequences are often damaging.

For Blackie, confessing to the police-station bombing means a complete revocation of his citizen (and human) rights:

> No longer was Blackie a 'person of interest.' All the police procedures went out the window with Blackie's arrest and charges. There was no phone afforded him. No contact made with Aboriginal Legal Service. No Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer available. No medical assessment or treatment offered. No watch was kept on him in his lonely prison cell. Blackie was just another black crim locked up, and society would be able to sleep easily again. (Collis 200)

This passage shows the utter ineffectiveness of government policies and procedures intended to mitigate the structural disadvantages for people of color and especially for Indigenous people in the Australian penal system. However, Aboriginal Legal Services, mandatory medical assessments or Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers reveal themselves as mere lip service in the face of the Black experience. It is thus the combination of McWilliams individual racism that intertwines with the racism that is "inherent in culture and social order" (Essed, "Everyday" 177, 176), as previously explained in Section 2.2. If the racism exhibited by McWilliams was not mirrored in the institutional racism in the police (in Philomena Essed's words, if the "rules, regulations, and procedures" were severed "from the people who make and enact them") Blackie's imprisonment and ultimate death would occur very differently. *Dancing Home* offers a fitting example to show that racism is a process "reinforced through everyday practices" that goes beyond structure and ideology" (Essed, "Everyday" 177).

As the following passage illustrates, officers like McWilliams flourish in this system:

> McWilliams was a highly decorated police officer. Medals for service and medals for bravery adorned the wall above his desk. But behind the scenes he slept with some black women, and shared

> a bottle or two with some black men. It was true enough. McWilliams wasn't all bad. But he was corrupt. And he could easily show kindness, if it benefited him, as he could be hard and mean. (Collis 190)

Both calculating and selfish, McWilliam is precisely the kind of person that *should not* flourish in an institution meant to enforce the law, and the fact that he *does* is testament to the flaws in the system.[287]

Returning to the parallels between *Dancing Home* and *Macbeth* – or, at the very least to the intertextual scope of reference the quotation opens up – questions of legitimacy of rule and legitimacy of forms of violence pervade both.[288] Where *Macbeth* "both begins and ends with an attack upon established rule, with a loyal nobility rewarded with new titles, and with the execution of a rebellious Thane of Cawdor" (Kastan 174), *Dancing Home* begins and ends with the containment of the rebellious Black man: first contained in prison, then permanently contained in death.[289] *Macbeth* posits the concept of illegitimate regicide against that of tyrannicide (legitimate, see Lemon 73), they are both centered on the same person (McWilliams) in *Dancing Home*.

Alan Sinfield points out that by differentiating between the violence perpetrated by Macbeth and that of Duncan and Malcom, the play differentiates between Macbeth's violence (selfish usurpation) and the violence "legitimately deployed by the state" (101) to return everything to its preconceived order. Rebecca Lemon goes one step further and argues that this distinction "serves merely to justify tyrannicide in the name of the state," calling attention to the question of who exactly has the power to declare a certain form of violence "legitimate" and therefore "just" (Lemon 73). This analysis of course echoes Foucault's theorizations on the legitimization of violence (see Section 3.3 on the concept of biolpolitics as well as Achille Mbembe's concept of "necropolitics"). *Macbeth* clearly showcases the "premodern" sovereign's execution of his "right

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[287] One might argue, of course, that one "bad apple" does not define the whole crop. I would counter that we are talking about a novel that uses a tragic plotline and whose main character has already been established as a symbolic referent for the black experience. The choice for a corrupt police officer as the antagonist is unlikely to be merely the representation of that "one" bad apple. The narrative further contains a veiled reference to the concept of "fragile masculinity," which describes the general state of anxiety of men that they do not live up to the societal expectations of their masculine role. It points the finger at the very thin fabric that ties cultural ideal (the role) to reality (the person). Since (culturally speaking) masculinity relates to supposedly unassailable strength, this anxiety is often linked to overcompensation (an aggressive performance of masculinity, in Judith Butler's sense). McWilliams is described as follows: "All that loneliness as a kid made him more determined and fragile than most. A man who hid himself behind his badge and his uniform . . . Beneath his blue police uniform and awards, a crook lurked and waited for his turn to make it big" (Collis 34). McWilliams is described as unstable in his self-esteem and tries to compensate through the (borrowed) authority of his uniform.

[288] Structurally, Shakespeare was of course greatly influenced by Aristotle's *Poetics*, though he and his contemporaries mainly referred to the well-known codifications of the Greek tragedy, such as Evanthius et Donatus' *De Tragoedia et Comoedia Commentatiunculae*, see Snyder 84.

[289] For the meaning of the transformation into a tree at the very end of the novel, see the following section.

to *take* life or *let* live" (Foucault, "Right" 259). The execution itself is the "spectacle," the production of this sovereign's right. As Coddon argues, in *Macbeth* "the tragedy enacts the contamination of the spectacular by the irrational, the production of the traitor by the very power structure he ostensibly threatens" (Coddon 490). Macbeth's madness caused by his guilty conscience infiltrates the spectacle and the production of sovereign power. But where the play restores the temporary "glitch" of irrationality and illegitimacy through another act of sovereignty – another execution –, *Dancing Home* translates these issues into the postcolonial context of contested sovereignty.

The "modern" Australian state, according to Foucault, no longer simply exercises its sovereignty in the sense of "take life or let live" but there is the added option to "let die" which is tightly intertwined with Agamben's *bare life* (Section 3.4, also connected to Butler's "grievable life"). Blackie's death in the jail cell – obviously injured and in need of medical attention – is a most impactful examples of the state's power (mitigated through the racially biased police force) to *let* die. *Dancing Home* reveals the consequences of white hegemonic (and masculine) power – symbolized in the police officer McWilliams – in Australia.

The three figures under the gum tree eventually reveal themselves as "blackfullas," a realization Blackie comes to because two of the shapes "stepped from their shelter beneath the tree and began swinging punches at each other," trading "hits while they slid and slipped in the mud" (Collis 165). This kind of behavior allows Blackie to recognize them as First Nations Australians: "No witches were they, Blackie knew. They were blackfullas" (165). In one sense, the intertextual reference to *Macbeth* ends at this point. In another, however, it draws a parallel between the three witches that are so often interpreted as harbingers of evil and the Black Indigenous men in the narrative:

> They looked to be drunk, dressed like fringe dwellers or maybe street people, raggedy and dirty from living in the long grasses . . . The rags, the desperation, the loneliness, the worn-out bags of bones. They slipped and slid on the wet ground, fighting to stand tall, fighting for space. No one but Blackie noticed. No one saw them get into it there, in the park. Blackie strained to hear their sad and angry voices, but their voices were lost to the howling wind and drowned by the pelting rain. (Collis 165-166)

The paragraph once again contrasts the perception of "society"[290] with Blackie's perception. Mixed in with descriptors such as "drunk," "raggedy and dirty" are those of "desperation" and "loneliness" that humanize the men who are "fighting to stand tall, fighting for space." The latter of course takes on metaphoric meaning: They are fighting for their dignity and for their place in

[290] I am framing it in quotation marks because this "society" is of course the white and heteronormative middle- and upper-class heteronormative society in Australia and the structures it has built and is built upon respectively.

this society that is determined to render them invisible or evil. Their voices remain unheard save for Blackie, but even he must concentrate to "hear their sad and angry voices" and must ultimately admit defeat (165).

Eventually, the two men stop their fight and continue as if nothing had happened, "brothers once more" (166). The eruption of violence is born out of circumstance, the despair and loneliness trying to find an outlet. Blackie prepares to turn away from the seen, but

> . . . he quickly stood to attention when he came across the shape of a woman, hanging there, alone in the weather.
> 'She not real!'
> 'She *can't be* real,'
> 'How can she be? Her feet don't touch the ground!'
> He blinked to get a clearer picture. But when he opened his eyes, the vision was gone. He stood ramrod straight. He searched for her again. Where had the strange woman gone? (Collis 167)

The apparition is not the first one Blackie encounters, and he soon comes to the realization that it is his grandmother's ghost. She first appears at the graveyard on the way to Dubbo when Blackie visits her grave:

> He stood in a clouded space in an afterworld place. Slowly her ghost appeared. He smiled, and she smiled, and they spoke to each other from another place – a silent place, in silence together. 'My boy, my boy, my beautiful black boy,' he heard her say. Tiredness had him unsteady on his feet. (Collis 72)

The graveyard is on ancestral Country, on his grandmother's Country, and this is where the ghosts appear, waiting for their people to return to country:

> You might feel their ghostly presence in the icy wind that blows up under your hair, behind your collar, in the afternoons when camp fires are lit. The ghosts look at the visitors from the trees. They wait there. They wait for the return of the Wiradjuri people, those ghosts, to hear black kids playing in the water. (Collis 38)

Blackie's tiredness is one of bone-deep weariness of life. The ghosts (the ancestors) are tightly connected to the trees on Country. They both watch over and shelter the three Black figures that Blackie first mistakes for the three witches, they are the resting place of the ancestors, and one tree even watches as Blackie dances his way home on country. The trees also live and breathe Wiradjuri history in the novel. On the road to Dubbo, Blackie passes a pine forest:

> All the trees shiver when the wind blows. The pines cry too. They sob like stolen children did when the boss came for them – them pines. They tremble when the chainsaw begins to rip through their brothers' trunks. They shiver and tremble each time they hear a truck coming, thinking that it might be coming to take them. So, they stand there perfectly uniform, perfectly still. They are scared, hoping that no one will pick them. Brave but too weak to defend themselves against a saw, they tremble beneath the bark. The pines stand alone, together. (Collis 31)

The passage clearly draws the connection between the children of the Stolen Generation and the pine trees. Much like the trees tremble in the face of the chain saw, the assimilationist policies of Australia have left deep wounds in Aboriginal communities. Children were hidden from white government workers and the police, in constant awareness and fear of the next visit, just like the trees tremble at the sound of approaching trucks. As McGrath and Rademaker point out, "everything within . . . Country – not only living things and humans, but also the hills and mountains, the rivers and lakes – pulse with stories in which all things are connected" (4). Ideally, in "a reciprocal nurturing relationship, Country is kin. If you speak to it properly, it hears you; it listens" and sometimes offers advice (McGrath and Rademaker 4). All of this, of course, is echoed in Blackie's death that turns him into a tree burned by lightning (Collis 205) and which I will return to shortly.

When Blackie talks to his grandmother's ghost at the cemetery, he asks "her for permission to go to war" against McWilliams (72). Blackie understands "she would never support that. He saw her smiling, shaking her head, warning him" (Collis 72) and this warning is repeated in her reappearance during the rain in front of the pharmacy. Blackie realizes that she has been following him since his return to Dubbo. He has been able to smell her scent but has considered that a sign of confusion or madness (171).

Regarding the structure of the plot, the appearance of his grandmother in both cases – at the graveyard and in front of the pharmacy – shadows Blackie's transformation. Thoughts of his grandmother on her country inspire Blackie to perform his own dancing ceremony:

> He thought about his grandmother out there. Dancing to clapsticks. Dancing and chanting. She'd make the dust fly with her feet on home soil.
> He kicked his boots off and took his shirt off and stood bare-footed on the wet ground. He carefully reached down, gathered mud, and painted his forehead and then, he painted his arms . . .
> Blackie began to chant a traditional chant. And then he began to dance. Muddy water flew up and wet his cheek. He bowed his head and held his arms wide, doing a dance like the eagle gliding in silent flight. . .He was dancing a warning. (Collis 54)

Jakelin Troy points out that understanding old songs means understanding when and where they were sung, because they are invariably connected to place. They are connected to seasons or times of day, and locally emplaced, referencing the landscape around them, and gaining meaning through the reciprocity in their interaction with Country (Troy 41). Thinking of his grandmother in this instance is not just reminiscence but understanding.

This scene marks a turning point in the plot development. Blackie is by no means an exemplary character or only "just" misunderstood. This becomes very clear when he takes no action whatsoever to protect Tegan from Rip despite his worries that Rip might force himself on her (Collis 131). At the cemetery, they also meet a young Aboriginal woman with her child and

her reaction to both men is one of great fear.[291] On the other hand, Blackie is both hardened to the violence and injustice of life and very much desensitized to the violence he himself and his friends and family perpetrate. But then again, in his epitaph, Collis asks his readers to think about all the ideas he has written into the book and to engage themselves. I would argue that in this context it makes perfect sense not to write a character into the story that is good to his core and has remained unchanged by the violence he has experienced.

During the dancing ceremony, "Carlos and Rip watched Blackie *dancing his country back*" (Collis 55, *my emphasis*), the scene that is clearly connected to the novel's title:

> [Blackie] imagined other black men. He imagined them black brothers, all right there with him! RIGHT THERE! Dancing the warrior dance with him. Bringing his grandmother's country back. He clapped his hands and chanted louder . . . The country knew that a warrior had arrived to claim his

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[291] This fear is not unfounded. Blackie, Carlos and Rip bring the rain and the storm with them to Dubbo and at the graveside meet Silvia, a young Koori woman whose car got stuck in the mud at the side of the road. She has her young boy Jimmy with her and the reader learns that she is a young single mother barely out of her teens. Carlos is the first to approach her and immediately sexualizes her. He "summ[s] up the look of the woman in an instant. Experience told him she was still breastfeeding. Late teens, maybe twenty at the most, he thought" (Collis 74–75). The narrator changes over the sentence "The woman's dress was tight on her body" (Collis 74–75), which bridges Carlos' sexual focus and the young woman's awareness and subsequent anxiety that she is being eyed a strange man at an isolated location. The tightness of a dress in the letter instance causing discomfort instead. Silvia is also grimly aware that "there was not much she could do about the situation she found herself in. She knew the danger she was in" (Collis 74–75). She tries to draw Carlos' attention away from her body by introducing herself and her baby Jimmy, but "Carlos kept sneaking quick peeks at her cleavage. Aware that she might catch him perving, he made his glances as occasional and inconspicuous as possible. She started drawing the baby closer to cover herself up." Collis 74–75 Using the baby as a shield, she tries to project a more wholesome picture and hopes for a less sexualized gaze. Her control over the situation, however, is minimal and Carlos' interpretation continues to differ greatly. To him, she "looked like she knew he was bullshitting her, but recognised the funny side of the whole event so she decided to let him off the hook and instead of telling him off right there and then" (Collis 76). I would interpret Silvia's decision to remain nonconfrontational as pure self-preservation. This view is supported, when later upon meeting Rip, Silvia "tightened the light baby blanket around Jimmy . . . re-gripping the hidden screwdriver (Collis 79).

In contrast to her interaction with Carlos, all pretense is lost in her interaction with Rip: "She nodded back towards the big black man in the car. She lowered her head towards Rips and she gently kissed her baby's head. But her eyes didn't leave Rips - not even for a second. He frightened her. She thought that he could see right through her and that he knew that she was terrified of him. Rips had that look of hungry lust written all over his ugliness, like he just wanted to fuck her senseless and leave her for dead in the mud" (Collis 80).

The Buckaroos' song "In the Palm of Your Hand" running from the car in the background takes a very unromantic turn at this threat of violent rape and murder. And Silvia's fear is not unfounded. Instead, it is precisely Silvia's vulnerability that has Rip "feeling powerful and horny . . . The speed had re-ignited his need for sex, and his focus was her. 'Wanna fuck ya! Wanna fuck ya! Wanna fuck ya. . .' he repeated to himself" (Collis 80). Rip is also no stranger to rape. Tied into his sexual fantasy of Silvia are memories of "gaol sex", which is really a euphemism for rape: "He imagined that he could still smell the sweat of the scared men struggling against his weight and against his hand held over their mouths as their souls screamed for mercy. The more they tried to scream, the higher the thrill" (Collis 80–81). Rip is no longer concerned with morals, though he does need to reaffirm his heterosexuality: "A couple of the other boys told him that it was okay. That's what they all do when they're inside. It didn't mean that he'd become a poofter. So it didn't take long for him to love any hole in the dark. But as much as Rips enjoyed having his way with those tight young boy arses, hearing them cry and begging him to stop, nothing satisfied him like a woman could" (Collis 80–81).

> place . . . The Wiradjuri warrior felt beautifully alive. Dancing. Dancing for the country. Dancing for his people. Dancing for his life. (Collis 55–56)

The connection to country, culture, language, and dance is the road forward for survival, yet at the same time, many lives continue to be lost along the way. Filled with "warrior spirit" (57) through the dance, dancing to the "drums of war" (60) the ritual is observed by a nearby tree: "the tree decided not to say anything. It just stood there doing tree things – swaying, holding soil together, that kind of stuff. Keeping secret things secret" (Collis 58). The ceremony and Blackie's anger and plans of revenge are sacred and remain between the tree (the ancestors) and Blackie.

While the connotation of the dance in this setting is that of a war dance, I would argue that due to the novel's title and the placement of the dance within the plot (just before Blackie arrives in Dubbo), the dance could also partly fulfill the function of a welcome ceremony.[292] Welcome ceremonies are rituals that "recognize the deeper, longer histories of the land occupied today. They also remind the audience of the dispossession and injustices suffered by Indigenous peoples" (McGrath and Rademaker 3). As such, they are a reminder that "Indigenous sovereignty was never ceded" and in themselves "a means of performing Indigenous authority" (McGrath and Rademaker 5), and, I would add, acts of rebellion and sovereignty (also "survivance" in Vizenor's terms). Blackie certainly draws the historical connection:

> Blackie quietly wondered what the original Wiradjuri people who owned that country, back before the arrival of the whitefullas, might have thought when they first saw the white ghosts in men's clothes. 'Terra nullius, man!' he yelled at the bush. 'Terror-shit!' he cried at the sky. (Collis 59–60)

Through the dance, Blackie reconnects with Country, but (more importantly) so does the reader. "It is potentially dangerous to travel into unfamiliar Country uninvited" (McGrath and Rademaker 4) and at least on the narrative level, the dance is the introduction of the reader to Blackie's Country.

One might argue that for Jackie this revived connection is the reason he is even able to turn himself into the police at the end of the novel, presupposing that turning himself into the police is a heroic act resembling a martyr. But while the intention is certainly noble – Blackie sees no other way to protect his family from McWilliams – I argue that the act is most of all a sign of bone-deep resignation akin to suicide. Multiple times during the narrative, highlighted by the epitaph ("suicide, and Aboriginal deaths in custody"), suicide is topicalized. For example, Blackie is

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[292] This contrasts with Kim Scott's novel *That Deadman's Dance*, in which dancing is also featured in the title. Where Dancing Home centers on an Aboriginal ceremony of homecoming and welcome, Scott's "Deadman Dance" denotes the white men's (British soldiers interpreted as ghosts due to their skin color) military parade.

troubled by "the death of young Aboriginal people from suicides, from overdose, from deaths in custody (Collis 46) and his experiences in jail:

> Young men in gaol necked themselves and he was witness to the bodies, covered in sheets, being carried out of the cells a few times. The sight of the dead men scared Blackie and saddened him as he thought of the darkness they may have felt that pushed them to suicide. He wondered if he'd go the same way. (Collis 46)

The "darkness" is overwhelming and everywhere, causing Blackie to consider it as possible outcome for himself from the very beginning. Fittingly, his walk towards the police station is similarly framed as the last few steps towards suicide: "Walking hunched over with his head tucked onto the shoulder as he braced against the beautiful storm . . . He suddenly felt very old. He stuck his tongue out to taste the rain. 'See ya Dubbo. See ya Mum. See ya Nan. See ya all later,' he spoke to the sky" (Collis 184). In the next section, I will show that this interpretation is not just overdramatization but a very realistic expectation.

In this section, I further investigated how the novel's intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* adds to its meaning. By concentrating on McWilliams as Blackie's antagonist, I demonstrated that the novel portrays bias and harassment as so deeply entrenched into the system that it barely if ever registers as discrimination to the people perpetrating it. For those affected, on the other hand, the consequences are often damaging. Had McWilliams's racism not been echoed by systemic racial bias within the police force, Blackie's incarceration and eventual death might have unfolded in a drastically different manner. Furthermore, I contrasted how the theme of regicide and connected questions of sovereignty and legitimacy are presented in *Dancing Home* and *Macbeth*, with the focus on the "legitimate leader" in *Macbeth* and the "incarcerated Black man" in *Dancing Home.* Thematically, *Macbeth* contrasts the concepts of illegitimate regicide and tyrannicide in two opposing characters, while *Dancing Home* centers both on the corrupt police officer McWilliams. As such, the novel also reveals the consequences of white hegemonic (and masculine) power – symbolized in the police officer McWilliams – in the Australian nation state and its exercise of sovereignty by deciding who is allowed to live and who is "let die" (in Foucault's theory modern state power).

4.2.4 The Racist System – Incidents as Allegorical Representation

In this section, I will illustrate how the novel narrates different instances of individual racist violence, such as a scene in the pharmacy and the police station to symbolize the greater systemic violence in (white) institutions. While Melissa Lucashenko's novel builds up a narrative of multiple instances of individual violence and makes structural violence visible through statistical representation (a high number of occurrences), *Dancing Home* portrays violence on the allegorical

level, narrating individual instances of violence as allegories. This narrative strategy is consistent for the novel, as I have demonstrated for the stylized tragic plot structure (Section 4.2.1) and the construction of Blackie as allegory for the "Black experience" (Section 4.2.2). The analysis is intersectional because Blackie is positioned as male (gender), and this position intersects with both his Indigeneity and his (lack of) socio-economic status (class). In the following, I will first analyze Blackie's visit to the pharmacy as allegory for a racist and classist health care system, illustrating how the pharmacist "Doctor White" becomes a representative of the (white) medical system. I will show how the fact that Blackie is asking for medical help in a pharmacy instead of a doctor's office is a result of his continued experience of structural racism, leaving him with no other option. Second, I will analyze how Blackie's arrest is constructed as a contrast between the police's violence and Blackie's non-violence. This effect is achieved through the third-person narrator who focalizes through Blackie's consciousness and who highlights that Blackie's anticipation of police violence (anticipatory bias) is confirmed despite his conscious effort to project calmness and non-violence. As such, I will show that it is Blackie's subject position that predetermines the police officers' reaction, and not the behavior of the individual.

The novel makes many references to lived experiences of racism and discrimination, it *tells* of these experiences. However, there are two scenes that are structurally placed within the present-day storyline and that stand out in their *portrayal* of the depth of racism as it is entrenched into society. The first is the scene at the pharmacy, when Blackie tries to get medication for the injuries he sustained in the bar fight shortly after his arrival in Dubbo, the second is the scene of his arrest, where he turns himself in at the police station and is handled brutally and callously. Let me first turn toward the pharmacy, which takes on a representative role for the failures of the health-care system.

Blackie is used to physical injury and at first does not take the injuries from the bar fight seriously. Instead, he lets Rip and Tegan drive him to a pharmacy, to buy medicine for his supposed "indigestion."[293] Collis uses this episode to remind the reader of the discrimination that poor people and especially Black/Indigenous people often face within the health-care system. At the pharmacy, the saleswoman at first completely ignores Blackie and then refuses to look at him while she asks why he is there. By the time she sees the "busted face and the worn-out eyes of the Aboriginal man in front of her," presumably causing at least some professional concern if not empathy, Blackie is "in a playful and vengeful mood" (Collis 159–60). He refuses to answer her and then pretends to be deaf when she becomes angry at his unresponsiveness. She immediately

[293] An alternative reading would be that Blackie is aware that something is incredibly wrong but too scared to admit it to himself, especially since he does not expect proper help from the health care system.

feels embarrassed, caught out in her unfriendliness towards a person with a supposed disability (instead of "just" an Aboriginal man looking worse for wear).

As she calls the pharmacist – "Doctor White" (Collis 159–60) – in to assist, Blackie quickly drops the act when he realizes that the pharmacist is genuinely trying to help and accommodate him. The title and name are symbolic, of course. While he might have a doctorate in pharmacology, "Doctor White" is no medical doctor but still draws on the prestige of the title. The assistant, by calling him "doctor" in this context clearly calls up the connotation of a medical doctor with the authority to diagnose Blackie's condition and also in this regard, ego supersedes the purpose of genuine care. The surname then is also setting the pharmacologist up as a synecdoche for a system that is not just predominantly white but one that is known to fail Indigenous peoples in their deviation from the "white norm" as well as people affected by poverty. The whole scene becomes an allegory for structural racism.

The reader also learns that the seriousness of Blackie's injuries is in part rooted in his violent history. He was exposed to racist violence while playing sports for his school and his "kidney was first torn when he was sixteen years old playing football. A big block-head forward dropped a knee into Blackie's back and ruptured the organ . . . and he was warned to never play again, that his kidney would always be subject to damage should he be hit in that region again" (Collis 126–27). Once again, the current circumstances are connected to a deeper, long-lasting, and structural level of violence and racism with instances that in themselves could be taken as "individual occurrences" but add up to a biased system. The pharmacist is therefore right to caution Blackie that the wrong medication might exacerbate his condition, but he also wards off any kind of responsibility for Blackie's health by retreating behind regulations and his license (Collis 164).

The second relevant scene is that of Blackie's arrest. Throughout the novel, McWilliams is set up as Blackie's antagonist. The racism and jealousy McWilliams directs towards Blackie is learnt behavior. At one point, they were friends, but then McWilliams suddenly turned on Blackie, "turned into a dog who lied and dobbed Blackie into trouble" (Collis 125). This is the point where Blackie as the protagonist of the novel most resembles Aristotle's version of the tragic hero, shoved into tragedy by the deception and corruption of another. When Blackie walks into the police station – on his own and clearly injured – he gives his name and McWilliams' at the reception desk and is first told to simply wait in the waiting room. This seemingly harmless situation is then harshly contrasted with the intensity and brutality of McWilliams' arrival:

> Blackie knew that the shit would hit the fan as soon as McWilliams heard mention of his name and so sat with his hands in plain view, waiting for the expected to arrive . . . The side door flew open and two coppers with revolvers drawn burst through screaming and Blackie. 'Hands behind your head! Hands behind your head!'

> More officers arrived into the lobby with revolvers drawn. 'So much overkill,' Blackie groaned. The first policeman . . . manhandled Blackie to the ground, driving his knee into Blackie's back, and snapped handcuffs on so tight that Blackie thought he'd broken his wrist. Another pushed his face into the floor . . . Blackie was left struggling for wind. He pulled a half-arsed smile, showing the cops that they couldn't break his spirit, no matter how hard they tried. (Collis 187)

Most striking in this passage is Blackie's expectation of precisely this brutal treatment despite his calculated effort to signal his surrender. One can only imagine what the response would have been like, had he not been silently sitting on the char, "with his hands in plain view" (187). The police response is completely out of proportion, as Blackie points out "so much overkill" (187). And it does, in fact, not end there. The image that the narrative calls up – that of the Black man struggling to breathe with a police officer on his back – is one that has gone around the globe multiple times in the last few years, most impactful in the 2020 murder of George Floyd. And even then, "McWilliams walked into the waiting room, so vain and full of shit, just like he was walking onto a yacht" (188) and once he reaches Blackie "McWilliams had clenched fists and was about to let them fly into Blackie, but decided against it when he saw that Blackie was fucked" (Collis 188). Blackie is already completely subdued, and yet McWilliams is prepared to further harm him. Additionally, this quote highlights that the police officer is completely aware that Blackie is high and injured and decides to negate him the necessary medical aid. In 2021, the United Nations' Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for member states to

> . . . ensure that detainees are not interviewed or interrogated while they are, or are suspected to be, under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, and that all detainees are given access to effective medical treatment while they are experiencing withdrawal symptoms in the early stages of their detention. To do otherwise casts doubt on whether detainees are capable of understanding their rights and providing accurate statements to the police, particularly in the absence of family members or legal representation. (Working Group on Arbitrary Detention 3)

In turn, this means that "denial of medical treatment and/or absence of access to medical care in custodial settings may constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (Working Group on Arbitrary Detention 5). McWilliams is presented as being corrupt throughout the novel. But once again, the inaction of his colleagues is alarming and points the finger at a systemic problem.[294]

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[294] The narrative offers an additional example, well contrasted with and connected to Kevin Rudd's apology to the Aboriginal population for the Stolen Generations (2008). When Blackie decides to turn himself in, he states: "I'll go down there and talk to him. I'll see if these whitefullas are fair dinkum bout this reconciliation shit! I'll give meself up! And den let's see if they'll let Fingers go. It's me dey want anyway" (Collis 181). Dot warns that "That's not what reconciliation's all about Blackie. You can't do that" and in Blackie's response it becomes abundantly clear that he has absolutely no illusions about what the whole reconciliation rhetoric means for Australian First Nations people: "Well, when dey all marched across the bridge down there in Sydney, I wuz on me way up ta see what the fuss wuz about. They had 'S-O-R-R-Y' written in the sky and ebreydin. Ya kno what the bastards did ta me? Two pigs strip-

The systemic problem is further underlined by the parallel between Blackie's two arrests. As much as the charges of the police-station bombing are fake, McWilliams construed Blackie's first arrest:

> When the opportunity came to nab Blackie, McWilliams seized his opportunity with both hands. He accused him of supplying narcotics. Blackie fell in the shit. He didn't stand a chance in court. He went down hard. Dropped without a prayer. As the Queen looked down from her glass frame upon her black subject, Blackie got nine years with a non-parole period of six . . . The truck took him next day to Silverwater, and his long sentence began in stormy weather. (Collis 34–35)

McWilliams exploits Blackie's racialization by the judicial system that leaves him without a chance in court despite his innocence. The sentence of nine years and six without a chance of parole is a harsh one for a first-time offense, echoing studies that have shown that, statistically, people of color are handed more severe sentences for violent and drug-related offenses than unmarked white people (United States Sentencing Commission 4).[295]

In the jail cell, Blackie swallows the rest of the speed and cocaine he still possesses, and which wasn't taken from him before he was locked up: "His rush came faster than usual. He was flyin within a couple of minutes. He felt strangely relaxed. He felt alright" (Collis 201). In combination with his internal bleeding, he drifts into unconsciousness:

> In his mind, he saw the face of his old nan smiling at him; her arms held open, welcoming him. The ghost image of his grandmother was a moody shade of grey. The only colour of her beside that grey, was her jet-black eyes. In the darkened cell, her eyes shone more than any light in the interview room where Blackie had signed his life away. They were brighter than the twin boys' smiles. Her eyes were pure love. Blackie reached for her and closed his eyes. None of his injuries bothered him them. He didn't feel a thing. (Collis 203)

The passage suggests a reunion with his grandmother and a feeling of peace. It is contrasted, however, by the weather outside:

> Outside, the storm raged. . .The wind howled around the corners of the police station. It battered and sandblasted the building as if trying to free Blackie by knocking the station down. Rain spat stinging little drops at the door, the roof, the whole bloody thing. Mother Nature hadn't forgotten her black son being held in custody. She was throwing her disgust at the dirty deeds done by the dirty

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searched me in the toilet in the park – jest cause I'm a blackfulla – jest cause dey could! Pulled a fucken gun on me and eberyding, they did! I got nothin from reconciliation. Fuck 'em! They owe!" (Collis 181–82). The recollection once again exposes the political rhetoric and its policies as inadequate, and hypocrisy as long as racist structures and culture are not decolonized.

[295] Class also plays a role in this context. As Ruth Frankenberg explains, concepts such as "white trash" (meaning low income or welfare-dependent white people) "actually mark . . . the borders of whiteness," the same as "European immigrants, especially those from the south and east," who especially in the United States "also fought long and hard to be considered 'white'" (Frankenberg, "Local" 13).

> policeman, with all the fury of a mother's love when her boys are being harmed. The wind howled louder, and all the lights went out for the town. (Collis 203)

Mother Nature, Country, is attacking the police station from the outside, trying to save Blackie in a last grand effort. She is harshly judging McWilliams "with all the fury of a mother's love," which immediately calls up images of women lost in grief over their dead children. The natural scene is dramatic, a crescendo at the end of the last act.

In the epilogue (what I am calling the last chapter), the storm discharges into a tree. Rip and Tegan are leaving Dubbo to evade the police and with the lightning strike into the tree, "the rain eased, and then stopped completely. The world went very quiet for a few moments, like they were in the eye of a storm" (Collis 205). The crescendo and the sudden silence are in stark contrast to one another, just before "Rips felt the wind start up again, turning everything icy cold. Cold, like death," causing Rips to realize that "Blackie's gorn!" (205). The lightning strike has turned "the white gum . . . all black," which is a fitting symbol for the fact that this must be Blackie's doing (Collis 205). Circling the tree in a line of cocaine, "Rips took a long last look at the tree. He was happy thinking that his warrior mate was no longer in chains . . . that Blackie's spirit soared with the wind. That he was free. As free as the fucken wind" (Collis 206). This image of the white line echoes the white line of settlers from the beginning of the novel, but more than that, it is turned into a ceremonial line that has been drawn on Country and around one ancestor specifically. The cocaine also calls to mind that the novel does not offer an easy solution for an interpretation that is merely looking to pit good against evil. Instead, it offers a tale of corruption and violence, and – most of all – of the corrupting power of systemic violence.

In this section, I have illustrated that Paul Collis' novel *Dancing Home* narrates structural violence through allegories. First, the novel narrates Blackie's interaction with the saleswoman and the pharmacist highlights how two (white) characters representative for the health-care system react to Blackie based on their perceptions of him. The scene reveals an underlying (mostly unconscious) racist bias. The fact that Blackie tries to self-medicate and asks for help in a pharmacy instead of a doctor's office is presented as a result of his experience of continuing structural racism and his distrust in the (white) system. This parallel between the medical doctor who "should" be visited and the doctor of pharmacology who is the only resource available to Blackie (mainly due to the fact that he is wanted by the police, but in the greater allegorical understanding of the novel is predetermined by his subject position as Black lower-class man) is further echoed in the pharmacist's name "Doctor White."

The second scene I analyzed is that if Blackie arriving at the police station to turn himself in. Here, Blackie's behavior is narrated as calm and non-threatening, an effect that is reached

through the focalization through Blackie's character (third person narration) that allows the (implied) reader to follow his reasonings for his actions. This non-threatening behavior is starkly contrasted by the reaction of the police officers who charge into the station's waiting room with weapons drawn. I illustrated how this scene contains strong resemblance to contemporary discourses on police violence surrounding the death of George Floyd in 2020, as well as the discourses in the Australian context on Black deaths in custody. In this context, the police reaction also foreshadows Blackie's death in custody.

To conclude, Section 4.2.1 has examined the narrative structure of *Dancing Home*, aligning it with the classical form of Greek tragedy. By mapping the plot's formal and regulated progression onto Freytag's pyramid, I have demonstrated that the novel's structural design renders visible the systemic violences of racism, gender and classism in contemporary Australia. I have posited that Aristotle's *Poetics* provides a more fitting analytical framework than modern interpretations of, for instance, Shakespearean tragedy, despite the novel's intertextual reference to *Macbeth*. This is because Blackie, as an allegorical figure, is fated to fail – not due to personal flaws as conceived in Enlightenment individualism – but due to the intersecting effects of structures of subjugation on his subject position as Indigenous, male, and working-class. Through this tragic form, the text critiques Western ideologies of merit and the myth of economic mobility. Unlike the other novels in the corpus – Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip* and Wright's *Praiseworthy – Dancing Home* does not reject the *white gaze* outright but instead reconfigures it, expanding its field of vision and directing its attention toward the violence it usually tends to overlook.

Building upon this analysis, Section 4.2.2 has focused on the character of Blackie as a departure from the Aristotelian tragic hero. Rather than possessing a singular "fatal flaw" (*hamartia*), Blackie is condemned by society based on his subject position. His position enables McWilliams to falsely implicate him in severe crimes, including murder, thereby casting Blackie as allegory for the overrepresentation of poor, Indigenous men in Australia's criminal justice system. This analysis has been further extended in Section 4.2.3 through a close examination of the novel's intertextual references to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. By analyzing McWilliams as Blackie's antagonist, I have argued that both characters function allegorically, revealing systemic bias and institutional racism deeply embedded within the police force. The intertextual link to *Macbeth* also intensifies the thematic contrast between regicide and tyrannicide. However, unlike Shakespeare's tragedy – which centers individual morality – the novel collapses both sovereign and tyrant into McWilliams. As a result, McWilliams becomes a dual symbol: lauded as a model police officer from a dominant perspective yet perceived as a tyrant from a subjugated gaze. This

duality encapsulates the moral contradictions of the modern Australian state and its exercise of sovereign power, as theorized by Foucault (see Section 3.3).

In Section 4.2.4, I have expanded this analysis by considering the allegorical role of "Doctor White," the pharmacist, who embodies the broader (white) healthcare system. The pharmacy is portrayed as Blackie's only point of access to medical assistance – not because he is a fugitive, but because his socioeconomic marginalization and the inadequate healthcare infrastructure in Indigenous communities leave him no alternatives. Referring to the concept of structural violence introduced in Chapter 3, I have interpreted the pharmacy scene as another allegory. This reading is further supported in the narrative's depiction of Blackie's arrest, where his deliberate attempt to appear non-threatening contrasts starkly with the police officers' inability to see beyond his racialized appearance. Thus, throughout these sections, I have shown that *Dancing Home* uses plot structure, characters constructed as allegories, and intertextual allusion to interrogate and expose the pervasive and otherwise often invisible mechanisms of structural violence and its intersecting effects.

4.3 Environmental Violence, Slow Violence – Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy*

In this section, I will analyze Alexis Wright's novel *Praiseworthy* from a narratological and intersectional perspective. I will illustrate how the narrative's style refuses a fast reading space, which is the precondition for understanding the novel's complexity. I argue that Praiseworthy specifically makes use of ambiguity and complexity to present an anti-colonial and anti-racist *perspective* (Section 4.3.1). This complexity is also a structural representation of the concept of relationality (Section 4.3.2). Furthermore, the novel centers on the material and psychological effects of the Northern Territory Intervention, and thus clearly identifies and represents the latter as a form of racist structural violence (4.3.3), and the latter operates both inside and outside the white nation state, producing the non-white *other* in both the Indigenous population and the refugees arriving by boat. As such, Praiseworthy identifies the Australian nation state as a *white possession* and asserts that it is not the boundaries of territories but boundaries of race that structure the nation (Section 4.3.4). In the following, I will first provide a concise overview of previous scholarship on *Praiseworthy*, the content of the novel, and then the structure of this section in more detail.

Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy* (2023) is an epic.[296] As both an author and activist, Alexis Wright has written and spoken extensively on Indigenous rights issues and has also offered insights into her writing processes and the questions she wants to ask with her book. A commonality shared by her novels *Carpentaria* (2006), *The Swan Book* (2013), and especially *Praiseworthy*, is her approach to "ask questions" instead of "offering answers." I understand her narratives as such, as a presentation of different pathways that offer multiple perspectives but no ready-made solutions. Due to the brief time since its release and its considerable length, the novel has not yet received critical attention beyond some literary reviews that offer little more than a summary of the text. The only exception is a review by Lynda Ng's, which ties the novel a bit more concretely to the politics of the COVID-19-pandemic and the "resurgence of anti-Chinese sentiment" that she sees in the novel as refracted "through the historical lens of anti-Aboriginal sentiment" (Ng n.p.). And

[296] The novel is written in prose but its lyrical style (as I will show in this section) resembles oral storytelling. The content is narrative fiction, and its length reminds the reader of Homer's *Odyssey*. While the events in the novel are not narrated chronologically (as in the *Odyssey*), they are centered around characters and place (see Dorothe Klein on Indigenous approaches to plot order tied to Country). Furthermore, each chapter is introduced by a short epigraph further frames the chapter's content and then calls upon different oracles to "speak" (for instance, Chapter 4: "*Oracle 4 . . . speak true*," 337). While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to analyze the intertextual references of each epigraph and the individual function of each Oracle's positioning (for instance, in Chapter 1, Oracle 1 is simply told to "speak" (1), while in Chapter 2, Oracle 2 is asked to "speak up" (150)) in relation to both the title of each chapter and the epigraph, the structure gives the whole narrative a certain formality that reminds me of Homer's *Odyssey*, further paralleled in the moral appeal included in both *Praiseworthy* (see this section) and Greek epics.

while this connection would certainly be a valuable topic for further investigation, I tie the discussions around Dance Steel's ancestors more firmly into discussions on Indigenous identity and essentialism in the novel. Overall, this section offers the first literary analysis of the novel.

Alexis Wright's novel *Praiseworthy* is set in the fictional town of Praiseworthy in northern Australia. The town is covered by an ochre-colored dust cloud called "the haze," which is made up of angry ancestral spirits. It is a direct effect of climate change. The narrative follows the protagonist Cause Man Steel, who is a visionary entrepreneur who proposes building a sustainable transport conglomerate as a solution to the town's challenges. In his argumentation, once all the reserves of fossil fuels have been used up, transportation still needs to be ensured, and as a source of income this would guarantee the town's financial independence. The sustainable transport conglomerate will be using donkeys as means for transportation because Australian donkeys are surviving in the bush with little water and are used to travelling long distances. Even more, to ensure that his transport business will be able to cover the whole continent, he searches for the one perfect platinum donkey that appeared to him in a vision and that is even more enduring than all other donkeys on the continent. Cause Man Steel therefore sets out to search for the platinum donkey all over northern Australia. Only the platinum grey donkey can serve as foundation for his transport business but whenever he thinks he has found 'the one,' upon his return to Praiseworthy he must realize that the donkey's color is not platinum grey after all. Instead, it is just the medium grey of all the other donkeys and Cause Man Steel sets out anew on his search. The donkey thus becomes a culturally encoded symbol for the capitalist myth of 'one lucky break, one good idea leading to eternal fortune.'

While Cause Man Steel is journeying to and from Praiseworthy in his search for this elusive donkey, his two sons, Aboriginal Sovereignty and Tommyhawk, face their own struggles. Presenting two contrasting responses to the racist government policies of assimilation, Aboriginal Sovereignty attempts to commit suicide while Tommyhawk dreams of being rescued from his community by the white Prime Minister of Australia, essentially becoming white himself. While Tommyhawk is eternally waiting for a rescue that never takes place, Aboriginal Sovereignty is rescued at sea (where he tried to drown himself) by a boat of refugees. Consequently incarcerated at an offshore detention camp, he transforms into a cloud of dust that joins the haze that is still resting above the town of Praiseworthy.

I argue that in *Praiseworthy,* Alexis Wright offers multiple narrative strands that each contain their own truths as well as critiques for their respective faults. This leads to complexity and a certain ambiguity that complicates clear-cut interpretations; there seems to be no single truth or 'right' reading of Wright's text. More than one truth stands at the same time. I further argue that

this, in turn, invites the reader to contemplate the complexity of the questions asked in the novel and to develop their own perspective without claiming it as "the one" true answer. Due to the sheer length of the novel, any analysis in this dissertation can only be exemplary, but it will nevertheless touch on the central themes as they relate to the concept of violence in the novel.

I will first focus on the narrative style of the novel and explain how it slows down the reading process. The connection between narrative style and violence is not immediate. However, understood in line with Alexis Wright's statement that contemporary literature needs to be written "on scale" to address the various problems that our societies face in a world threatened by ongoing colonialism, racial injustice and climate change (the connection between these three concepts and violence has been established in Chapter 2), this narrative style is one aspect of establishing the narrative's position. First, the slow reading pace stands in direct contrast to the accelerating pace of fast capitalism. Second, the winding sentence structures are almost lyrical in their richness of intertextual references and connotations. Only the slower reading pace allows for these connotations to enter the sense-making of the reading process to their full effect (see Section 2.4 and Schneider's situation model). I trace this process through the example of the ancestral haze that hovers over the town of Praiseworthy and the reaction of the town's elders when they blast European classical music at the cloud of dust. And third, the slower reading pace resembles the unspectacular unfolding of slow violence as described by Nixon. While this connection to violence is not immediately apparent, the narrative in its richness of references (intertextual, allegorical, symbolic, or simply through associations) is a manifestation of relationality, the network of relationships that shape life in Indigenous epistemologies (see Section 2.3.2.1 on the concept of relationality).

In contrast to both *Too Much Lip* and *Dancing Home*, *Praiseworthy* does not rely on the portrayal of direct interpersonal violence to show how it builds up and is interconnected with structural violence. Instead, the narrative is steeped in complexity to the point of ambiguity but still manages to present a perspective that can be identified as anti-colonial and anti-racist.

The second section follows different narrative storylines of the novel that are all characterized by a break of connection in this network of relationality. There is the haze who is a manifestation of the missing connection to Country and the ancestors. There is the protagonist Cause Man Steel who has lost his connection to culture in his pursuit of economic independence which turns out to be a reproduction of capitalism in its focus on the individualistic gains that can be achieved by extracting the land's resources. The view of land as a resource is the *white view* of land as property. This causes a rift between Cause Man Steel and his community and their fight over Native title, the legislation of which was explained in detail in Section 2.3.2.2 (see the

Indigenous concept of custodianship and the idea of "belonging to Country" as stated by Alexis Wright, and which stands in opposition to Western concepts of land ownership). Along the line of Native title negotiations and white legal requirements of proving Native title develops a discourse of essentialism. Suddenly, Cause Man Steel and his wife Dance's Aboriginality is under question. The narrative follows one narrative strand into another, opening up a complex backdrop of socio-political discourses that are all part of the national discourses of Australia. More importantly, these discourses are all connected to different forms of violence, mainly epistemic violence.

It is against this backdrop of violent discourses that Section 4.3.3 turns to the suicide of Cause Man Steel's son Aboriginal Sovereignty. The suicide is first analyzed through the perspective of Tommyhawk Steel. This perspective, staying true to the narrative's tendency to follow different storylines and perspectives not in a chronological fashion but through association, is an example of the effects of the racist government policies of the Northern Territory Intervention. By focusing on the effects of the discourses surrounding the intervention, it is very clearly presented as a form of racist structural violence. Tommyhawk's internalization of this racism (see Section 2.2 on the concept of internalized racism) motivates his desire to *become white*, and it allows him to watch his brother's suicide with dispassion. He represents the *white gaze* that is declaring Indigenous people as always already dead (Section 2.3.5), only waiting for 'the drama' to finally be over (see Section 4.3.3).

In addition to Tommyhawk Steel's perspective, Aboriginal Sovereignty's attempted suicide introduces a storyline that connects the racist and colonialist oppression of Aboriginal people with the structural racism leveled at refugees. This storyline reveals the Australian nation state as a *white possession* and parallels the dehumanization and criminalization leveled at refugees and asylum seekers with the same discourses leveled at the Indigenous population within the territory borders. This parallel dissolves the border as a legitimate line for self-definition, reasserting that it is not the boundaries of territories but boundaries of race that structure the nation. This revelation is finally tied back into the acute climate crisis as represented in the form of the ancestral haze over the town of Praiseworthy when Aboriginal Sovereignty, detained on an offshore island as a supposedly 'illegal immigrant' dances himself back into culture and turns into a cloud of dust to join the haze. Let me now trace this summary in more detail in the analysis below.

4.3.1 Tragedies in the Epical Pyres of Life – Writing on Scale and the Heartbeat of Country

For Alexis Wright, the acknowledgement of one's origin of place and culture is central to finding one's place in life. It is not enough to look at "just where you go and where you are right at the moment," but "where you come from" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). The

acknowledgement of origin (heritage, ancestry, culture) is a continuance of an "unbroken culture" that spans hundreds of thousands of years and is the foundation for the future (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). Literature and culture, for Wright, are a path to learning about the stories of other peoples and their "unbroken cultures," which in turn allows for a more complex and empathetic understanding of "what's happening to people and to each other and to other people" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). She likens the complex interweaving of storylines to a "multi-stranded helix that was spinning with stories and stories from all times that they come"[297] and which start to make sense in relation to each other: "you keep reading, and then you keep on reading, and then you'll start to get it" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). It is a form of perseverance that is necessary for dealing with complexity.

Wright argues that any literature that wants to address this complexity needs to be written "on scale to meet the scale of what's happening in the world", and with a global climate emergency, this leads to epic books (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). In fact, this is the central function of literature for Wright: "What is literature for really? We need to be writing about things that are important and affect us and affect our future" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). Furthermore, she recalls "Edward Said once saying, we ought to be able to say and at length that what you do, you do not do in my name" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.) and agrees with him. Here, she refers to global inaction to properly address the danger of global warming. At the same time that literature needs to be written on scale, she argues, readers need to learn to "read on scale," so they may learn how to learn from these epic books, too (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). Literature, it might be summarized, is political and it needs to be understood as such.

Writing on scale, for Wright, goes beyond the length of the novel. She approached *Praiseworthy* from a perspective of wanting "to bring in a type of writing in this Country that belongs more to the Country, given all the issues that we have here" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). This shows in the rhythm in which the narrative is written. She draws on a lifetime of listening to elders who have both an ancient and modern understanding of the world and this oral storytelling has influenced her writing style (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). As she explains:

> Praiseworthy, this particular rhythm and beat, I knew I had to write off-key in an Aboriginal chord. That was the heartbeat. Up in the Gulf, people say that we are of one heartbeat. So what is the

[297] In this interview, she recalls that she has described the structure of *Carpentaria* as such in her article "On Writing Carpentaria," but applies the observation to her writing of *Praiseworthy* as well.

> heartbeat? The heartbeat is the heartbeat of Country and the slow beat. I was listening to a particular type of music when I was doing this book.
>
> yidaki, didgeridoo music, an instrument that comes very much from the soul of Country. Clapsticks, women singing, ceremony. It's a particular beat and the tone and the rhythm in Praiseworthy. (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.)

This rhythm can be observed in the sentence structures and intonations of the narrative. The often long and winding sentence structures do not lend themselves to a fast reading pace. Trying to "read for information" will invariably lead to a feeling of "overload." Instead, a slow reading pace that simply follows the given structures and does not demand immediate understanding of everything that is written is the way to approach this novel from a reader's perspective.[298] Ann McGrath and Laura Rademaker's description of embodied storytelling is particularly fitting at this point:

> Like music, spoken histories pierce the air. They are multisensory, speaking not only in the special timbre and quality of sounds and rhythms vibrating from one person to the next in particular place but also in the visual languages of decorated, painted, and adorned human bodies, faces, and hair in ceremonies and dance. (McGrath and Rademaker 20)

Indigenous stories are histories and depending on the level of formality in which they are told (see Section 2.3.6 on the Indigenous concept of "yarning"), they are told in ceremony, dance, and music, not only voice. This also offers more complexity and embodied interconnection than Western written texts.

Rhythm and differences in rhythm are also addressed on the content-level of the narrative. For example,

> One elder found some inappropriate whitefella music on the Decca label which he used to assimilate into the mind of local thinking about the Anthropocene, the man-made disaster of the world. The locals who knew nothing about European classical music or how it created human heat like global warming, became hooked on what the elder said was Dvorak. Then some other old fella in a suit said that the music was from the New World in his symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95 and could pacify the gods of the Anthropocene. The music was piped into the haze to speak to its soul in this otherwise weirdo free-for-all feast of peddling stress and anxiety, while trying to coax a deal for blacks from the white government sitting pretty thousands of kilometres away, to get it to get up off its arse and do something about cleaning up the air. The sum total of their hymn travelled through the ether, and went onwards into infinity as could only be expected, such was the government's complete incomprehension about Aboriginal humanity. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 8)

The passage contains several intertextual references, as is quite common of Wright's writing style (see also Klein, *Poetics* 140–65). One of the elders in the town of Praiseworthy uses white

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[298] This is, of course, a subjective opinion. It is supported by the interviewer Alice Edwards at the beginning of her interview with Alexis Wright, when she explains that she failed in her first read of *Praiseworthy*, because she hadn't "checked her reading habits" and had to adjust them (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.).

European classical music to speak to the haze's soul, trying to appease it. This music is judged "inappropriate" from the start by the omniscient narrator and using the music to speak to the haze is seen as a sign of assimilation (which in turn is strongly rejected as a racist form of control throughout the narrative).

European classical music is also accused of contributing to global warming in the novel. This connection has been established by ecocriticism and interdisciplinary climate change research. In reaction, like many industry sectors, the music industry at large has begun to evaluate the sustainability of their formats. For example, the Tyndall Center at the University of Manchester published a roadmap for low-carbon live music (C. Jones et al. n.p.). Carbon emissions to be considered range from audience travel to the energy use of the location, waste management and the transportation of the musicians, their instruments and supporting equipment. For classical music, this can contain logistics for whole orchestras, especially if they're touring large distances.[299] Classical music is unlikely to be the sector in the music industry with the largest amount of carbon emissions, but the narrative nonetheless establishes it as *pars pro toto*. This connection is important because it alludes to the fact that the Western (industrialized) world is responsible for the largest amount of carbon emissions fueling climate change while their former colonies (in Africa, Sout-East Asia and the Pacific) experience its effect most severely, a structural inequality that leads to the definition of environmental violence (see Section 3.5 for a definition of "environment violence" according to Nixon, in combination with Crosby's ecological imperialism, and Chavis's racist environmentalism).

The specific mention of Dvořák's ninth symphony contains even more connotations. Antonín Dvořák is a Czech composer and was credited with composing his nation's identity into musical form (Hinrichsen 107; Philippi 41).[300] There is a sharp contrast between listening to Dvořák's highly stylized composition and yidaki music (as Wright mentions she did during the writing of the novel).[301] Where Wright describes yidaki as the "soul" and heartbeat of Country (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.), the European symphony is considered the peak aesthetic of classical music, and Dvořák's ninth symphony is in turn considered his masterpiece. Yidaki music and Dvořák's symphony could be considered the opposition of nature and culture, but this

[299] Carbon emissions of the music industry do not end there. The streaming of music takes energy as well, and internet use is anticipated to make up about 21 percent of the global use of electricity in 2030. As such it is about to equal 50 percent of the global carbon emission of the transportation sector by 2040 (Widdicks et al.).

[300] By this I do not mean the national anthem, but the Country's musical national identity, much like Carl Maria Weber shaped German Romantic music and Mozart is part of Vienna's musical identity.

[301] I suggest listening to Dvořák and then watching the introductory video for the yidaki by Brendan B. Mitchell to properly appreciate the difference.

would in fact reproduce colonial stereotypes and colonial discourse (see Section 2.2 on postcolonial theory and the establishment of power hierarchies through the use of binaries). It could be assumed that Wright consciously plays with this opposition, and she thereby reduces it to absurdity in the image of the classical symphony blasted at the haze of dust sitting over Praiseworthy. But I would rather interpret the "heartbeat" comment in line with relationality and a sense of being grounded in Country, which in turn offers a grounding of self. The effect of this description is a feeling of belonging, also established through the abovementioned engagement with "unbroken culture" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.). In this vein, the contrast between yidaki music and Dvořák is one of belonging to Country and one of importation. Furthermore, in context with the reference to assimilation, Dvořák becomes a symbol for colonization.

This interpretation is supported by a closer look at the circumstances of the ninth symphony of the "New World." After his success as a nationalist composer in Bohemia in what is today the Czech Republic, Dvořák was called to the New York National Conservatory of Music to capture the American national spirit in musical form, as well. For this, he claims to have incorporated both African American and Native American music into the composition of his "Symphony No. 9" (Clapham). So it is not just any European classical music that is blasted into the haze, but a highly stylized symphony written in the attempt to capture the national spirit of a nation that grew out of a British colony and through the incorporation (if not appropriation) of Indigenous and African American musical influences by a white European in order to give his work a more "local" (if not exotic) flavor. From the perspective of postcolonial and critical race theory, this resembles patterns of appropriation, racialization, primitivism, and *white possession* as introduced in Chapter 2. As such, the symphony is a most fitting choice to "pacify the gods of the Anthropocene," the "man-made disaster" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 8), by blasting its stylized cultural production back to the sender, creating a different form of "writing back to the empire" (see Section 2.1.2 for the definition according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin). This is especially as we recall the continued criticism of the term "Anthropocene" which calls the Western industrialized nations out for bearing the main responsibility for the increase in carbon emissions and causing climate change (DeLoughrey 2–3 drawing on Chakrabarty, see also Randazzo and Richter, and to a lesser extent see Anthias and Asher). Considering the racialized, gendered and (neo)colonial structures of global economies and resource extraction, the disaster is indeed "man-made" in all its unmarked connotation of the "white, Western, heterosexual, able-bodied man," a criticism that has been formulated in literary and artistic responses to climate change (for example, see R. Maynard and

Simpson 17–18, DeLoughrey, and for creative approaches to the issue see Jetñil-Kijiner et al, *Indigenous Pacific Islander Eco-Literatures*).[302]

In the last sentence of the passage quoted above, "the sum total of their hymn travelled through the ether, and went onwards into infinity as could only be expected, such was the government's complete incomprehension about Aboriginal humanity" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 8). The government's incomprehension is a clear reference to continuing racist and assimilationist policies of the government, especially in the Northern Territory (also see Agamben's "bare life" in Section 3.4).[303] The hymn is Dvořák's symphony, sent out in self-preservation because all attempts to negotiate with the government have been unsuccessful. Sent "through the ether" and "into infinity" almost turns time into a physical location. In the section before, the traditional owners of Country are "continuing their long line of imaginings into infinity" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 7). And while English lends itself to conceptual metaphors that describe concepts of time through spatial referents (conceptual metaphors), I argue that the whole novel is written in a manner that makes the reader feel as though they are stuck in time. The narrative almost becomes a *place of time*.[304] The plot is not action driven and circularly revisits the same themes (Cause's donkeys, assimilation, racism, Aboriginal Sovereignty's suicide, Tommyhawk's calls for rescue to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Dance's moths) while adding further details and eventual meaning to each rendition.

Circularity has been linked to plot structures in Indigenous storytelling by Knudsen, especially in the form of spirals for Australian First Nations writing. She uses them as symbols for the cultural transformation that has taken place in contemporary Aboriginal and Māori writing (Knudsen 25). Similarly, Catherine Ellis argues that in ceremonial performances, the past is

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[302] In *Rehearsals for Living*, Robyn Maynard suggests the term "Racial Capitalocene" (20), taken from Françoise Vergès as more fitting.

[303] Alexis Wright herself remarks that *Praiseworthy* is "a work of fiction, it's an imagined world, but it's a world that's also affected by issues of government intervention in their lives and the ideas that were influenced in the book by what actually happened in the Northern Territory. The Intervention was rolled out on Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory by the federal government to change the national narrative about support for Aboriginal people, which had been built through the Reconciliation process. And this little boy [Tommyhawk Steel], what happened, it was rolled out in a very hostile way, and through the media, through politicians, through anybody who thought that it was alright to say anything they like about Aboriginal people, and they did, and a lot of it was really, really toxic. This was all broadcast through the media, through radio, television, newspapers, social media, and it went on and on . . . What I thought when I was thinking about writing this book was, what happens to our children? Our children can hear all this. How do they become affected?" Wright ("Discussing Praiseworthy"). For an analysis of the rhetoric used by the media at the time see Bielefeld.

[304] Ritz and Ponsonnet remark that "Space-based metaphors for time [conceptual metaphors] are less frequent in Indigenous Australian languages than in European languages, yet they are attested", but they also caution that language does not necessarily offer a window on shared cultural representations and that comparative conclusion must therefore be drawn with caution and on a case-by-case basis (Ritz and Ponsonnet 169).

brought into the present though multilevel repetitions of movement and music (Ellis et al. 101; Barwick 96). Both authors trace this back to the Aboriginal understanding of Dreamtime as both timeless and cyclical.

Dreamtime is the time of the ancestors, but it is also "a discrete and emplaced Indigenous temporality, an 'everywhen' that lives on in a kind of eternal present" (McGrath and Rademaker 5). Emplaced, in this context, means that time "and Country are inseparable and have a deep spiritual foundation" (S. Yu et al. 63) precisely because the ancestors *are* Country and the stories about them, their presence, is location-specific.[305] Dreamtime is also the space of stories in the sense of what Europeans understand as myths, but since the ancestors are continually present in Country, story "can be about any and every time; it persists in and outside time, with time itself refusing to be pinned down" (McGrath and Rademaker 4). Furthermore, as "the Country itself changes over time in response to human activity or larger flows of climatic or ecological change, the song system is able to adapt, to find new contexts for meaning making" (Barwick 110), also adapting to contemporary circumstances. Overall, "everywhen" is an "inadequate translation of a complex, rich, culturally deep term" (S. Yu et al. 63).

In relation to an everyday life understanding of time Shannon Foster elaborates:

> My Elders taught me that Garuwanga stories . . . remind us that we do not follow the processes of colonial time. Time is insignificant. For our knowledges human beings do not dictate time; Country does. Country informs us, and we follow the movements of Earth; this renders the colonial notions of time utterly redundant . . . a Northern Hemisphere notion of seasonal time . . . fails to take into consideration the Country to which we belong, her Spirit, her nuances, and the interactions of the organisms that belong to her. Instead, we take our cues from Mother Earth herself. (Foster 284)

Foster describes a form of living with the land that is, for example, not completely uncommon for farms and agricultural businesses in European contexts either. It goes deeper than seasonal planning and harvesting, though, through the concept of relationality (the interconnection of all living beings, the ancestors and Country, see Section 2.3.2 for a definition of the concept of "the Dreaming"). Nevertheless, Foster's distinction is another reminder "that conceptualizations of time are culturally based and that modern (supposedly) universal time (the 'homogenous, empty time' of Walter Benjamin) is a relatively recent aberration" (McGrath and Rademaker 6). In Pasifika and Māori epistemologies, for example, history is traced through genealogy: "In many ways history *is* genealogy and vice versa. In the Māori language, "whakapapa" (genealogy) is a

[305] The word "buru" in the Yawuru language even contains references to both time and space (McGrath and Rademaker 11). As Dian Appleby explains: "Every place has memory – visual memory of story, spirit memory, where *rayi* come from and where our ancestors are. Every place has season and its own story. Things rise up from Country, like the clouds, the rain. You have to watch to find out what is happening and to know what you must do." (Dianne Appleby, quoted in S. Yu et al. 66).

verb as well as a noun; accordingly, genealogy is both content and method of history" (Te Punga Somerville 70, *my emphasis*). When used as metaphor, genealogy "has the capacity to resituate the present as a 'mark,' 'speck,' 'notch,' or perhaps 'node' in a vast, multidirectional network of connections" (Te Punga Somerville 70). This is also an understanding that some of the elders in Praiseworthy exhibit when they ask: "Why had they survived since time immemorial? Their ancient law. That's what" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 1). The present is just one part of a century-long history, and it is embedded in story, not something "outside of it" or the "end point."

Ritz and Ponsonnet rightly caution that explications of dreamtime and the suggestion that Australian First Nations understandings of time collapse the past into the present have applied consequences that can be used to justify discrimination: "For instance, such conceptions of time are often invoked to claim that Indigenous Australians cannot be good employees, since their culturally ingrained notion of time does not equip them to attend work regularly" (Ritz and Ponsonnet 166). This understanding of Aboriginal conceptions of time is incorrect. "Everywhen" and the repetition of the past in the present exists on the level of "cultural ideologies, institutions, and symbols", it is not the claim "that people who embrace such representations also experience time differently at a narrower, phenomenological scale" and take this understanding literally (Ritz and Ponsonnet 168). In fact, "circular representations of time are prevalent in many cultures (e.g., seasonal calendars) and . . . theories of history as incessant repetition are also well attested in Western traditions (e.g., religious events)" (Ritz and Ponsonnet 168) and equating cultural understandings of time with an inability to differentiate it from everyday conceptions of time (e.g. time in relation to the position of the sun) is a form of exoticism and racist notions of primitivism.[306]

The narrative structure of *Praiseworthy* does not follow a linear understanding of time and progression. Instead, the different chapters follow different characters (such as the first chapter focusing on Cause Man Steel) or thematic topics (such as the character Aboriginal Sovereignty in both his personal and conceptual form, or the supposed mistreatment of children in Aboriginal

[306] See Ritz and Ponsonnet, who explain that "when [Australian First Nations people from the Arnhem Land region] discuss the passage of time, they often relate it to the location or progression of the sun, moon, and seasonal alterations. The older Arnhem Land languages . . . have words for 'before,' 'after,' 'today,' and 'tomorrow,' but not for units of measurements of time such as 'year' or 'hour,' and people rarely count units of time. This is also the case for some Aboriginal groups in the Western Desert who do not habitually measure time" (167) This does not mean, however, that this denotes the inability to comprehend concepts of time. To the contrary, it "is important to note that this difference is one of inclination and habit, not ability . . . And historically Australian Indigenous communities have always held complex schedules for jointly organized rituals" (Ritz and Ponsonnet 167).

communities in the Northern Territory). Each of these chapters is introduced by a call to a specific "oracle" to start telling its story.

As Dorothee Klein has pointed out, for Australian First Nations Literature, place can also act as a unification of plot where linear time does not offer a consistent point of reference. In *Praiseworthy*, the town itself functions as an anchor as truly little happens outside its geographical location and the progression of time remains vague, the narrative often returning to previous points in a different oracle's storyline (or even in their own). And whereas a detailed investigation of the function of place in *Praiseworthy* is beyond the scope of this dissertation, indicators can be observed in Cause's circular patterns of driving through Country in his search for the perfect platinum donkey: This story of the eternal search is set as continuous repetition as the backdrop to everything else happening in the town of Praiseworthy, including Aboriginal Sovereignty's suicide, the town's search for his body and Tommyhawk's desperate calls for rescue to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. In fact, regarding plot and linear time, I would part the novel into the following sections:

1) Cause Man Steel and his dream-journey (chapter 1, pages 1-149),
2) Aboriginal Sovereignty's suicide (chapter 2),
3) the search for Aboriginal Sovereignty's body until he is finally declared dead towards the end of chapter 5 (483),
4) the establishment of Cause as his murderer (chapters 6, 8, and 9), and
5) the relocation of Tommyhawk Steel (chapter 7 and chapter 10).

This partition is preliminary and certainly offers much room for discussion, modification, and particularization, but it nonetheless provides a rudimentary structure to the novel.

4.3.2 Lines of Stories Entombed in Smoke Clouds – The Haze and Cause Man Steel

The town of Praiseworthy is covered by a dust haze that features prominently in the novel. The description of the haze remains ambiguous at the beginning, but in each reappearance in the narrative, the description adds another layer for the reader to understand it, which is why the following passage is worth quoting at length:

> The story goes . . .
> Hate place was a monument of the monument for some of the poorest people on Earth. A hard bit of magic grown from a corpus of ancient stories that had been scattered into mystery by broken spirits creating hell fires. All those endlessly wandering fragments of ancient words were coming together, and forming the lines of stories entombed in smoke clouds circumnavigating the planet.
>
> Now. . . A ghostly windstorm from out of nowhere came more frequently, came to this place blowing dry leaves, burnt leaves, ash leaves, and spoke of tragedies in the epical pyres of life. The wind looked at the remains of life on this place, then blew and blew these fragments away in mountainous

> serpentine waves that hit the soul world of an even greater local spirit and there, dust, ash, memories written on broken butterfly wings with black soot, all backed up into an ochre-colored haze that ended up sitting permanently over the flatlands of the *blessed be thou, more blessed be I*.
>
> This old grief haze cuts a powerful image from forty thousand feet up in the sky where ancestral serpents roamed through the remnants of migrating angels, and you, looking down from the window seat up front of a QF Qantas flight cruising over the northern flat country would see the grand improbabilities. Yes, the supercell anomaly was a miracle on Earth, but not a good one. . . .
>
> This was how the dust storm lingered for far too many years, and became a stationary presence, pivoting over the spinifex land of the zeitgeist, where those strugglers of apocalyptic times – the traditional landowners in this isolated place of flatlands – were continuing their long line of imaginings into infinity. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 6–7)

This extensive quotation introduces a number of connotations for the haze, each of which is further elaborated throughout the novel. First, there are the "broken spirits" that are forming storylines all over the world. The spirits are "creating hellfires," which explains why the storylines are "entombed in smoke clouds" (6). These clouds are joined by a "ghostly windstorm" that "spoke of tragedies in the epical pyres of life," strengthening the image of thickening smoke. The windstorm blows the remains of life in Praiseworthy into the air, in "mountainous serpentine waves" that eventually hit the local spirit of Country and out of this collision originates the "ochre-colored haze" sitting over the town.

The haze is an anomaly that can be seen by the implied reader (direct address in the text) from their seat on the plane flying over north Australia. The Qantas airplane is a symbol for white cosmopolitanism, "flying over" the local realities of the rural town. Young Tommyhawk Steel dreams of being taken away from his community on a Qantas flight by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and into a life of white upper-class capitalism, but the plane never lands in Praiseworthy. Whenever the plane is mentioned in the novel, it reminds the reader that Praiseworthy remains geographically separated from the rest of white Australia and especially from the government's seat in Canberra. The geographical separation also signals the economic and political isolation of the town and its inhabitants. The Qantas flight further stands in contrast to Cause Man Steel's vision of a global transport conglomeration of donkeys, which, in contrast to the airplane, are supposed to run without the use of fossil fuels in the apocalyptic future of global warming. The Qantas plane could be a connection between the town of Praiseworthy and the rest of the world, but the network of flights never actually connects to the town: much like government policies to "close the gap" between Aboriginal people and white Australia never connect with the people they are supposed to "save". Like the Qantas plane, government policies are decided upon and executed "over the head" of the people they most affect.

Returning to the description of the haze in the long quite above, the reader also learns that the haze is made of grief (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 6) and lingers over Praiseworthy for "far too many years" until the mountainous serpentines become a "stationary presence" over the traditional owners of the spinifex Country, who continue "their long line of imaginings into infinity" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 7). Infinity here is time immemorial, also called the Dreaming. It is the interconnection between the ancestors and the present generation, as well as Country and the future. This connection is celebrated and practiced through story: By telling story but also by practicing it on Country in the form of ceremony and caretaking. The imaginings into infinity are thus also on some level connected back to the broken spirits creating the storylines entombed in smoke from the beginning of the quotation. The meaning behind this connection, however, remains ambiguous at this point in the narrative.

Later passages reveal that the government in Canberra refuses to see the haze and acknowledge "changes in the climate" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 9). This is a clear reference to populist discourses prevalent in white industrial nations (especially discourses of right-wing end extreme right politicians and conspiracy theorists in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and North America) that continue to deny that either global warming is taking place at all or that it has been caused by industrialization.[307] In response, the "local people followed up with physicality, by having a boxing match with the haze's curse on their kind" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 9). The tone of the statement is matter of fact, but the phrase clearly contains a heavy dose of sarcasm for a boxing match with a dust haze is – technically – impossible. At the same, the narrative makes frequent use of such matter-of-fact statements that describe (relative) impossibilities and that open up room for interpretation. In this case, I argue, the statement can be understood literally, and the reader is invited to imagine the townspeople (shadow-)boxing with the haze. That image has a comedic effect, but it also draws on the racist stereotypes of Black and Indigenous peoples as supposed savages and irrational beings incapable of solving a disagreement rationally. Written by an Indigenous author in an extremely eloquent and artful writing style, I argue that the boxing match could be interpreted as a strategic performance of "savagery" that reveals the underlying racism ingrained in the government's refusal to "see the haze."

This refusal to "see the haze" is also a form of environmental racism. As mentioned in Section 3.5, Dr Benjamin Chavis coined the term "environmental racism" in 1982, which he defined "as racial discrimination in public policy making, as the deliberate targeting of people of color communities for toxic waste and hazardous waste facilities, as the exclusion of people of

307 For an excellent analysis of the interconnection between global warming, ecocriticism, colonialism and racism, see Malcom Ferdinand.

color from public policy making" with regard to environmental concerns and pollution (Chavis). Rural and poor communities in Australia are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change in the form of rising temperatures, continued droughts, and an increase in bush fires. First Nations Australians are particularly vulnerable. As Angela Y. Davis points out,

> . . . racism does not simply enter the picture as a factor determining the way environmental hazards are disparately experienced by human beings but, rather, it creates the very conditions of possibility for sustained assaults on the environment, including on the human and non-human animals, whose lives are always already devalued by racism, patriarchy, and speciesism. (A. Y. Davis, "Foreword" xvii)

Australian First Nations activists, Pacific Islanders and many other Indigenous peoples have been warning the global population for decades that the impact of global warming is visible in their environment, but they have been ignored, or their concerns have been postponed to a later date.[308] In Australia, mining rights continue to be awarded to global corporations such as Rio Tinto despite their history of environmental damage. And while Alexis Wright herself described the haze "like an angry ancestor . . . compiled of the events or things that have gone wrong, not caring for Country in the way that it should be" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy" n.p.), the complete disregard for the concerns of Praiseworthy's population describes a form of structural (environmental) racism.[309] As Malcom Ferdinand points out, any "critique of the destruction of the planet's ecosystems is . . . intimately tied to the critique of colonial and postcolonial dominations and to demands for equality" (Ferdinand 15).

In the novel, the haze "mutate[d] into its multiaxial position by multiplying itself by two" and "ended up infusing some creepy haze spirit into the lungs of the Major Mayor white-influencer thing, who up until then, had always been seen as a normal human being" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 9). The possession by the haze has him "obsessed by whiteness" and turns his skin "as white as vanilla ice cream" before he erodes "into sheer translucence, like one of those white plastic shopping bags from the supermarket lost in space" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 9). He gains the additional name of "Ice Pick" when even his naturally brown eyeballs turn white, and of "Casper" due to his translucence and "a labyrinth of Casper the Ghost tattoos, mermaids and octopuses" on his skim (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 9). At the same time, his transformation is "not the kind of transformation that white people could see" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 9), meaning that to the Minister

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[308] As recently as November 2024 at the UN-Climate Conference in Baku, the industrialized nations refused to take appropriate financial responsibility for the effects of climate change that have been affecting countries in the global South.

[309] A prominent example of environmental racism is the poisoned water supply in Flint, Michigan, in 2014 (A. Y. Davis, *Freedom*).

of Aboriginal Affairs, the Major Mayor Ice Pick continues to look "like a real Aboriginal . . . and not a far-fetched spirit wind that caused albino-ness, because she knew what her Aboriginal people looked like" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 613). The latter quote supports the interpretation that the transformation of Ice Pick is internal, and that his behavior is identified by the townspeople in Praiseworthy as "white." The narrative, however, does not reveal this until the last pages of the novel, allowing, until then, for an interpretation that also applies to his outward appearance. In either case, Ice Pick is "marked" as white in the sense of Moreton-Robinson and Frankenberg. He supports assimilationist policies and is presented as being "just like any other dictator in the world who liked to control people" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 491).

Indeed, in order to disperse the haze, the town unsuccessfully tries to use a hologram of Ice Pick to ward off the dust, since after all, "You could read about the benefits of holograms to fight bad climate in any government report about closing the gap with Aboriginal people" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 35). The absurdity in this statement and in the whole procedure is obvious. But the absurdity also offers a second interpretation: The translucent Ice Pick clearly stands for the result of complete – but substance-less – assimilation. Fulfilling the white ideal of assimilating into white culture gains him nothing but a loss of self. He projects himself outward (the hologram), but the projection stands no chance against the angry ancestral spirit, it is nothing but an illusion.

In a different passage, the haze is connected to a loss of community-minded thinking. The narrator remarks:

> This 'I' think, or what local people were calling old sulky haze, had become the new normal for the traditional people, who later claimed they had no power to get rid of the haze that they wanted to be lifted off their Australian government for Aboriginal people-created designer town, and who could blame them for acting nervous like Twitter-scape, since they had really tried to turn themselves into white-type superior people. . . . They had begun dressing up in suits while they walked around in the tropics. Heat was nothing. They were not thinking like their ancestral selves, but more like the swingers of power, the hitters of the Anthropocene, like pseudo-dictators of the speed texting wars, primed up, boiler fires roaring for battle. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 19)

The traditional people on Country in Praiseworthy are following Ice Pick's path – if not all the way to translucence – and are neglecting their traditional responsibility for Country. They are so focused on assimilating, on "closing the gap" and being a model Aboriginal town that the haze keeps growing. It is an old spirit that is awoken by continual "attacks on its sovereignty—land bulldozed here, mines shafted and blown to smithereens, ancestors falling into the mine pit over there — . . . eternal sleep impossible in the anger world" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 11–12). However, the townspeople remain ignorant of this fact:

> The old haze kept on presenting itself atmospherically, claiming ultimate sovereignty of the flatlands, and had grown so exponentially huge that it was sitting on the ground like a fallen angel cut loose

> from sixty thousand years or something of immemorial time. . . . You could not push the thing away, and like toxicity, it would probably end up staying in the atmosphere for a million years. So much for all the unmeant prayers for peace and goodwill rattling on day and night in the local community's ramshackle faith churches of assorted Chrisitan beliefs, when this country was itself already holy, and not a fool. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 19–20)

The ancestral spirit of Praiseworthy has materialized and has refused to cede sovereignty over its territory. Country is "holy" in and of itself, and white faith in whichever denomination (of which there is a multitude in Praiseworthy) cannot hold a candle to its power and knowledge. At the same time, the ancestor has only materialized in this form because his connection to time immemorial, to the Dreaming, has been cut. The traditional people in Praiseworthy have been neglecting their responsibilities as caretakers and have refocused their attention from relationality – the interconnection of all living things – to individualism to the detriment of their heritage. One might argue that they have taken on the hegemonic perspective of Western individualism (and as such, the Western *gaze*).

The haze is further fueled by the hatred of the people living in Praiseworthy:

> Old sulky [the haze], oh, loved the theatre of atmospheric soup that was gathered by the bucketload at top speed, where all the cyclically generating hardcore never-ending epics of hatefulness were mashed up in a monstrous fast-paced dance, and just as fantastically, instantaneously almost, spat triumphantly into community operatic wonderment, a march that was reminiscent of the choir of Verdi's Gloria all'Egitto, as projectiles of polluted dirt-engrained plastic shards shooting like glistened stars into the hot and sticky humidity of the hazy atmosphere were marching steadfastly into the festering human lungs of the whole song cycle thing, now jammed on repeat cycle, and the traditional owners in their continuous rows, arguing about who the true traditional owner was anymore, could not do a thing about it. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 21)

The traditional owners of Country are in constant debates about Native title. Cause Man Steel and his wife Dance live on her ancestral land – the cemetery – and have been awarded Native title over it. As Cause continues to bring more and more donkeys to Praiseworthy, however, and continues to let them roam in the cemetery, the townspeople grow to resent him and his vision of the transport conglomeration. They appeal his Native title claim and are eventually successful. More interesting than the result are the strategies by which they overturn the ruling: In a fully assimilated fashion, they start questioning Cause's "true" heritage, claiming that he "was actually Chinese, and not Aboriginal at all" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 246–47). The narrative suggests that this line of thinking is like a snake that wraps itself around the thoughts of the people in Praiseworthy:

> . . .you never knew what came tumbling out of the barrel in the mind when you tipped it over. Other than water, other things spilt over the ground too, but who was interested in the spilt water when snakes were slithering around your feet.
>
> Now the thing was, there was nothing much that could be built out of what comes out of an empty barrel, at least nothing that ended up being glorious. So! In short: What do you do with a squatting snake? Wrap it around your brain? This was what happened. With the spreading belief that

> Widespread's traditional country was elsewhere, and so elsewhere that it was far away and may as well have been in China, this was where the story ended up, not that anyone in Praiseworthy knew a thing about China, or even that Asia was a big country containing several other traditional countries and nationalities, and ruled the sky and the moon too, because this was hard to conceive when world thought began and ended in Praiseworthy. Now all of a sudden, everyone else with Han blood in their Aboriginal veins thought that, unlike themselves, Widespread was actually Chinese, and not Aboriginal at all. It did not matter that there was total blindness to the considerable mixed-heritage in the racist creepy colonial history of the region. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 246–47)

Cause Man Steel/Planet/Widespread's ancestry is written out of the town's joint history because he no longer fits into the community's vision of itself and has become a nuisance. In order to do this, they employ racist strategies that question the "percentage" of Indigenous blood in a person in order to categorize their degree of belonging. This way of thinking is likened to the image of a squatting snake in an empty barrel that starts slithering into other people's thoughts once the barrel is tipped. The imagery echoes that of the "virus" in Oblivia's mind in Wright's novel *The Swan Book*. There, the "virus thinks it is the only pure full-blood virus left in the land. Everything else is just half-caste. Worth nothing! Not even a property owner" (Wright, *Swan* 1) and infects the protagonist's mind and thinking. Here as well the racist categorizations of full- and half-bloodedness play a vital role and are linked to property rights.[310] As discussed in Section 2.3, this is a central colonial strategy for white possession: Both with regards to the possession of property ("Who *is* Native to the land?") and with regard to the authority to define how belonging is determined ("What is considered 'proof' for a Native title claim and who defines authenticity?").

In parallel, the quotation also opens up questions of essentialism. For it is the "Han blood," the theorized Asian mixed descent that is to negate Cause's authenticity. At the same time, the last sentence of the quotation above warns, the focus on this aspect betrays "a total blindness to the considerable mixed-heritage in the racist creepy colonial history of the region" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 246–47). For as the "superhero cop" anthropologist from Canberra is disappointed to observe once he arrives in Praiseworthy, there are no "full-blooded" Aboriginal people for his discovery of a "dream civilisation" left (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 318), their "purity" destroyed by "modern thought" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 317). The "racist creepy colonial history of the region" furthermore refers to the assimilation policies of the Australian state, as well as the history of child removals (Stolen Generations) and the abuse of First Nations' women by white men and the high number of pregnancies resulting from rapes (see also Melissa Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip*). In this sense, no one in Praiseworthy is likely able to claim supposedly "pure" Aboriginal ancestry.

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[310] *The Swan Book* also already referred to the Northern Territory Intervention. For an analysis see Klein, "Intervention"

However, I argue that the question of "purity" is not at all the question that the narrative is concerned with. Through its imagery of the empty barrel, the slithering snakes and the reminder of colonial history, the paragraph above strongly criticizes the thought patterns that the townspeople have taken on in their quest for assimilation. These categorizations are of colonial origin and not local tradition. Much like Cause Man Steel/Planet/Widespread, the townspeople have been seduced by the possibility to claim land as possession: "Widespread knew real hate sounded like real estate, and he lived off it. This was his temple where hate sprung up from everywhere in the realm, it rained hate, and you could feel the vibrations of contempt gyrating like snakes radiating around a snake's temple of worship" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 248). Here as well, the image of the snake returns in verbal repetition, and property rights ("real estate") is identified as a cause of hatred and animosity. Possession of Country in the white colonizer's sense instead of the caretaking of Country as thought in Aboriginal epistemologies as caring for ancestors and relationality lie at the root of the issues. Where the first causes exclusion and separation, the second is supposed to foster interconnection and community.[311]

Cause Man Steel with his dreaming of his transport conglomeration does not fit into the white assimilationist town of Praiseworthy and he was thus "history blanked. Cancelled. . . . He was not in their culture. Not in the long tradition. He was nothing" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 245). The play of words refers to the catchphrase "cancel culture" that has been mainly appropriated by populist discourses. Originally describing the revocation of (social) support for people exhibiting offensive, racist, homophobic, or sexist (among others) behaviors, "cancel culture" is now mainly connotated with the attempt to "silence free speech." Once again, I argue that the narrative here produces meaning on more than one level. For one, there is the cancelling of Cause Man Steel by the Praiseworthy townspeople, the silencing of an undesired voice. He is written out of their history and thus declared irrelevant. Also, this is still linked to the assimilationist behavior that has infected the townspeople, which means that it has its origin in white colonialism and racism. As such it refers to the century-long practice of silencing Indigenous histories and voices (see Section 2.3 and Spivak's concept of epistemic violence). The statement therefore produces ambiguity.

This ambiguity can be resolved (at least partially) by taking into consideration the axes of power involved in this "cancelling." The withdrawal of support for a person in (relative) power by a person of (relative) subordination due to the first person's harmful behavior would be considered

[311] This opposition between individualism and community-centered thinking and acting is also alluded to in the quotation from the novel at the beginning of this chapter. The "flatlands of the *blessed be though, more blessed be I*" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 6) can be seen as a first sarcastic hint at the interweaving of (white) Christian belief, individualism and capitalism.

justified. The withdrawal of support (or active suppression) of a person of (relative) subordination by a person of (relative) power which is not based on harmful behavior by the first person, on the other hand, would not be considered justified but could be considered an abuse of power, especially if it is only done in order to further the interest of the person in (relative) power. So with regard to Praiseworthy and Cause Man Steel, the question would be, "Who is in (relative) power?" and "Is there a moment in which this power shifts?" And much like in the case of colonial history writing, the cancellation of Cause Man Steel equals the cancellation of a voice in relative subordination by the people in power. So there is once again a parallelism between not just the behavior but also the effect of the behavior of the white assimilationist townspeople and colonialist practice. Where the townspeople have been the recipients of racist colonialist policies in the past, they are now the ones employing them.

All of this adversity and hate pollute the haze, the ancestors, until the "whole thing turned sour. The dome transformed into an aerial cemetery when it became a slow-moving dust tomb that could not free itself from the sheer weight of dead, broken insects" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 658). As Alexis Wright remarks in an interview: the haze is "compiled of the events or things that have gone wrong, not caring for Country in the way that it should be, and now we see the unprecedented climate change events taking place" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy"). The haze is a manifestation of Country's reaction to the human lack of caring.

One of the novel's protagonists is Cause Man Steel, who also carries the names Planet and Widespread. He is called "Cause" because he is always fighting for a cause, specifically for survival in the face of global warming: "Cause Man Steel—cause, cause and effect. He was hard all right, like the power ancestor's essence in Australia's iron ore" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 4). His long speeches on climate change also gain him the name "Planet", always "acting like he was the biggest and only real guardian angel in the ancestral law-bound black man's world" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 24). And because he always has ideas about everything and is spreading them around, he is called "Widespread."[312] The "Steel" in his name is a reference to his "solidness," for his "brain was composed of the heavy inward and durable skid-resistant substance of aggregated concrete," which connects him to the earth and puts him in complete opposition to his wife Dance – who is associated with air, butterflies and moths – and the Major Mayor Ice Pick and his translucent hologram (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 34–35).

[312] "They . . . named him Widespread—for the breadth of his ideas spreading all over the place. Or they called him Planet—because he was talking planetary stuff. Or else, they called the weirdo by his real name—Cause Man Steel—cause, cause and effect. He was hard all right, like the power ancestor's essence in Australia's iron ore." (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 4).

Cause is obsessed with the idea that the world is "committing suicide", "omnicide" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 24), and in his obsession "could generate more hate stories in half an hour from a bunch of locals, than any combined humanity of the world could create with all their gossip in a lifetime" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 25).[313] He is the "zeitgeist" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 3), and outspoken against any form of assimilation (which is "really vogue" in Praiseworthy (24)), and he puts the responsibility for environmental destruction firmly on the colonizers' shoulders (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 25). His hatred of the white government, however, also turns against the people in Praiseworthy:

> *Why you mob negotiating treaties with people who fucked up your land in two centuries flat after our ancestors were able to survive here for millennia*? He ripped the local treaty-mongers, the reconciliation faithful, the recognition front line. *Don't forget Aboriginal Sovereignty knowledge. . .treaties worth nothing* (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 25).

For all his rejection of reconciliation and treaty negotiations, Widespread is convinced that the "survival of humanity had always been an economic question" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 38). He therefore thinks up his donkey transportation business as alternative to fossil-fueled transportation. In his pursuit of the perfect platinum-colored donkey (the grey color of success), he is "walking on the metaphorical thin ice of ambition with economic passion growing up from the roots sunk deep into the dirt under his feet" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 97). And as it "happens when you go chasing a dream, where in the excitement of the hunt you feel invincible, you become colourblind, you lose your mind, . . . and start seeing things differently, as though this wrong thing you were chasing was exactly what you needed" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 55). On the hunt for the platinum donkey, Planet drives through country in his old, rusted Falcon. The Falcon can only transport one donkey at a time. Every time that Planet thinks he has found the one, perfect platinum donkey, he must discover upon his return to Praiseworthy that the grey color of the new donkey is just the same dull grey of all the other donkeys, and he thus continues his search. He is, in fact, "looking for a creature of myth, one capable of creating magic, of fulfilling every wish, and never gave up hoping to turn his donkey business into gold" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 362).

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[313] Wright herself called the Anthropocene "omnicide": "In the movement toward progress and modernity, the importance of ancestral knowledge was forgotten. The deliberate severing of this link—humankind's oldest knowledge, its oldest wisdom—from the so-called modern world was not a good idea when you think of the Anthropocene, now termed omnicide, or our collective suicide" Wright ("Inward"). The term goes beyond what is generally referred to as "ecocide" as "the heedless or deliberate destruction of the natural environment through various human activities that endanger human life. It is the extreme environmental degradation of the vital areas needed for the survival of indigenous communities. Ecocide might result from 'externalities' such as pollution, which destroy the ecosystem or from less-than-adequate safety procedures utilised by corporations, governments, etc., operating on the indigenous lands themselves. This leads to a situation where the lands, the reproductive ability and the long-term health of the indigenous population are irreparably damaged" (Mwangi 4).

Alexis Wright remarks that one of the big questions she was asking in this novel, was "what has brought us here? You know, what do our people have to be, the oldest living culture in the world, to be able to survive?" and she cautions that hope alone cannot be the answer (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy"). For Wright, it all comes down to the "desire to survive" and a proactive approach to the next decades and centuries: "what is plan A? What is plan B? And how are you going to take your people into the future?" (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy"). From this perspective, both Ice Pick and Cause Man Steel offer up plans and ideas on how to survive: Ice Pick in his attempt to completely assimilate and Cause in his attempt to become economically independent with his transport conglomeration. Whereas Ice Pick's plan is set up to fail from the start because the colonial logic will never allow for full assimilation (see Section 2.2 on the "colonial *other*"), Cause's plan seems completely ludicrous during most of the novel, but actually produces the desired result at the end, the transport business along ancestral roads booms. However, Cause becomes the catalyst for just another capitalist resource extraction of Country:

> It was too much, as other people in the country who were not the traditional owners wanted to become part of the ancestral roads too, and to be part of the ancient laws, and they could not make treaties that recognised Aboriginal sovereignty and Aboriginal government quick enough. You want to know who paid for all this? Country. Country coughed it up. Coughed up the money. Chucked the cash of frivolity around like it was nothing but a trifle for the great ancestral powers governing the land in all times. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 652–53)

So even though the end result is as intended because it is a capitalist venture, even the fossil-fuel-free transport conglomeration relies on the exploitation of Country. Moreover, in his execution of the plan, Cause is heavily criticized, often with a heavy dose of irony:

> He stooped so low from carrying the weight of the entire world on his bony shoulders, that his face was almost touching the ground in front of him, like he was studying the dirt of the planet itself . . .. This was the local influencer: a modern god preaching about the planet collapsing. They call this type of person a collapsologist, someone specialising in collapsology. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 5)

Cause's perpetual search and his refusal to give up on his vision turn Cause's mind into a prison (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 136). When at home, he constantly volleys his speeches resembling "hellfire and brimstone" at his two sons, preaching about the "global warming famine catastrophe like you can't even imagine" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 472). At the same time, he collects newspaper clippings "ad nauseam about the Australian government's racist intervention policies to control the lives of Aboriginal people" with which his wife Dance papers the walls in their house, turning it into an "archive of hell" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 471). When he is not preaching, Cause is absent, driving along circular lines in his search for the perfect donkey. Dance, the mother, due to her affinity to moths also often called the "moth-er," is just as absent because she retreats into her dream world of butterflies and moths. Where Cause invests all his energy into building his

conglomeration, resembling a panicked activism that seems hopeless throughout most of the novel, Dance is forced into a form of inner emigration: Dance "would eventually switch off her own internal nervous breakdown antennae that were looking pretty buggered up these days, and blocking out her imaginative world where all the racists lived, she would calmly continue counting the moths" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 473). Dance can thus be interpreted as a personification of what Wright has termed "inward migration":

> This inward migration can be described as being locked in a prison of the mind. It can also be described as retreating to the dwelling place of stories: a return to country, going home to where the stories of our culture are kept in the mind—for the mind that knows how to read country. The inward migration is most often a solitary journey, a turning away from the bombarding speed of reality hitting your very sense of being and destroying your soul. Returning to the place of country held in the mind is a way of figuring out how to deal with the powerlessness we sometimes feel from having to continually hold back the end-of-the-world times and confront ongoing realities. It's where we go to slowly pick things apart, to reimagine our world in new ways, and sometimes we come out the other side with a map of how to make some sense of our world. (Wright, "Inward" n.p.)

It would therefore be shortsighted and a repetition of colonialist tropes to interpret Dance and Cause's parenting as "absent" or "insufficient." Instead, both characters are caught in the violent structures of the continuing colonial and racist violence in Australia and perform different strategies of coping with this violence: that of inward migration and that of attempting to find self-determination through economic independence.

When Aboriginal Sovereignty disappears, Cause is accused of murdering his son (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 464) and becomes the imagined realization of the racist stereotype of the "black father killer, the John Howard image imprinted on the brain of the Australian citizenry" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 465), a clear echo of the hypervisibility of Black crime in Australian media. John Howard was the prime minister who authorized the Northern Territory intervention. The effect of the Northern Territory intervention on Aboriginal families and children is one major topic of the novel, most effectively narrated through in the characters Aboriginal Sovereignty and his brother Tommyhawk. I will discuss these two characters in more detail in the following section.

4.3.3 These Perfect Youth Suicidal Nights – Tommyhawk and Aboriginal Sovereignty

Cause Man Steel and Dance have two sons together. The first is named "Aboriginal Sovereignty" by his father, "for young hope and all that emotion-laden charged asset language of the modern day" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 150). As a name for a person, Aboriginal Sovereignty is incredibly "charged," with all the different understandings of sovereignty that have been explained in Section 2.3.4. This includes, e.g., Lyons' concept of "rhetorical sovereignty" and Simpson's "embodied sovereignty" but also her definition of "self-determination", which extends to both Indigenous

"political cultures and non-hierarchical systems of governance" and is used "to mean the maintenance of these relationships through balance, care, and nurturing rather than coercion" (Simpson, "Place" 19). As Geoff Rodoreda points out for *The Swan Book*, "Wright resists romanticising sovereignty as a singular political goal that may one day benefit all Indigenous people" (Rodoreda 196) and instead leaves it open to both interpretation and negotiation. This also holds true for Praiseworthy, because Aboriginal Sovereignty keeps getting claimed by different groups – the townspeople, the white superhero cop anthropologist, and Cause Man Steel – in his absence. However, the appropriation is never successful. For example,

> . . . the deep chasm that lay between himself [Cause] and Aboriginal Sovereignty remained a bridgeless place, never to be crossed . . . He [Cause] would never see the police cars roaring through the streets of his son's brain, nor where the deafening sirens roared even louder through thin walls, and open windows in the middle of the night, nor feel how his brain was blasted apart by pistols aimed at his head, nor know the intimate fear of running like dogs accused by the state of being paedophiles. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 61–62)

Cause may have named Aboriginal Sovereignty for his own imaginations and hopes of what the name may mean, but there is no connection between father and son. Aboriginal Sovereignty is battered by the racist government policies and media representations of what in the narrative is the adaptation of the Northern Territory Intervention. But for all his tirades about the racist government, Cause Man Steel is never able to empathize with his own son and never questions how it affects his children. Instead, he is so focused on building his donkey business that he is completely absent even when he is physically present.

Aboriginal Sovereignty is suspected of being a pedophile, but how and why only becomes intelligible later in the narrative. What the reader learns first is that his brother Tommyhawk Steel called the police on his brother, accusing him of being a pedophile (310).[314] Aboriginal Sovereignty is arrested and charged with the crime of having sex with a minor, but towards the middle of the novel, the townspeople remember that the case is not as clear-cut as that sounds. Aboriginal Sovereignty had only just turned seventeen when he was arrested, and his girlfriend is fifteen, almost sixteen years of age. So only a little more than one year separate the two in age (311-312). But where the town remembers a love-story, and especially one that was conducted

[314] This is first suggested on page 164, when Tommyhawk recalls talking to his brother: "This is what the government is saying. Not me saying it. It was all in the newspapers. I even know the hotline. We got it at school. The number is stuck on the wall. They told us to call if we are frightened of any men . . . I reckon you are one of those paedophiles. You are? Your girlfriend is underage? She still goes to school. The police will be coming for you, you know?" and then explicitly confirmed on page 310. Until then, there are multiple references of him threatening "to tell on Aboriginal Sovereignty" so that the reader is already quite sure that Tommyhawk is responsible for his brother's arrest.

right by traditional law (308-309), the white judicial system sees a crime and the girlfriend, " actually his wife now" is "taken into institutional care by the government of Canberra" (174). Once the additional information on the small age-gap is revealed, the narrative returns to the day of Aboriginal Sovereignty's attempted suicide.

Chapter four – narrated by the fourth oracle that is called upon to "speak true" – starts with the following warning: "Listen! Unravel the mystery death thing correctly. Look proper way. Carefully. See detail, if you want to see properly. Go back to the night Aboriginal Sovereignty walked into the sea . . ." (337). Chapter two – and oracle two, the one called upon to "speak up" – already narrated Aboriginal Sovereignty's drawn-out walk into the sea as observed by his brother Tommyhawk (150). Chapter four now returns to this moment but instead of focalizing through Aboriginal Sovereignty, it returns to the town of Praiseworthy and the pandemic of "young Aboriginal kids suiciding to get out of reality, by going home to the ancestors" (309). Aboriginal Sovereignty is by no means the only child to commit suicide in Praiseworthy. The beach is haunted by the ghosts of children who had committed suicide in "these perfect youth suicidal nights of Praiseworthy" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 151) and Country recognizes the loss: "Even fish stayed away from the sorry place. It felt like a massacre was still happening right here, and when you thought about it, it was" (452). Shortly after, the high number of suicides is described as "another stolen generation" (453): "Put very simply, those children had felt the pointlessness of the new era, that there was no future. . . . there had been no new reality dawning as far as they were concerned" (454) and in their hopelessness they choose death over this life.

Tommyhawk has been watching his peers committing suicide for a long time. The reader learns in Chapter 2 that Tommyhawk is always standing in the mangroves, "always hanging around, hiding and watching the misery of others, like a little academic who thought he knew it all" (157). Tommyhawk always stays and watches them walk out to the sea, never "leaving the scene until he was sure they were not coming back" (162). Tommyhawk is "obsessed with ways of committing suicide" and is constantly watching his schoolmates for "signs of their weakness, those he thought would commit suicide, go all the way, until he hit on what pushed them in the end—humiliation, the slightest mishap, a word out of place, a betrayal of their innermost shame. . . .he had felt like a feather breaking a camel's back" (171). While this description portrays a total lack of empathy, throughout the narrative it becomes clear that Tommyhawk is a victim of the racist narrative by the government and white media, of its epistemic violence (see Section 3.5 for a definition). He has been "born into the shrill of a nation constantly yelling at the top of its voice about how to fix up the black problem" and by "the time he reached his eighth year, he had

graduated as a student of racism (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 68). The racism is so very internalized for the young boy that it has become a virus, a pandemic:

> It was as though his brain was being eaten alive by a though virus, a pandemic, where every Aboriginal child was at risk. He spent every moment of the day traying to escape from the imagined virus snaring him into its grips and finally killing him. . . . He lived in a state of emergency, of total vigilance, of trying to second-guess the invisible paedophiles out to get him. (208-209)

The "state of emergency" is a play on words of the Northern Territory Intervention, which called the abuse and neglect in the territory a national emergency, legitimizing the revocation of citizen rights for Aboriginal people. But instead of a pandemic of abuse by Aboriginal parents, the novel turns the gaze back on the torrent of abuse by continuing racist and colonialist discourses *about* Aboriginal parents. The state of emergency is caused by the very people claiming to want to intervene.

Tommyhawk believes everything he hears on the news about paedophiles being everywhere in Aboriginal communities. He is completely indoctrinated (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 65) but most of all he is terribly afraid. His mind is wrung out, he is too afraid to sleep at night (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 170), constantly afraid of becoming the next victim. The danger is invisible but ever present, because "the white people were hiding something from him. They were not even telling him how to identify the Aboriginal people they were talking about who were going to harm him. When. How. Identification" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 170).[315] Tommyhawk is completely terrorized, and he feels "fish-dead, dead enough, completely dead from his fulltime exhausted effort of keeping himself alive" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 185). The reference of feeling fish-dead echoes the fish avoiding the water around the beach where many children committed suicide and therefore hints that Tommyhawk is just as desperate as they are and just as vulnerable to depression and suicidal thoughts. But instead of giving in, he has constructed the dream of being adopted by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, which would allow him to live in parliament house and to become a rich white child, untouched by the desperation in Praiseworthy (see Section 2.2.1 on Omni and Winant's criticism of assimilationist policies in the context of the ethnicity paradigm, which asserted that assimilation could be reached by changing "cultural values").

The night of his brother's suicide, Tommyhawk is torn between running out to save his brother and the deep conviction that he can only survive himself if he completely dissociates from the moment, sinking into the belief that he is better than everyone else in Praiseworthy and will soon be rescued (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 184–88). While the description of the boy being bored by his brother's suicide and eating a bag of chips while watching (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 185, 188)

[315] Tommyhawk is completely caught up in security and surveillance thinking.

again fuels the interpretation of Tommyhawk as a sociopath, this picture is set into perspective soon after:

> There were times when you could see the sickness of conquering floating in the air as a general thing, spreading over a couple of centuries more than any new worldwide virus pandemic. Tommyhawk had told his father about Aboriginal Sovereignty trying to kill himself, as he had always been trying to talk to him about kids committing suicide, and he remembered his father acting as though he had not spoken, as though he had not even heard him speak. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 202)

At eight years old, Tommyhawk is already completely disillusioned. His attempts to warn his father of Aboriginal Sovereignty's suicide have been ignored, and his father refuses to listen to warnings of acute danger to his children.[316] The narrative clearly explains this impassiveness as a result of centuries of colonization, as the "sickness of conquering" (202). Much like Tommyhawk has been indoctrinated, so has Cause learnt that he cannot win against overwhelming and deep-seated racism. In the second half of the novel, the narrative reveals that Cause used to be different, that he used to care about the youth suicides at the beach. However, the last time that he tried to prevent a mass suicide, he was suddenly accused of being a pervert:

> There was a suicide pact of ten schoolchildren but someone saved them that time. No one remembered if it was Cause Man Steel who had actually stopped the kids in time. He was out at night, down on this same beach where he had set up his own one-man night patrol with a high-beam light spinning from the top of his sedan, watching what the kids were doing in the middle of the night. This was the first time he had been accused by the shire council of being a prowler, a peeping tom. Forgot all about that time. Forget it happened. It was always funny how the negative part of the mind started jumping ahead of itself in the twenty-first century, and spoke out of turn. (453)

Because he is an Aboriginal man, his concern is turned on its head. The shire council immediately assumes the worst about his intentions, which in turn allows them to completely disregard the bigger problem of youth suicides.

As the pages in my references show, information about the characters, Aboriginal Sovereignty's suicide and the general situation in Praiseworthy are revealed in snippets throughout the 661-pages novel. Information begins to add new layers and builds a bigger picture in each circuit of the storylines.

As such, stories are also central to the relation between the people in Praiseworthy and the traditional Country. As the stories change that the people in Praiseworthy tell each other – fueled

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[316] The same is true when Aboriginal Sovereignty warns Cause that Tommyhawk has become indoctrinated to a level that has become dangerous: "Cause walked away" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 211). Tommyhawk is also a self-fulfilling prophesy: At his birth, Cause decides that the boy is going to be a "fascist" (62) and refuses to give him the traditional name he had thought up for his second son: "Tommyhawk! Same one Widespread had refused to call Duruki. Eight years old now. Fat kid." (157)

by despair and hate, especially through the racist narratives of assimilation – they become more and more disconnected from Country. The children committing suicide in Praiseworthy are immersed in "new legends" and "new sagas" of a "white world . . .. [i]magining a white people army taking control of their lives" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 152).

These white legends are those of the "killer father" and the "Aboriginal paedophile" as told by the government. Both Aboriginal Sovereignty and Tommyhawk become the "national narrative" in their own right. Tommyhawk decides for himself that he is the national narrative as the "victim of injustice in the country's historical theft situation" (207). In a Country that has publicly acknowledged its occupation of traditional Aboriginal land in the form of the Mabo decision, only to immediately invent a legal construction that allows to extinguish original possession in the form of the Native Title Act (see Section 2.3.2), the Rudd-apology to the Australian First Nations (see Section 4.3.1) and the initiation of a national reconciliation process is immediately followed by extreme vilification of Aboriginal communities – and especially Aboriginal men – in the discourse of the Northern Territory Intervention. Tommyhawk is therefore living in the very middle of the national narrative of "a totally dysfunctional world crawling with paedophiles" (208). He has learnt about this "Because the Australian government—also, for the Aborigines—had said so" (208). This last sentence is once again a grammatical reminder that the Australian government is marked as white. Supposedly neutral and responsible for all Australian citizens, the insertion "also, for the Aborigines" with the specific inclusion of the racial slur for "Australian First Nation" or "Aboriginal people," turns them into an afterthought or a justification. Policies are supposedly "color-blind" (see Section 2.2 on the concept of color-blind racism), which, in effect, makes them iterative of existing racist structures.

Tommyhawk is both exoticized as "genetically and spiritually wired to fight calamity, ice ages, global warming, any kind of Anthropocene climate change, as well as contagions, viruses or diseases, or anything relating to the above" as part of the oldest surviving culture on earth studied by anthropologists and hailed as the solution to climate change by New Age environmentalists (see Section 3.5), while at the same time saying "what the assimilationists wanted from young Indigenous minds. Yep! Exactly that" (210). He shows the dichotomy of racist colonialist thinking of Indigenous peoples as the "noble savage" (see Section 2.1.2 for a definition of the concept and its usage within colonial discourse), as always already extinct (see Section 2.3.5), and the simultaneous demand for them to assimilate into the white nation. He also illustrates how the concept of assimilation (see Section 2.2) is a constant deferral of "belonging" to the hegemonic culture (see Section 2.2 on the criticism on the ethnicity paradigm, and Section 2.1 for colonial discourses on assimilation and hybridization).

Aboriginal Sovereignty becomes the national narrative not as the victim whose justice is eternally deferred, but as the Black oversexualized man who abuses innocent children. Even though he is only seventeen himself, at the police station he is "accused countless times. . .of being a hostile dirty old paedophile savage" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 518). He is not the noble savage to be rescued and preserved, but the savage driven by his sexual desires with no control over his impulses. In this reimagination, Aboriginal Sovereignty as the person he truly is "ceased to exist, . . . his body parts cast into nothingness. He was dead to his world" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 518). He is Agamben's bare life that is politically qualified as "without worth." As such, as not belonging to the lives that are to be grieved (Butler's "grievable life"), he is no longer protected from police violence: "Eye sockets bloodied, pushed into the back of his head" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 518).

As the first supposed Aboriginal pedophile caught in the area, the first pedophile caught for creating a rampant scourge on the white purity of Australian conscience" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 514), Aboriginal Sovereignty becomes the personification of "the imagination of the nation-state, the dull dirty lens of Australian folk law. Yep! He was the ethnological story. He fed the hunger. Fattened the mudslinger's narrative of racial vilification. He was the paedophile savage" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 518). The whole rhetoric of this "racial vilification" discharges on the one teenage boy who is guilty of nothing but sleeping with his girlfriend (wife in traditional law) who is just about a year younger than him. In his deprival of a "life worth living" he becomes an allegory for what Moreton-Robinson refers to as the "race war," a symbol for white vindication:

> Some dirty old black paedophile had been captured. Oh! Rest in peace. Success and vindication at last. The national narrative strengthened at the total cost of billions of dollars to hold back the tide of black justice through a simple illusion of fear, the dreaded uprising of the soul, the spirit of black savages attacking Australian domesticity. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 518–19)

The "spirit of black savages attacking Australian domesticity" are echoes of the Australian frontier Gothic that "conscripts Aboriginal people into the role of white society's 'darker self'" (van Toorn, "Terrors" 87). Because the continuing existence of First Nations Australians represents "a serious challenge to the moral legitimacy of colonialism", they are induced as fearsome villains (van Toorn, "Terrors" 87).[317] The spirits are also the unsettling reminders of the white unbelonging in the face of the original dispossession. They represent a crisis of identity and need to be contained. As such, Aboriginal Sovereignty "become[s] tied into the chosen shame of a continent stolen from his people by a pack of racists, who had turned the argument against the people whose land they

[317] See also Althans (*Darkness*); Althans ("White"); Althans ("White") The Australian Gothic is a projection of the white unconscious back at the white settler and needs to be read as such. It is not the Black reflection of the white settler in Indigenous texts as the term "postcolonial Gothic" often suggests and as Bartha reads it for Wright's novel *Plains of Promise*. For a disambiguation see Holgate.

had stolen, and whose intergenerational lives have never recovered from so great a loss" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 516).

Where Tommyhawk becomes the national narrative about the child victim, Aboriginal Sovereignty becomes the national narrative about the Black abuser.

As Alexis Wright states about *Praiseworthy*:

> It's a work of fiction, it's an imagined world, but it's a world that's also affected by issues of government intervention in their lives and the ideas that were influenced in the book by what actually happened in the Northern Territory. The Intervention was rolled out on Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory by the federal government to change the national narrative about support for Aboriginal people, which had been built through the Reconciliation process. And this little boy [Tommyhawk], what happened, it was rolled out in a very hostile way, and through the media, through politicians, through anybody who thought that it was alright to say anything they like about Aboriginal people, and they did, and a lot of it was really, really toxic. This was all broadcast through the media, through radio, television, newspapers, social media, and it went on and on.
>
> This little boy. . . What I thought when I was thinking about writing this book was, what happens to our children? Our children can hear all this. How do they become affected? (Wright, "Discussing Praiseworthy")

These modern myths and legends about Australian First Nations people and communities influence not just the current generation, but the one to come as well. These are often the dominant stories that the children grow up with and which they internalize.[318]

At the same time, these legends are just another layer of stories: "Myths were stacked to the proverbial rafters of the universe from the ice age to the white age, but wait a minute, listen. The white law was just that, white law. There was a whole stack of laws in the world" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 522). The myths are put back into perspective – into the long history of survival by the Aboriginal peoples in Australia. If they can survive the ice age, they can survive the white age – provided they remember that the "white law" is not the be all and end all of existence. This can even be observed in the sentence structure that can be read fairly fluently in the first part with the rhyme "ice age" and "white age" and that through this rhyme not only sets the "white age" up as an epoch that will pass by and can be overcome, but that also echoes the white ice in the "white law," strengthening a connotation of coldness and disregard. This echo is followed by three pauses in the rhythm of the sentence, visualized by the two commas and the period: "but, wait a minute, listen.", while also explicitly calling for the reader to break their stride, pause for thought and

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[318] The narrative of racism has always been a master narrative: "One of the key functions of master narratives is that they offer people a way of identifying what is assumed to be a normative experience. In this way, such storylines serve as a blueprint for all stories; they become the vehicle through which we comprehend not only the stories of others, but crucially of ourselves as well. For ultimately, the power of master narratives derives from their internalisation" (Bamberg and Andrews 1).

reconsider that while the "white law" is currently the one in power, this is not an inevitable destiny. Instead, even this white law is just one of many laws, relativizing its importance in comparison to a multitude of different perspectives. These contemporary myths are just another possible storyline interwoven with others that are just as relevant:

> Country always tells its people that there are endless ways of reading its world, depending on whether you are a moth, a butterfly, a dragonfly, a mountain chain, the sea, a river, moon, or stars, or the atmosphere itself. The story was always about sanctity, the sacredness of country. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 481)

This interpretation is further supported by Wright's concept of the "sovereignty of the mind" which is the precondition for any fight for "sovereignty of the country or the land" (Wright and Zable). For Wright, "sovereignty of mind" is the ability to keep "the basic architecture of how you think," which in turn means that "you [own] the freedom of your mind, that unimpeded space to store hope and feed your ability to survive" (Wright, "Weapon" 21). As such it is similar to Thiong'o's decolonized mind, and even more to Leane Simpson's embodied and emplaced sovereignty:

> If sovereignty from indigenous perspectives includes our bodies, then it also includes our minds and our knowledge system. To me, that means the ability to regenerate indigenous languages, philosophies, legal systems, and intellectual systems and to nurture and continue those systems for the always coming new generations. Our ways of thinking come from the land; our intellectual sovereignty is rooted in place. (Simpson, "Place" 21)

Understanding the sovereignty of mind as the ability to keep thought and knowledge structures free from assimilation but also as the continued immersion in traditional stories also means remaining rooted in Country (because stories are always localized and emplaced). This has led Geoff Rodoreda to observe that, in turn, with "disconnection from country . . . in sense of not taking care, not just displacement – comes disconnection in mind" (Rodoreda 205). Taking care of Country means listening to Country and listening to its stories. Where this is no longer observed or where other stories become too loud (those of assimilation or capitalist ventures), caretaking becomes fractured.

In the novel, this fracture is signified by the loss of Aboriginal Sovereignty, in the wake of which Country becomes almost completely silent:

> Sometimes, you would feel country roaring even on a still day, even in a concrete jungle you hear them telling stories, sometimes like thunder, sometimes just the tree swinging in the wind, sometimes through things you never heard of, or seen before. . . . But not while the haze ancestors were talking low after Aboriginal Sovereignty never came back – their voices fading to almost nothing they want to say to you anymore" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 153).

The loss of Aboriginal Sovereignty and all the other children to suicide in Praiseworthy is considered as an important failure in taking care of Country and its relations.[319]

4.3.4 Disposable Humanity Claimed Only by Oceans and a Rhapsody Travelling in the Winds

The separation between Country and the people in Praiseworthy is, as mentioned above, symbolized through the loss of the character of Aboriginal Sovereignty. But it is also narrated in different forms. For one, once Aboriginal Sovereignty is lost to the sea, Cause "finally realised that he was no longer related in a place where everything was related" (248). But instead of returning to taking care of Country properly, Cause descends even further into an individualist form of thinking:

> . . . he realised the pointlessness of hoping for the climate to change. This realisation drove home his need to settle his so-called legitimate claim against Praiseworthy's long-suffering multitudes of conflicting Native Title claims, to prove that he alone had unbroken access to his traditional lands in spite of over two centuries of colonial annihilation, and where the theft of Aboriginal land on a colossal scale from here to kingdom come had left bugger-all of his Native Title land to claim back for all that it was. A ring of steel around his own cemetery was where he must build the high-fangled techno transport conglomeration with pack donkeys to save the fate of his people, or even perhaps, the whole country from that total crisis stage of them having nothing left, not a litre of gas to save themselves. (249-250)

The loss of connection to Country lets Cause perceive of land as property (which is white colonialist thinking) and to double down on his Native title-claim for the cemetery. He even goes as far as to imagine a "ring of steel" around the land, which is of course a reference to the border walls erected between the United States and Mexico under the Trump administration. When Country is viewed as property, not as relation, access rights are regulated and surveilled. Land becomes nothing but a resource that is to be possessed and extracted from.

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[319] Wright also remarks that for a sovereignty of mind, Indigenous people often need to retreat in a form of inward migration: "This inward migration can be described as being locked in a prison of the mind. It can also be described as retreating to the dwelling place of stories: a return to country, going home to where the stories of our culture are kept in the mind—for the mind that knows how to read country. The inward migration is most often a solitary journey, a turning away from the bombarding speed of reality hitting your very sense of being and destroying your soul . . . This inward place is where we work with our own thoughts—our own sovereignty of mind, our own sovereignty of imagination—and where we keep our own knowledge safe" (Wright, "Inward"). In *Praiseworthy*, the character who seems to be lost in such a form of inward migration is Dance, the "moth-er," who is most concerned with dreaming about her moths and butterflies. That this extreme inward migration is not unproblematic is shown through the clear neglect of Tommyhawk, who Dance only notices when she mistakes him for a butterfly (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 69).

This disconnection between Country and people also becomes visible through the symbolism of the basics card. Supplied to welfare recipients, the welfare card is a form of income management that relies on control over autonomy.[320] The basics card can be used in certified stores and for specific products that are declared as essentials. It is supposed to reduce spending on alcohol, drugs, and other "unnecessary" items, as well as reduce cash flow which cannot be tracked. From a human rights perspective, however, these cards not only stigmatize their users, they also severely limit their self-determination. The system behind the card infantilizes the people required to use the card and prescribes not only what is deemed necessary for their everyday lives, but due to the licensing agreements, it also prescribes where to shop for which items, excluding a range of other options (including choice of brands or locations of shops).

The card receives the full attention of the sea lady – the spirit in the ocean – when she finds Aboriginal Sovereignty adrift in the waves. His suicide attempt has (not yet) been successful and he is just barely clinging on to life. When the sea lady tries to discern what exactly it is that keeps him tied to the mortal plane, she is aghast to learn that it is the basics card:

> *What thing had he left behind that was stopping him from dying*. . . . *You know what? It was the bloody Basics Card*. You know, the silly white government's tool for the twenty-first century for cruel means to suppress any real sense of sovereignty out of Aboriginal people. . . . Why was this boy of sovereignty thinking about racism when he could have been imagining the joy of death, or another joy, the hopefulness of his sovereignty in country? But! Hey no. Aboriginal Sovereignty was more worried about what would happen to his independence, about his bit of welfare entitlement, his social benefit under Australian law, even when he was dead. How was he going to feed himself if he lost his Basics Card. . . . Worrying about not having any money because he had forgotten to bring his Basics Card on his suicide, after he had been floating out there in the sea for days. The government was not worrying about eternity. It only worried about getting rolled over in the next election after a four-year trip of further disempowering the sovereign peoples. (351)

The passage is a hyperbole of the importance of the basic card in the life of welfare recipients and especially – since they are statistically overrepresented in this group – Australian Aboriginal people. The dependency on the card, which is at the very core of the government's intention behind introducing this card, is exaggerated to the extreme. It still takes center stage in Aboriginal Sovereignty's mind in the moments before his death. It is a symbol of the government's control tying itself so deeply into Australian First Nations life that it almost transcends death itself. In contrast, while the life of Aboriginal Sovereignty (as a placeholder for the majority of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory) is completely reduced to the card as symbol of control, the government is barely noticing its effect while preparing for the next election cycle.

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[320] The same system is used in Germany for the "Bezahlkarte" for asylum seekers.

The basics card becomes a symbol for Indigenous oppression and colonialist and racist structures in modern government. At the same time, the basics card also ties this racist structure of control to the capitalist structures of environmental pollution. For the basics card is but a piece of plastic, and

> . . . the sea lady was not interested in Basics cards. What use was another piece of plastic to her? The ocean was trashed with plastic. Untold billions of plastic bottles, and the rest of the many trillion bits and bobs floated into the centuries to come by winds, currents and waves, and journeying towards one of the many rubbish dumps, creating their own thousand-kilometres circling mass, gyres like giant weeping sores festering the ancestral planet in the centre of the ocean basins. (353)

The novel ties violent structures of racism together with the violent structures at the root of climate change. From the Indigenous perspective presented here, both issues are intertwined and introduced to their communities through colonization. Over time, they have affected, disturbed, and interrupted the storylines that connect them to their Country, and this rupture in turn has caused a loss of "sovereignty of mind." Without this sovereignty, community and individual resilience and resistance to racist propaganda is weakened:

> . . .the so-called right to be simply crazed about hating Aboriginals, which was nothing new, since what have you got? Invaders! Plus! A bad spirit that had grown fat on negativity. Equals what in whose law? Brokenness. Poverty broken. Broken generators. Broken homes. Broken emotions. Broken ties. Broken culture. Broken land. Broken people. Broken love? Broken joy? Race broken. A broken state of affairs. Broken band-aids. Broken children. Broken thoughts. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 518)

Country becomes a resource instead of a relation and traditional caretaking falls by the wayside and with it the foundations that strengthen the next generation.

However, the narrative does not end here. Aboriginal Sovereignty does not die at sea but is picked up by a refugee boat. He becomes one of the souls of "disposable humanity claimed only by oceans, and the sun above" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 527). The boat is filled with Nixon's "casualties of slow violence," climate change refugees of the "displacement era", which are critically underrepresented in the global consciousness (Nixon 13; Wright, *Praiseworthy* 531).

The boat is captained by Vert Vert,[321] who is most likely Pasifika and who knows the ancient sea laws about bodies found adrift in the water:

> He knew how ocean waters behaved, how its ghost carried a corpse of the Anthropocene in a roll, kept it floating on the surface while waiting to be found and taken from the sea. He had grown up

[321] The name „Vert Vert," meaning „green, green" is clearly another play of words on environmentalism. As connected to Country (i.e. the ocean) as Vert Vert is, he is exemplary of living "in tune" with Country, a concept often exoticized by Western environmentalists who remain ignorant of racist structures in their own movement (see Ferdinand). But as racialized Pasifika, Vert Vert is also one of the first to suffer from the consequences of climate change and ignored by the global community that still follows the hierarchical structures of Western (neo)colonialism.

> with a deep sense of these old sea laws about bringing back the bodies to their families, the sacred people of country who had died in shock after being tossed into the sea like the waste of humanity. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 535)

Aboriginal Sovereignty is thought to be such a "corpse of the Anthropocene," a casualty of the man-made disaster of Western colonization and industrialization. He is "tossed into the sea like the waste of humanity" because he was made the national narrative of the Black pedophile, but also because he is an example of what Foucault calls the state's power to "let die" (see "biopolitics" and the legitimization of violence in Section 3.3). In a pandemic of suicides in a small rural town, no one in power cared enough to change the circumstances that led to such all-encompassing desperation. In this sense, these are Galtung's violent structures that prevent a whole number of young people from reaching their potential (what he as termed "actualization", see Section 3.2).

What happens in Praiseworthy is happening everywhere, and the boat is so full that it cannot carry "much more. Not much more at all, and each secretly knew that the thing that was needed most of all, was to lighten the load. . . . It could have been anyone, anyone might have welcomed the boat sinking, and be done with it, for they wished to let go, the final lesson, letting go" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 532). Like Aboriginal Sovereignty, all of the refugees on the boat are so very desperate that they are on the brink of suicide. They are certainly too tired to keep on fighting for much longer. There is complete silence on board because "no language existed that was powerful enough to explain the world of one single person on the boat, nor was [Vert Vert] sure if a comprehending language of man-made atrocities would ever be developed that discovered how to empathise with the depth of loss in the sum total of human endurance" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 539). Trauma breaks down the causal structure of an event. Silence and the inability to narrate a traumatic event are therefore signs of (cultural) trauma (Caruth; LaCapra). At the same time, the act of narrating these events is key to countering the underrepresentation of victims of slow violence as identified by Nixon, leaving the people on the boat stuck between silence and expression. The boat is a liminal space (in Bhabha's terms also an interstitial pace, see Section 2.1.2): set on the brink between living and dying, overburdened and at risk of sinking.

Aboriginal Sovereignty is only saved through the intervention of the sea, of ancestral spirits:

> The chants of the sea will continue for all times, and sometimes, when you hear a rhapsody travelling in the winds across the water and far away in the flatlands, you will know it is the world rejoicing, and sometimes, it is the slow music of changing fate, like the way it was abruptly changing course in the time immemorial . . . sacred orders, renunciation, by intervening into a boy's suicide in those midnight hours. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 536)

The "rhapsody travelling in the winds" calls up Wright's comments on the "heartbeat of Country" and the need to listen to what the ancestors are saying through this song. Vert Vert is versed in old stories and can recognize the call for saving Aboriginal Sovereignty.

Once Aboriginal Sovereignty is on board, the boat is "caught in this sweep of the Australian net of closed borders, and if you were boat people you would never set foot in the country" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 537). This "net of closed borders" is a clear reference to the Australian policies of migration control that have been called out for their inhumanity over the last two decades (see, for example, Moreton-Robinson, *Possessive* 8). The Australian border control is sent out to sea to prevent refugee boats from reaching Australian soil since the latter would allow for a different form of application for asylum than an application started outside of the Australian territory. Preventing refugees from entering Australian sovereign territory excludes them from legal protection encased in the Australian constitution, a construction that – in tun – allows for indefinite internment in asylum detention camps such as on Nauru and Manus island outside Australian state borders. This form of detention is not possible once refugees have reached Australian soil.[322] This is therefore a strategy that legally defines a life as unworthy of protection (see Agamben's "bare life" in Section 3.4), or, in a different sense, as invisible to the laws that would otherwise offer a thin layer of protection. In this, it also resembles the mechanisms that Butler describes in her definition of "grievable lives" (Section

The dehumanization is made explicit when the people on the boat are "ordered to remove their clothes and identity, throw everything on the deck before leaving the pitching boat" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 541). A person who cannot identify themselves cannot petition for asylum and neither can they properly lay claim to an observance of human rights: For all these legal petitions require identification at their very first step. The border control officers are of course fully aware of this, which is *why* they order the refugees to throw away their identification (another piece of plastic discarded into the sea). Vert Vert tries to intervene as one of the few people able to speak English on the boat, but "he was wasting his bilingual tongue on speaking ignorance, to match a version of the dismal English language plaguing the Earth" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 538). Here, the English language as tool of colonial control becomes pars pro toto for continuing neocolonialism and racist subjugation of the "other."[323]

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[322] For a more in-depth analysis of how Refugee Camps and constructions of Australian Aboriginality by the state government are related see Grieves.

[323] See Section 2.2 on the use of the English language and English literature in the colonies and the role of both the use and the refusal to use English in the anticolonial struggle.

In other words, Vert Vert "meant to say that they [the boat people] were not in the business of invading other people's countries, or wishing to be destroyers of traditional lands with global-warming consequences. They were not colonising destroyers. They were not the ecocidal people. . . . They were not the ones murdering the planet of the broken homelands" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 541), but they are treated as such. They are as much the enemy in the "national narrative" as the constructed "Aboriginal paedophile." The border control is the "ocean shield, the protector of sovereign borders from all forms of invasion, its Indigenous inhabitants, viruses, diseases, and other peoples in the rapidly increasing ocean population of the landless" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 542). The sarcasm is heavy in this sentence, especially due to the juxtaposition of "invasion" and "indigenous," but also the "viruses" and "diseases" that have long been part of the history of genocide in the British colonies.

The refugees, Vert Vert and Aboriginal Sovereignty are all brought to a detention camp on an island outside Australian national territory. The Indigenous man held in a refugee detention camp becomes the poignant symbol for the dehumanization of white Australian law and government. This point of complete dehumanization is also the catalyst for Aboriginal Sovereignty's transformation. In the camp, he remembers the ancestral stories of his homeland:

> Those thoughts were where the ancestral spirits of country, the ghostly serpents, were winding the rivers, and where the dingo dogs were sleeping in the mountain range in the distance, sitting with their huge backs to him, and with the mangrove forest along the coastline that looked like tribespeople dancing ceremonies in the storm winds singing the stories, rhythms that continued to stay in his mind for days, or months, and sometimes, with the fog women spread across flat country for kilometre after kilometre, lying there like something extraordinary in the red haze. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 543)

And Aboriginal Sovereignty begins his own "travelling ceremony," he begins to "walk story," interweaving his own ancestral dreaming with that of the other refugees in the camp, until it becomes one shared dreaming of escape and freedom (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 544). Aboriginal Sovereignty is walking story, and as he walks the circles, his feet rhythmically beat against the earth, "waking the earth" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 552), and from this rhythm he transforms into wind:

> It was hard to believe what you were seeing when the ceremonial boy began shape-shifting into gale-force winds from the sea that screamed through the air while bringing what looked like hordes of praying mantises changing into the shape of plastic sheeting thrown over sticks blowing in a cascade through the shells whipped from the ground, and flying away in a slithering serpentine haze that took with it the storied law Aboriginal Sovereignty had told through his feet writing grids comprising tens of thousands of ceremonial tracks. (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 553)

Like the ancestors of the Dreaming, Aboriginal Sovereignty becomes the wind, becomes an ancestral spirit and in his transformation whirls up all the plastic polluting the sea like an angry

spirit raging at the disrespect. In this form, Aboriginal Sovereignty is finally able to return to his homeland. This transformation is not a "death" in the way that Western epistemologies understand it. Neither does it signal resignation or hopelessness:

> Older and wiser people said . . . that Aboriginal Sovereignty was everywhere, he had not left, he was hidden in his own spirit. They believed he had gone away for the time being to somewhere in the future, but he would be coming back. You won't find him yet they said. It was too dangerous as long as Aboriginal Sovereignty was not recognised as the true owner of so much power country (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 592–93)

This quote suggests that it was not yet the right time for Aboriginal Sovereignty to claim his full power. But it also suggests that the story of the young Aboriginal man is not a wasted one. Instead, it has become another storyline in the Dreaming of Praiseworthy, and he will eventually return. For, "of course, the spirit of Aboriginal Sovereignty never dies, for you cannot destroy what was infinitely existing in the law of country that always is, and always will be governing itself" (Wright, *Praiseworthy* 661).

Concluding the analysis of *Praiseworthy* on this statement of Aboriginal sovereignty and resilience, the last four sections can be summarized as follows. At first, I illustrated how the novel's narrative style deliberately slows down the reading process, contrasting it with the rapid pace of modern capitalism. The narrative's complex, lyrical structure is rich in intertextual references and against a complex backdrop of connotations of racist and environmental violence presents and represents the often-invisible nature of structural violence in general, and of slow violence in particular. This narrative style in addition to the length of the novel amounts to what Alexis Wright has termed "writing on scale" with the complexity of the contemporary world and the issues humanity faces in form of the climate crisis.

Viewed through the lens of this activist position, the narrative establishes a network of interconnections (through intertextual references, allegories, symbols or simply through association) between the ongoing colonialism, racial injustice, and environmental violence. As such, the narrative is also a manifestation of the Indigenous concept of relationality, and it presents an anti-colonial and anti-racist perspective. However, this complex network and wealth of references also overburden the reader. The interpretation of these references is not always distinct or linear. Instead, the narrative remains ambiguous on many levels. Nonetheless, central themes were identified in the analysis above. For instance, the narrative suggests that many of the issues faced by the residents of the town Praiseworthy are rooted in the disruption of the connection to culture (in the form of Country and kinship). This was shown at the example of the protagonist Cause Man Steel and his loss of connection to Country in his pursuit of a capitalist and exploitative dream. It has also been illustrated through his ongoing fight with the townspeople over Native title

to the cemetery in which it becomes apparent that both sides have forgotten their original responsibility of caretaking and custodianship towards Country and are now focused solely on land as possession. My analysis has further shown how this discussion about land as property is turned into a discussion of essentialist and racist definition of Aboriginality and how these discourses further serve to divide the community.

The second half of the analysis turned to the characters Aboriginal Sovereignty and Tommyhawk Steel as the personifications of two opposing effects of racist government discourses. For one, Tommyhawk was identified as the success story for assimilationist policies, dreaming of becoming white and living in the white world (of consumerism). His dreams were revealed as unreachable when his continuing wait for rescue remained unanswered. His dreams were also determined as the effects of internalized racism, which in turn has been defined as a form of violence.

Aboriginal Sovereignty who tries to live his life according to traditional laws (exemplified in his marriage to his slightly younger girlfriend) and who is criminalized and ostracized as a pedophile by the police and his community. His attempt at suicide, his rescue and subsequent internment as a refugee on an offshore island revealed that the Australian nation state is a *white possession* (as defined by Moreton-Robinson in Section 2.3. 3) and parallels the dehumanization and criminalization of refugees and asylum seekers by this same nation state. This has been identified as a form of racist and structural violence made visible through this connection on the structural level of the narrative. This shifted our understanding of borders from markers of territory to markers of race and added new meaning to the climate crisis symbolized by the ancestral haze over Praiseworthy when Aboriginal Sovereignty returns there to join his ancestors in the form of a dust cloud. It thus allowed me to argue that the climate crisis as presented in Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy* is a form of racist violence.

5 Conclusion and Outlook

In conclusion, the dissertation "Violent Intersections: A Poetics of Intersectionality in Contemporary Australian First Nations Novels" has explored how contemporary Australian First Nations novels narrate and address different forms of violence through the lens of intersectionality. Structural and systemic violence – manifested through ongoing colonization, racism, and their pervasive consequences – profoundly influences the lives and experiences of Indigenous peoples in Australia and globally. These forms of violence are deeply rooted in a legacy of marginalization and discrimination. The authors examined in Chapter 4, including Melissa Lucashenko, Paul Collis, and Alexis Wright, have employed unique narrative strategies to engage with these interconnected forms of violence without perpetuating racist stereotypes. Their work challenges dominant discourses while highlighting the resilience and resistance inherent in Indigenous communities.

5.1 Intersections of Theory and Theoretical Intersections

To fully understand these literary strategies, the analysis in this dissertation was grounded in several interconnected theoretical frameworks: postcolonial theory, critical race and critical whiteness theory, intersectionality, and critical Indigenous studies. Postcolonial theory, as discussed in Section 2.1, provided a foundation for examining the cultural, political, and material impacts of colonialism and the continued operation of colonial power structures in so-called post-independence states. The distinctions between settler colonialism and extractive colonialism, alongside the relationship between colonialism and capitalism, were key to understanding the systemic roots of violence analyzed throughout this dissertation. The application of postcolonial concepts such as cultural hybridity and the critique of colonial discourses revealed how these narratives deconstruct binaries and the racialized *other*. Furthermore, the section acknowledged criticisms of postcolonial theory, including its Western-centric tendencies, by incorporating critical race and critical whiteness theory to broaden the analysis.

Section 2.2 examined critical race theory, tracing its development from African American criticism and activism, and applied its central concepts, such as DuBois's "double consciousness" and the notion of institutional racism, to the Australian First Nations context. Critical whiteness theory, introduced in Section 2.2.2, shifted the analytical focus to interrogate how whiteness maintains its centrality and privilege, examining its social construction and historical contingency. The intersection of these theories, discussed in Section 2.2.3, emphasized the need for an intersectional approach that accounts for the overlapping and compounded effects of

discrimination based on race, gender, class, and other social categories. By recognizing these intersections, the dissertation underscored the importance of avoiding reductive analyses that fail to address the complex realities of marginalization and social justice. Critical Indigenous studies centered Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems (epistemologies) for the analysis of the novels. It recognized the unique cultural, legal, and spiritual dimensions of Indigenous sovereignty and identity, and introduced and explained concepts such as Country and its deep ties to ancestral and spiritual relationships, as well as the critique of colonial land possession articulated through the concept of *terra nullius*. The section also generally illustrated the fundamental disparities between Indigenous and settler-colonial worldviews. Additionally, the analysis addressed how Indigenous scholars have engaged with feminist and queer studies, often navigating tensions between these frameworks and Indigenous authenticity.

In Section 2.4, I first defined Genette's concepts of focalization, voice, and mood, before critically engaging with Susan Lanser's distinction between the private and public narrative planes, ultimately finding it insufficient for an intersectional analysis of Indigenous literature due to its grounding in white feminist frameworks. Lanser's proposal to examine narrative voice for traces of hegemonic discourse was adopted and expanded through Robyn Warhol's concepts of the engaging narrator and the unnarratable. The section then turned to Seymour Chatman's refinement of Genette's model, introducing the terms center, focus, slant, and interest-focus to more precisely distinguish between character and narrator perspectives. Most crucially, Chatman's division of perspective into position and line of sight was incorporated into the thesis' working terminology. Firstly, focus or focalization for narrative sections that are told by the narrator through the consciousness of a character. Secondly, slant for sections in a narrative that are told by the narrator without use of a focus. And third, perspective as a position and line of sight of the narrative text as a whole. This framework was then extended by engaging Caroline Levine's considerations of connections between form and content, as well as the ordering and patterning of narrative elements. Further contributions from postcolonial narratologists such as Fludernik, Gymnich, Prince, and Alber were included, as well as from Dorothee Klein and James Donahue, who tied a narrative's plot to Indigenous conceptions of place and the focalizer to their cultural specificity and location, respectively.

Ultimately, none of the existing models fully captured how *Too Much Lip*, *Dancing Home*, and *Praiseworthy* engage with the unmarked white position and the *white gaze* identified by critical whiteness studies. Therefore, this thesis linked the narratological concept of perspective (as position and line of sight) with the notion of the *gaze*, enabling an analysis of how these novels

assert their own narrative authority over whiteness as a marked and racialized construct, moving beyond mere resistance to a sovereign discourse of self-determination.

Chapter 3 extended these theoretical insights to categorize and analyze various forms of violence. Structural violence, as discussed in Section 3.2, was examined as a pervasive and often invisible form of power embedded in social and institutional norms, perpetuating inequalities in access to resources and opportunities. Foucault's concept of biopolitics (Section 3.3), along with Agamben's "bare life" and Butler's "precarious life" (Section 3.4) were introduced in order to illustrate how power hierarchies and discourses of "humanness" govern whose lives are protected and whose are expendable in a given society. Section 3.5 demonstrated the racialized and colonial underpinnings of such discourses, linking them to the lived realities of Indigenous communities in the (post)colony by further extending on the concepts of epistemic violence, which marginalizes Indigenous knowledge systems, and environmental violence, which disproportionately affects Indigenous communities through climate change and neocolonial conservation practices. Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" further underlined the invisibility of gradual, long-term harm, exacerbating structural disadvantages for those least visible in global media narratives.

Chapter 4 applied these theoretical insights to an analysis of three novels. I will recapitulate my analysis in the following section.

5.2 Narrating Networks, Allegorical Tragedies and Complex Interrelations of Ambiguity

Through multifaceted analysis, the dissertation has demonstrated how contemporary Australian First Nations novels not only represent the lived experiences of violence and marginalization but also challenge and reimagine dominant narratives. By foregrounding Indigenous voices and intersectional frameworks, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the ongoing impacts of colonialism and the transformative potential of literature to confront and resist systemic injustice. It did so by focusing on the narrative styles that the three novels employed in order to challenge the *white gaze* and reveal whiteness as a structure of power.

Section 4.1 provided an in-depth analysis of Melissa Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip*. Section 4.1.1 demonstrated how the three openings of the novel – the epigraph, the prologue, and the initial scenes of the narrative – reposition the categories of "victim" and "perpetrator" along intersecting axes of power by layering multiple forms of violence within each respective "beginning." The epigraph initially points to an instance of sexualized violence that traverses racial and gender boundaries (the rape of an Aboriginal woman by a white man); however, it is subsequently reframed as a manifestation of internalized misogyny and normative gender expectations. The

prologue then destabilizes heteronormative assumptions when male police officers rape Owen, thereby illustrating a form of violence that, while remaining within gender lines, subverts heteronormative and stereotypical masculinities. This act further transgresses racial boundaries (white men assaulting an Aboriginal boy) and introduces additional layers of violence through institutional authority. These two instances of violence are subsequently complicated by the depiction of the Salter siblings' relationship, which alludes to domestic (gender-based) violence. Although this final example remains confined within racial boundaries, much like the act of violence introduced in the epigraph, it mirrors white patriarchal structures. Through their narrative construction and by destabilizing the notion of a singular "perpetrator" and "victim," these three beginnings collectively position colonization as the foundational source of violence within the novel.

In Section 4.1.2, I proceeded to examine how the four Salter siblings, Kerry's boyfriend Steve, and the Salters' next-door neighbors are represented through various identity categories (subject positions) across the narrative. While Kerry and Black Superman are portrayed as Black Bundjalung and queer community members, Ken and Donna are depicted as "less Black," not in terms of communal affiliation but primarily in relation to their lighter skin tone. I demonstrated how this perceived difference shapes Ken's and Donna's experiences of their grandfather's abuse. More broadly, this section revealed how the narrative persistently evokes and then deconstructs racial and gendered categorizations by positioning each character in complex relational dynamics with other racialized and gendered figures. One illustrative example of this is Donna's capacity to pass as white within Sydney's real estate sector, alongside the internalized racism that undermines her mental health. The different constructions of "Blackness" embodied by the Salter siblings are set in contrast to the figures of Steve and Susannah. I showed how the narrative identifies these characters as white and demonstrates that "whiteness," too, is a constructed and unstable category. This contributes to a broader destabilization of whiteness – the category that sustains racism through its normalization and invisibility. The critique is encapsulated most sharply in Kerry's term "whitenormalsavages," used to describe white individuals oblivious to their own privilege and complicit in the reproduction of systemic racism. Importantly, the choice of Kerry (with her intersectional subject position) as the internal focalizer ensures a continuous marking of dominant discourses throughout the text. The ongoing construction, relativization, and destabilization of identity categories thereby forms a network of relational references that mirrors the destabilization of the "victim" and "perpetrator" categories analyzed in Section 4.1.1. Through its multiplicity and heterogeneity, this network ultimately resists the white gaze that seeks epistemic mastery by claiming knowledge of the Other.

Where Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 concentrated on how the narrative destabilizes categories and their assignment by the white gaze through a network of multiple and shifting referents, Sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 explored how the novel portrays violence as a pervasive and interconnected network. I first demonstrated how the characters Owen, Ken, and Brandon are constructed in parallel, and how this mirroring effect underscores the impacts of cultural and intergenerational trauma within Indigenous communities. This analysis also identified Brandon as a symbolic figure who explicitly links the family's intergenerational trauma to the history of the Stolen Generations. Alongside the focus on trauma, the section also addressed the theme of intergenerational healing. I showed how the narrative proposes culturally grounded strategies for "working through" trauma by re-centering Country and community. This was initially illustrated through Owen's embedded story of Mount Monk, which I interpreted as a symbol of colonial occupation and dispossession—both territorial and cultural—and later through Ken's confrontation with the rifle, where Uncle Richard deescalates the situation by "grounding" him, symbolically and literally, by sitting down on Country. I also offered a close reading of Uncle Richard's explanation of the distinctions between "responsibility," "apology," and "forgiveness," situating it within the broader context of Kevin Rudd's "National Apology." Finally, I demonstrated how Brandon, as the youngest among the three paralleled characters, is fashioned as a symbolic representative of the Stolen Generations. Overall, this section analyzed the intersections of Indigeneity and gender, illustrating how Western stereotypes of hypermasculinity intersect with racist violence, influencing both the experiences of harm and the processes of healing.

After addressing the interconnections among violence, generational trauma, healing, and forgiveness, Section 4.1.3 shifted back toward a more overt intersectional analysis through the examination of a scene involving latent and overt police violence. I selected the confrontational encounter between the Salter family and the Durrongo police, in which the narrative register shifts from a threat of gendered and racialized violence to one where racial violence intersects with constructions of hypermasculinity, to illustrate how alliances are forged along shared axes of oppression. This scene demonstrated how different forms of (threatened) violence generate distinct effects depending on the power hierarchies that underpin them—even when the identities of perpetrator and victim remain unchanged. Thus, the scene offers another example of how the narrative constructs a sophisticated web of interrelations that only emerges fully through an intersectional lens.

This intricate network is further reinforced through the continual recurrence of violence depicted in the "background" of the novel's action. The high statistical prevalence of violence

within Indigenous communities—rooted in the legacy of colonialism—is contextualized through background media, such as radio and television news reports recounting incidents of sexual assault and murder across Australia, extending beyond Indigenous communities alone. Characters like Donna and Kerry hear these reports but display minimal emotional response, having become so habituated to violence that it registers merely as "white noise" within their daily lives. This subtle narrative device provides a final illustration of how Lucashenko constructs complex and intersecting networks of violence, subjectivity, and resistance throughout *Too Much Lip*.

In Section 4.2, I analyzed the narrative structure of *Dancing Home*, by first aligning it with the classical model of Greek tragedy (Section 4.2.1). By mapping the plot onto Freytag's pyramid, I have shown how the formal and regulated progression of the story exposes systemic violences of racism, gender, and classism in contemporary Australia. I proposed that Aristotle's *Poetics* offers a more appropriate interpretive framework than modern notions of tragedy, such as the Shakespearean model, despite the novel's intertextual references to *Macbeth*. This is because Blackie, functioning as an allegorical figure, is fated to fail not due to personal flaws, as posited by Enlightenment individualism, but because of the intersecting structures of subjugation tied to his identity as Indigenous, male, and working-class. Through this tragic form, the novel critiques Western ideologies of meritocracy and the myth of upward mobility. In contrast to the other novels in the corpus – Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip* and Wright's *Praiseworthy – Dancing Home* does not reject the white gaze outright but rather reconfigures it, compelling it to confront the violence it typically ignores.

Building on this analysis, Section 4.2.2 focused on Blackie's characterization as a departure from the Aristotelian model of the tragic hero. Rather than possessing a singular "fatal flaw" (hamartia), Blackie is condemned by societal structures based on his subject position. This social positioning enables McWilliams to falsely accuse him of serious crimes, including murder, thereby constructing Blackie as an allegory for the overrepresentation of poor Indigenous men in Australia's criminal justice system. Section 4.2.3 further extended this analysis by exploring the novel's intertextual references to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Through a close reading of McWilliams as Blackie's antagonist, I argued that both characters function allegorically, exposing systemic biases and institutionalized racism within the police force. The intertextual engagement with *Macbeth* intensifies the thematic contrast between regicide and tyrannicide. However, unlike Shakespeare's tragedy, which focuses on individual moral failure, the novel collapses the distinction between sovereign and tyrant into the figure of McWilliams. Consequently, McWilliams embodies a dual symbol: celebrated as a model police officer from a dominant perspective yet seen as a tyrant through the lens of the subjugated. This duality encapsulates the

moral contradictions of the contemporary Australian state and its exercise of sovereign power, as theorized by Foucault (see Section 3.3).

In Section 4.2.4, I extended this argument by considering the allegorical significance of "Doctor White," the pharmacist, as representative of the broader (white) healthcare system. The pharmacy emerges as Blackie's sole access point to medical care, not solely due to his status as a fugitive, but because systemic socio-economic marginalization and inadequate healthcare infrastructure in Indigenous communities leave him no alternatives. Drawing on the concept of structural violence introduced in Chapter 3, I interpreted this pharmacy encounter as another form of allegory. This reading was further substantiated by the depiction of Blackie's arrest, where his careful attempt to appear non-threatening stands in stark contrast to the police officers' racialized assumptions. Thus, across these sections, I have demonstrated that *Dancing Home* employs plot structure, allegorical character construction, and intertextual references to reveal and critique the pervasive and often invisible operations of structural violence and its intersecting effects.

In Section 4.3, I analysed Alexis Wright's Praiseworthy. First, I demonstrated how the novel's narrative style deliberately decelerates the reading process, setting it in contrast to the accelerated tempo of modern capitalism. The narrative's dense, lyrical structure – rich in intertextual references and layered with connotations of racial and environmental violence – both presents and represents the often-invisible operations of structural violence, particularly the phenomenon of slow violence. This narrative mode, coupled with the novel's considerable length, exemplifies what Alexis Wright has termed "writing on scale": a literary practice commensurate with the complexity of the contemporary world and the multifaceted challenges humanity faces amid the climate crisis.

Framed through this activist position, the narrative constructs a dense network of interconnections – through intertextual references, allegories, symbols, and associative techniques – that binds ongoing colonialism, racial injustice, and environmental degradation. In doing so, the novel manifests the Indigenous concept of relationality and articulates a profoundly anti-colonial and anti-racist perspective. However, the complexity and profusion of references deliberately place an interpretive burden on the reader. The process of making meaning is often nonlinear and remains marked by ambiguity. Despite this, the analysis above identified central thematic threads. For instance, the novel suggests that many of the challenges facing the residents of Praiseworthy stem from a disrupted connection to culture, particularly through Country and kinship. This is exemplified in the character of Cause Man Steel, whose pursuit of a capitalist, exploitative dream leads to his disconnection from Country. It is further illustrated through his conflict with the townspeople over Native Title to the cemetery, revealing how both parties have abandoned their

original responsibility of caretaking and custodianship in favor of possessive and commodified understandings of land. My analysis also demonstrated how this debate over land ownership intersects with essentialist and racist constructions of Aboriginality, which in turn serve to fragment and divide the community.

The second part of the analysis focused on the characters Aboriginal Sovereignty and Tommyhawk Steel, who personify two contrasting outcomes of racist governmental discourses. Tommyhawk was identified as the apparent success story of assimilationist policy, aspiring to whiteness and consumerist ideals. His unattainable dreams – evidenced by the perpetual and unanswered wait for "rescue" -– were interpreted as products of internalized racism, itself a form of violence. Aboriginal Sovereignty, in contrast, seeks to live according to traditional law, exemplified in his relationship with a younger partner, but is criminalized and ostracized as a pedophile by both the police and his own community. His suicide attempt, subsequent rescue, and internment as a "refugee" on an offshore island reveal the workings of the Australian nation-state as a white possession (following Moreton-Robinson, Section 2.3.3). This narrative arc parallels the broader dehumanization and criminalization of refugees and asylum seekers, exposing another form of racist and structural violence operating at the systemic level. Through this allegorical connection, the novel reframes borders not merely as territorial demarcations but as racialized constructs, thus adding a new layer of meaning to the ancestral haze that envelops Praiseworthy. Aboriginal Sovereignty's return, transformed into a dust cloud, symbolically joins him with the ancestors and marks the climate crisis as another manifestation of racist violence. Thus, I have argued that Alexis Wright's Praiseworthy presents the climate crisis not merely as an environmental issue but as a profound extension of colonial and racial violence.

In line with the argument made by Alber (Alber, "Introduction" 3; Alber, "Resilience" 293; Alber, "Indigenous" 99) and Levine (3), the form of the three novels differs greatly, though I argue that they overlap in function. Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip* operates at the micro- and meso-levels of society, and it embeds violence in intimate relationships, community dynamics, and daily encounters. It highlights everyday and systemic racism as experienced by the characters through the destabilization of fixed categories (victim/perpetrator, Black/white, masculine/feminine) and through a multiplicity of perspectives and narrative openings that intertwine. Violence itself is represented as a diffuse, interconnected phenomenon, often experienced as background noise, intergenerational trauma, institutional threat, or internalized racism. Resistance to white hegemony emerges from within the community, from Country (especially land-based healing and embodied sovereignty), humor, and survival. On the other hand, *Dancing Home* differs strongly from this approach because it adopts a highly regulated and stylized narrative structure, aligning itself with

Greek tragedy. The narrative has a linear, tightly plotted trajectory that follows the trope of the road movie, and that foregrounds inevitability and systemic constraint rather than a multiplicity of perspectives. The narrative heavily relies on the use of allegory (Blackie, McWilliams, Doctor White) to render structural violence legible, and it focusses on police violence, the healthcare and the justice system. One might say that unlike *Too Much Lip*, which fragments perspective and resists narrative closure, *Dancing Home* exposes racism by forcing it into visibility through form. Its tragic logic underscores how failure is socially produced, critiquing meritocracy and showing that Blackie's fate is structurally predetermined. Alexis Wright's *Praiseworthy* differs from the other two novels in its radical expansion of scale, both formally and conceptually. As such, *Praiseworthy* operates at a macro-level (i.e., the planetary level), focusing on the interconnections between colonialism, racism, capitalism, and the climate crisis within a single relational framework. By decelerating the pace of reading itself, through incredible density, repetition, and ambiguity, the novel resists capitalist logics of speed, efficiency, and consumption. In turn, it places a deliberate interpretive burden on the reader, refusing narrative transparency and epistemic mastery (especially that of the white gaze), posing its own epistemological challenge. Within the novel, violence is almost never direct and interpersonal, but almost always slow and structural (i.e., especially environmental violence). Resistance is articulated through Indigenous relationality, ancestral presence, and non-linear time rather than through plot resolution or character development.

5.3 A Matter of Voice and Recognition: Where to Go from Here?

This thesis provides an intersectional analysis of the narration of violence in contemporary First Nations Australian novels. It begins by explaining the title and outlining the rationale behind the selection of the topic, before demonstrating how the close reading of the three novels offers a new approach to Indigenous literary studies – one that critically engages with whiteness as a structure of power. Although primarily a literary study, this thesis is firmly rooted in cultural and social theory, treating literature as a cultural artifact through which broader cultural dynamics can be examined. In particular, it positions Indigenous literature as a lens for critically interrogating the structures of power and domination within white culture, which often remain invisible or unmarked. This thesis demonstrated that literature is a medium through which the invisible forms of structural violence can be made visible. Furthermore, my analysis illustrated how the novels in my corpus employed different narrative strategies along which lines the application of a *normalized Western gaze* (tied into the idea of the cultural model but more closely related to the

literary concept of perception) is rejected. It also demonstrated that narrative strategies can engage with the text on a meta-level, laying bare the white gaze as an application of power.

This thesis analysed three Indigenous novels in order to investigate these narrative strategies, and for further research I would suggest (in the vein of Anderson, see Section 2.2) to extend on the interdisciplinary engagement between critical Indigenous, critical race, and critical whiteness studies. I would suggest two avenues of research, both of them following comparative approaches. First, I would suggest investigating contemporary novels by other marginalized groups in the Australian context (for instance, the literature of Asian Australian, Pacifica, or African immigrants) in order to further investigate the normalizing discourses of whiteness in Australia. I can imagine that this interdisciplinary and comparative approach would continue to illuminate the white researcher on the discourses of power they are often complicit in but at the very least benefit from. A second avenue would be a more in-depth comparison with Indigenous literature from other settler-colonial nation states, such as New Zealand, Canada or the United States. All previous colonies of the British Empire, I imagine that they can further illuminate us on different forms and material effects of whiteness as a structure of power in these nation states. I argue both avenues of investigation would provide us with more insight into how white narratives of domination function (may this be through the concept of the *white gaze* or other concepts that we might transfer from critical race, critical Indigenous and critical whiteness studies). Especially in consideration of the contemporary political global order, further investigations of whiteness as hegemony and violence will continue to be necessary.

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