

2475/3840

**MONASH UNIVERSITY**  
THESIS ACCEPTED IN SATISFACTION OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ON..... 12 April 2002 .....

.....  
Sec. Research Graduate School Committee

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### ERRATA

- p71 para 2, fourth sentence: "it reflects the way in which" for "it reflects way in which"  
p78 para 1, first sentence: "of a series" for "of series"  
p173 para 2, second sentence: "more than 40 Thai women" for "more 40 Thai women"  
p198 para 1, second sentence: "level of Asian women's" for "level Asian women's"  
p201 para 2, third sentence: "as a 'civilising mission'" for "as 'civilising mission'"

### ADDENDUM

- p3 para 1, last sentence: "is at times textually transacted" for "is textually transacted"  
p4 para 1, fourth sentence: "its subtext is often about keeping" for "its real agenda lies in keeping"  
p4 para 2, first sentence: "rescue trope" for "topos of rescue"  
p8 para 1, add to end of second sentence: "(Hall, 1997)."  
p13 para 2, delete first sentence and read: "Fanon was one of the earliest critics to recognise humanism's paradoxical complicity in a project of domination that had such dehumanising effects."  
p14 para 2, delete fifth sentence and read: "For Fanon then, colonialism engenders 'a feeling of non-existence' (1970: 98) in those it subjugates."  
p14 footnote, last sentence: omit "by rendering her a mere reflection of the white subject."  
p21 para 2, line 13: "lent" for "leant"  
p22 para 2-3: Comment: 'Development discourse' refers to that humanistic discourse produced by economists, demographers, politicians and planners, in which bourgeois modernisation is held up as *the* solution for the 'third world'. This 'benevolent' system of discursive production operates in the neocolonial present as a mode of ideological control. In this context, as Dirlik contends, 'developmentalism' should be understood as 'the renovation and redeployment of colonial modernity... as economic development' (1994: 334).  
p22 para 2, last sentence: "lowest" for "lowliest"  
p23 para 2, second sentence: "mainstream news media" for "mainstream media"; add to end of sentence: "(Chibnall, 1981)."

p23 para 4: delete last sentence and read: "Trinh Minh-Ha (1991: 22) has argued that the metropolitan West seems to 'take as much pride in its 'third world' underdeveloped as the church used to take pride in its poor.'"

p26 para 1, first sentence: to the end of the sentence add "(Bhabha, 1985, Ching-Liang Low, 1996 and Fanon, 1970)."

p29 para 3, second sentence: "Shohat and Stam (1994) object" for "It has been objected"

p30 para 2, fifth sentence: "As Kaul points out, critics contend that" for "Critics contend, then, that"

p30 para 2, last sentence "Bhabha exemplifies for Dirlik" for "Bhabha exemplifies for one critic"

p33 para 2, delete first sentence and read: "Australian national imaginings have been marked by a persistent refusal to consider 'Asians' as a part of Australia, despite their presence here from the time of earliest European settlement."

p33 para 2, second sentence: "In section three of the chapter, I contend that" for "I contend that"

p35 para 2, first sentence: omit "Returning to the observation with which the first chapter opened"

p36 para 1, delete last sentence and read: "Moreover, White Australia's assumption of cultural superiority over its 'Asian' others was neatly mirrored in the Japanese nationalist discourse as it championed Japan's imperialist rights."

p46 footnote: omit final two sentences.

p47 para 2, first sentence: "In many news texts" for "In news texts"

p53 para 2, final sentence: "As Leitch observes" for "As one critic observes"

p62 para 2, first sentence: "which critical media theorists such as Stuart Hall have" for "which critical media theorists have"

p66 para 4, first sentence: "Australian metropolitan daily newspaper articles" for "mainstream Australian news texts"

p87 para 2, delete first sentence and read: "Many news texts claim that apologies for the recruitment of 'comfort women', and for Japan's wartime 'atrocities' in general, face widespread "virulent opposition" both within and outside the Japanese Parliament."

p105 para 2, delete second sentence and read: "One article for instance observes that "30,000 Korean women were traded to Japan last year at the same time that Korean 'comfort women' from world war two were seeking compensation for being forced into prostitution by the Japanese" (*Asian girls 'sold' as sex slaves* HS 6.4.93, p. 21). It is thus implied that male sexuality in contemporary Japan is marked by the same exploitative drive that engendered the 'comfort' system half a century earlier."

p107 para 2: delete last sentence and read: "The former 'comfort women' stand as the overdetermined, mute ground from which the white subject's discursive production proceeds."

p109 para 2 delete second sentence and read: "In this sense, international tourism replicates the colonial tradition in which first world nationals sexually subjugated others."

p112 para 2 delete first sentence and read: "In section two of the chapter, I examine Australian news texts' attribution of blame for the women's victimisation to such factors as official corruption, Asian greed and poverty, the misogynistic Asian cult of masculinity, and barbaric Asian family 'traditions'."

p113 para 1, third sentence: omit "protagonist."

p114 para 3, first sentence: "lent" for "leant"

p122 para 1, second sentence: omit "albeit of invariably undisclosed origin"

p143 para 2, delete first sentence and read: "These otherwise decent, morally upright men, it is implied, are well out of their depth in South-East Asia, where "the rules are different," and "criteria of everyday rationality" are allegedly "thrown overboard.""

p144 para 2, first sentence: "to" for "→"

p155 para 2, delete last sentence and read: "Given this early involvement of US forces, the contemporary sex industry in Thailand might best be understood as a kind of cultural hybrid."

p159 para 2, second sentence: "for the most part disavows" for "would rather disavow"

p179 para 1, third sentence: omit "[also read: vulnerable and defenceless]"

**REPRESENTING SEXUALISED OTHERNESS. ASIAN WOMAN AS SIGN  
IN THE DISCOURSE OF THE AUSTRALIAN PRESS.**

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the School of Literary, Visual  
and Performance Studies, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, April 2001.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis interrogates the received practices of othering that underwrite the production of white Australian subjectivity in the discourse of the Australian press. The discursive construction of White Australia as a cohesive national unity has historically taken place in relation to representations of putatively inferior others, among whom 'Asians' figure prominently. The central argument of the thesis is that this asymmetrical process of othering and identification is textually transacted through the overdetermined figure of the 'Asian woman' as a semiotic object.

This claim is elaborated through discursive analysis of contemporary Australian newspaper texts reporting on three issues. The first of these is the ongoing negotiation of compensation for former 'comfort women' recruited throughout Asia to serve in Japanese military brothels during the Pacific War. Analysis of press coverage of the 'comfort women' case reveals a dominant narrative template centred upon the vilification of corrupt and sexually rapacious Japanese others, whose portrayal is set against the implicit self-representation of the white Australian subject as a benevolent witness to the uncompensated women's abuse. It is argued that while their plight occasions the moral outrage of the implied Australian reader, the former 'comfort women' are in fact commodified in the coverage as a currency of international relations, and their rights to personal reparation are effectively marginalised.

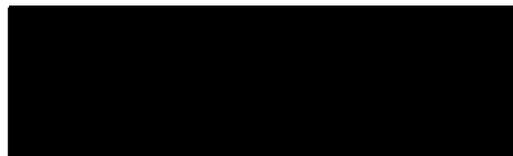
Sex tourism in Southeast Asia is the second issue examined in the empirical component of the thesis. Australian press narratives of sex tourism are premised upon an image of Southeast Asian sex workers as coerced innocents whose exploitation is attributed to corrupt Asian officials and backward, misogynistic Asian cultural practices. Western sex tourists themselves are discursively distanced from the implied Australian reader in the coverage via their persistent depiction as perverts. Australians are thereby exempted from blame for what is constructed in the coverage as the exploitation of helpless young women from developing Asian countries, and the operation of contemporary sex tourism as a form of neo-imperialism deployed at the level of sex is thoroughly disguised.

The final issue addressed in the thesis is that of the alleged 'trafficking' of 'mail-order brides' and illegal Asian sex workers into Australia. As in the previous case studies, the women's agency is obliterated in Australian news texts reporting on this issue. Instead, they are allocated the familiar status of unilateral victims, whose sexual exploitation, although perpetrated by a minority of pathological western men, is ultimately facilitated by cruel and corrupt Asian others. It is finally argued that while the discursive construction of 'sex trafficking' in the Australian press is ostensibly concerned with the protection of helpless Asian women, its real agenda lies in keeping polluting racial others out of White Australia. An apologia for Anglo-Celtic sociocultural hegemony within Australia is thus surreptitiously inscribed upon the sexualised-objectified bodies of Asian women.

In Australian press representations of each of these issues, implied Australian subjectivity comes into play in relation to representations of Asian women's sexual exploitation by cruel and lascivious Asian others, via the topos of 'rescue'. In each case, the silent, abject bodies of Asian women, themselves divested of national agency, launch this narrative trajectory upon its course. It is concluded that the overdetermined figure of the 'Asian woman' is deployed in the discourse of the Australian press as a mute site upon which white Australia's neo-imperialistic ambitions are implicitly elaborated.

## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University or other institution, and, to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Maryanne Dever and Jane-Maree Maher for their guidance and painstaking reviews of successive drafts. Thanks also to Daniel Crooks, Fiona and Michael Craig and Takeshi Kondo for their support.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Australian Associated Press
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AFR	Australian Financial Review
AJA	Australian Journalists' Association
ASIS	Australian Secret Intelligence Service
CATW	Coalition against Trafficking in Women
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism
GAATW	Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women
HS	Herald Sun
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
RAA	Recreation and Amusement Association
SCAP	Supreme Command for Allied Powers
SMH	Sydney Morning Herald
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Emergency Children's Fund

## INTRODUCTION

Newspapers constitute a major source of information about the agents and events of material history existing outside the immediate experience of news consumers. The discursive production of alterity for consumption by a national community is arguably the primary function of the news media. It follows that popular conceptions of otherness are to a great extent determined by the ways in which others are signified in the discourse of the press. In this thesis, I examine representations of 'Asian' others in mainstream Australian newspapers.

Subtexts of self-construction are always implicit in sites of textual othering. And, given the central role played by newspapers in fictioning nations as cohesive sociopolitical unities (Anderson, 1991), this thesis treats Australian press representations of Asian others as a window onto [white] Australian identity. Asian others discursively produced in the narratives of the Australian press might be expected to stand in contrast to the implicit self-representation of the Australian subject. For the discursive production of non-western others in western texts has been identified in contemporary critical theory as representing an attempt on the part of western subjects to consolidate their own sovereign status.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis is particularly concerned with the gendered inflection of the received practices of othering underwriting the production of Australian identity in the discourse of the press. Indeed, the fundamental concept directing the research is that women tend to be allocated a semiotic role as culture-bearers in discursive constructions of identity and otherness (Fuss, 1994). This deployment of women as signs is facilitated by emptying them of any 'subjective' content, permitting struggles of cultural politics to be figured at the level of objectified female bodies. The empirical component of the thesis interrogates press representations in which the discursive constitution of Australian subjectivity in relation to an Asian other, is transacted through the figure of the 'Asian woman' as an overdetermined object.

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<sup>1</sup> By using the term 'subject' in this context, I am referring to the unitary humanistic subject decentred by postmodern theorists; that self-knowing, self-present entity or mind, which would claim to precede processes of interpellation and identification, and places him or herself at the centre of history, as its autonomous driving force.

Situating my analysis in relation to Said's (1978) account of Orientalism, I examine the replication in the discourse of the Australian press, of those Orientalist tropes in which power and desire mingle; namely, the feminisation of the 'Orient', and the metonymic figuration of East-West relations in terms of sexual conquest. Related to these tropes is the time-honoured topos of rescue, in which the welfare of non-western women is represented as contingent upon western heroism in the face of the rapacious sexuality of non-western men. The contemporary deployment of these tropic figures in the discourse of the Australian press illustrates that sexuality still operates, in a Foucauldian sense, as a dense transfer point in struggles over cultural politics. I therefore analyse Australian press coverage of three issues, which illustrate, in various ways, the [white] Australian subject's surreptitious inscription of what is arguably an apologia for cultural imperialism, upon the sexualised-objectified bodies of Asian women.

Part one of the thesis outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework within which my analysis of Australian press representations of Asian others is grounded. In chapter one here, I elaborate a theoretical model with which to understand the subtexts of self-representation implicit in the discursive encoding of non-western others in western texts. I contend that western modes of representing difference proceed from the same assumption of normative whiteness Fanon (1970) perceived at work in colonial modes of representation. Furthermore, I argue that western representations of otherness are structured by the discursive economy of Manichaeism, which consecrates hierarchical divisions between representing western subjects and their object others (JanMohammed, 1985). I conclude the chapter, however, by drawing upon Bhabha's account of colonial ambivalence to argue that the fixity of the western self / non-western other binary, which underpins the sovereignty of the West-as-subject, is contingent upon its anxious repetition in discourse.

In chapter two, I discuss the ways in which the self-other trajectory is played out in Australian media representations of 'Asians'. I contend that, at least since the Second World War, Australia's self-representation as a cohesive national community has taken place in relation to an inferior external other discursively homogenised as

'Asia'. I attempt to show how the asymmetrical white Australian self / Asian other binary is embedded in Australia's national imaginings, which, even thirty years after the official demise of White Australia, remain marked by fears of 'Asian invasion'. I conclude the chapter by discussing the means by which the threat posed to white sociocultural hegemony by the presence of Asian others within Australia – since the time of earliest European settlement – is contained in the rhetorical operations of news texts.

In chapter three, I outline the methodological presuppositions underpinning the empirical component of the thesis. My analysis of representations of Asian others in the discourse of the Australian press is informed by the recognition, which emerges out of the tenets of structuralism and semiotics, as well as from sociological conceptions of news production, that 'the news' must be treated as a form of cultural discourse. Drawing upon Foucault's assertion that there is no 'truth' outside of power, I analyse press representations of otherness in terms of the power-knowledge alignments forged in news texts between the 'micro' levels of the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical features of language, and the 'macro' levels of cultural and sociopolitical structures.

Part two of the thesis reports on the findings of the empirical research undertaken in three case studies. The first of these, discussed in chapter four, analyses representations of Asian women as the abject victims of an Asian other who is also Australia's historical enemy. Specifically, I examine Australian press coverage of the negotiation, during the 1990s, of compensation for an estimated 200,000 Asian 'comfort women' who were subjected to organised mass rape in Japanese military brothels during the Pacific War. The second case study, whose findings are reported in chapter five, analyses representations of Asian women as sexual commodities exploited by Asian others in the context of recent reporting on sex tourism in Southeast Asia. The final case study, discussed in chapter six, addresses the representations of feminine Asian others within, in press coverage of the contemporary immigration of 'mail-order brides' and the alleged 'trafficking' of illegal Asian sex workers into Australia.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE DISCURSIVE ENCODING OF IDENTITY AND ALTERITY

In this chapter, I discuss the power-invoking effects of the discursive construction of otherness in western texts. I introduce the chapter by outlining briefly those philosophical and psychoanalytic conceptions of self-identification as bestowed by an other, which may be applied to understand western encounters with non-western 'otherness'. I contend that western modes of representing difference remain structured by the same normative whiteness Fanon perceived at work in colonial modes of representation. In particular, I argue that the persistent representation of non-western others as objects replicates the psychic violence inflicted upon native others under colonialism, and consolidates white discursive power.

The second section of the chapter concerns that form of discursive imperialism discernible in nineteenth century Orientalism, and echoed in the contemporary discourse of 'development', which produces others' realities as pathologies, betraying a cultural superiority complex on the part of representing western subjects. In section three, I contend that subtexts of self-identity are implicit in western representations of others. I conclude the chapter by drawing upon Bhabha's account of colonial ambivalence to argue that the superior-western-subject / inferior-object-other binary is unstable by definition, and that its fixity is contingent upon the performance of ongoing discursive labour.

### Section one: subjects and objects of representation

Philosophical interest in the self-other trajectory has its roots in the Hegelian master-slave dialectic. Hegel's formulation of self-consciousness as 'the return from otherness' is echoed in Sartre's existentialist model of human development, in which the individual subject acquires its sense of 'self' only within a system of differences, and in relation to the presence of an other. Metaphysical notions of otherness found their way into anthropology and cultural studies in the 1970s, with the popularisation of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory as an analytical tool for approaching questions of identity and difference. 'The Other' denotes for Lacan not pure otherness but 'the locus from which the question of [the subject's] existence may be posed to him [sic]'

(1977: 194). In the Lacanian scheme then, the detour through this place of otherness is the precondition for the subject's accession to identity within the Symbolic Order.<sup>2</sup>

Psychoanalytic categories have provided a useful framework for deciphering representations of identity and difference in colonial discourse, as mutually constitutive processes in which a visual element is prominent. A debt to Sartre and Lacan is thus evident in postcolonial theory where it examines processes of ethnic identification and racial othering in the colonial setting. The claim that modern Europe was conceived in the colonial encounter, acquiring its identity only by contact with racial others, is clearly informed by Sartre's notion of the self as a relational term. In this reading, 'Europe' cannot be understood as a self-contained monolith that projected itself around the globe in imperial projects. Rather, the colonies provided a physical and a psychical terrain on which the coloniser's own identity could be constructed. Thus as Fanon contends, 'Europe is literally the creation of the third world' (1969: 81).<sup>3</sup>

In the face of this lack of self-presence at its origin, revealed instead as the locus of definitional otherness, the coloniser's sovereign subjectivity must be secured in representation by the performance of certain kinds of discursive labour. The application of psychoanalytic theory to the encoding of identity and difference in colonial discourse was pioneered by Fanon in the anti-imperialist manifesto *Black Skin White Masks*. Fanon's diagnosis of colonialism's 'neurotic orientation' (1970: 71) grew out of his experience as a practicing psychiatrist in 1950s Algeria, where he

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<sup>2</sup> Lacan in fact draws a distinction between 'the other' and 'the Other'. The small other refers to the image of its own body encountered by the child during the narcissistic mirror stage of primary identification. This other provides the child (who, lacking the ability to perceive a boundary between its own body and the world, has previously experienced nothing more than a diffuse collection of sensations) with a corporeal image on which to hook its sense of self. The mirror stage thus produces in the child a sense of self-unity in the form of the 'Ideal I', which "situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination" (Lacan, 1977: 2). The capitalized Other enters the development process with the onset of the real during the phase of secondary identification. The child now encounters another speaking subject and forms a linguistic relation to this interlocutor. This Other thus denotes the locus of intersubjectivity in the Symbolic order of language and culture.

<sup>3</sup> In chapter two, I examine the ways in which 'Asia' has operated in this sense as Australia's definitional other.

observed 'a massive psycho-existential complex' (1970: 11) created by the colonial imposition of white civilization upon indigenous cultures. Shunted by western imperialism into 'a complete situational neurosis' (1970: 71), the colonised subject is for Fanon 'a man [sic] crucified' (1970: 153).

As one of the earliest critics to recognise humanism's paradoxical complicity in a project of domination that had such *dehumanising* effects upon indigenous people, Fanon initiated the critique of western humanism. He argued that humanism effectively sanctioned colonialism's 'psychic violence' (Fuss, 1994: 21) by taking as its unit of analysis and politics an allegedly universal category - 'man' - whose constitution as a sovereign subject was in fact predicated upon the exclusion of racial others as sub-human<sup>4</sup>. Humanism, as Sartre later asserted in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, is 'the counterpart of racism: it is a practice of exclusion' (1976: 752). For Sartre and Fanon then, the subject of the discourse of western humanism is colour coded white.

By contrast, the colour black, and indeed the figure of the black human being, is charged in the collective unconscious of European civilization with symbolising the baser instincts, immorality and evil.<sup>5</sup> Fanon observed that in the process of colonial subjugation, the black individual internalises the 'negrophobia' produced by this racist archetype. For as s/he is interpellated in the collective unconscious, s/he selects him or herself as 'an object capable of carrying the burden of original sin' (1970: 136) and is henceforth 'forever in combat with his [sic] own image' (1970: 138). 'I felt knife blades open within me' (1970: 84), Fanon writes; 'out of the blackest part of my soul ... surges this desire to be suddenly *white*. I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*' (1970: 46). This is a form of recognition, he quips, that Hegel

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<sup>4</sup> Fanon however recognised that humanist project might potentially constitute a manifesto for important struggles against injustice and inequality. He sought to preserve this promise by moving 'towards a new humanism' (1969: 7) which reformulated the category of 'man' in such a way as to circumvent its constitutive exclusions. In this sense, as Young (1990: 125) observes, his anti-humanist critique was notably humanistic.

<sup>5</sup> Here he borrows a Jungian term and perverts its original meaning, using collective unconscious to refer not to inherited genetic material, as Jung does, but rather to signify a collection of myths and prejudices which is above all culturally acquired (1970: 133).

never envisaged. There is then a constant effort, on the part of the colonised, 'to annihilate [one's] own presence' (1970: 44) in attempts at a 'hallucinatory whitening' (1970: 71).

Asserting the 'absolute reciprocity' of the Hegelian dialectic (1970: 154), Fanon notes that a white interlocutor's look of recognition is required in order for the black self to accede to subjectivity within the Symbolic Order. Yet the colonised subject's claim to existence is acknowledged by the coloniser only in proportion to his or her assimilation into European culture and language. Since the subjective alterity of the colonised is not admitted within colonial discourse, the white Subject is free to annex the place of the Other as its exclusive territory. Consigned to obscurity in a nonplace *other* than the Other, the colonised individual is permanently barred from the passage into otherness that makes subjectivity possible. For Fanon then, more than a simple inferiority complex, colonialism breeds in those it subjugates 'a feeling of non-existence' (1970: 98). Arrested prior to entering the Symbolic Order of language and culture and imprisoned within their unformed selves, with every escape route leading into the European world, their only choice is to '*turn white or disappear*' (1970: 71).

Colonial discourse thus operates to disenfranchise indigenous people of their subjective interiority and overdetermine them from without, ensuring that they become the slaves of their physical appearance. Fanon's Negroes, for instance, are fixed in discourse by a 'racial epidermal schema' (1970: 78) which ensures they are walled in by their black skin; 'battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin'"' (1970: 79). Locked out of the Symbolic Order and into 'crushing objecthood' (1970: 77), racial others tend to be figured in colonial discourse at the level of the body. Lacking the kind of 'ontological resistance' (1970: 78) subjective agency affords, the colonised object-other is obliged to act as a passive mirroring surface for the narcissistic white subject.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, as Fanon insists,

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<sup>6</sup> The mirror trope figures repeatedly in colonial literature, where the encounter with racial otherness is metaphorised as a journey into the unplumbed depths of the white self. Bhabha's discussion of mimicry, to which the discussion will later return, represents an attempt to shatter the colonial mirror by disconcerting those rhetorical manoeuvres that annihilate the racial other's alterity by rendering her a mere reflection of the white subject.

representations of racial others in colonial discourse must be recognised as nothing more than the phobogenic projections of the white imaginary.

Fanon's observation of this white monopolisation of otherness within colonial regimes of representation parallels what Irigaray has described as the sexual indifference underpinning all discourse. In calling attention to the logic of hom(m)osexuality that structures the discursive terrain, Irigaray reveals discourse as a means of masculine self-affectation. She contends that the unchallenged autonomy of the masculine subject is ensured by a phallogocentric syntax that denies feminine alterity, defining it only ever in relation to the masculine term. Since the feminine has no existence in phallogocentric discourse except as a masculine projection then, for Irigaray there are not two sexes but one. Rendered autistic, unable to participate in the symbolic realm of inter-subjectivity, woman is constructed instead as the mute object of the phallogocentric discourse. She is the

"matter" upon which he will ever and again return to plant his foot in order to spring farther, leap higher... a something to absorb, to take, to see, to possess ... as well as a patch of ground to stand upon, a mirror to catch his reflection (1985a: 133).

To articulate a self-referential femininity would 'disturb the staging of representation' (1985b: 155) in phallogocentric discourse and pull the rug out from under its self-important protagonist. The phallogocentric thus preserves his stakes in the representational enterprise and contains the threat of true feminine otherness by claiming an objectivity which allows him to transcend his empirical connection with the scene he surveys and assume in discourse 'the vantage point of greatest power' (1985a: 134).

Foucault made similar observations of the fundamental role played by mute others in consolidating discursive power. In *Madness and Civilisation* (1983) he describes the constitutive moment of western discourse in terms of a confrontation beneath the language of reason: a division of reason and its other as *unreason*, where the latter is stripped of any intrinsic worth and defined only by its negativity. Banished from the practice of representation, the others of reason are denied entry into the subject position of discourse and constructed instead as passive objects to be submitted to

knowledge. Their silence effectively authenticates the narratives of monistic discourse, and underwrites the absolute sovereignty of its knowing subject.

*Whiteness as transcendental-invisible framework structuring representation*

These insights may be extended to analyse the way in which whiteness functions as an invisible normative framework structuring discursive practice. Fanon described the way in which the white subject, by colonising the place of the Other, exempted itself from the dialectic of racial identification and claimed the status of a self-present signifier, thereby transcending the category of race altogether. Freed from the constraints of an ethnic identity, whiteness appears in discourse as both everything and nothing; indeed, as 'coterminous with the endless plenitude of human diversity' (Dyer, 1988: 47). While others bear the burden of embodying immutable racial difference – 'not only must the black man [sic] be black,' Fanon contends, 'he [sic] must be black in relation to the white man [sic]' (1970: 78) – being white is construed as simply the normal way of being human. The cultural values of racial others are thus routinely nominated and scrutinised in discourse, while white cultural values remain nameless, creating the ethic of 'normalised absence and pathologised presence' which Avtar Brah (1988) discerns at work in racist representational regimes. With the white eye always outside the frame, yet seeing and positioning everything within it (Stuart Hall, 1981), the racially inflected nature of all representation is obscured.

Granted the ability to objectify others in discourse while itself remaining unseen, whiteness partakes of that peculiarly modern form of power/knowledge anatomised by Foucault. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault contends that the transition in the mode of power from traditional jurido-discursive sovereignty to modern discipline is marked by an inversion in the economy of visibility. The old sovereign power that manifested itself as a spectacle and consigned its subjects to obscurity has thus been largely supplanted in the modern West by the inverse formula of power through transparency; subjection by illumination (Foucault, 1980: 154). For Foucault then, disciplinary power is premised on the dissociation of the dyadic seeing/being seen relation, so that it is exercised invisibly, even as it imposes a state of compulsory

visibility on those it subjects.<sup>7</sup> Its *modus operandi* is that of an exacting gaze which permits the progressive objectification and enumeration of bodies and behaviours, in a new articulation of knowledge and power.<sup>8</sup>

As Shohat (1993: 45) observes, it is not coincidental that the birth of cinema in the late 19th century occurred at the height of imperialism. The news and documentary in particular have arguably functioned as mechanisms of imperialism by extending the realm of the known for the western subject. To the extent that it transcends national boundaries in its quest for knowledge, 'annihilating space by time' (David Harvey, cited in Loshitzsky, 1996: 324), selectively submitting that which it finds to an ever-expanding regime of visibility, the news-maker's gaze might be characterised as heterotopic. Foucault (1986) coined the term heterotopia to denote a

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<sup>7</sup> The perfect realisation of modern disciplinary power was contained in the architectural figure of Bentham's Panopticon, which allowed a central gaze to see everything without being seen, while immersing those it confined to the blindness of the peripheral cells in a field of total visibility. Foucault contends that from the nineteenth century, panopticism spread throughout the social body as the general principle of a new political anatomy. Power was therefore no longer concentrated in the body of a Sovereign, but was 'democratised' as 'machinery that no one owns' (1980: 156), forming a web-like mechanism in which all individuals were caught.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault identifies the invention of the lens and light beam as pivotal to the operation those 'observatories of human multiplicity' in which modern disciplinary power finds expression (1979: 171). In this sense, film – whose mechanical eye (the camera) assures a more final hold on its object by affirming "with blows and hammers" where the human eye hesitates' (Trinh Minh-Ha, 1991: 192) – enacts the very power/knowledge relation detailed in Foucault's analysis. The camera functions as a panoptic mechanism by canceling the reciprocity of looking relations between the object of its gaze, and its operator (and, remotely, the spectator). Attached to the body of the filmmaker, the camera acts as an extension of his or her sensory apparatus, which, following Althusser (1971), is always already inscribed with the ideology that determines the way in which s/he perceives the world. While the camera necessarily reproduces in the film text the subjective bias of the filmmaker then, this fact is obscured by that convention of documentary which obliterates all traces of its operator from the camera's visual field, figuring his or her presence as an absence. S/he is rendered transparent, and vanishes beneath the surface of the documentary text so that only the object other is seen. The filmmaker's role in actively constructing the other as object of the gaze is thereby antiseptically removed from the frame, creating the illusion of unmediated access to an authentic other whose reality the audience is privileged to consume raw. The camera's unidirectional gaze thus instantiates an invisible, omniscient spectator, freed from the constraints of embodiment, in a world of corporealised otherness.

phenomenon peculiar to western modernity, which exists outside all times and places as a kind of utopian counter-site in which a series of disparate other spaces are simultaneously represented, preserved and displaced. Documentary film thus expresses the will to immobilise and enclose by heterotopic juxtaposition even the remotest forms and objects for the western subject's perusal. The 'frenzy of the visible' (Trinh Minh-Ha, 1991: 189) ushered in with the advent of mass media has only accelerated this representational imperialism. By initiating western viewers into an 'ethnotopia' (Hansen et al., 1991: 218) of unlimited access to others' images, news and documentary texts enact a new form of colonial appropriation which, as I will now argue, serves to entrench a binary power imbalance between the metropolitan West and its 'underdeveloped' others.

### **Section two: producing the object other as inferior**

At the heart of much western representation of otherness lies the Manichaeian allegory. JanMohammed (1985) identifies Manichaeism as a cognitive framework structuring colonial discourse, which fetishizes sociohistorical dissimilarities between colonising and indigenous cultures as absolute metaphysical differences. Manichaeian representations thereby discursively fix European self and cultural other in a rigid antipodal relation, opening an unbridgeable gulf between their worlds. Manichaeism functions as an axis structuring a discursive field of infinitely substitutable oppositions between self and other, subject and object, white and black, civilised and primitive, culture and nature, good and evil, and so on. Said observed the polarising impulse of Manichaeism at work in Orientalist discourse, whose practitioners charged the differences between western and 'Oriental' cultures with 'creating a battlefield that separates them' (1978: 47-8). The Manichaeian allegory would thus divide human reality into two camps: 'us' (the West) and 'them' (the East), and for Said, it is doubtful 'whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division' (1978: 46).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Yet as Raymond Williams (1988) observed in *Keywords*, the signs 'East' and 'West' have no empirical referents in the real. Rather, they must be recognised as arbitrary sociopolitical constructs, with a history of flexible and ambiguous deployment in discourse. Formulating the categories 'East' and 'West' as antonyms obscures what Shohat and Stam (1994: 16) describe as their inter-penetration in unstable creolised sites such as Latin America, or even Australia – indeed, in any former colony.

The discursive economy of Manichaeism is, furthermore, hierarchical, its ultimate object being the overdetermination of the other's inferiority as immutable. It institutes what Said describes in *Orientalism* as an 'advanced / backward binarism' (1978: 207), which allows the Western Subject to maintain a 'flexible positional superiority' (1978: 7) over its racial others. The Manichaean allegory is so deeply embedded in discursive practice, and operates on so many levels - psychic, cultural, political, economic - that even anti-imperialist representations may be unwittingly drawn into its vortex (JanMohammed, 1985: 82).

The popularisation of notions of social evolution in nineteenth century Europe reinforced the Manichaean civilised self / inferior racial other binary with the full weight of science. Although nineteenth century evolutionism essentially resurrected the 'great chain of being' developed some centuries earlier as a sliding scale of humanity, whose lowest rung was occupied by black people in proximity to apes, the modern science of race was inaugurated in the late eighteenth century with Blumenbach's typology of Caucasians, Mongolians and Ethiopians. The application of Darwinian theories of natural selection lent the taxonomy a biological gloss, so that the assumed backwardness of racial others was increasingly framed in a scientific language of 'polygenism' and 'climatic determinism'. By the mid-nineteenth century, the category of race was being hailed as containing 'the master key to history' (Pieterse, 1992: 49). An 'aristocracy of race' took shape in the pseudo-science of eugenics, establishing for the British an exalted position as the 'Lords of Human Kind', as Kiernan alleged in his 1969 book by the same name.

Critiques of race thinking emerged from the early twentieth century, when du Bois advocated speaking of 'civilisations where we now speak of races' (cited in Appiah, 1985: 35). It has since become clear that racial categories have no empirically verifiable genetic basis and are at best imperfectly realised. As there are no referents that can do all that is asked of it then, the sign 'race' must be recognised instead as a pernicious trope whose arbitrary application serves to entrench culturally produced

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There is also a sense in which Europe itself is always already hybrid, a myth constituted by synthesising elements from 'other' cultures (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 16). The discussion will return to

differences as natural. Furthermore, it is clear that the discursive production of racial difference has historically served the politico-economic interests of the western subject.<sup>10</sup>

Yet the Manichaean advanced / backward binarism has underpinned the discursive production of difference in the discipline of anthropology from its inception in the 19th century. 19th century anthropologists plotted a typology of cultures at various stages on a scale of social evolution from primitivism to savagery to barbarism, with civilisation at its pinnacle (Pieterse, 1992: 37). The model held primitive others to be Europe's 'contemporary ancestors', embodying an infantile stage of human development. Its temporal mapping of cultures thus entailed an assimilatory application of an exclusively western model of progress onto disparate peoples. Taking as its object the temporal category of the primitive, anthropology established itself as 'a science of men [sic] in another time' (Fabian, 1983: 144), existing in absolute isolation from the civilised West.<sup>11</sup> Anthropologists discursively produced their objects - and consolidated their own subject status - according to a series of Manichaean dualisms which placed primitive others on the side of nature, the body, the inert and instinctual, while implicitly aligning the Western self with mind and culture, the scientific and moralistic. Moreover, as Ching-Liang Low observes, the primitive is often discursively linked with the feminine (1996: 63-4). Indeed, Darwin

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hybridity later in this chapter.

<sup>10</sup> Pieterse for instance, identifies the pseudo-science of race as providing a rationale for the continuation of the slave trade even after the British abolition of slavery in 1807 (1992: 45-6). And Gates argues that in the US, the ideology of race has from the start served as a smokescreen for concealing what are in fact socioeconomic inequalities (1985: 6).

<sup>11</sup> The trope of the noble savage, which appears most famously in the work of Rousseau, does something to undermine nineteenth century anthropology's eurocentric hierarchy of social evolution. Moreover, the Manichaean primitive other / civilised self dyad was somewhat complicated in the psychoanalytic work of Freud and Jung however, who recognised savagery as an inner disposition buried within all human selves. The notion of the savage within was first used to explain colonial ambivalence by Mannoni, who observed that 'civilised man [sic] is painfully divided between the desire to 'correct' the 'errors' of the savages and the desire to identify with them in his [sic] search for some lost paradise (a desire which at once casts doubt upon the merit of the very civilisation he [sic] is trying to transmit to them)' (1950: 13, cited in Pieterse, 1992: 38).

himself posited sexual difference as a central explanatory category in the evolutionary scale he outlined in *The Descent of Man* (1871).

The assumption that primitive cultures were decaying with contaminating contact with the advanced West and, lacking the technological sophistication of written records, would vanish altogether, informed and justified the anthropological enterprise of salvage and recovery. The myth of the dying race – which, as Blythe (1994: 60) points out, must be understood in the wider context of the modernist thesis of global disintegration – thus shaped the nostalgic mode of many early ethnographic texts. Anthropologists have tended to arrest their primitive object others in suspended animation by a kind of discursive formaldehyde, which Derrida has termed the hieroglyphist prejudice. Blythe suggests that the arrival of colonising West on the scene of the primitive might be understood as forcing an exchange of space (the other's land) for time (a place for the other in white history). Yet by textually imprisoning the other in a timeless utopian realm, anthropologists have lent credence to the view that history can only happen in the West, and anything outside it amounts to no more than the 'unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant parts of the globe' (Hugh Trevor-Roper, 1965, cited in Shohat and Stam, 1994: 1). In short, anthropological discourse seems to suggest that the western subject alone possesses a history and dwells in progressive time.

The 'denial of coevalness' which Johannes Fabian (1983) discerns in conventional ethnographic writing, institutes an insurmountable temporal split between the western subject and its object other. It is clear that immobilising native others in discourse as quiescent objects prevents them from entering a dialogic relation with the western subject who observes and represents them. Moreover, consigning others to a timeless space, in which the possibility of historical becoming is foreclosed, has the ideological effect of obscuring the geopolitical reality of western imperialism structuring the other's present.

Numerous critics have in fact recognised the discipline of anthropology as directly implicated in the imperial project. Its doctrine of social evolutionism provided both justification and a manual for the colonial management of societies at different levels of development (Pieterse, 1992: 37). Yet even as it corroborated colonialism's

masquerade as civilising mission, it simultaneously disavowed the possibility of assisting colonised peoples to evolve, by Manichaeistically fixing their primitivity as irrevocable. And, as JanMohammed (1985: 81) points out, once the indigenous other's attainment of civilised status was indefinitely postponed, the colonial appropriation of indigenous resources and land could theoretically continue *ad infinitum*.

*The Manichaeian production of the underdeveloped 'third world'*

Contemporary development discourse echoes nineteenth century anthropology in promulgating what Blaut terms 'the coloniser's model of the world' (cited in Shohat and Stam, 1994: 2). It too maps out a linear evolutionary path, over which the western subject stands alone as arbiter, since only 'the master's image of progress' counts (Trinh Minh-Ha, 1991: 97). Heterogeneous regions are again submitted to eurocentric evaluation, although progress is now measured in socioeconomic rather than explicitly 'cultural' terms. While the metropolitan West is installed in development discourse at the peak of its evolutionary scale, the geopolitical construct of the 'third world'<sup>12</sup>, by contrast, is relegated to the lowliest position, replacing the primitive as discourse's disciplinary object.

By discursively constructing its 'third world' object in terms of a series of disorders (poverty, illiteracy, famine, infant mortality, etc.) which it then alleges to treat, developmentalism functions in the Foucauldian sense as a disciplinary regime of power-invoking knowledge. As Escobar observes, far from eradicating the problems of the 'third world', developmentalism has in fact succeeded in 'multiplying them to infinity' (1992: 25), thereby justifying the enterprise of its practitioners in the West. Development discourse thus persistently produces 'third world' reality as pathology, and suggests that its socioeconomic advancement is only possible to the extent that it

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<sup>12</sup> The three worlds typology has its roots in the 1950s, when French demographer Alfred Sauvy analogised the geopolitical arena in terms of France's first estate (nobility), second estate (clergy), and third estate (commoners), producing a typology of three 'worlds', the first represented by the capitalist nations of Europe, the US, Australia and Japan, the second comprising the socialist block, and the third the remaining undeveloped nations (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 25).

embraces the bourgeois values of the modern West, thereby resuscitating colonisation-as-civilising-mission narrative in a new guise.<sup>13</sup>

The very possibility of development is however foreclosed in those western media texts which fix the 'third world' in a primitive Manichaean space of despotism, violence, corruption and chaos. The mainstream media's almost exclusive framing of the 'third world' in terms of its problems, is in part the product of *negativity* as a news value. As such, it must be deciphered in the context of what critical media theorists have identified as culturally determined criteria of newsworthiness, which become associated with and subsequently legitimated in terms of audience expectations. Knight's (1997) analysis of Australian media coverage of the 1993 Cambodian elections, for instance, shows how overdetermination of Cambodia as 'the killing fields' (after the Hollywood film of that name), created a reluctance on the part of the press to depart from an unsubstantiated analytic of 'expectations of violence' and 'the threat of the Khmer Rouge'.

The hegemonic narrative archetype within which the non-western world is made meaningful to a western audience is thus arguably that of 'the problem'. It is possible, then, that for many spectators in the West, the term 'Islam' signifies only an ill-defined, worrying spectre of 'fundamentalism' (Said, 1997), 'Thailand' is synonymous with 'sex tourism' (Hamilton, 1997a), and 'Vietnam' 'does not exist outside of the war' (Trinh Minh-Ha, 1991: 100). 'Third world' sites, in other words, often appear in mainstream media texts as pathological spectacles against which the voyeuristic - yet sympathetic - western viewer is implicitly invited to define him or herself as superior.

Nowhere is this Manichaean operation more apparent than in images of western aid programmes. That the metropolitan West seems to take 'as much pride in its 'third world' underdeveloped as the church used to take pride in its poor' (Trinh Minh-Ha,

<sup>13</sup> In chapter five, I return to this theme, examining the discursive production of 'third world' reality as pathology in Australian press narratives of sex tourism, which persistently frame 'Asia' as a crisis-zone, often by recourse to the construction of 'Asian AIDS'. In chapter six, I discuss the ways in which this alleged 'third world' pathology becomes localised in the bodies of migrant Asian sex workers, in the Australian press coverage of 'sex trafficking'.

1991: 22), reeks of colonial paternalism. Indeed, the western subject's self-image as a humanitarian dispenser of charity is realised only at the expense of effacing the agency and dignity of its 'third world' beneficiaries. Thus for Trinh Minh-Ha, the gift of western aid is not innocent, but conceals what is in fact an act of taking / despoiling, whose real purpose is 'to spread the Master's values' (1991: 22) while assuaging his guilt.

The images of 'third world' hunger that appear in western charity advertisements predictably fail to address the large role of both colonialism and current OECD agricultural and trade policies in creating famines where food surpluses were once produced (Pieterse 1992: 235). The discourse of western aid may therefore be read as exemplary of a wider tendency to parochial practice in mainstream media representation. The western media's distancing, voyeuristic gaze upon 'third world' others thus instantiates its audience in 'a world of false horizons' (Pieterse 1992: 235). By foreclosing any analysis of global interconnections, its geopolitical eye constructs for the western subject a diminished universe of moral responsibility, finally ushering in 'a pervasive moral indifference' (O'Tuathail, 1996: 182).

Mainstream media narratives of development thus routinely conceal the fact that the underdevelopment of the 'third world', and the technological sophistication of the modern West, are functions of the former's protracted exploitation by the latter. In this sense, the 'third world' cannot be defined solely in terms of its lack of 'development', but must rather be understood in the context of the anti-imperial struggles with the metropolitan West which have shaped it. Given the mutually determining, structural relation of dominance between them then, the categories of 'first' and 'third' worlds retain some analytic worth. Yet the 'first' / 'third' world divide clearly partakes of the reductive polarising impulse of Manichaeism, flattening the heterogeneity within each 'world' and obscuring the commonalities – such as patriarchal oppression and class inequality – between them. For this reason, the term 'third world' must be 'placed under erasure' (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 27) in representations; suspended in quotation marks which designate it as an open-ended site of discursive contestation whose semantic contents cannot be taken for granted.

### Section three: the subject of the dream is the dreamer

Trinh Minh-Ha's (1991) formulation that there *is* no 'third world' without its 'first world', and no 'first world' without its third, points to the subtext of *self*-representation implicit in all representations of others. Images of definitional 'third world' others are thus available for deployment in discourse as a vehicle for the existentialist meditations of the western subject. Morrison, for instance, has shown how the figure of the black slave historically functioned as a playground for the American literary imagination, giving scope to its deliberations on the nature of freedom and humanity (1992: 38). The textual fabrication of an africanist other has thus provided the occasion for white America's contemplation of selfhood (Morrison, 1992: 47). White subjectivity is thus surreptitiously inscribed in images of others, which arguably reveal more about the representing subject than about the others represented.

The discursive construction of otherness may be recognised then, as an exercise in existential boundary-marking, which provides a kind of 'metaphorical short-cut' (Morrison, 1992: x) to the truth of white subjectivity. Constructions of object others are often instrumental in consolidating, by favourable comparison, the representer's own subject status. For the other's image establishes the place of the subject in a binary representational regime, by defining what is *not*-self for the subject. Morrison (1992: 52) observes, for instance, that the figure of the black slave has historically functioned in the American literary imagination as the instrument through which white subjects know themselves as

not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful;  
not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution,  
but a progressive fulfillment of destiny.

Here, the image of the other may be read as an inverted self-image. It is significant that others often appear to act out or embody that which is frowned upon by the culture that represents them, evoking 'a rogue's gallery of the forbidden' (Hansen et al., 1991: 204-5). Put differently, others are discursively invested with the very desires and behaviours that western cultures possess yet refuse to admit.

Postcolonial theorists have drawn upon psychoanalytic concepts to explain the (re)constitution of the western subject's own disavowed desires in its representations of others. In a psychoanalytic reading, elements repressed in the unconscious of the western subject are projected onto the figure of the 'native' other. The other of colonial discourse thus appears as the subject's shadowy evil twin, expressing that which the subject represses. Ching-Liang Low observes, for example, that nineteenth century Orientalist discourse framed the masculinity of African others in terms of a raw physicality which was marginalised in the Victorian ideal of a Christian manliness premised upon intellect, reason, knowledge and religion (1996: 60). In the figure of the strong black man (epitomised by the Masai warrior), the white masculine subject was invited to recognise an aspect of his own manly nature he could not afford to express, given his 'position of rational authority' (Mullen, 1994: 83). For Chiang-Ling Low, the fantasy of the black male body as repository of supplementary masculine power is shot through with sublimated homoerotic desire (1996: 60). It is her contention then, that the Orientalist gaze appraised the black male body as animal-like in its unbridled sexuality, for the ultimate 'scopophilic pleasure' of the white subject (1996: 53).

The discursive construction of libidinous racial others as mediators of repressed white desire persists into the present. As perhaps the most salient marker of otherness (Gilman, 1985), sexuality provides a useful window onto subtexts of self-identity underpinning the projections of the western subject. The discursive construction of the racial other within the American psychosexual drama of lynching is particularly telling in this respect. Here, in contrast to the desire-inducing figure of the Masai warrior, libidinous otherness appears in the anxiety-provoking form of the rapacious black beast, whose transgressive hypersexuality is stamped out by an avenging lynch mob. The figure of the lynched black man thus stands as an object lesson, warning the white subject of the dangers of unbridled lust. And as Pieterse contends, his symbolic castration at the hands of the lynch mob may be read as a cryptogram for the white subject's own profound ambivalence regarding sexuality (1992: 180).

The discursive construction of otherness routinely takes place within ambivalent force-fields of pleasure and power. Others are produced in familiar processes of

discursive vacillation, as spectres of fascination and fear, objects of desire and discipline, invoking at once libidinous impulses and a will-to-power in the subject. This conflictual economy of the discursive othering processes upon which identity constitutively depends, introduces a split in subjectivity, generating for the subject a disconcerting otherness of self. It is this power / desire split at the level of identification that produces what Homi Bhabha and other postcolonial critics have identified as the fundamental ambivalence of the colonial condition.<sup>14</sup>

### *Representations of others as ambivalent*

Bhabha examines the institution of the English bible in India to illustrate colonial representation as ambivalent. The arrival of that text of the civilising mission in the colony would at first seem to suggest 'the triumph of the writ of colonialist power' (1985: 169). Yet for Bhabha, its transposition into the colonial context is also crucially 'an *Entstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition' (1985: 166). For in adopting the bible, the natives – reasoning that the word of God cannot possibly come from 'the flesh-eating mouths of the English' (Bhabha, 1985: 178) – disarticulate 'the structure of the God-Englishman equivalence' (Bhabha, 1985: 180), alienating 'English' as the middle term. This 'expulsion of the copula' effectively empties the sign of the bible of its normative 'syntagmatic supports' (Bhabha, 1985: 180), those cultural connotations which would make its presence authoritative as an authentically *English* sign. Thus freed from subordination to its European origins, the bible is now available for a specifically colonial – and inappropriate – deployment.

The bible thus emerges in the context of the colony as 'an uncertain textual sign, possibly a fetish' (Bhabha, 1985: 166). Its signifying value is lost in colonial transposition and only its visible surfaces remain intact. Separated, in the Lacanian sense, from itself, the sign of the bible exists in what Bhabha terms a 'metonymy of

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<sup>14</sup> In chapter two, I refer to the operation of this kind of ambivalence in popular Australian representations of feminine Asian others. And, as will be discussed in chapters five and six, an ambivalent fear / desire split emerges in the Australian press coverage of sex tourism and 'sex trafficking', where Asian sex workers appear as 'exotic-erotic' objects *and* as potential 'AIDS-vectors'.

presence' (1985: 176). For although its colonial mode of existence fails to replicate the original plenitude of its Englishness, it cannot be construed as an entirely original or indigenous sign either. The appearance of the bible in the colony therefore illustrates what Bhabha identifies as the *differance* of colonial presence (1985: 169). Subjected to the logic of Derrida's double inscription, where 'writing both marks and goes back over its mark with an undecidable stroke' (Derrida, 1981, cited in Bhabha, 1985: 169), signs of colonial authority are 'enigmatic in a way that is "less than one and double"' (Bhabha, 1985: 179). For Bhabha, then, the presence of edicts of colonial discipline in this doubly inscribed representational space, signify at once the enactment of European mastery and its displacement. Deprived of their full presence in the colonial context, European signs are articulated in colonial discourse with native sign systems, producing hybrid subject effects.

Hybrid identification breaks all the 'rules of recognition' (Bhabha, 1985: 175) that underwrite colonialism's discriminatory governance, shattering the colonial mirror in which the white Subject's sovereignty is realised. Colonial authority thus addresses a body in which stable self / other, subject / object distinctions cannot be made. As the eye of power turns upon its objects, subjecting them to its disciplinary gaze, their display of hybridity 'terrorises authority with the *ruse* of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery' (Bhabha, 1985: 176). Once translated into the context of the colony, then, European power appears as 'a mode of authority that is agonistic (rather than antagonistic)' (Bhabha, 1985: 169).

The stability of those binary othering processes that underpin colonial authority is further eroded with Bhabha's development of the notion of mimicry. The 'mimic man' is for Bhabha the subject effect of an ambivalent regime of colonial representation in which the other's cultural difference is at once produced and disavowed. Specifically, even as the discriminatory logic of colonial rule strives to maintain an enforced separation between colonising self and colonised other, the other is incorporated by the colonial project's humanising impulse. Consequently, the other - 'Anglicised' yet '*emphatically* not... English' (Bhabha, 1997: 154) - is granted neither identity nor difference in colonial representation, and is instead subjected to an impossible double demand: 'be mimetically identical, be totally other' (Fuss, 1994: 23).

To Fanon's characterisation of the options facing the colonised – *turn white or disappear* – Bhabha thus adds a third psychic choice: mimicry. In the injunction to mimesis, the other is produced as an 'authorised version of otherness' (Bhabha, 1997: 155), and appropriated by the watchful eye of colonial power as its disciplinary object. But at the same time, the mimic man – emerging as both an excess and a partial presence in the slippage between identity and difference; as 'a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha, 1997: 153) – appears as an inappropriate subject whose returning gaze menaces colonial authority, undermining the rules of its normalizing discourse. Bhabha thus reveals a paradox at the heart of the colonial project; namely, that its success is contingent upon 'a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure' (1997: 153-4).

For Bhabha, mimicry 'almost but not quite' (1997: 158) represents a potential tool of insurgency for strategic deployment by the colonised. Ultimately, however, it is the condition of the colonised other's dispossession. Miming 'the forms of authority at the point at which [he] de-authorizes them' (Bhabha, 1997: 158), the mimic man is both complicit in his subjection to colonial authority and its unwitting antagonist. In this sense, mimicry is 'a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them' (Bhabha, 1997: 156).

In foregrounding the tensions within colonial regimes of representation, Bhabha remedies the tendency of critics such as Said, to view imperialism as a monolithic and all-powerful system imposed by the West upon its racial and cultural others. It has been objected, however, that Bhabha's theory of colonial ambivalence lacks the political acuity of Said's critique. In the first instance, Bhabha formulates hybridity as a one-dimensional category whose indiscriminate application effaces the fundamental asymmetry of colonial power processes in all their diverse modalities. As Shohat and Stam point out, his all-purpose hybridity analytic is incapable, for instance, of distinguishing forced assimilation from instances of political co-option in the colonial setting (1994: 43).

The conception of colonial mimicry arguably has a similar flattening effect. By refusing to specify the political import of mimicry, Bhabha is unable to distinguish

the reactionary behaviours of colonised others from their attempts at anti-colonial subversion. In any case, his exclusive focus upon the otherness within the colonial project has the effect of belittling that material history of distinctly *non*-ambivalent forms of resistance mounted by colonised people in their struggles for independence. Put differently, Bhabha's ostensibly formalist concern with its internal conflicts 'anthropomorphises' colonial discourse (McClintock, 1995: 63), leaving no room in his account for consideration of the role of historical agency.

More importantly, Bhabha's general theme of ambivalence risks obliterating the real differentials of socioeconomic and political power that have historically existed between colonisers and colonised. Colonial ambivalence seems to imply that the colonised, although dispossessed of land and culture, are 'somehow in "possession" of "colonial power"' (JanMohammed, 1985: 78). For JanMohammed therefore, Bhabha's repression of its politico-economic history implicates him in the imperial project (1985: 79). In fact, this is a problem for all theorists who attempt to understand the sociopolitical processes of colonialism in terms of the explanatory categories of psychoanalysis and poststructuralism. Critics contend, then, that in much postcolonial theory, the banalities of material history are bracketed and mystified according to the dictates of poststructuralism as 'a series of largely disconnected textual moments' (Kaul, 1996: 78); and the exploitative politico-economic conditions of colonies are de-historicised and re-cast in psychoanalytic terms as generalisable problems of psychic identification. In this sense, Bhabha exemplifies for one critic 'the third world intellectual who has been completely reworked by the language of first world cultural criticism' (Dirlik, 1994: 333 n. 6).

Bhabha's seemingly uncritical application of the western conceptual scheme of psychoanalysis to describe the material processes of colonialism is indeed problematic. He is characteristically ambivalent about the ontological status of the psychoanalytic concepts he uses, never specifying whether the structures of colonial discourse are analogous to or expressive of psychic structures (Young, 1990: 154). Processes of colonialism and psychoanalysis might therefore be said to stand in metonymic relation to each other in his account. While this ambiguity is arguably justifiable in relation to his overall theme of ambivalence, Bhabha's failure to

question whether psychoanalytic concepts of identification hold water in the context of the colony remains vexing.

Bhabha's unexamined use of psychoanalytic categories contrasts with Fanon's explicit consideration of the connections between imperialism and psychoanalysis. Fanon's clinical study of the psychopathology of colonialism led him to identify the psychical as a political formation that possessed a material history (Fuss, 1994: 39). For Fanon, psychoanalytic categories were both products and mechanisms of colonial expansion, whose relevance outside the West lay in the fact of their forced imposition – along with many other western structures – upon colonised peoples. However, as Young (1990: 144) notes, Bhabha's insistence upon the *differance* of colonial presence would presumably preclude him from agreeing with Fanon's contention that the categories of European psychoanalysis are identically reproduced in the context of the colony.

In spite of the attendant dangers of his approach however, Bhabha's insight that conflict is internal to colonial modes of identification and authority is a valuable one. Resistance for Bhabha is not located in the agency of an adversary who intentionally acts and attacks from outside colonialism's 'system of disposal'. Instead, it is an effect of the ambivalence produced within those rules of recognition that constitute the very categories of western self and colonised other.

The ambivalent process of identification described by Bhabha in the colonial context is clearly at odds with that dialectical model envisaged by Hegel (Bhabha, 1985: 169), where self-consciousness is given by the negation and incorporation of otherness. The assimilationist logic evident in Hegel's dialectic is reproduced in both psychoanalytic and existentialist accounts of identification. As Fuss (1994: 23) observes, then, there is a sense in which Freud replicates colonial conquest at the psychical level in his work. Fanon's discussion of the psychopathology of black others under colonialism suggests that similar charges may be leveled at Sartre. In contrast to Sartre, who failed to perceive the hierarchical nature of his self-other dialectic, Fanon – observing that the white other-as-master was able to appropriate subjectivity as its exclusive territory within racist representational regimes – illustrated that in inter-subjective encounters, not all 'others' are equal.

The hierarchical self-other dialectic may therefore be recognised as a prelude to the assimilation of otherness, and is rightly displaced in Bhabha's account. Given what Bhabha has identified as the constitutive ambivalence of colonial positionality, the fixity of all dyadic self-other, coloniser-colonised constructs must be recognised as contingent upon their anxious repetition in discourse. Western representations thus bear the trace of an ongoing struggle to contain the threat of otherness present within the binary categories that underpin the sovereignty of the West-as-subject.

## CHAPTER TWO: ENCODING AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY AND ASIAN ALTERITY

In this chapter, I discuss the reproduction of that power-invoking self-other dynamic discussed in chapter one in Australian media representations of 'Asians'. I introduce the chapter by identifying national identities as fictive unities whose claims to sovereign self-presence are underwritten by the disavowal of their constitutive otherness, in the discourse of the mass media. Section two of the chapter examines the role played by 'Asia' as Australia's definitional other in the post-war era. Drawing upon the analysis developed in chapter one, I argue that Australian representations of 'Asian' others reveal more about *Australian* subjectivity than about 'Asians' or 'Asianness' *per se*. I then examine the gendered inflection of such representations, noting the echoes of nineteenth century Orientalism discernible in the contemporary troping of 'Asia' as feminine.

In section three of the chapter, I discuss the refusal to consider 'Asians' as part of Australia, despite their presence here from the time of earliest European settlement, which has marked Australian national imaginings for over a century. I contend that the threat posed to Anglo-Celtic sociocultural hegemony in Australia by the presence of Asian otherness within has been contained by the fundamentally assimilatory discourse of multiculturalism. The final section addresses the containment of otherness and the perpetuation of white dominance in the institutional structures of the mass media, and at the level of the news text.

### Section one: nation as narration

The centrality of the print media to the production of national identity was established by Benedict Anderson in his text *Imagined Communities*. For Anderson, the possibility of imagining the modern nation as a cohesive 'sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time' (1991: 26) came about only with the rise of print capitalism. Specifically, as the publishing industry condensed heterogeneous spoken vernaculars into standardised print languages which were then disseminated through the market, it began to generate 'unified fields of exchange and communication' within which a readership formed as 'the embryo

of the nationally imagined community' (Anderson, 1991: 44). Anderson names the newspaper, that cultural artifact which constitutes the basis of a kind of secular 'communion ritual' performed by thousands of people daily, as an especially potent site of identity production. For in the act of reading the newspaper, a population of otherwise diversely positioned, anonymous social actors is simultaneously addressed and constructed as the interpretive subjects of a fictitious national audience.<sup>15</sup>

Anderson's analysis illuminates the way in which the modern nation came into existence as an imagined community, a specific system of cultural signification. Once national identity is understood as a form of 'narration', it becomes necessary to investigate what Bhabha has described as 'the performativity of language in the narratives of the nation' (Bhabha, 1990a: 3), and thus to expose it

in the *process* of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are *in media res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image.

Bhabha's argument here would seem to support a genealogical engagement with what Foucault might have termed the 'effective history' of the nation. In opposition to conventional historiography's 'search for "origins"' (Foucault, 1977: 140), a Foucauldian approach to national identity would trace 'the endlessly repeated play of dominations' (Foucault, 1977: 150) underwriting the nation's imagined unity. Such a project would seek out traces of suppressed difference, those constitutive exclusions upon which the monistic discourse of nation is premised, to reveal 'the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself' (Foucault, 1977: 147). Genealogy, in short, aims

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<sup>15</sup> Given its ubiquitous status as a cultural common denominator in contemporary western societies, it is clear that television functions in a similar fashion. In this sense it is perhaps no accident that the increasing preoccupation with Australian national identity, which Stratton (1998: 105) identifies as having emerged in 1970s, coincided with the rise of the local film and television industry. Stratton contends that this new concern with the construction of Australian identity through film was government-led, as the Whitlam Government sought to counter the flooding of the local market with American film and television by promoting Australian cultural products (1998: 134-6).

not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all those discontinuities that cross us (Foucault, 1977: 162).

In what follows, then, I examine some of the homogenising narrative strategies through which Australia has been fictioned as a cohesive unity.

### **Section two: narrating Australia in relation to its 'Asian' other**

Returning to the observation with which the first chapter opened, since subjectivity is acquired only in the presence of an other, the discursive construction of Australian national identity must take place in relation to representations of otherness. The external unity that has been Australia's most durable definitional other in recent decades has arguably been 'Asia'.<sup>16</sup>

As Tebbutt (1995: 204-5) has noted, the experience of the Pacific War left Australia with an awareness of the need for self-reliance in defence and diplomacy in the region, precipitating a shift in nationalist discourse. Specifically, after World War Two, Australia's national imaginings were increasingly in relation to 'Asia' rather than the British Empire. This post-war movement away from colonial origins and towards an independent regional identity gained momentum in the 1960s, as the ABC and most Australian broadsheets appointed permanent foreign correspondents in the Asian region (Tebbutt, 1995: 206). By the 1970s, the notion that Australia was 'part of Asia' – first articulated in the 1950s as a means of 'clothing strategic vulnerability in ideals of cultural responsibility' (Brown, 1990: 89) – had gained wide currency.

'Asia' has subsequently stood in representation as a ubiquitous and fetishized other against which Australia's essential coherence as a national community within the region is realised. It should be noted that this 'Asia' has for the most part been discursively constructed as a cultural monolith, comprised of undifferentiated – and

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<sup>16</sup> I suspend the term 'Asia' in quotation marks in order to emphasise its status as a discursive construct, lacking any referent in the real.

patently inferior – ‘Asians’. Where it has invoked its definitional others then, the Australian discourse of nation has partaken of the homogenising impulse that marks all logocentric representational economies, to which the discussion will later return. As Hamilton points out, however, cracks began to appear in the monolith in the wake of the Pacific War. In short, the success of Imperial Japan meant that the Japanese could no longer be so easily subsumed within the category of backward ‘Asians’. Moreover, underpinning the imperialist rights – including to Australia – championed in Japanese nationalist discourse, lay an assumption of cultural superiority which mirrored that claimed by White Australia over its ‘Asian’ others (Hamilton, 1990: 24-5).

A central premise of this thesis is that Australian representations of Asian others constitute a stage upon which (white) Australian subjectivity is figured. Indeed, ‘Asia’ has been extensively deployed in Australian feature films as the setting for popular narratives of self-discovery, which Hamilton summarises in terms of a trajectory of ‘Identity in Question; Loss; An (O)ther Place; Desire for the Other; Betrayal; Transformation of the Self towards a new Strength; Return and Re-integration’ (1997a: 152). It is the encounter with Asian otherness that galvanises the Australian protagonist in his (or, rarely, her,) movement along this linear trajectory. For the mysterious ‘East’, where ‘Australian certainties, securities and understandings break down, fail, turn into wraiths’ (Hamilton, 1997a: 158), becomes a catalyst for the protagonist’s loss of innocence, cathartic self-examination and eventual emergence of a tough new self.<sup>17</sup> Whether typecast as an Oriental baddy, or as sidekick to the protagonist, the figure of the Asian other is constructed as ‘a kind of fetish’ (Hamilton, 1997a: 152), and charged with what Morrison terms ‘lubricating the turn of the plot’ (1992: 13). Asian characters have no role to play in

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<sup>17</sup> For Hamilton, this kind of narrative is exemplified by the documentary fiction film *The Good Woman of Bangkok*, in which Australian protagonist Dennis O’Rourke represents himself as ‘a lost soul... approaching middle-age’ (1997a: 158), who escapes from his failed marriage to Bangkok, where he forms a morally ambiguous relationship with Aoi, a young Thai woman. His journey into this corrupting Asian underworld impairs his sense of agency even further, forcing him into ‘a terrifying contact with the depths; the depths of his desire, depths of his abasement, depths of his fear and horror, depths of his need for love, to be loved’ (Hamilton, 1997a: 159). ‘These are depths,’

representations of this kind, except as deposits of generic otherness against which the Australian hero's reflexive self-awareness becomes possible.<sup>18</sup>

These Australian narratives of self-discovery, moreover, often take place in relation to an Asian other who is crucially *feminine*. As Berry (1997: 42) observes, the intrepid Australian male who ventures into the space of the other typically enters also into a romance with a local Asian woman. The narrative of Australia as western self constituting itself in relation to a feminised Asian other assigns its protagonists a metonymic relation to their countries of origin, allowing them to function in the text simultaneously as psychoanalytic subjects and as metaphors for nations. And, the persistent feminisation of Asian others in relation to an Australia which is typically coded male, points to the gendered inflection of national identities.

#### *Gendering national identities:*

A favoured trope of nationalist discourse is that of nation-as-woman. As feminist critics have observed, however, the 'motherland' is fundamentally a patriarchal construct, in which women appear as 'symbolic bearers of the nation' even as they are 'denied any direct relation to national agency' (McClintock, 1995: 354). The privileged national agent is male. Even the struggles of anti-colonial nationalism in the 'third world' – a project whose agents are typically 'male, vanguardist and violent' (McClintock, 1995: 363-4) – have invariably failed to deliver 'liberation' for

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Hamilton observes, 'which Australian life, particularly Australian public culture, pushes aside, refuses, covers up, particularly for the masculine subject' (1997a: 159).

<sup>18</sup> A parallel procedure is enacted in documentary films that empower an Australian narrator to decipher Asian otherness and broker the Asian other's experience for a western audience. This may occur even in documentaries that eschew the claim to objectivity afforded by the outmoded voice of God style of narration, by capturing the narrator on film as a corporeal tour guide (Dever, 1997b: 77). As Dever contends in her analysis of the documentary *As the Mirror Burns*, the voices of the Vietnamese women the Australian narrator is filmed 'conversing' with are rendered peripheral by her orchestration of the dialogue in advance (1997b: 78). Installing an Australian as the text's voice of authority ensures that, rather than being simply an other amongst others, the Australian in Asia is awarded an exclusive role as subject-of-identification for the audience. The Asian other's agency is consequently eclipsed so that s/he can only appear in the text as an object.

women in any meaningful sense. Indeed, national 'liberation' movements have often been built on a redefined patriarchal base (Sangari & Vaid, 1989).

Women's estrangement from claims to national identity must be understood in the wider context of that discursive operation which Fuss has termed their 'semiotic role as bearers of culture' (1994: 26, n. 10), whereby cultural difference is figured at the level of female bodies emptied of any 'subjective' content. While men tend to bear a metonymic relation to nation, then, appearing in nationalist discourse as 'contiguous with each other and with the national whole' (McClintock, 1995: 355), women are assigned a narrowly metaphoric or allegorical role, appearing as 'the earth that is to be discovered, entered, named, inseminated and, above all, owned' (McClintock, 1995: 31). Thus are women symbolically reduced in nationalist discourse to the space outside history upon which masculine contests are waged.

In this sense women have historically served as 'mediating and threshold figures by means of which men oriented themselves in space, as agents of power and agents of knowledge' (McClintock, 1995: 24). The nation-as-woman trope underwrites what McClintock describes as the 'long western dream of colonial conquest as an erotics of ravishment' (1995: 364), inviting the further troping of imperial conquest as the 'rape' of the virgin motherland, a metaphor which presupposes the patriarchal image of womanhood as 'chaste' or 'maternal' (Parker et al., 1992: 6).<sup>19</sup> To be virgin, moreover, 'is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency, passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason' (McClintock, 1995: 30).

In the context of Australian narratives of self-discovery, then, the metonymic equation of 'Asia' with a sexually available woman, may be read as resurrecting an earlier sexual metaphor for the West's imperialist intrusions into the Orient. In both cases the erotically charged figure of the veiled Oriental woman awaits her denuding

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<sup>19</sup> As will be argued in chapter four, however, the relationship between sexual conquest and imperial contest is perhaps better understood as a *metonymic* one. This is illustrated by the case of the 'comfort women', who, as colonised others, were subjected to organised mass rape under Japanese Imperialism. And in chapter five, I discuss the contemporary replication of this power dynamic in the neo-imperialist sex tourism industry.

and penetration (Shohat, 1993: 57). Such representations however, are profoundly ambivalent, for the feminised Asian other appears as an equivocal figure inspiring at once erotic desire and fear. As I now argue, Asian otherness is construed as threatening in popular Australian narratives of 'Asian invasion'.

### Section three: containing the threat of Asian otherness within

Although discursive constructions of Australia's relation to 'Asia' have shifted over time,<sup>20</sup> persistent fears of Asian invasion lend historical continuity to such representations. Stratton reports that white settlers in the latter half of nineteenth century took exception to the number of Chinese emigrating to the colonies (1998: 88). The legislative foundations of the White Australia policy were laid in 1901 with the passing of the *Immigration Restriction Act*, whose aim was the establishment of an exclusively Anglo-Celtic Australian population.<sup>21</sup> Half a century later, nationalist discourse deployed the same rhetoric of 'Asian invasion', with white Australians of the 1950s and 1960s being told they had to 'populate or perish' at the hands of the 'yellow hordes' (Stratton, 1998: 88). And, during the 1980s, the 'yellow peril' appeared in a slick new corporate guise, as significant holdings of Australian real estate were acquired by Japanese investors (Stratton, 1998: 165). The spectre of 'Asian invasion' still resonates in the Australian imaginary. It has been exploited most recently by Pauline Hanson, who targeted 'Asian' immigrants as undesirable because they fail to assimilate and create enclaves of an alien – and apparently

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<sup>20</sup> Hamilton (1990: 25-6) tracks a rough post-war representational trajectory beginning with the dominant image of starving 'Asians' as recipients of generous Australian aid in the 1950s, to the 'Asia' discovered by backpackers and hippies in the 1960s as mystical refuge from western materialism, to the commodified pleasure zone promoted in package tourism from the 1970s into the present, and the unlimited sex paradise opened to western men since the Vietnam War.

<sup>21</sup> Jupp (1995: 208) notes that while the act was directed specifically against Chinese migrants, it effectively barred any 'undesirable' [read: non-European] immigrants from entry by requiring them to sit a dictation test in a European language. It also provided for the imposition of fines for carriers of such 'non-desirables', with the result that most shipping companies would simply not issue tickets to non-Europeans. Up until the 1960s, the policy was actively supported by both Liberal and Labour parties, as well as by the Australian Workers' Union (Jupp, 1995: 207-8).

undifferentiated – ‘Asian culture’, undermining what Hanson would define as ‘Australian’ [read: white] culture.<sup>22</sup>

Almost thirty years after the legislative and administrative foundations of the White Australia policy were dismantled, national imaginings are still marked by a refusal to admit ‘Asians’ as a constituent part of Australia. Despite their presence in Australia from the time of earliest European settlement, then, ‘Asians’ remain Australia’s immutable other. Yet as Bhabha has observed, ‘[t]he ‘other’ is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously “between ourselves”’ (1990a: 4). For difference is necessarily internal to all nations, which have existence as fictive unities imposed upon the diverse sociocultural realities of heterogeneous people whose difference, in psychoanalytic terms, is repressed and projected onto external others.

The cohesion of national identity is therefore underwritten by an indefinite deferral of engagement with the nation’s threatening constitutive difference. The claims of nationalist discourse are therefore ‘as much acts of affiliation and establishment as they are moments of disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural contestation’ (Bhabha, 1990a: 5). In this sense, the claiming of an essentialist national identity is ultimately an ideological manoeuvre, anxiously directed at conjuring up an image of a consensual society in order to conceal the inequalities between its differently

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<sup>22</sup> Stratton speculates that the virulence of the ‘Hansonite backlash’ is due in part to the new willingness to consider ‘Asians’ as a part of the Australian nation, which, he suggests, is signaled by their increased visibility in Australian cultural products from the 1990s (1998: 164). In any case, ‘Asians’ comprise an increasing proportion of Australia’s population. Figures released by the Australian Immigration Department’s Research and Statistics branch showed that for the 1995-1996 period, settlers from ‘Asian’ countries accounted for 39.9 per cent of total immigration, while Europeans made up only 26.7 per cent (Teo, 2000: 8). Within the ‘Asian’ category, settlers from North-East Asia totaled 18,668, or 18.8 per cent of total immigration, those from South-East Asia totaled 13,147, or 13.3 per cent of total immigration, and migrants from South Asia totaled 7,709, or 7.8 per cent of total immigration (Teo, 2000: 8). And, while by 1995 people of Chinese origin remained the most numerous Asian population overall (Jupp, 1995: 210), the largest Asian-born populations in order of size were Vietnamese, Malaysian, Filipino, Hong Kong Chinese, Indian, and Mainland Chinese (Jupp, 1995: 212). Overall, however, there were still 20 times more Australians of British and European origin than of Asian origin (Jupp, 1995: 224).

positioned constituents. In contemporary Australia, threatening otherness within has been contained – and Anglo-Celtic cultural dominance thereby safeguarded – by the discourse of multiculturalism.

### *Narrating multicultural Australia*

The institutional form of liberal multiculturalism developed in Australia as a technique for 'managing the population as an evolving unity' (Stratton, 1998: 74), following the failure of official assimilation policy to address the cultural divisions pursuant to migrant settlement in the post-war era (Stratton, 1998: 71).<sup>23</sup> Driven by the recognition of the state's need to keep watch over the national culture, official multiculturalism encouraged the increasing politicisation of Australian national identity (Stratton, 1998: 112-113), and by the 1990s, 'multiculturalism' was touted as its cornerstone (Stratton, 1998: 139). Berry (1997: 44) has identified the phrase 'multicultural nation', which enjoys such wide currency in the postcolonial present, as oxymoronic, since attaching the qualifier 'multicultural' ostensibly abrogates the conventional understanding of nation as cohesive cultural monolith. On closer inspection however, as I shall now argue, official multiculturalism in contemporary Australia does little to undermine the nation's fictive unity.

In the first instance, the discourse of multiculturalism operates in terms of a binary, discursively producing cultures as discrete and static entities. As such, it is unable to comprehend cultural complexities or the creolising transformations wrought in source cultures as they encounter different cultural forms.<sup>24</sup> In its Australian variant moreover, liberal multiculturalism enshrines a privileged Anglo-Celtic<sup>25</sup> core culture

<sup>23</sup> The discourse of multiculturalism has therefore tended to frame Australia's ethnic politics in terms of immigration, thereby deflecting critical attention from the plight of Aboriginal people (Gunew, 1990: 104).

<sup>24</sup> Kalpana Ram's critique of liberal multiculturalism from the viewpoint of a migrant woman is salient here. Ram contends that the binary structure of identity recognised by multiculturalist discourse keeps non-'ethnic' forms of difference such as gender 'sealed off in tidy fashion from issues of "multiculturalism"' (1996: 137), thereby obscuring the complexities associated with being female and a member of a 'minority' ethnic group in contemporary Australia.

<sup>25</sup> The term 'Anglo-Celtic', made popular in the 1980s under official multiculturalism, is in fact exclusive to Australia. As Stratton notes, it was adapted from 'Anglo-Saxon' in the nineteenth century

around which it organises 'ethnic minority' margins, where limited difference is paternalistically tolerated (Stratton, 1998: 84). The expression of difference is permitted only in the domain of the narrowly 'cultural', in isolation from the sphere of judicial and political processes. Peripheral cultures are thus produced as wholesome ethnic spectacles for consumption by members of the core culture (Gunew, 1990: 104), while Anglo-Celtic dominance of constitutional affairs goes unchallenged, and the existing racial power structure is further entrenched. In the Australian context then, liberal multiculturalism has arguably operated as nothing more than 'a thinly disguised euphemism for assimilation' (Gunew, 1990: 110-111), and ultimately, as a discursive whitening agent for the national culture.<sup>26</sup>

Multiculturalism thus licenses the consumption of palatable [read: apolitical] otherness.<sup>27</sup> The uncritical celebration of multiculturalism would erase the material histories of racist and imperial domination which continue to structure relations between different cultural groupings in the postcolonial present. Devoid of its political resonance, otherness is co-opted and cathected as pure image, a 'corporate-managed United-Colours-of-Benetton pluralism' (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 47),

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by Irish settlers who sought to proclaim their insider status. While its earliest use was 'by a subordinate group insisting on their syncretic presence within the dominant culture,' then, it is contemporarily deployed not as a 'tactic of inclusion but as a strategy of exclusion' (1998: 38).

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Stratton identifies some shared ideological presuppositions underpinning the official policies of both assimilation and multiculturalism. Specifically, both discourses assume firstly that a national culture has to be homogeneous in order for it to exist, and secondly, that some cultures [read: 'Asian'] are fundamentally incompatible with what is alleged to be Australia's exclusively Anglo-Celtic-European heritage (1998: 64). It is therefore ironic that Pauline Hanson and John Howard's attacks on liberal multiculturalism 'come out of the same assumptions in which multiculturalism is, itself, deeply embedded' (Stratton, 1998: 70). For Stratton, there is no real qualitative difference between the Labour Party's championing of multiculturalism and the 'One Nation' rhetoric espoused by Pauline Hanson and the Howard Government, except that Hanson and Howard's promotion of 'a limitedly multiracial society with a monoculture' (1998: 79) is perhaps less subtle.

<sup>27</sup> Ethnic difference has indeed proved increasingly profitable for culture industries in the metropolitan West since the late 1980s, a phenomenon which must be viewed in the wider context of that commodification of ethnicity which Loshitzsky identifies as 'part and parcel of western modernity' (1996: 330). I return to this observation in chapter five, which examines the consumption of ethnic otherness in modern mass tourism.

which, as bell hooks (1994: 149-150) observes, does little to inhibit the reproduction of white cultural dominance:

When the discourse of blackness is in no way connected to an effort to promote collective black self-determination, it becomes simply another resource appropriated by the coloniser. It then becomes possible for white supremacist culture to be perpetuated and maintained even as it appears to become inclusive.

The 'sudden feverish love affair with pluralism, otherness, and diversity' (Naficy & Gabriel 1993: x) must therefore be understood in the light of white capitalism's conservative appropriation of apolitical 'blackness'. In this context, multiculturalism comes to seem at best 'an empty signifier' (Shohat & Stam, 1994: 47), and at worst, a protective screen behind which the furtive operation of modern racism continues unchecked.

Recent years have witnessed the increasing displacement of overt institutional racial discrimination by indirect – and arguably more insidious – forms of racism, whose practitioners would emphatically deny that they are racist. Indeed, a defining feature of the multicultural present is the apparent supplanting of the discourse of race altogether by a rhetoric whose key terms are 'ethnicity' and 'culture'. Yet race thinking remains central to the organisation of multiculturalism.<sup>28</sup> And, as Jakubowicz et al. (1994: 32) contend, the discourse of the mass media has become the testing ground for the subtle operation of this new racism. Mass media organisations cannot appear to sanction forms of racial oppression now placed outside the consensus, such as blatantly racist attacks on groups or individuals. Yet, as I illustrate in the following discussion, the mass media persist in transmitting ideologies whose net effect is the perpetuation of white sociocultural dominance.

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<sup>28</sup> As Stratton points out, the demise of the White Australia policy led to a greater presence of visibly identifiable migrant groups, so that by the 1980s, racial markers were increasingly being used as signifiers of allegedly insurmountable ethnic or cultural difference, as exemplified by Pauline Hanson's identification of a single 'Asian culture' (1998: 44).

#### Section four: marking otherness in the mass media

The news constitutes a major source of 'information' about events, places and people existing outside the immediate experience of its diversely positioned consumers. It follows that understandings of such forms of otherness as ethnic or cultural difference are inextricably linked to the ways in which they are signified in the news media. In fact, the marking of difference and the articulation of otherness are arguably the most abiding preoccupations of newsmaking.

The symbolic centering of the culturally peripheral, however, is realised in news texts at the expense of its containment. And it is a central premise of this thesis that the containment of threatening forms of otherness, via certain textual strategies, underwrites white discursive power in the press. Where others are represented in news texts then, I seek to investigate the power-knowledge alignments forged by this discursive logic of containment. While my analysis is directed at the discursive production and containment of otherness at the level of the text, it should be noted that the institutional context in which news texts are produced – that sphere which, following Jakubowicz et al. (1994), might be termed the political economy of the news media – is still marked by structural forms of racism.

Van Dijk has called attention to white dominance of the news media's institutional structures in western countries, such that 'ethnic minority' journalists continue to experience discrimination in hiring, news story assignment and promotion (1991: 245). Researching structural racism among Australian media organisations, Jakubowicz et al. (1994: 188) found media owners and managers, as well as those controlling newsrooms and making editorial decisions, were almost exclusively men of Anglo-Australian or British background.

Racial discrimination is also institutionalised at the level of source-media relationships, with white sources typically enjoying a priority of access to news media (Van Dijk, 1991: 153). This racially inflected pattern of consultation is in part the product of the communication gaps that exist between predominantly white journalists and potential sources from 'ethnic minority' groups (Van Dijk, 1991: 153). As Van Dijk contends however, even where minority groups produce regular

press releases, journalists still fail to define them as newsworthy (1991: 153). In addition, minority group spokespersons tend to be considered less credible, and are typically represented as partisan, in comparison to white sources whose ethnicity goes unmentioned (Van Dijk, 1991: 154). Even where individuals from 'ethnic minority' groups are key actors in a news story, then, they are seldom permitted to define their own reality by appearing as speaking subjects. Their speech is instead typically mediated through more 'reliable' politicians, lawyers or other white representatives who defend their case (Van Dijk, 1991: 154). The greater readiness to consult white sources creates a tautological amplifying dynamic, appearing to give confirmation of the inherent newsworthiness of white actors.

In short, mass media organisations tend to sustain a milieu in which racial discrimination flourishes, even as they purport to oppose racism (Jakubowicz et al., 1994: 30). This permits white control of what Van Dijk terms the 'definition of the ethnic situation,' and ensures that the mass media text is 'essentially a form of positive group self-representation' (1991: 33).<sup>29</sup> While there may be an occasional airing of anti-racist or minority group views in the discourse of the press, these occur only within the narrow and carefully guarded boundaries of 'legitimate dissent'. Indeed, as Van Dijk – evincing a debt to Chomsky – observes, such apparent challenges to the system of white hegemony may even strengthen it; for they have ideological existence as 'manifestations of the strategic flexibility of the system of ethnic dominance' (1991: 31). Where otherness escapes symbolic annihilation and is represented in texts at all then, it is 'mainstreamed' (Ruby, 1991: 61) in such a way as to avoid upsetting the power-knowledge structure upholding white dominance.

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<sup>29</sup> Although the discourse of the press may be broadly defined as a site in which white power is reproduced, important ideological differences exist between various news publications. Van Dijk for instance refers to the division in editorial stance between the liberal quality press, on the one hand, and right-wing popular tabloids on the other (1991: 6). And, in the Australian context, Jakubowicz et al. note that *The Australian*, in its strong identification with neo-liberal economics, and firm commitment to a position which persists in denying the existence of racism in Australia, reflects the interests of the conservative white elite more closely than do newspapers such as *The Age* or *The Sydney Morning Herald* (1994: 111-2).

The institutional context in which they are produced thus ensures that mass media texts operate as instruments of cultural assimilation. The imperatives of commercial success in particular, which underpin the favoured news values, narrative archetypes and tropes of the news, encourage a representational homogenization which mitigates against attending to the complexities of other cultures. This flattening process is not unique to the discourse of the press however, for threatening forms of otherness have in fact often been contained on a variety of discursive terrains by representing cultural others as all alike.<sup>30</sup> Stamping others with 'the mark of the plural' (Memmi, cited in Shohat & Stam, 1994: 183) renders them infinitely interchangeable, so that any analysis of the multiple overlapping sociocultural forces shaping their diverse realities is summarily foreclosed. More importantly however, the general failure to admit the immense heterogeneity of otherness betrays a will-to-power born of fear. 'The paradigmatic conception here,' as Godzich (1989: xiii) observes, is that of

the quest in romances of chivalry in which the errant knight leaves Arthur's court – the realm of the known – to encounter some form of otherness, a domain in which the courtly values of the Arthurian world do not prevail. The quest is brought to an end when this alien domain is brought within the hegemonic sway of the Arthurian world: the other has been reduced to (more of) the same.

The discursive colonisation of alterity in the press thus permits others to be constructed as the disciplinary objects of a logocentric representational regime,

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<sup>30</sup> This form of discursive othering has for instance been widely employed in conventional ethnographic representation, where the actions of one tribesman are construed as 'tribal customs' that are common to all members of his tribe in all times (Hansen et al., 1991: 218). The complexities of an entire culture are thus distilled into 'an iconic "he" (the standardised adult male specimen)' (Pratt, 1985: 139), whose ethnographic representation is clearly recognisable as an instance of 'the humanist tradition of men celebrating the achievements of "Man"' (Hansen et al., 1991: 219). And Said has shown how this homogenising form of discursive violence proved expedient in colonial conquest, where the construction of 'the Orient' as a homogeneous sociopolitical monolith allowed diverse others to be conveniently subsumed under a single category for the purpose of colonial administration. Furthermore, contemporary critical theory is not immune to this homogenising impulse where it invokes the ontological category of 'the Other'. As Fuss points out, theorists who treat 'the Other' as a categorical imperative in their analyses paradoxically risk 'eliding the very range and play of cultural differences that the designation is intended to represent' (1994: 22).

whose dominance, as Irigaray has argued, is secured by 'its power to *reduce all others to the economy of the Same*' (1985a: 74).

In news texts then, there is a denial of other cultures' three-dimensionality and their reduction to tropes and stereotypes. Richard Dyer (1977) draws upon Alfred Schutz's theory of typifications, those primary classifying mechanisms without which individuals could not make sense of the world, to define a social type as a basic, easily recognisable and memorable characterisation which foregrounds a limited number of traits (cited in Hall, 1997: 257-9). Stereotypes, by contrast, reduce an individual entirely to the sum of those few 'essential' traits, further simplifying, exaggerating and fixing them by 'nature' for eternity in the process. As Stuart Hall observes, they operate much like fetishes. Fetishism is a form of disavowal, or, as Hall describes it, 'a strategy for having-it-both-ways' (1997: 268), in which a powerful yet forbidden desire is indulged in representation even as it is denied and expelled. Like the fetish then, the stereotype grants that which is forbidden a displaced form of representation through the substitution of some thing for the whole of the feared-yet-desired object (Hall, 1997: 266-7). Above all, however, the stereotype must be seen as a form of symbolic violence. Its ideological effect is to consecrate a hierarchical division between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal', and police the boundary thereby created between a privileged 'us' and a deviant or pathological 'them', whose structurally determined silence renders them powerless to contest such representational practices.

Notwithstanding some positive changes that have occurred in recent decades, Van Dijk finds that the discourse of the press plays a continuing role in perpetuating racist stereotypes (1991: 245). The tendency to frame coverage of ethnic minority groups in terms of the 'social problem', as discussed in chapter one for instance, persists in news texts. Jakubowicz et al.'s analysis revealed that where Aboriginals and non-English speaking background immigrants (or 'NESBs') appear in mainstream Australian news texts, it is almost exclusively in the context of stories involving violence (1994: 160). Within the 'hermeneutics of domination' moreover, while representations of members of cultural dominants draw from a wide spectrum of tropes and typifications, 'each negative image of an underrepresented group becomes... sorely overcharged with allegorical meaning' (Shohat & Stam, 1994:

183). Others are thereby called upon to stand for something more than themselves, and might be said to carry a greater 'burden of representation' (Shohat & Stam, 1994: 184). This is the sense in which Michael Rogin has referred to the 'surplus symbolic value' (cited in Shohat & Stam, 1994: 183) of racial others, which encourages such slippages as *young black male* → '*delinquent*'.

Stereotyping, then, is one of many hegemonic strategies of containment at work in the discourse of the press. In striving to contain alterity by annexing it within 'a regime of the conventional and familiar' (Hansen et al., 1991: 224), news texts ensure that others are represented only to the extent that they are rendered non-threatening to cultural dominants. The deployment of rhetorical devices such as stereotyping therefore positions news consumers to understand others from the vantage point of white middle class experience (Grey, 1993: 118). By domesticating otherness however, the news 'destroys the very authenticity it desires' (Loshitzky, 1996: 325) and therefore fails to deliver the 'truth' it promises to capture. In this sense mainstream media representation is driven by a perpetually unfulfilled desire for the other's 'truth'. I conclude this chapter by quoting from Naficy and Gabriel (1993: ix), who observe:

Consuming the other is a continual process of yearning - for meaning, for those qualities which the dominant order has exiled or lost, and for the certainties that ideologies provide in a world that is increasingly uncertain and unpredictable. Since this yearning is never fulfilled, the other remains forever alluring (and threatening).

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the methodological presuppositions underpinning the empirical component of the thesis. The fundamental concept informing my analysis of Australian press texts is that news must be treated as a form of cultural discourse. I survey three theoretical models out of which this recognition emerges, including the 'structuralist' theories of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, sociological conceptions of news production, and the insights of Foucauldian genealogy. The second section of the chapter outlines the method by which the news texts covering each of the three issues examined in the empirical chapters of the thesis were selected and analysed.

### Section one: methodological presuppositions

The news is conventionally understood as a democratic flow of truth to the public, facilitated by the objective reporting of self-evidently newsworthy events. News texts purport to offer consumers unmediated access to the real, historical world. Yet as one critic has noted, '[t]rying to determine what is going on in the world by reading a newspaper is like trying to tell the time by watching the second hand of a clock' (Ben Hecht, cited in Cohen & Young, 1981: 429). In opposition to what critical media theorists have identified as the 'mirror' analogy of the news, in which "reality" magically transform[s] itself into alphabetic signs' (Schudson, 1989: 263-4), I contend that the news must be treated as a form of cultural discourse, a 'man-made' prism through which extra-discursive events are refracted.

A theoretical approach to the news text must therefore aim at dissolving what Barthes has referred to as 'the greasiness of 'natural' language (that is to say, language which feigns ignorance of the fact of its nature as language' (1977: 199). For news discourse is not immune to the many lexical and rhetorical devices operative at all times in all language use. The truth it transmits is therefore best understood in Nietzsche's (1976: 46-7) sense, as:

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically,

and which long after use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.

Put differently, the news text's claim to the status of purveyor of the pre-semiotic Real is precisely upheld by effacing the culturally determined signification processes that constitute it. I contend, therefore, that the insights of structuralism may be productively brought to bear on the analysis of news texts.

### *Structuralism and semiotics*

Of particular relevance to the present study is the work of literary and cultural critic Roland Barthes. Drawing upon the formalist insights of semiology, the 'science of signs' developed by French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913), Barthes inquires into the sociocultural determinants of semiotic processes. Broadly speaking, the structuralist problematic addresses the production of meaning within a sign system. In Saussurean terms, it asks how an individual utterance or writing act – a *parole* – acquires its meaning in terms of the 'deep structure' of the signifying system, or *langue*, in which it occurs.

Underlying the signifiers in all sign systems is what Barthes describes as a 'floating chain of signifieds' (1977: 40), such that multiple meanings coexist in any given text for potential actualisation by different 'readers'. Yet as Barthes observes, every society develops textual practices designed to anchor this floating chain and thus arrest the inherently polysemic play of signs. In this sense, texts might be said to 'remote control [the reader] towards a meaning chosen in advance' (Barthes, 1977: 40). This is the point at which semiotics becomes vitally concerned with the notion of ideology. For as Barthes observes, 'the anchorage may be ideological and indeed this is its principal function' (1977: 40).

Barthes' structuralism thus effects the dissolution of the natural link between signifier and signified by revealing their 'indexical' bond to be arbitrary and 'if not unmotivated, at least entirely historical' (Barthes, 1977: 27). The semiotic toolkit thus lends the valuable insight that meaning does not flow automatically from reality but is accomplished in culturally determined signification processes. It follows that

understandings of reality are contingent upon the success of social actors in imposing their meanings on events. The ability to signify, in short, entails a form of social power.

Barthes anatomizes the key mechanism through which signifiers are legislatively fixed to signifieds, by distinguishing between the denotative (first order) and connotative (second order) meanings carried by words.<sup>31</sup> He pinpoints the latter – that culturally determined ‘associative field of meanings of a single term’ – as ‘the domain through which ideology invades the language system’ (Hall, 1982: 79). Operating to forge chains of equivalence between words and referents, connotation is at work in all texts committed to what Barthes identifies as ‘the closure system of the West’ (1974: 7). Various descriptions include ‘a determination’ (ibid.: 8), ‘a deliberate “static”... introduced into the fictive dialogue between author and reader,’ and ‘a subjugation which the text must undergo,’ connotation therefore ‘makes possible a (limited) dissemination of meanings’ (Barthes, 1974: 8-9).

I contend that the news text may be viewed as an archetypal site of this kind of ideological foreclosure of meaning. For news values of clarity and simplicity make the discourse of the press uniquely hostile to the necessarily polysemic potential of signs, wherein lies the cause of what one critic observes as the standard complaint about the ‘loss of complexity, the hemorrhaging of excess,’ in the news and in journalism generally (Nichols, 1991: 147).

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<sup>31</sup> The difference is only in appearance however, for denotation, as Barthes observes ‘is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations (the one which seems both to establish and close the reading), the superior myth by which the text pretends to return to the nature of language, to language as nature’ (Barthes, 1974: 9).

*Manufacturing the news*

My analysis is also informed by the sociological recognition of the fundamentally bureaucratic nature of news production, which posits the news text as the result of 'an organised response to routine bureaucratic problems' encountered in both the sources and contexts of its production (Rock, 1981: 64).<sup>32</sup> Seen from this sociological angle, the news text appears as the end product of a dual process of filtering (news-gathering) and construction, such that 'the world of the press is not the real world, but the world skewed and judged' (Fowler, 1991: 11). Tiffen identifies the two primary constraints shaping the rhythm of news production in the press as the *deadline* and the *news hole*. And since the size and shape of the latter is pre-determined by commercial decisions and cannot be varied to suit how many newsworthy events actually occur each day (1997: 195), the news presents a necessarily 'episodic and fragmentary view of the world' (Tiffen, 1997: 199).

News-gathering routines in the press generally fall into three main categories. In the first instance, newspapers obtain news items from regions outside their circulation area by subscribing to news agencies. In Australia, the largest agency of this kind is the Australian Associated Press (AAP), which in turn subscribes to international news agencies and has a close relationship with the British news agency Reuters. In addition, Tiffen observes that syndication services offered by other news organisations including prestigious overseas papers like the *New York Times* are becoming increasingly important (1997: 195). Secondly, internal reporters are assigned 'rounds' which ensure a steady supply of news items. And finally, generalist reporters are employed to cover areas that do not provide such a regular flow of stories. Their stories are typically derived either from tip-offs from public or social agencies about 'spot news' such as accidents, from pre-scheduled public

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<sup>32</sup> This is the basic premise underpinning the sociological model of newsmaking that emerged in the early 1970s. Texts which overturned claims of the spontaneous actuality of the news by examining the organisational contingencies determining its production include Edward Jay Epstein's *News From Nowhere* (1973), as well as the participant observation studies published by Gaye Tuchman (1978) and Herbert Gans (1980).

events, or from the promotional activities of sources seeking publicity (Tiffen, 1997: 196).

The source-media relationship has in fact attracted considerable scholarly attention. Critical media theorists have exploded the pluralist myth of the mass media as a freely competitive market-place of ideas, calling attention to what Stuart Hall has described as the 'systematically structured over-accessing to the media of those in powerful and privileged institutional positions' (Hall et al., 1978: 58). As one critic observes, while such legitimate sources 'do not have to raise their voices to be heard,' since 'journalists are always stationed on their doorsteps,' alternative sources generally have to instigate vociferous demonstrations in order to attract media attention (Leitch, 1990: 20).

The critical model thus holds that certain legitimate spokespersons are enthroned at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of credibility in the reporting of news. Awarded the status of 'primary definers', they are able to set the parameters within which the discussion of issues takes place. Alternative sources must then frame their counter-definitions of events in terms of this agenda established in advance, and consequently have little hope of dislodging the definitions of the powerful. For critical media theorists, this structured relationship between accredited sources and news organisations gives substance to the Marxist axiom that 'the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class' (Schlesinger, 1990: 67).

Routine reporting on the activities and opinions of legitimated institutions is partly the result of the practical considerations of time and financial constraints. Institutional sources are easily accessed in the search for items to fill the news hole surrounding advertisements. A second reason for the dominance of institutional sources may be located in the distinction drawn in the news media between 'fact' and 'opinion', and the consequent reliance upon 'accredited' sources for the retrieval of 'facts'.<sup>33</sup> It is ironic, then, that the very procedures designed to preserve the

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<sup>33</sup> The news media thus partake of the 'will to truth' identified by Foucault as the most important rarefying procedure shaping discursive production in contemporary Western societies. This is an important point, to which the discussion will later return.

objectivity and neutrality of the news, also serve to reproduce the 'definitions of social reality' provided by the powerful (Hall et al., 1978: 58).

The relationship that has historically been maintained between press organisations and successive Australian Governments would appear to provide some support for the primary definers model. From its inception, the Australian press was directly controlled by the colonial administration, so that the first newspapers established in colonial Australia operated primarily as a means of distributing Government announcements (Schultz, 1997: 27). Schultz contends that even after the advent of 'press freedom', journalism in Australia has been 'constrained by a commitment to reporting the pronouncements of prominent men' (1997: 29-30). The close relationship between the press and politicians has proved an enduring one in Australia.<sup>34</sup> While the potential political power of television is generally thought to exceed that of the press, those in elected office, acknowledging that 'newspapers remain the most powerful agenda setter' (Schultz, 1997: 32), continue to court newspaper owners.<sup>35</sup>

The interests of mass media and national elites, however, are clearly not identical. The proprietary control that characterises the top-down model of media organisations has been gradually eroded since the 1970s, with journalists and editors becoming increasingly assertive (Schultz, 1997: 42). Elite control of news-making in Australia was further undermined in the mid-1980s, when the Hawke Government took steps to reduce the concentration of ownership of the Australian press, acknowledged as one of the highest in the world. Nevertheless, oligopoly ownership of Australian newspapers persists into the present.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Schultz further contends that the Australian press has retained 'an unquestioned conservative bias' despite the proclaimed ethic of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' in journalism which took root in the 1960s (1997: 30).

<sup>35</sup> In 1997, Government subsidies to the press were estimated at above \$3 million (Schultz, 1997: 31).

<sup>36</sup> Three entertainment conglomerates now have a monopoly on Australian news media: Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation Limited, which publishes over sixty per cent of the nation's papers; John Fairfax Limited, which was acquired by a Canadian group in the mid-1990s; and the Australian Consolidated Press (Schultz, 1997).

In general however, while their typically hierarchical structure does make news organisations 'susceptible to influences from above,' complete proprietary control would require 'an improbable omniscience' (Tiffen, 1997: 197-198). Instead, the exercise of power both within news organisations and by dominant sources over news content, is constrained by the essentially bureaucratic nature of news production. The autonomous requirements and practices of news media organisations themselves, in other words, prevent them from passively reproducing the definitions of the powerful.

The primary definers model therefore comes to seem overly reductive, foreclosing the possibility of theoretical engagement with the dynamic processes underpinning discursive production in the press. By depicting the official source camp as an all-powerful monolith, the model obliterates competition between sources. And as one critic observes, the notion that primary definers are simply 'accredited' to their position of ideological dominance by virtue of their institutional location, is atemporal, being unable to account for the ways in which the boundaries of 'primary definitions' may be permeable and shifting (Schlesinger, 1990: 66).

I share with Schlesinger the view that Bourdieu's formulation of the *field* provides a more satisfactory theoretical framework within which to conceptualise the relationship between the press and its sources. In Bourdieu's scheme, the mass media exist as a complex sphere of social relations in which actors compete to impose an orthodoxy of interpretation upon media products, by strategically mobilising the cultural capital and financial resources at their disposal. This recognition that primary definition is not entirely structurally pre-determined is echoed in the work of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, which has leant a theoretical backbone to much critical study of the press. Gramsci (1971) outlined the way in which hegemony is accomplished in democratic societies by securing the consent of the governed in ideological struggles over meaning, where weapons of signification are inequitably distributed among contenders. Gramsci's sophisticated conception of hegemony remedies the implicit functionalism of the ruling class / ruling ideas formula, illuminating the oblique nature of the relationship between news organisations and elites.

In democratic societies, then, the mass media do not function as agents of ruling class propaganda. The situation is not one of perfect closure; there are cracks in the edifice which create room for a degree of dissent and the airing of oppositional views. In this sense the mass media is a 'leaky' system. As Stuart Hall (1986: 10) observes,

it leaks all over the place, like a badly patched-up roof, because it is subject to such contradictory pressures. It must keep, feed, and expand its hold on mass audiences while being fundamentally oriented ... within the perspectives of those who control the power structures of society.

While news organisations are vulnerable to sanctions from powerful sources, they have a range of strategies at their disposal for countering this problem. They may for instance proclaim their objectivity or their indispensable democratic role as the fourth estate, or simply invoke what Tiffen refers to as 'arcane and impenetrable notions of newsworthiness' (1997: 197). For outside the sphere of influence of powerful sources, news values structure the selection of events for inclusion in the news. Learned by journalists via an informal socialising process, these implicit rules of newsworthiness foster certain expectations in audiences and thus become legitimated in terms of audience demand (Chibnall, 1981: 87).

News values are culturally determined and shift over time. It should be noted, for instance, that the apotheosis of television as a virtual cultural common denominator, as well as the expansion and deregulation of electronic media technologies in recent years, have impacted in crucial ways upon the news values at work in the press. Daily newspapers – which once had a monopoly on the news – are forced to compete for a share of the news market with other more instantly accessible media technologies.<sup>37</sup> The pressure to gain an audience and hold it has thus arguably become the primary consideration driving the reporting of news in the press.<sup>38</sup> It

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<sup>37</sup> Yet as Schultz (1997) notes, predictions of the decline of the press have been often made and never realised. What is most interesting about the press as a medium of communication for Schultz, then, is its resilience. The quality press in particular remains highly profitable despite falling per capita circulation, as advertisers seem prepared to pay to reach consumers with money to spend (1997: 24).

<sup>38</sup> The 'overriding commercial priorities' (Schultz, 1997: 26) which have precipitated this shift are ostensibly at odds with the press' original role as the fourth estate, that vital part of a representative

seems likely that for newspapers this commercial imperative has precipitated a shift in news values in line with an increased emphasis on the news as 'entertainment' rather than 'information'.<sup>39</sup>

News values clearly perform a gatekeeping role, ensuring that certain aspects of the social world are systematically excluded from the news. The gatekeeping metaphor depicts news production as a mechanistic system of 'cybernetic filters reducing the flow of information reaching the audience' (Chibnall, 1981: 75). On its own, however, the metaphor yields only a partial understanding of the newsmaking process because it leaves the notion of 'information' sociologically untouched (Schudson, 1989: 265). Since news items are not simply discovered and mechanically relayed to readers, news texts must be recognised as fictive cultural products actively constructed by journalists.

Journalists are employed by news organisations to arrange untidy 'reality' into orderly narratives 'with beginnings, middles, and denouements' (Curran & Seaton, 1991: 265). For the reading activity of news consumers is assumed to be conditioned by the expectation of narrative resolution brought to bear on the consumption of fiction. The commercially driven need to secure a reader's instant attention and hold it, also creates a preference for familiar themes and modes of emplotment in news reporting. In this sense, 'the most 'satisfactory' news story is also a literal *story*' (Sparks, 1992: 24); or, in John Fiske's terms, the news and fiction exist as 'modalities of each other' (1989, cited in Cucklanz, 1995: 85).

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democracy. For Schultz the contemporary press is therefore essentially a commercial business, whose claim to act as the fourth estate remains 'little more than a rhetorical shell' (1997: 25).

<sup>39</sup> Furthermore Tiffen argues that the commercial pressures brought to bear on the press have forced an overall drop in the professional standards of the newspaper industry, a claim corroborated by the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA). For in the wake of the heavy financial losses incurred after December 1986 with the upheaval in Australian media ownership, the temptation for news organisations to 'take short-cuts in their reporting activities' is greater than ever (Tiffen, 1997: 198). As Tiffen points out, the pinch has been felt most acutely in the areas of investigative and international reporting, those most publicly valuable kinds of news which are also the most expensive (1997: 198).

The construction of news items is thus largely determined by what might be termed narrativity, such that certain narrative archetypes 'hover above experience', providing shared thematic frameworks within which events may be made meaningful (Jacobs, 1996). Observing that journalists not only tell stories, 'they receive the world in a "storied" way,' as 'composed of actors and "messages,"' Jacobs contends that 'narrativity allows news workers to do much of the work of producing the news in the very act of discovering it' (1996: 381-2). Indeed, for Pugliese, the archetypal newspaper article is characterised by a teleological trajectory reminiscent of the morality tale (1991: 85). Rhetorical continuity is maintained by editing any contradictions and discrepancies out of the narrative trajectory, whose logical development culminates in a denouement to which is attached an unequivocally moralistic coda – in contravention of the ethic of journalistic impartiality.

Since their net effect is to oversimplify and constrict the informational dimension of news texts, such narrative formats are 'cognitively disabling' (Tiffen, 1997: 200). Constructions of actors and events tend to be drawn from a predictable stock of stereotypes, appearing in the news text in an 'impoverished' form. In Stuart Hall's words:

regularly and routinely, day after day in the press... we find the same categories, the same repertoire of images, the same systems of representation, the same structure of presences and absences, stresses and weaknesses, the same explanatory frameworks, the same pictures connoting the same chains of association, the same plots and narratives, the same links and smooth transitions (1986: 11).

In this manner, messy 'reality' is domesticated into the explanatory frameworks of the familiar, thereby conveying an impression of 'eternal recurrence' (Murdoch, 1974, cited in Hall et al., 1978: 56), and, ultimately fostering the appearance of a consensual social order. Returning to Gramsci's analytic, this textual process marks newsmaking as a site of ideology reflection and production, aimed at securing the consent of the governed which is the necessary precondition for the accomplishment of hegemony in democratic societies.

The work of French Marxist Louis Althusser also sheds some light upon the political role of news texts. In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser examines the role played by systems of representation in the 'appropriate' socialisation of subjects, in line with the socioeconomic imperatives of class societies. For Althusser, the hegemony of a ruling class is maintained by a consensus produced ideologically through such ISAs as the press. Ideology in this context is to not be understood as the conscious and deliberate components of bourgeois institutions and modes of production. Rather, it is a collectively held system of ideas which 'hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject' (Althusser, 1971: 173). For Althusser however, there is nothing outside of interpellation to be rescued, since 'ideology has no outside,' and thus individuals are 'always already subjects' (1971: 172). Ideology is a necessary condition of social relations because it obscures the reality of the class structure, providing 'a "representation" of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser, 1971: 162). However, the methodological approach underpinning this project owes more to an alternative way of politicising the analysis of news texts which has emerged outside the Marxist tradition.

#### *Foucauldian discourse analysis*

The understanding of the rules of discursive formations developed by Foucault in his quasi-structuralist archaeological phase may be usefully applied to the analysis of news discourse. In his methodological treatise *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault shelves his characteristic interest in social institutions, and develops a theory of discourses as autonomous self-regulating systems, which, he concedes, is 'not entirely foreign to what is called structural analysis' (1972: 15).<sup>40</sup> Foucault's

<sup>40</sup> Yet even in his most overtly 'structuralist' work (*The Birth of the Clinic* and *the Archaeology*), Foucault never denies that discourses are to a certain degree dependent upon the non-discursive social, economic and institutional practices they 'unify'. Indeed, Dreyfus and Rabinow contend that insofar as he maintains a recognition that the rules of discursive structures cannot be abstracted from their non-discursive 'historical conditions of possibility', he is never truly structuralist. And since Foucault concedes that there are no ahistorically systematizable rules governing discursive production, his

archaeological method aims to decipher less what statements mean than *how* they mean; 'it questions them as to their mode of existence... what it means for them to have appeared when and where they did – they and no others' (Foucault, 1972: 109). In asking these questions, Foucault emphasises discourse's character as event, as activity, aspects which, he alleges, have been thoroughly obscured by practitioners of both hermeneutics and structuralism, in their tendency to allocate discourse 'the smallest possible space between thought and speech' (Foucault, 1981: 65). Between the meaning-giving agent and the 'effects' of the play of signs, then, Foucault's analytic opens up the hitherto uncharted terrain of discursive production.

In exposing discourse as a field in which struggles over meaning production take place, Foucault's archaeological analytic permits signs to be unmoored from stable, organic referents, and re-imagined as discursively constituted – and contested – objects. Discourses for Foucault are not to be understood as collections of signs which 'represent' pre-existing objects, but rather, as 'practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak' (1972: 49), so that objects emerge only at the intersection of multiple discursive practices. They are produced in and by discourses, and are never to be rediscovered in some 'primitive, fundamental, deaf, scarcely articulated' form, which was only 'later organised (translated, transformed, travestied, perhaps even repressed) by discourses' (Foucault, 1972: 47). Ultimately, then, 'there can be no question of interpreting discourse with a view to writing a history of the referent' (Foucault, 1972: 47), for there is no 'reality' to which one could transparently gain access beyond the representational practices which put it into discourse.

Foucault develops an account of the complex articulation of discursive and extra-discursive realms after 1968, when he abandons his quasi-structuralist attempt to specify the rules governing discourses in isolation from their social contexts, and takes up Nietzschean genealogy.<sup>41</sup> Foucault's genealogical analyses are thus

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archaeology is more 'descriptive' than structuralist, being directed to analyses of existing discursive formations in their specificities (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 15-6).

<sup>41</sup> Foucault however continued to use variants of both forms of analysis in his later work. He retains archaeology as a useful methodology for analysing the intelligibility of statements within a discursive

concerned with the historical, sociopolitical and institutional determination and consequences of discursive formations. And once he adopts the genealogical method, Foucault's conception of discourse becomes crucially concerned with the articulation of forms of knowledge and social power. For Foucault, 'power and knowledge directly imply one another' (1979: 27), and 'it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together' (1978: 100). The discourse of the press must therefore be situated within the wider context of the system of power-knowledge disclosed by Foucault to be at work in modern western societies.

In the Foucauldian scheme, discourses are both the instruments and effects of modern power, and the sites of resistance to it. Thus a discourse will be neither inherently reactionary nor inherently progressive. This is what Foucault (1978: 100-101) termed the rule of the 'tactical polyvalence' of discursive production, which ensures that

[d]iscourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile, and makes it possible to thwart it.

Discourses must therefore be understood as 'fields of possible options' (Foucault, 1972: 49), which are at once enabling and constraining. On the one hand, for Foucault there is no singular and static binary division structuring the field of discourse; discursive production is not harnessed once and for all into the service of the powerful, and there is no 'great unsaid' (Foucault, 1981: 67) buried beneath it. Discursive production is rather to be understood as an unstable collection of heterogeneous practices. Yet, to the extent that discursive production takes place within a relatively well-bounded arena, on 'the basis of the grammar and of the wealth of vocabulary available at a given time,' Foucault observes that 'there are, in total, relatively few things that are said' (1981: 118). While he denies that there are

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formation, but 'after archaeology does its job, the genealogist can ask about the historical and political roles that these [discourses] play' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 117).

power-knowledge alignments fixed in discourse once and for all, Foucault characterises discursive formations as 'rarefying', and in this sense his archaeology is indeed an 'analytic of finitude'.

Foucault's analysis of discourse as premised on a series of rarefying operations is especially pertinent to any study of the discourse of the press, which critical media theorists have revealed as a site of the foreclosure of meaning. In *The Order of Discourse* (1981), Foucault identifies several procedures of exclusion, which fix the limits of discourse by determining which statements will be 'taken seriously'. These external mechanisms play a determining role in the treatment of sources by news media organisations. In addition to simple taboos and prohibitions governing who can legitimately speak, when they can speak and what can be spoken of, there is the pivotal division of reason and its other – madness – and the consignment of madness to silence, by construing its 'immense discourse' as senseless noise, or by instituting a hierarchical relation whereby the madman's speech is interpreted by a diagnosing expert (Foucault, 1981: 52-4).

Finally, Foucault identifies procedures regulating the social appropriation of discourses. These mechanisms control the degree to which the space in which discourses circulate is 'open' or 'closed', by establishing criteria (such as educational credentials) for entering the discursive region of speaking subject (1981: 63). It should be noted, further, that Foucault insists that silence be properly recognised, not as the 'absolute limit of discourse,' but as its constitutive possibility, functioning 'alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within overall strategies' (1978: 27). Thus does news discourse deny certain socially marginal persons the right to assume speaking subject positions, discursively constructing them instead as objects for journalistic investigation. Consigned to silence within the arena of mainstream media coverage, such individuals are powerless to contest their representation.

However, as Foucault points out, these procedures are increasingly subsumed by that most fundamental exclusionary mechanism in modern societies, the will to truth, which posits the existence of 'true' discourse uncontaminated by power and in opposition to false discourse (1978: 56). Clearly, in its pretensions to journalistic

impartiality and objectivity, the news claims for itself the status of 'truth'. Yet as Foucault has insisted (1980: 131):

[t]ruth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics of truth': that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

Since ultimately there is no 'truth' outside of power, then, I analyse news texts in terms of the power-knowledge alignments they forge between the 'micro' levels of the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical features of language, and the 'macro' levels of cultural and sociopolitical structures. My analysis pays particular attention to the use of sources, considering which sources are treated as repositories of 'facts', as opposed to offering opinions; whether the credibility of certain sources is undermined via such textual operations as the use of 'scare quotes' to suggest the questionable validity of their statements; and finally, whether the speech of any particular individuals or groups is systematically excluded from coverage of a given issue. In addition, charting the power-knowledge alignments at work in news texts necessitates inquiring into what is considered 'newsworthy', or, which concepts are present and which are absent, and above all, whose interests are served by this structure of presence and absence.

*Textual devices at work in the discourse of the press*

Once it is conceded that the discourse of the press is thoroughly infused with power, the focus of analysis shifts away from inquiry into the fidelity of the representations to some kind of primordial truth, to a consideration of the discursive operations at work in news texts. I therefore examine the way in which news texts employ purposeful framing devices to determine the context in which signification occurs, thereby excluding other interpretive possibilities carried by signs. The semiotic function of framing resembles that of the window or picture frame, and has been described by Barthes (1974: 54-5), for whom every description is literally a 'view':

It could be said that the speaker, before describing, stands at the window, not so much to see, but to establish what he [sic] sees by its very frame: the window frame creates the scene. To describe is thus to place the empty frame which the realistic author always carries with him [sic] ... before a collection or continuum of objects which cannot be put into words without this obsessive operation... in order to speak about it, the writer, through this initial rite, first transforms the "real" into a depicted (framed) object; ... this famous *reality*... is *set farther away*, postponed, or at least captured through the pictorial matrix in which it has been steeped before being put into words.

Topics and themes are ubiquitous framing devices which shape a reader's subjective definition of a situation or 'model of events', by suggesting not only what information is important in the news text, but what is important 'in the world' (Van Dijk, 1991: 74). In Van Dijk's terms, topics and themes function to create 'semantic macrostructures' (1991: 72) at the interface between news text and reader. They are typically expressed in headlines, which, as the first thing the news consumer reads, ideologically inflect the subsequent reading process by signaling to readers how they are to evaluate the situation reported on. In this sense it is significant that, since their central function is hooking, headlines will tend towards sensationalism.

Recurrent patterns in describing things form thematic templates, whose rarefying effects permit the expedient categorisation of new events according to preexisting formats. Around themes and topics therefore develop what Gamson and Modigliani (1989, cited in Ungar, 1998: 39) have termed 'interpretive packages'. These clusters of expressive features offer sets of condensing symbols with which to summarise a

core theme, so that it becomes possible, for instance, to invoke the package as a whole with a single catachrestic image or metaphor.

I now briefly address some of these stylistic or expressive features, which include lexical and syntactic patterns as well as rhetorical devices. It should be noted that none of these are neutral, reflecting, rather, the ideological systems structuring language use in a given social context. Furthermore, as Cameron (1996) has cautioned, when analysing the lexicon of the press, it should be kept in mind that press organisations often have explicit policies on stylistic values, which are ideological in themselves.

The centuries old art of rhetoric exists as 'a labour of classification intended to name, to lay the foundations for, the world' (Barthes, 1974: 26). Rhetoric deals in linguistic ploys designed to enhance a text's effectiveness, and the several hundred figures of rhetoric are primarily deployed for the purpose of persuasion. They may operate at the level of sound (as in rhyme or alliteration) or syntactical structure (as in parallelism), or in the cognitive dimension of a text (as in implicitness or presupposition, comparison, attribution, metaphor, stereotype, hyperbole, understatement or irony). Rhetorical figures may be considered textual signposts whose aim is to arrest polysemic play and thereby effect closure, that moment at which ideology enters the process of signification.

Of all persuasive rhetorical devices, this aim is perhaps most transparently operative in the stereotype, that key mechanism by which ideologies are reproduced and achieve historical continuity. Yet Barthes identifies antithesis as one of the most stable rhetorical figures (1974: 26). Functioning to consecrate the irreducibility of a division between opposites, the antithesis 'separates for eternity' (Barthes, 1974: 26). More than marking a dialectical relation between terms, it stages a 'battle between two plenitudes set ritually face to face like two fully armed warriors' (Barthes, 1974: 26-7). Put differently, '[t]he antithesis is a wall without a doorway. Leaping this wall is a transgression' (Barthes, 1974: 65). Metaphors produce similar ideological effects, functioning to restrict and concentrate meaning, by 'collapsing a multiplicity of connotations into one' (Young, 1996: 6, n.9). For, despite its definition as 'the application of a name or description to something to which it is not literally

applicable' (OED), a metaphor all too easily becomes an analogue or model. Metaphorical activity therefore tends to take place around sites of difference, wherever there is contention.

Yet implicitness is the rhetorical device perhaps most favoured in the discourse of the press, for as Van Dijk has observed, the news text is 'like an iceberg of information of which only the tip is actually expressed in words and sentences' (1991: 181). Implicitness describes that process by which information expressed in the text combines with mental representations or models previously acquired by readers. Significantly, it is information of a partisan nature – such as evaluative propositions – which tends to be left implicit. News texts for instance commonly deploy presuppositions instead of outright assertions in order to disguise controversial claims as 'common knowledge'. A text's constitutive presuppositions may come close to the surface only at moments where seemingly innocuous connecting conjunctions such as 'because', or adverbs such as 'therefore' appear (Van Dijk, 1991.: 183).

### **Section two: research design**

Since, as discussed in chapter one, self-construction is always implicit in sites of textual othering, I examine mainstream Australian news representations of 'Asian' others as a window onto [white] Australian subjectivity. In this sense the thesis might be read as a contribution to the project of the 'racialisation of whiteness' which Abel (1993) and others advocate. I am particularly interested the gendered inflection of received practices of representational othering underwriting the production of Australian subjectivity in news texts. More specifically, I seek to inquire into how the bodies of feminine Asian others might function in press discourse as sites upon which [white] Australian masculinity surreptitiously inscribes itself.

The empirical component of the thesis thus interrogates the codification of the overdetermined figure of the 'Asian' woman in mainstream Australian news texts. My analysis focuses particularly upon instances where feminine 'Asian' others are assigned metonymic roles in representation. Sampling of newspaper articles for analysis is therefore structured around key themes and events that illustrate, in

various ways, the Australian subject's inscription of racial and cultural politics on 'Asian' women's bodies, themselves emptied of subjective content.

The first case study, discussed in chapter four, examines Australian press coverage of the ongoing negotiation of compensation for an estimated 200,000 women recruited throughout China, the Koreas and Southeast Asia as 'comfort women' for the Japanese military during the Pacific War. The second case study, discussed in chapter five, analyses Australian journalistic representations of sex tourism in Southeast Asia. The final chapter addresses the discursive construction of 'mail-order brides' and the so-called 'traffic' in 'Asian' women, in the wider context of contemporary debates over 'Asian immigration' in Australia.

I have confined my case studies to the 1990s since this was an era in which Australia's relationship to 'Asia' was being refigured, concomitant with a broader politicisation of national identity. The Bicentennial celebrations of 1988 forced a recognition of the complexities and contradictions associated with 'multicultural' Australia's identity, fueling cultural anxieties around questions of 'race'. Australia's relationship to 'Asia' subsequently featured as a significant cultural preoccupation and it is likely that 'Asian' issues received a higher level of media attention throughout the 1990s.

From the mid-1990s moreover, discursive activity around Australia's relations with 'Asia' might bear the trace of a certain apostasy. For the Coalition's victory in the 1996 Federal election brought an apparent renunciation of the official emphasis on Australia as 'part of Asia' – a tradition inaugurated under Whitlam in the early 1970s and continued into the 1980s and 1990s by the Hawke and Keating Labour Governments (Stratton, 1998). New Prime Minister John Howard expressed concerns about the divisiveness of official multiculturalism in general and the rate of Asian migration in particular, and sought to resurrect a national Australian identity retrogressively defined in terms of an 'Anglo-Celtic mainstream culture'.<sup>42</sup> As

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<sup>42</sup> Howard also undermined the Native Title Act with his post-Wik amendments, undermined the reconciliation process by refusing to apologise formally to members of the 'stolen generations', and abolished the \$5 million Office of Multicultural Affairs, removing its functions, without funding, to the Immigration Department (Stratton, 1998: 76).

Stratton observes, however, in spite of the ensuing discursive shift, 'Asians' were for the first time narrativised in national imaginings as 'part of Australia' during the 1990s. Yet public animosity towards non-northern European migration had been building since the late 1980s, and this is the context in which the rise of the 'Hansonite backlash' must be understood.<sup>43</sup>

The sample I have submitted to analysis is composed of mainstream news texts drawn from major metropolitan newspapers which have the largest circulations in Sydney and Melbourne, including *The Age*, *The Herald Sun*, *The Sunday Herald Sun* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, as well as from the *Australian Financial Review*, one of only two national daily newspapers. It is significant that many of the articles sampled were in fact published outside the 'hard news' sections of the newspapers, appearing in the *Age's* or the *Sydney Morning Herald's* supplementary 'leisure reading' publication, the *Good Weekend Magazine*. Newspaper articles were selected for each case study using keyword searches from CD-ROM databases on which the Fairfax and News Limited papers are held. I have elected to include articles derived from international news agencies, which may be considered 'Australian' only by virtue of their circulation among Australian news consumers, as well as articles authored for a specifically Australian audience by local staff reporters or foreign correspondents. News reports, feature articles, editorials, letters, book reviews and obituaries collected are submitted to a process of close reading, focusing on the headline, lead sentence or tagline and main body of articles, as well as any illustrations or photographs and captions.

I am less interested in the statistical representativeness of the texts sampled than in their general patterns of discursive production. In the first instance, I seek to identify the textual strategies mobilised in the texts' construction of narrative templates and trajectories. In particular, I analyse the way in which excess is contained in the texts via the deployment of certain lexical, rhetorical and framing devices that are

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<sup>43</sup> Pauline Hanson, famous for her attacks on 'Asian' immigration, and on Government funding for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, came into Federal Parliament in the seat of Oxley in same election as Howard, and launched her One Nation party in April 1997, which won 11 seats in the Queensland State election of June 1998 and 8% of the primary vote across Australia in the Federal election of October 1998.

effective in sustaining closures in meaning production. Secondly, I inquire into the ideological effects of these containment strategies, paying particular attention to the [white] Australian subject's emergence at a sub-textual level in the representations.

## CHAPTER FOUR: COVERING THE 'COMFORT WOMEN'

### Introduction

In this chapter I examine Australian press coverage of the negotiation during the 1990s, of compensation for an estimated 200,000 women recruited throughout 'Asia' as 'comfort women'<sup>44</sup> for the Japanese military during the Pacific war. I introduce the chapter by situating the press coverage of the case in the historical, sociopolitical and psychoanalytic contexts of the 'comfort' system.

Military 'comfort stations' were first created in the 1930s following Japan's invasion of China. In 1937, the Japanese Government adopted a policy for systematically establishing 'comfort stations' and the first official Japanese military brothel was built in December of that year in central China. Some comfort stations were managed by civilians, but all were licensed and regulated by the Japanese military (Dolgopol, 1994: 9). From 1941, brothels were established in Japan's occupied territories throughout South Asia (Chung, 1997: 224).

Korean women were transferred to China to work in the brothels from 1938 (Chung, 1997: 223-4). Most of the estimated 200,000 'comfort women' were taken from poor rural communities in North and South Korea (Chung, 1997: 228), with Korean women comprising 80-90% of the total number of comfort women, but women in Japan, Taiwan, China, Manchuria, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Burma, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam have registered as former sex slaves for the Japanese military (Hyunah Yang, 1998: 57). The women were held in sexual service, their freedom of movement heavily restricted, and subjected to medical examinations every week, some for up to nine years (Dolgopol, 1994: 14).

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<sup>44</sup> While this problematic term, used by both the UN and the Korean Council for Women Drafted into Sexual Slavery by Japan – a translation of the Japanese word *ianfu* – is a euphemism which conceals thousands of women's suffering as military sex slaves, I follow Field (1997: 46, n. 45) in using it in order to 'preserve the linguistic history'. It will appear in my text suspended in quotation marks in order to place it under interrogation as a site of epistemic violence.

Given that the vast majority of 'comfort women' were recruited on the Korean peninsula, Korea's historically ambivalent role as Japan's generic other is relevant. Bhabha's psychoanalytically inflected conception of colonial modes of identification and authority discussed in chapter one may be usefully applied to understand this relationship. Bhabha (1997) has shown all colonial representational regimes to be ambivalent as they seek to 'incorporate' the other even as the discriminatory logic of colonial rule strives to maintain an enforced separation between coloniser and colonised. This simultaneous production and disavowal of the other's difference takes on a particular character in the case of Japan's relationship with the Koreans. In Japanese nationalist discourse, Koreans have been deemed *racially* close and therefore capable of cultural assimilation, even as they are judged indisputably inferior. John Lie has argued that it was precisely this 'ideological combination of closeness and insistent inferiority' (1997: 255) which facilitated the mass rape of Korean women under the 'comfort' system, as the ambivalent objects of desire and disgust.

The comfort system should also be deciphered in terms of colonial Japan's attempts, since the Korean Peninsula was incorporated as a Japanese protectorate in 1905, to obliterate the distinctive Korean language and ethnic identity (Dolgopol, 1994: 3-4). In this context, colonial Japan's drafting of Korean 'comfort women' appears as an instance of ethnic genocide, aimed at weakening Korean identity by depleting the reproductive capacities of its female population (Yang, 1998: 62). At the same time however, since this 'ethnic' struggle is enacted by *men* on *women's* bodies, its profoundly gendered nature must be recognised. As with any case of mass rape as a war tactic, the comfort system was crucially dependent upon the patriarchal cathecting of woman's body as man's property. Moreover, it reflects way in which women are often assigned a metonymic role as underwriters of the inviolate nation. The invasion of enemy women's bodies in war aims to leave what Hyunah Yang has described as 'a rift in the most fundamental ground of the symbolic system that sustains the enemy's group identity' (1998: 63). In this sense, the 'comfort' system exemplifies that process I discussed in chapter two, wherein women are symbolically reduced to the status of semiotic culture bearers (Fuss, 1994: 26, n.10), and their bodies become a site upon which masculine contests are waged (McClintock, 1995: 31).

This type of construction is most transparently operative where the imperialist invasion of territory is analogised as sexual conquest or rape. In this sense, the violence of imperial acquisition has borrowed its rhetoric from the violence of the patriarchal imagination. Edward Said has famously shown how the sexual subjugation of Oriental women by white men in the nineteenth century stood as a metaphor for the West's imperialist incursions into the Orient (1978: 6). Feminist critics have taken issue however with the fact that in Said's account, gender and sexuality operate as no more than tropes or metaphors for the more crucial [read: male] processes of imperialism (McClintock, 1995: 14). Clearly, to view gender or sexuality as simple metaphors is to fail to understand the ways in which they are in themselves constitutive dynamics of imperialism. Moreover, since indigenous women *are* often subjected to mass rape in imperial contest, sexual conquest must be understood as a *metonym* for imperialism, engaging both symbolic and 'real' levels simultaneously. The metonymic relationship of sexual conquest to imperial conquest is revisited in chapter five, where I examine the way in which it is played out in the contemporary sex tourism industry.

The recruitment of Korean 'comfort women', however, differs in several respects from instances where rape is deployed as a strategy of imperial conquest or ethnic genocide, as in Bosnia for instance. In the first place, Korean women, already a part of Imperial Japan, were not discursively positioned as the enemy, but were instead mobilised for Japan's war effort as *deishintai* (volunteer corps) (Yang, 1998: 63). Secondly, the 'comfort' system was not aimed at expropriating the women's bodies as reproductive vessels with which to accomplish the corruption of Korean identity. Rather, it would seem that the Japanese 'degradation of the category of "Korean"' (Yang, 1998: 65) was already complete. For as Hyunah Yang notes, 'comfort women' who fell pregnant were injected with '606', a mercury containing antibiotic, to induce abortion (1998: 65). Under the 'comfort' system, the bodies of feminine others were simply appropriated as Japanese 'military supply'.

In December 1990 the Korean Council for Women Drafted into Sexual Slavery by Japan was formed as an umbrella for twenty-three South Korean feminist groups actively pursuing the issue (Hyunah Yang, 1998: 54). The first military sex slaves

came forward in August 1991 (Chung, 1997: 235), and since then, over one hundred South Korean women have registered with the Korean Government as former 'comfort women'. In December 1991 three elderly Korean women filed the first lawsuit against Japan for enslaving them in military brothels during World War Two (Hyun Sook Kim, 1997: 99). At the date of writing, these three were the only women to have been directly compensated by the Japanese Government, receiving payments of \$A3,540 each in April 1998 (SMH 28.4.98, p. 12).

In November 1991 and January 1992, archival research in Japan uncovered documents relating to the 'comfort' stations. The Japanese Government has since published two reports on the case, the first in July 1992, in which it admitted official involvement in the comfort stations but denied the use of force in recruiting and detaining the women, and the second in August 1993, in which it admitted that forced mobilisation of 'comfort women' had occurred, but claimed this had been carried out only by civilians (Chung, 1997: 239). In 1994, following an investigative trip to North and South Korea, Japan and the Philippines, the International Commission of Jurists released a report advising the Japanese Government to compensate former 'comfort women'.

#### *Interpreting the Australian press coverage of the 'comfort women' case*

News texts drawn from several major Australian metropolitan daily newspapers published in Sydney and Melbourne, including *The Age*, *The Herald Sun*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian Financial Review* were analysed. Feature articles appearing in the *Good Weekend Magazine* were also included in the sample. While the 'comfort women' issue received considerably more attention in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* than it did in the other newspapers, there was little discernible difference in the overall perspective taken on the issue between the publications.

All articles mentioning 'comfort women' published in these newspapers from January 1992 to January 1999 were collected for analysis. Of a total of 153 articles collected for analysis, only 47.7 per cent featured the 'comfort women' as their main substantive topic, and the remaining 52.3 per cent alluded to the case in the context

of a consideration of Japan's war crimes in general, or of reporting on Japanese domestic politics, diplomacy, or trade. I felt that this 'non-substantive' type of coverage was interesting in itself, since it illustrated the cathecting of the 'comfort women' as a kind of currency of international relations in the discourse of the Australian press. These kinds of news texts were therefore analysed together with the texts that addressed the 'comfort women' case more fully.

The most significant peak in the coverage occurred in August of 1993, coinciding with the Japanese Government's release of a report conceding that forced recruitment of 'comfort women' had occurred – albeit by civilians only. Coverage of the case was also high in the July to September period of 1994, when Prime Minister Murayama announced the establishment of a compensatory 'Plan of Exchange for Peace and Friendship', and embarked on a tour of the countries from which 'comfort women' had been recruited. Smaller peaks in the coverage occurred in February and March of 1995, as well as in June and August of 1995. There was very little coverage in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

Of the 153 articles collected, 119 were authored for a specifically Australian audience, by staff reporters (49) or by foreign correspondents stationed in Tokyo or Seoul (52). The vast majority of the latter (43) were written for the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* by foreign correspondent Ben Hills, a key analyst brokering news of 'Asia' for the Australian public at this time. Editorial pieces or letters to the editor accounted for a further 18 texts in the sample. The remaining 34 articles may be considered 'Australian' only by virtue of their circulation in this domain. They were derived from syndicated press services, including the Associated Press (5), Reuters (19), Agence France-Presse (3) and the *Washington Post* (2), with single articles provided by the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph* and the Asahi News Service.

Each article was closely examined in terms of its operative narrative, stylistic and rhetorical devices. Most of the texts built their narrative trajectories around the central theme of the failure of the Japanese to acknowledge and atone for their role in WWII. Thus, 'the Japanese' typically emerge as deluded about their role in the war, kept in the dark by a self-serving and unjust government which has consistently refused to make proper amends for the unparalleled horrors perpetrated by Japan's

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wartime administration. The former 'comfort women' appear as abject victims whose innocence and youth were stolen by 'the Japanese'.

This is the thematic framework which provided the 'macro' context within which Australian news consumers were invited to make sense of the 'comfort women' case. This dominant template is deployed by journalists as a pre-existing format with which to organise 'events' into news stories. The repeated deployment of a narrative template is in part the product of that commercial imperative of newspapers to gain the instant attention of an audience and keep it. As discussed in chapter three, this imperative breeds hostility to ambiguity and complexity in news texts, and thus encourages a domestication of messy reality into conventional formats and familiar themes. In this chapter, I outline the components of this narrative template – the lexical elements and rhetorical devices that comprise it – and examine its ideological effects.

My discussion of Australian press reporting on the case is arranged into four sections. In the first, I unpack the dominant thematic template at work in coverage of the 'comfort women', which, as discussed above, holds that successive Japanese Governments have failed to atone for Japan's alleged 'wartime atrocities'. Section two of the chapter examines the way in which the news texts assign the former 'comfort women' the status of rape victims. The third section attends to the Orientalist tropes underpinning the constructions of 'Asian' others in the coverage, by examining representations of both the Japanese-as-villains and the 'Asian' 'comfort women'-as-plaintiffs. The discussion in section four is a critique of the news texts' marginalisation of the former 'comfort women's' agency, and obliteration of the roles of certain western players in the 'comfort' system. I conclude the chapter by considering the ideological purposes served by the deployment of the abject figure of the 'comfort woman' in the discourse of the Australian press.

### **Section one: judging the Japanese**

The Japanese Government's categorical misconduct in responding to the 'comfort women' issue is connoted in the coverage by the deployment of various rhetorical devices. The attribute of recalcitrance is assigned to the Japanese Government so that

'Tokyo' is charged with an unwillingness "to court the loss of face involved in admitting that terrible things were done in the name of the Emperor," and an "inability to come to terms with the past" (*Facing up to the past* Age Opinion 25.11.94, p. 15). Opening with the phrase "[f]ifty years after war's end" to imply the absurdity of what it describes as the Government's "chronic avoidance of political accountability", one news text alleges that "Japanese officialdom remains mesmerised by the need to avoid explicit political accountability for Japan's part in the conflict" (*Anniversary will give Japan its chance to purge war guilt* AFR 25.1.95, p. 12). This construction is corroborated in one article by quoting the inside scoop offered by an expert source, Takeshi Sasaki of Tokyo University: "The real problem here is that Japan, as usual, isn't ready to face the past" (*More bear witness to sex slaves outrage* SMH 15.8.92, p. 15).

Editorial pieces relating to the 'comfort women' case openly deplore the Japanese Government's failure to atone for acts perpetrated by the Japanese military during the war – "[f]ar from being contrite, Japan has indulged in half a century of historical revisionism" (*Confronting the past* Age 27.5.95, p. 23) – warning that "Japan will not be fully accepted in the world until it owns up" (*Facing up to the past* Age 25.11.94, p. 15). One editorial makes the somewhat patronising assessment that "[t]here are signs that this may be coming to an end. As Mr Keating noted, young students are now beginning to learn about the war and Japan's part in it" (*Confronting the past* Age 27.5.95, p. 23), yet concludes with the admonition that

[t]his is still a long way from confronting the realities of the past, or acknowledging moral responsibility for the war and the cruelties that followed in its wake. Post-war reconstruction has made Japan into an economic superpower. Now it needs to face its past and pay its moral and legal debts. Only when it does so will it be fully accepted among the nations of the world.

Deakin University's Director of Defence Studies Dr Magnus Clarke opines in the *Herald Sun* column *The way of the world* that the Australian Government's decision not to invite Japanese officials to any of its remembrance ceremonies is "entirely correct given their continued attitude to the conflict, which is that if it happened at all it wasn't really their fault" (*Japanese bearing gifts* HS 4.9.94, p. 25).

Yet this patronising, pedagogic tone is not confined to editorial and opinion pieces, and many of the news texts read like homilies in their thinly-veiled castigation of Japanese politicians, belying the conventionally understood neutrality of 'the news' as information transmission addressed in chapter three. In an article bearing the moralising headline: *Japan's Mountain of aid can't bury past*, for example, foreign correspondent Ben Hills remarks that the Japanese Government "refuses point-blank to consider a scheme like the one the US began in 1990, to compensate more than 100,000 ethnic Japanese interned during the war" (SMH 27.8.94, p. 19). Here, Hill employs the persuasive rhetorical device of comparison and amplifies its impact with the accompanying colloquial phrase 'point-blank' to connote the Japanese Government's unreasonable dogmatism. He concludes the article with the decree:

[u]ntil Mr Murayama, or his successor, can convincingly demonstrate that Japan has acknowledged its past, it cannot be forgiven, let alone admitted as a trusted member of the Asian community of nations it once so cruelly subjugated.

The device of comparison is deployed extensively in the narrative template, to establish an opposition between 'Germany' and 'Japan', where the latter is judged inferior. The precedent for this rhetorical manoeuvre is established in an August 1994 article by Ben Hills, who informs readers authoritatively that "unlike Germany – Japan hasn't yet accepted its guilt, let alone attempted to atone for it" (*Japan's Mountain of aid can't bury past* SMH 27.8.94, p. 19). A later editorial diagnoses that in its predilection for "historical revisionism," Japan "differs remarkably from Germany, which has faced up to its Nazi past, admitted responsibility for the holocaust, and made reparations to the survivors and their families. Germany has also tried to teach its young people about the past so that they might learn from it" (*Remember the horror* Age Opinion 28.1.95, p. 23). Elsewhere, 'foreign affairs commentator' Dr Magnus Clarke notes pointedly that "[s]ince the end of world war two, Germany has paid \$125 billion in reparations. Included in that amount has been \$3.5 billion to the state of Israel and \$73 billion to individual Jews. In the same forty-nine years Japan has paid very little" (*Japanese bearing gifts* HS 4.9.94, p. 25).

The rhetoric of comparison is often deployed in the coverage satirically. Thus, via the elaboration of series of unsubstantiated attributions in two juxtaposed paragraphs *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist Mike Carlton observes:

The Germans have faced their past. Their children are well instructed in the atrocities of Nazism and, despite the loathsome neo-fascist skinheads of Hamburg and Leipzig who crop up occasionally on television, there is national contrition. The late Chancellor Willy Brandt fell weeping to his knees at Auschwitz. The Germans are now the most pacifist people in Europe.

Yet Japanese high school textbooks still apparently refer to the war only as a temporary unpleasantness, a little local difficulty, a misguided detour on the expressway to prosperity. The occasional Cabinet minister will have to be sacked, to mollify world opinion, when he denies all national guilt. The ultra-Right is still a potent force in Japanese politics. Compensation for the thousands of Korean and others conscripted as war-time 'comfort women' – prostitutes – is out of the question (*Sorry seems the hardest word* SMH 18.2.95, p. 30).

This mocking tone is encapsulated in the headline of a later article – *What war? In Japan, 'sorry' sometimes means something else* – which ridicules Japan's "wretched attempts at apology" by likening them to an imagined parody of official Germany's apologies to the Jews: "we regret what happened to you people, if indeed it did happen, but we wouldn't like you to take this as an apology" (SMH 17.8.95, p. 15).

A *Herald Sun* columnist eulogises that "Germany has tried to pay for its crimes, and Germany has apologised, time and time again," finds Japan's reparations lacking in comparison, and concludes that "[i]t is the tragedy of Japan that the national character still will not allow the Japanese to follow suit" (*Japanese bearing gifts* HS 4.9.94, p. 25). Indeed, attributions of certain traits to 'the Japanese' are commonly made in press coverage of the 'comfort women' case. By invoking an ahistorical essence of 'Japaneseness' in this context, news texts enact a slippage, from Japan's wartime administration → Japan's present Government → 'the Japanese', conveying the impression of a seamless continuity of complicity. Some of the texts thus implicitly encourage the attribution of blame for the failure to atone for putative 'wartime atrocities', and indeed sometimes, it would seem, for the atrocities themselves, to the Japanese people as a whole.

*Japanese myopia*

'The Japanese' are thus alternately chastised in the coverage for their stubborn refusal to acknowledge what is presupposed as 'the truth' of the war – "to their shame, the Japanese have steadfastly refused to come to terms with the past" (*Remember the horror* Age Opinion 28.1.95, p. 23) – for their obfuscation of this horrifying truth with coy euphemisms – "what the Japanese call the Pacific War, in which the Imperial Army conquered half of Asia, killing some thirty million soldiers and civilians" (*Minister sacked for war comments* SMH 15.08.94, p. 13) – and for their misplaced self-pity – "the Japanese, prone to collective amnesia about wartime events... often see themselves as victims" (*Heroes and villains* AFR Weekend Review 3.2.95, p. 3). Furthermore, it is insinuated that the nation is living in fear of the imminent disclosure of this truth: "[a]s information continues to emerge and Korean comfort women step forward to claim compensation, the Japanese are clearly rattled" (*Tokyo's sex-slave poser* HS 2.8.92, p. 32).

*Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Les Carlyon makes one of the most explicit invocations of discursively constructed Japaneseness to 'explain' the Japanese Government's handling of the 'comfort women' case (*What war? In Japan, 'sorry' sometimes means something else* SMH 17.8.95, p. 15). Opening his commentary with the claim: "[w]hy the Japanese have so much trouble admitting to the war is beyond the understanding of the casual visitor", he speculatively elaborates a Japanese national character in the text via the extensive deployment of the devices of attribution and stereotype:

They are just about the most courteous people on earth, but on this issue there is a deep problem. They are prouder nationalists than we are: maybe they feel too much shame? Maybe it has to do with that part of the Japanese character that doesn't like to confront unpleasant things. Or another part that likes to prolong negotiations, any negotiations.

The tone of condescension discernible here is echoed in the many infantilising constructions of Japaneseness that appear in press coverage of the case. Ben Hills intuits that 'the Japanese' are "still largely ignorant of their role in the war" (*Tokyo*

*hints at war apology Age* 4.8.93, p. 8), and a subsequent commentator makes the patronising assessment that “it is difficult to expect... political responsibility from a postwar generation when there is pervasive ignorance of the history of the war” (*Japan’s UN bid is premature AFR* 27.9.94, p. 19)

This alleged state of national delusion is routinely attributed in the coverage to what Ben Hills refers to as “official Japan’s attempt to obliterate anything that challenged its version of the history of the war” (*Unlocked: Japan’s wartime chamber of horrors SMH* 2.10.93, p. 7). The Japanese Education ministry, it is elsewhere claimed, “has ruthlessly censored any mention of Japan’s aggression or atrocities from the official histories for nearly fifty years” (*Cold comfort for Japan’s war women SMH* 23.07.94, p. 32), with a “textbook screening system” described as “tantamount to State censorship” (*Atrocity recorded – briefly SMH* 3.7.93, p. 24).

According to the dominant narrative template, then, the resultant “sanitised version of history taught in schools” (*Tokyo hints at war apology Age* 4.8.93, p. 8), whose basis is “a massive work of one hundred volumes, compiled by the armed forces themselves,” has misled “most Japanese” to believe that the war was “fought in self-defence” (*Unlocked: Japan’s wartime chamber of horrors SMH* 2.10.93, p. 7). Commenting on Japan’s apparent self-deception, Ben Hills reports incredulously that “[j]ust last month ... a priest ... tried to explain to me that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour was an act of self-defence” (*Unlocked: Japan’s wartime chamber of horrors SMH* 2.10.93, p. 7). He further implies that the “the evidence of the radioactive ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki” has been fraudulently cited to appropriate for Japan the status of the war’s true victim.

One article satirizes the Japanese history syllabus as a collection of laughable misconceptions, characterising the omission of the ‘facts’ of the war as being “like a French teacher leaving out the revolution of 1789, or a Polish teacher skipping over the period 1939-45, when nothing much happened, except 5.4 million Poles sort of disappeared” (*What war? In Japan, ‘sorry’ sometimes means something else SMH* 17.8.95, p. 15). “Japanese school texts are vague,” the article continues. “Our embassy recently complained because there is no mention of the bombing of Darwin.

The authorities are looking into this, presumably to see if Darwin really was bombed or whether 233 Australians died when a barbecue exploded.”

Japanese education is thus cathected as ‘indoctrination’ (*Unlocked: Japan’s wartime chamber of horrors* SMH 2.10.93, p. 7), beyond which, it is implied, lie the undisputed facts of its wartime belligerence and ‘atrocities’, tantalizingly described in a *Sydney Morning Herald* headline as *Japan’s wartime chamber of horrors* (2.10.93, p. 7).

### *Brokering historical Truth*

This notion of uncontaminated historical ‘truth’ is in part established in coverage of the ‘comfort women’ case by reference to ‘Western historians’ who appear in texts such as the following, as repositories of ‘facts’:

Western historians estimate that 200,000 women from a dozen countries, at least one Australian, were abducted into sexual slavery when Japanese troops overran half of Asia (*Japanese war brothel fund offer rejected* SMH 18.7.94, p. 9).

Here, deferral to expert estimations underwrites the news text’s claim to being a purveyor of Truth with a capital ‘T’, permitting its elevation to the status of all-seeing neutral arbiter. This tendency is exemplified in another text, which pontificates that “[t]he tradition of depicting the war as a mission to liberate Asia from the yoke of Western imperialism distorts history into myth” (*Japan’s UN bid is premature* AFR 27.9.94, p. 19).

The historical truths dispensed by the news texts are further authenticated via the deployment of the figure of the native informant. Arguably nothing carries more weight in the coverage as the Truth of the ‘comfort women’ than the incriminating testimonies of Japanese war veterans. One text constructs a picture of the spectacular Tokyo symposium at which former Japanese soldiers and military police came forward “[a]fter decades of silence” (a stock phrase that is repetitively deployed for dramatic effect in the coverage), to “give horrifying accounts” of the recruitment of ‘comfort women’ in what it designates as “one of the most shocking chapters of

Japan's brutal occupation of Asia" (*More bear witness to sex slaves outrage SMH* 15.08.92, p. 15). This version of events is endorsed as the Truth in the text by quoting from the sensational confession of 72-year-old veteran Ichiro Ichikawa. "The women were tricked, beaten and enslaved... What we did was so shameful... I feel a responsibility to tell the truth."

Friendly Japanese natives whose versions of history are consonant with that presupposed in the dominant narrative template often emerge in the texts by means of what might be termed David and Goliath allegories. One of the most comprehensive constructions of this kind appears in a feature article whose moralising overtones are anticipated in the headline: *War graves damn Japan's silence* (*Age* 27.5.95, p. 16). The article sketches a portrait of an 'ordinary' Japanese person, as he meditates on the Truth the government has hidden. The opening sentence ensures his innocence is undisputed by distancing him from Japan's wartime past. "Nobumichi Sabanai snips a dead twig from a rose bush flowering among the graves as he reflects on the war that ended three years before he was born". His self-evident ordinariness is then established in the text with the disclosure of his occupation as "caretaker of the Commonwealth war graves cemetery." This humble working man is thus called upon to stand in the narrative as an iconic figuration of 'the people' against whom the Government is brought into relief as powerful and corrupt. "Like most Japanese, Mr Sabani learned nothing at school of Japan's war crimes," and "[h]e was deeply shocked," the text assures readers, "when he began to read later about the appalling treatment of allied prisoners of war." "Many Japanese come here for a picnic or to play ball," he is later quoted as saying. "They have no idea why so many people are buried here, or how they died."

The David-Goliath construction is set in motion early in the text, where the reader learns of Mr Sabani's implied reluctance to express anything resembling an opinion about the Government's obligations: "There should be some explanation," *he says, at last* (emphasis mine). The construction is further elaborated where the text asserts that:

Mr Sabani thinks the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which maintains the cemetery, has refrained from posting any explanation for fear of offending the Japanese Government, which owns the land. 'This makes me very sad,' he says.

But in this friendly native's 'speech', it is arguably the voice of the morally outraged liberal-humanist subject in the West that is heard. Mr Sabani's role as the Subject's moralising mouthpiece is firmly established by the article's conclusion:

'When relatives of these men come to visit, I can feel that they still have anger in their hearts against Japan because we have not acknowledged what happened,' Mr Sabana. 'Fifty years is long enough to wait for an apology.'

The preference for David and Goliath constructions is also manifested in news texts lauding the heroic efforts of a few courageous individuals to uncover the Truth the Government has hidden from the people. "Horror stories... are only now coming to light thanks to the efforts of a few dozen revisionist historians and lawyers," reads a feature article which purports to 'unlock' what its sensational headline refers to as *Japan's wartime chamber of horrors* (SMH 2.10.93, p. 7). Having introduced its protagonist, Professor Shinichi Arai, as a "self-styled Marxist historian" and "leading member of the cumbersomely-named Japan's War Responsibility Data Centre", the text metaphorises his quest for the elusive historical truth in terms of mining "a narrow, broken seam" for gold. The text eulogises his maverick research team – "operating on a shoestring and funded by public donations" – as fighting for the Truth "over the obstruction of officialdom, and in the face of attempts to hide and destroy the shreds of evidence that remain". Continuing with the mining metaphor, the text develops a narrative reminiscent of a fictional murder-mystery, telling readers that "the team stumbled onto a gold mine while researching the euphemistically-named 'comfort women'; namely, some official diaries "guarded for decades by the Government," which allegedly "revealed in their faded, spidery script, a chamber of horrors that shocked even Professor Arai."

The text veers even closer to fictional narrative in a subsequent paragraph that is almost parodic in its attempt to titillate readers –

[t]here are still many secrets remaining, guarded by bureaucrats. Did General Tojo keep a diary? Would the Emperor have surrendered if the atomic bomb had not been dropped? Perhaps most intriguing of all: was Japan's army aviation wing planning to develop its own nuclear weapons, as recent tantalising hints suggest?

– before ending on a mystical note with another quotation from its cowboy protagonist: “‘The new moon has just come out, to illuminate a little of Japan's wartime past,’ says Professor Arai.” Yet, again, when readers are told that Professor Arai “says with a quiet authority” that “‘Japan must learn the truth about its past before it can justify its place in the present,’” it is the representing Subject who speaks the Truth with the “quiet authority” the text would attribute to him.

#### *Uncovering official corruption*

In opposition to these courageous Truth-questing Davids, the Japanese Government emerges in the coverage as disingenuous and calculating, allegedly admitting responsibility for the ‘comfort stations’ only once evidence came to light which forced it to stop issuing what Ben Hills decries as “scarcely plausible denials” (*Cold comfort for Japan's war women* SMH 23.7.94, p. 32). “After decades of official denials,” an early 1992 article scathingly reports, the Japanese Government “has had to admit publicly that the former Imperial Army forced thousands of Korean women to work as prostitutes for Japanese soldiers before and during World War II,” following the discovery of incriminating documents in the Japanese Defence Agency library (*Army recruited prostitutes, Japan admits* SMH 15.1.92, p. 7).

‘Scare quotes’ appear frequently in the coverage, where inverted commas are deployed to mock that which they enclose for rhetorical effect. This device is most commonly used to connote the falsity of governmental statements of non-responsibility. One text reports, for example, that in 1992, after almost half a century of denying the existence of the ‘comfort women’, the Government abruptly “found ‘new evidence’” (*Army sex slaves scorn Japan's compromise* Age 16.6.95, p. 8). At other times texts deploy scare quotes to mock what Ben Hills describes as the Government's early “claim that ‘civilian contractors’ were to blame” for the ‘comfort’ system (*Cold comfort for Japan's war women* SMH 23.7.94, p. 32). A

similar rhetorical operation is performed in an earlier text which asserts “the direct involvement also of the Government in operations previously blamed purely on ‘private’ organisations” (*Japan faces up to ugly past* SMH 8.7.92, p. 13).

Subsequent coverage of the case invariably ridicules the Government’s continuing efforts to evade full responsibility for the ‘comfort’ system in the face of what news texts would posit as “overwhelming evidence” to the contrary, proving “that the military organised, transported, provided medical inspections and even issued the condoms for the brothels” (*Cold comfort for Japan’s war women* SMH 23.7.9, p. 32).

The dominant narrative thus constructs a portrait of an unscrupulous Japanese Government “reluctantly retreating” (*Japan apologises to ‘comfort women’* Age 5.8.93, p. 11). A Government spokesperson is quoted as conceding – in what is mocked as “an unusually strong statement of contrition” – that “it was now ‘undeniable that the Japanese Imperial Army was in some way involved’ in the recruitment of Korean women as prostitutes” (*Army recruited prostitutes, Japan admits* SMH 15.1.92, p. 7). The concession that the ‘comfort women’ even existed was thus allegedly “wrung out of the Miyazawa Government” (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13).

Allegedly having “admitted grudgingly... that the military brothels existed” (*More bear witness to sex slaves outrage* SMH 15.8.92, p. 15), then, the Government is repeatedly chastised in the coverage for its continued denial that the ‘comfort women’ were forcibly enslaved. Again, the Government’s unmitigated duplicity *vis-à-vis* the use of force is discursively established by recourse to the Truth-telling native informant; thus: “old soldiers interviewed on television have wept as they recalled the tortures the women suffered” (*War brothel recruits not coerced, says Tokyo* AFR 7.2.92, p. 12). Another article, bearing the provocative – and misleading – headline *Tokyo’s Sex Slave Poser* satirizes the Government’s stance on the use of force by asserting that “[o]f course, the next and most important step is for the Japanese to confirm if the prostitutes were sex slaves or wily businesswomen, something they seem to have avoided so far” (HS 2.8.92, p. 32). It is further claimed

that denying the use of force “gives Japan a reason to avoid the issue of compensation for the time being.”

The government’s offers of compensation are construed in the press coverage as woefully inadequate. When Japan’s newly installed socialist Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama “promised that ‘something should be done,’” Ben Hills asserts that “the comfort women had high hopes”; hopes that, as is intimated in the headline *Cold comfort for Japan’s war women*, will only be shattered by the narrative’s conclusion (SMH 23.7.94, p. 32). The text develops predictably: “However, last week they learnt what Murayama – or more precisely, Japan’s Foreign Ministry mandarins who write his scripts – means by ‘something’”, a construction which predisposes readers to understand the “\$1.3 billion, to be spent over 5 years... none of [which] will go to the victims” mentioned in the subsequent sentence as insufficient. In an almost identical article published in the *Age*, Hills makes extensive use of scare quotes to connote the farcical inadequacy of using the paltry sum for “vaguely-defined ‘youth exchange schemes’, ‘women’s support centre’ and ‘historical research’” (*Korean ‘comfort women’ reject Japan’s \$1.25b war fund plan* Age 18.7.94, p. 11). A year later Hills reports derisively that there is no “sign that the much-hyped \$1 billion fund to compensate surviving victims such as the ‘comfort women’ (slave prostitutes) will in fact happen. The victims have, in any case, already rejected it” (*Ghosts of former conquests that will not lie down* SMH 8.6.95, p. 12).

The Japanese Government’s moves to compensate former ‘comfort women’ are construed as ornamental and not substantive where the planned fund is described as “the centrepiece of a proposal to be unveiled... to mark the fiftieth anniversary of World War II” (*Korean ‘comfort women’ reject Japan’s \$1.25b war fund plan* Age 18.7.94, p. 11). In general, gestures of atonement are represented in the coverage as empty rhetoric, with one text alleging that the ‘Committee to Tidy Up Postwar Issues’, is the product of putative “[i]ntense political manoeuvring”, and that its very name betrays what is identified as the Japanese Government’s “chronic avoidance of political accountability” (*Anniversary will give Japan its chance to purge war guilt* AFR 25.1.95, p. 12). The insincerity of apologies is connoted by referring to them as repetitions of “the coalition’s official line, established less than a year ago, that Japan’s wartime aggression and occupation inflicted ‘unbearable pain

and sorrow on many people” (*Japanese minister sparks Asia outcry* Age 6.5.94, p. 10).

Apologising for the recruitment of ‘comfort women’, and for Japan’s wartime ‘atrocities’ in general, is represented in many news texts as facing widespread “virulent opposition” both within and outside the Japanese Parliament (*Japan may abandon its ‘apology’ for war* Age 28.4.95, p. 9). Official Japan’s reluctance to atone for its wartime conduct is implied in texts covering the annual pilgrimages of Government officials to a Shinto memorial honouring Japan’s war dead – “including hanged war criminals,” as Ben Hills is at pains to point out (*Japan’s Mountain of aid can’t bury past* SMH 27.8.94, p. 19). Commenting on the forced resignation of Environment Minister Shin Sakurai, who is alleged in the text to have stated that “Japan liberated, rather than invaded, its neighbours and that the occupation actually did them a power of good,” Ben Hills declares in the same article that “[h]e was the fourth Minister in six years to pay the price, and he will not be the last.” Another commentator alleges moreover, that the sacking of Shin Sakurai was “a sop to foreign sensitivities,” unsupported by “domestic public opinion” (*Japan’s UN bid is premature* AFR 27.9.94, p. 19). A recurring line of argument in the coverage posits any moves towards compensating former ‘comfort women’ as nothing more than calculated attempts to win sympathy for Japan’s ambitions of obtaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (*Philippines sex slaves sue* SMH 3.4.93, p. 22; *Backlash as nation faces war claims* HS 13.8.93, p. 18).

The ‘anti-apology movement’ constructed in the texts is at times associated with “the resurgent right wing of the LDP,” and at other times with Japan’s far right, one article noting pointedly that its leader “was an officer in Japan’s equivalent of the Gestapo during the war” (*Japan refuses to offer war apology* Age 8.3.95, p. 1). Indeed, Ben Hills proclaims the probable “end of Japan’s attempts to apologise” for its wartime conduct, in the wake of “a massive demonstration” of “more than 10,000 right-wingers” including “uniformed ultra-nationalists in 600 black-painted paramilitary trucks... chanting slogans to the effect that the 1932-45 war was aimed at ‘liberating Asia from American and European colonialists’” (*Japan may abandon its ‘apology’ for war* Age 28.4.95, p. 9).

It makes front page news that the apology resolution drafted by socialist Prime Minister Murayama, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end, is under threat from "powerful lobby groups in the Diet," who "have the numbers to crush any attempt to refer to Japan's 'aggression and colonial domination' or the 'unbearable suffering and sadness' caused by the war" (*Japan refuses to offer war apology* Age 8.3.95, p. 1). Once passed, the "much-vaunted 'war apology resolution'" is decried in the coverage as "a pathetic political compromise, cobbled together to save the coalition Government," whose wording "demeans the whole atonement process to the level of 'the dog ate my homework'" (*Ghosts of former conquests that will not lie down* SMH 8.6.9, p. 12).

Indeed, lexical elements of apologies issued by Japanese officials are routinely dissected in the coverage in such a way as to imply their insincerity. Columnist David Jenkins analyzes – and invariably finds lacking – the depth of feeling embedded in various official statements, contending that "Tokyo has played around with words and phrases that can be used to avoid having to utter the word 'apology,'" in what he decries as an exercise which compounds "the horror" of its war crimes (*Japan yet to admit to the horrors of its past* SMH 6.6.95, p. 15). "Under no circumstances," he asserts righteously, could Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe's 1991 statement that 'we feel a deep remorse about the unbearable suffering and sorrow Japan inflicted on the American people and the peoples of Asia and the Pacific during the Pacific War', "be seen as an apology to Australia or anyone else" (emphasis mine). He then writes off the expression of 'deep remorse' for Japan's 'aggression and colonial domination', and the 'unbearable suffering and sadness' it caused, in Murayama's draft resolution, with the peremptory remark "[t]his is not an apology". Elsewhere, Ben Hills bemoans the inadequate expression of 'regret' for the war in the final wording of the war apology resolution with use of the "ambiguous" term *hansei* – which, he alleges, "can mean anything from self-reflection to sorrow and remorse" (*Ghosts of former conquests that will not lie down* SMH 8.6.95, p. 12).

Japanese gestures of apology are satirized in an editorial piece entitled *What war? In Japan, 'sorry' sometimes means something else* (SMH 17.8.95, p. 15.). Commenting on a speech made by Prime Minister Murayama, the text claims that "[a]fter

expressing 'profound regret' for some incident, the Japanese often need to remind the recipient that this does not amount to an apology, or that if it does, it is merely a 'personal' view." Alleging that "apologies come hard" in Japanese diplomacy – "particularly when they concern any wars that might have occurred between 1931 and 1945", the text exhorts its implied reader to "[b]e patient. World War II has been over only fifty years and Japan is still trying to work out what happened." But "[w]hen it comes to its own victimhood," the text assures, "Japan knows exactly what happened."

The mocking tone discernible in these articles is often extended in the coverage into an implied critique of the Japanese political system as a whole. It is insinuated that Government officials are mere puppets who rely on "scripts" written by "Foreign Ministry Mandarins" (*Cold comfort for Japan's war women* SMH 23.7.94, p. 32), ensuring that public opinion does not "count for much" (*Japan's Mountain of aid can't bury past* SMH 27.8.94, p. 19). A 1994 article undermines the announcement, by newly installed Japanese Foreign Minister Mr Koji Kakizawa, that he intends to honour former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's acknowledgement of Japan's wartime 'aggression', by dubbing him "the international face of Japan's new Government for as long as it lasts" (*War apology stands, says new minister* SMH 20.4.94, p. 12, emphasis mine). The text goes on to point out that he "is the fourth foreign minister Japan has had in a year," and to pose the rhetorical question: "does anyone still remember Mr Kabun Muto?"

### **Section two: representing rape – victimologies of the 'comfort women'**

Against this construction of the Japanese Government, the former 'comfort women' emerge in the coverage as incontrovertible victims. Their eminent 'rapability' is established in some texts by reference to their tender age – *Terror stole youth*, reads a headline of an article covering the case (HS 5.3.98, p. 5) – and / or to the fact that they were attending school and still in parental custody at the time of their 'recruitment'. As I go on to show in chapters five and six, the news texts' evident concern with the youth and naivete of former Asian 'comfort women' is replicated in Australian press representations of women working in Southeast Asia's sex tourism industry, 'mail-order brides', and women migrating to Australia as sex workers.

Ben Hills amplifies the sense of outrage and disgust that his account of the 'women's' "journey into hell" is intended to provoke, with the expedient observation that "many were as young as fourteen" (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13). The schoolyard setting is deployed to similar effect in an article which opens: "Felicidad de Los Reyes was just fourteen when she was noticed in class by some Japanese soldiers, summoned to a garrison behind the school, and raped at least eight times on the first night" (*Fight for justice after horror of war* Age 17.6.95, p. 7). "Still, as though it were yesterday, Kang Duk Kyong remembers the day they came for her," another news text begins theatrically (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13). Having established her maidenly credentials with the sentence "[s]he had just turned sixteen and was attending junior high school," the text follows with a quotation from Kang in which she is shown to have been irreproachably dutiful and submissive: "[t]he teacher came to our house and asked for volunteers to work in Japan for the Women's Labour Corps,' she says. 'My mother wept after the teacher left, but I felt I had to go – in those days, the teacher was God.'"

The recruitment of women for 'comfort stations' is typically represented in the coverage as a violation of the sanctuary of the family home. Readers are told that the Japanese military "dragged Korean girls from their parents and tore mothers from their crying babies to take them off as prostitutes" (*More bear witness to sex slaves outrage* SMH 15.8.92, p. 15). The coverage thus tends to discursively situate the women in the protected domain of marriage and the family. One former 'comfort woman' is for instance described as "only seventeen and due to marry in five days when Japanese soldiers stormed into her house" (*More bear witness to sex slaves outrage* SMH 15.8.92, p. 15).

Other texts resort to more explicit indicators of the women's chastity [read: rapability] by referring to their virginity prior to recruitment as 'comfort women'. A feature article covering the experience of a Dutch woman describes "seven frightened, exhausted girls huddled together to cry over lost virginity" following their "first horrific night" (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse* SMH 11.12.92, p. 3). Significantly, it is reported in an earlier text that the Dutch girls

carried "only a small bag of belongings and a Bible" to the comfort station (*'Comfort' woman tells of Japanese brutality SMH 10.12.92, p. 3*). But perhaps the most exemplary victim is constructed by Ben Hills in his description of an innocent girl who "was raped – a virgin, before her first period – and... thrown into a military brothel" (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell Age 22.7.94, p. 13*).

In general, considerable importance is attached to the degree of force used against the women. The use of force and a woman's resistance to it have historically been key ingredients in determining whether a plaintiff qualifies as a legitimate 'rape victim'. Many of the texts thus establish the 'comfort women's' unequivocal status as 'rape victims' by invoking the conventional ideology of what constitutes 'real' rape. It is variously alleged, for instance, that the 'comfort women' were "forced into submission under threat of death" (*Forgive, urges sex slave HS 2.10.94, p. 26*), that they "fought, cried and pleaded for mercy, all in vain" (*'Comfort' woman tells of Japanese brutality SMH 10.12.92, p. 3*) and made "unrelenting, though futile, physical struggles to resist" (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse SMH 11.12.92, p. 3*). One article notes approvingly that eight Australian nurses captured after the fall of Singapore in 1942 safeguarded their chastity and courageously refused to be forced into prostitution, "saying they preferred death" (*Tokyo's sex slave poser HS 2.8.92, p. 32*).

The troping of the former 'comfort women' as victims is at times expedited in news texts by alluding to the women's long-held silence. "For almost half a century the vast majority of victims have suffered silently," one article claims (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse SMH 11.12.92, p. 3*). Much of the coverage displays a preoccupation with the women's "deep shame" (*More bear witness to sex slaves outrage SMH 15.8.92, p. 15*) and 'humiliation' (*'Comfort' woman tells of Japanese brutality SMH 10.12.92, p. 3*). South Korean former 'comfort women' are alleged in one article, for instance, to "have kept a low profile in society because of their guilt and shame for having been sex slaves of the Japanese" (*Funeral rekindles hope for apology from Tokyo SMH 10.2.93, p. 11*).

The dominant narrative template in fact constructs the Asian societies from which most of the 'comfort women' were recruited as lamentably inhumane and bigoted.

Reputedly “shamed and shunned by the conservative societies in which they live,” Asian former ‘comfort women’ have been forced to exist, it is claimed, as “social pariahs” (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13). Unsubstantiated assertions that the women were “rejected by their families because of the ‘shame’ of what happened to them” (*Japan shuns war brothel ruling* Age 24.11.94, p. 1) are frequently made to connote ‘Oriental cruelty’. Generalising that “after the war, most of the women were disowned by their families” for instance, Ben Hills goes on to claim sweepingly that former ‘comfort women’ “who kept their secret and managed to marry, lived in permanent fear of exposure, and most marriages broke down and the children turned their backs on their mothers,” ending with the sensational report that “[o]ne went mad after she discovered her newborn child had congenital syphilis” (*Cold comfort for Japan’s war women* SMH 23.7.94, p. 32). The Asian women who survived the ‘comfort stations’ thus appear in the coverage as doubly victimised. Violated by ‘the Japanese’, persecuted and condemned by their own communities, they emerge in the coverage as abject, broken women. “Tortured by injury and illness; some sent mad by their ordeal... infected with venereal diseases,” as Ben Hills describes them, “[s]ome committed suicide, others became insane” (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13).

This picture of abjection contrasts rather dramatically with the narrative template’s representation of Dutch former ‘comfort woman’ Jan Ruff-O’Herne. Readers are assured that O’Herne “led a normal life” (*Forgive, urges sex slave* HS 2.10.94, p. 26), marrying a British soldier named ‘Tom’, having children, and emigrating with her “young family” to Adelaide, where she “made her career as a teacher in Catholic primary schools” (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse* SMH 11.12.92, p. 3). The account of O’Herne’s recovery of bourgeois respectability contrasts starkly with the story of a Korean ‘comfort woman’ who allegedly “turned to drugs to endure her misery” (*Tokyo’s sex slave poser* HS 2.8.92, p. 32). The Korean woman, named in the article as ‘Ms Kaneda’, is quoted as complaining that her experience in a ‘comfort station’ “‘destroyed [her] both mentally and physically.’”

This characterisation is further reinforced in an article covering the public hearing in Tokyo at which O'Herne gave evidence. "Mrs Jan Ruff-O'Herne, of Adelaide, should have been an emotional wreck yesterday," the text opens by proclaiming, "but she wasn't" (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse* SMH 11.12.92, p. 3). O'Herne appears elsewhere in the coverage describing herself as "a joyful person" who "wasn't going to let this ruin the rest of my life" (*Forgive, urges sex slave* HS 2.10.94, p. 26). Indomitable O'Herne is furthermore credited with having single-handedly "dramatically lifted the veil on one of the most brutal, least-acknowledged episodes in Japanese military history" (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse* SMH 11.12.92, p. 3). By revealing herself at the hearing as a former 'comfort woman', it is asserted, O'Herne "shared her darkest secret with the world" (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse* SMH 11.12.92, p. 3).

"For fifty years, Jan Ruff-O'Herne has been keeping a terrible secret," reads the tagline of an article enticingly titled *Horror of war rape exposed* (SMH 14.7.94, p. 22). The subtext of these allusions to 'dark' and 'terrible' secrets is the patriarchal framing of rape as 'shameful' and damaging to a woman's social worth. Even as it mounts a thinly-veiled attack on Asian societies for treating former 'comfort women' as social pariahs, then, this kind of coverage itself arguably displays allegiance to the same patriarchal order of sexuality. The discursive construction of the former 'comfort women' as legitimate victims is thus in part achieved via the perpetuation of a patriarchal mythology of 'rapability'. It is also, I shall now argue, partly at the expense of vilifying 'the Japanese'.

### Section three: orientalising others

Texts commonly identify the term 'comfort women' as a "euphemism" (*Japan apologises to 'comfort women'* Age 5.8.93, p. 11), whose continued use by 'the Japanese' is "as horrific as the act itself" since it "masks the horror of rape" (*Horror of war rape exposed* SMH 14.7.94, p. 22), thereby reenacting, in a sense, the original violation. The 'comfort women' appear in the coverage as victims of unmitigated violence – "tortured and repeatedly raped by Japanese officers and soldiers" (*Justice Department bars entry to 16 accused of wartime atrocities* SMH 5.12.96, p. 12);

“subjected to rape and beatings twenty-four hours a day” (*Forgive, urges sex slave* HS 2.10.94, p. 26) – and generally “treated like animals” (*More bear witness to sex slaves outrage* SMH 15.8.92, p.15).

### *Troping Japaneseness*

Some texts construct lurid – indeed, arguably gratuitous – accounts of “horrific crimes” (*Japan sex apology* HS 5.6.96, p. 30) and “grotesque punishments” (*‘Comfort woman’ tells of torture* HS 26.2.92, p. 15) inflicted on the women by ‘the Japanese’. Somewhat fraudulently, texts such as these address a shocked and morally outraged implied reader, even as they facilitate his or her voyeurism. “When women contracted diseases or suffered from malnutrition,” it is reported for example, “the Japanese threw them into the sea or doused them with petrol and burned them alive” (*‘Comfort woman’ tells of torture* HS 26.2.92, p. 15). “One woman reported being thrown onto a bed of nails for complaining. Another said her venereal disease was treated with a red-hot piece of metal, while another told of having her genitals burned by matches” one article reports. It ends with a shocking revelation suggesting Japanese ignorance as well as cruelty, that “[m]any of the soldiers wore used condoms which they turned inside-out so they could use them a second time” (*Japan sex apology* HS 5.6.96, p. 30).

In much of the coverage, then, the discursive production of Japaneseness takes shape around constructions of sadism and inhumanity.<sup>45</sup> One text describes “an air of fear” pervading a camp of war prisoners as Japanese officers performed what is chillingly described as “a brutal sex-slave selection process” (*‘Comfort’ woman tells of Japanese brutality* SMH 10.12.92, p. 3). On being selected for transportation to an army brothel, “[t]he Dutch girls protested,” the text asserts, “but *the Japanese merely laughed*. They told them they were all captives and that their families would suffer if they didn’t obey” (emphasis mine).

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<sup>45</sup> This Orientalist construction surfaces also in the dominant narrative of sex tourism developed in the Australian press, which attributes the exploitative sex tourism industry to the misogyny that is alleged to mark Asian masculinity.

Underpinning these constructions of cruelty and mercilessness is the assumption, present as a subtext in much of the coverage, that 'the Japanese' committed worse war crimes than anyone else. Allegedly responsible for "some of the most ghastly episodes of the war" (*Remember the horror Age* 28.1.95, p. 23), the Japanese are described as "sadistic and brutal captors," whose "unbelievable brutality" (*Japan's Mountain of aid can't bury past SMH* 27.8.94, p. 19) was "so inhumane as to defy all understanding" (*Remember the horror Age* 28.1.95, p. 23). Many articles thus discursively situate the comfort station system in the thematic constellation of what is referred to as "the horror" of Japan's war record, and significant textual space is taken up in coverage of the case by generalised inventories of "Japan's World War Two atrocities" (*Japan yet to admit to the horrors of its past SMH* 6.6.95, p. 15).

"Terrible things were done in the name of the Emperor" (*Facing up to the past Age* 25.11.94, p. 15), an editorial piece asserts, locating the cause of Japan's war crimes in an ancient and peculiarly Oriental form of despotic power. This construction has its roots in the nineteenth century Orientalist imaginary, and is echoed in subsequent coverage of the case. "In the name of the Emperor and the Samurai cult of Bushido," a later article recapitulates, invoking the spectre of a mysterious Oriental warrior cult, the Japanese Imperial Army "committed some of the most barbaric crimes humanity has witnessed" (*Sorry seems the hardest word SMH Opinion* 18.2.95, p. 30).

One text dubs Japan's Imperial project "the Japanese Reich", likening its invasion of Asia to the spread of a bloodstain (*Cold comfort for Japan's war women SMH* 23.7.94, p. 32). Japan is persistently represented as an unusually harsh colonial overlord, conquering "half of Asia," ruling its occupied territories "with surpassing brutality" (*Japan yet to admit to the horrors of its past SMH* 6.6.95, p. 15), and "committing unacknowledged atrocities against civilians, slave workers and prisoners of war" (*Japan's planned war apology silenced SMH* 8.3.95, p. 12).

#### *Imaging Asian 'comfort women'*

The reproduction of unflattering racist stereotypes is not confined to the discursive construction of 'the Japanese' in coverage of the case, but is also evident, I now

argue, in representations of the 'comfort women' themselves. In particular, the Australian press treatment of the Asian 'comfort women' is generally unsympathetic and frequently pejorative, contrasting markedly with the overwhelmingly adulatory representation of the Australian survivor of the comfort stations, Jan Ruff-O'Herne.

Korean former 'comfort women' in particular are reputed to harbour "hatred" for 'the Japanese' (*Pay comfort women, UN tells Japan* SMH 7.2.96, p. 11). News texts report that the Asian women have "conducted a campaign of world-wide anti-Japan demonstrations" (*Japan shuns war brothel ruling* Age 24.11.94, p. 1), at which they have "shouted anti-Japanese slogans," issued such vitriolic statements as "why are the Japanese so good at telling lies?" and threatened that "the fight would not end until they got an apology and compensation" (*Funeral rekindles hope for apology from Tokyo* SMH 10.2.93, p. 11). Former 'comfort women' from Korea, the Philippines, China and South-East Asia are described as having come forward to "demand retribution" (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13), protesting in explosive demonstrations outside embassies in Seoul and Manila, and becoming embroiled in "angry confrontation" with Japanese Government officials (*Comfort women 'did it for money'* SMH 6.6.96, p. 10; *Sex slave comments embarrass Japan* PM Age 6.6.96, p. 10).

One text even surmises that "[a]ccording to people like Korean-born Kimiko Kaneda, 70, a Japanese apology is not enough," going on to identify her as "one of 41 plaintiffs each seeking about \$200,000 in civil damages from Japan" (*Tokyo's sex slave poser* HS 2.8.92, p. 32). Indeed, coverage of the case makes frequent reference to the Asian women's mercenary demands for individual cash payment (*Philippines sex slaves sue* SMH 3.4.93, p. 22; *Japanese to offer \$500m for atrocities* Age 16.12.94, p. 8; *Army sex slaves scorn Japan's compromise* Age 16.6.95, p. 8). Cash amounts offered by the Japanese Government are reputed to have been "condemned as derisory" (*Comfort women 'did it for money'* SMH 6.6.96, p. 10) and "insufficient" (*Sex slave comments embarrass Japan* PM Age 6.6.96, p. 10) by leaders of Asia's 'comfort women'. The women's complaints about the inadequacy of existing monetary compensation are highlighted in headlines proclaiming 'Korean 'comfort women' reject Japan's \$1.25b war fund plan' (Age 18.7.94, p. 11), 'Army sex slaves scorn Japan's compromise' (Age 16.6.95, p. 8), and 'Comfort women snub

*Japan deal*' (SMH 16.6.95, p. 10). Ben Hills in fact quotes a Korean woman complaining bitterly that "[e]ven if the Japanese gave us their entire country, that could never compensate" (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13).

While Asian former 'comfort women' are persistently troped in the coverage as rancorous and vengeful, however, a European survivor of the comfort stations emerges as the narrative template's saintly and forgiving heroine. "Beaten and raped by soldiers in a Japanese military brothel during world war two, an Australian woman wants to see her tormentors' country welcomed to next year's VE celebrations," reads the heart-rending tagline of a feature article on Jan Ruff-O'Herne entitled *Forgive, urges sex slave* (HS 2.10.94, p. 26). Explicitly juxtaposing Ruff-O'Herne's conduct with that of her Asian counterparts, another text extols the virtues of the Australian comfort woman's comparative stoicism. "Her message was different," [read: superior] the text affirms (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse* SMH 11.12.92, p. 3). "Where others had spoken of revenge and hatred for the Japanese," Ruff-O'Herne, it proclaims admiringly, "merely sought their frank admission of the truth and reconciliation." "I have forgiven the Japanese because it is no use living your whole life with hatred in your heart... I have never said to god, 'why did this happen to me, why me?'... I think it is in God's plan... I know that inner strength that I had came from God, that is for sure," she is elsewhere quoted reflecting, in an article which at times almost reads like the genuflection of a worshipper before a saint (*Horror of war rape exposed* SMH 14.7.94, p. 22). "Family and faith are the guiding lights in Ruff-O'Herne's life," the article continues. "And when you look into her face – at 71, her skin is fine and dusky with faint hues of deep red, her eyes are joyous and alive – any scepticism disappears." This representation of Ruff-O'Herne's wholesome Christian faith stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of Japan's belligerent Oriental 'cult of Bushido'.

Moreover, the dominant narrative template casts Ruff-O'Herne as a champion of the rights of her powerless Asian sisters in need of a [white] saviour. Her noble decision to 'go public' as a former 'comfort woman' is construed in the coverage as a self-sacrificing gesture, made in response to her having seen the first Korean women testify on television in 1992 (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse*

SMH 11.12.92, p. 3), "sobbing for justice" (*Horror of war rape exposed* SMH 14.7.94, p. 22). It is alleged then, that Ruff-O'Herne 'spoke out' to rescue these inarticulate Asian women from obscurity:

'Japan wouldn't listen to the Korean women,' she says. 'I mean, what are Koreans to Japan? Nothing. But when European women come forward and say, 'wait a minute, you didn't only do that to Asian women, you did that to European women, to Dutch girls, too,' I knew they would sit up and listen – and this is what happened.

'When I spoke out in Tokyo, the whole world was there, wanting to know the truth – radio and television. They weren't taking that much notice before because they were 'only Asian comfort women'. It's terrible to say, but that's the truth' (*Horror of war rape exposed* SMH 14.7.94, p. 22).<sup>46</sup>

Yet the racist double standard Ruff-O'Herne identifies here is only perpetuated in the press coverage. One text for instance pronounces that Ruff-O'Herne has "made the most potent impact as the first non-Asian victim to go public," and commends her "powerfully controlled presentation" at the Tokyo hearing (*Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse* SMH 11.12.92, p. 3). More fundamentally, however, the coverage generally denies the Asian 'comfort women' the kind of three-dimensionality it accords Ruff-O'Herne.

Ruff-O'Herne is quoted extensively, discussing the psychological effects of her experience as a former 'comfort woman' –

'It's something that's been bottled up for fifty years,' she says. 'There have been times where I've been wanting to scream it out to the world and yet you can't do it because it's too terrible. Then all of a sudden, phew, that's it: it's out and it's a release and that's good' (*Horror of war rape exposed* SMH 14.07.94: 22).

– and expressing opinions about the wider political context of rape as a war crime –

<sup>46</sup> Ruff-O'Herne's claim is supported by the fact that the only war crimes tribunal ever to investigate the case considered evidence exclusively from a group of Dutch women, overlooking the existence of Asian 'comfort women' altogether. The tribunal, convened in Batavia, Indonesia, which led to the execution of ten Japanese officers, is in fact alluded to – albeit briefly – in one article covering the case (*Sex slave comments embarrass Japan* PM Age 6.6.96, p. 10).

'Women are always used, especially in war,' says Ruff-O'Herne. 'I remember one reporter in Tokyo – a young reporter – said to me at one stage: 'oh, these things happen in war.' I said, 'this is where you are wrong. These things should not happen in war: war does not make it right. Just because it is war does not make it right.

'This is the attitude that is still with people today. In Bosnia, rape is still not a war crime. So the world has to change. And it can only change with what we are doing now. My speaking out, I hope, is going to change that' (*Horror of war rape exposed* SMH 14.07.94: 22).

Where Asian women appear in the coverage by contrast, they are seldom quoted as sources. While it must be conceded that Ruff-O'Herne is more accessible to the Australian media, since she speaks fluent English, lives in Adelaide and has made a documentary about her experience, the coverage nevertheless reflects what Rakow and Kranich (1991) have identified as the general silence of women who are also racial others in the mainstream news media. In any case, the representation of Asian 'comfort women' lacks complexity and is iconographic and overdetermined. They tend to appear in the texts as unilateral victims, reduced to the sum of the abuses they once suffered in the 'comfort' stations, "now ill and alone" (*For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13), "mostly ailing, living in appalling conditions" (*More bear witness to sex slaves outrage* SMH 15.8.92, p. 15). Those who have offered their testimony for voyeuristic consumption at public hearings are described as "aged, weeping women" (*Japan apologises to 'comfort women'* Age 5.8.93, p. 11), one text evoking the pathetic image of a Chinese woman who "collapsed while giving her harrowing testimony" (*'Comfort' woman tells of Japanese brutality* SMH 10.12.92, p. 3).

With the exception of one article which alludes to a former 'comfort woman's' involvement in the Philippine underground (*Japanese complot sought* SMH 16.10.93, p. 23), then, the coverage reproduces the conventional understanding of war-making as an exclusively masculine endeavour, an equation in which women figure only as casualties. While their testimonies might constitute a potential counter-discourse, which would challenge such received wisdoms, the Asian 'comfort women' do not appear as speaking subjects, but remain deeply in shadow.

#### Section four: exonerating the Australian subject

As illustrated earlier, Australian press coverage of the case is openly critical of the Japanese Government's lack of concern for the comfort women themselves. Criticisms of this kind are not leveled exclusively at Japan however, with some texts suggesting that other Asian Governments have treated the 'comfort women' with indifference. When the South Korean Government reportedly announced that the release of an official Japanese report on the 'comfort women' "ends a key obstacle to better relations with Seoul", Ben Hills pointed out that the announcement was made despite the report's failure to recognise the need for redress or recommend any compensation for the women (*Japan apologises to 'comfort women'* Age 5.8.93, p. 11). A more recent article observes that South Korea's official claims for compensation from the Japanese Government for Korean 'comfort women' were dropped by President Kim Dae-Jung, who, it is pointedly noted, "has called for new ties with Japan" (*Claims dropped* HS 22.4.98, p. 30). The South Korean Government, these texts imply, has done nothing to assist the women because their struggle for compensation is not consonant with its trade and security interests.<sup>47</sup> In an even more damning allegation, Ben Hills intimates that the Korean Government played an active role in the 'comfort' system. Describing its attitude to the women as "ambivalent", he postulates that this is "hardly surprisingly, considering many prominent figures... were collaborators, senior officers in the Japanese occupation forces" (*Cold comfort for Japan's war women* SMH 23.7.94, p. 32).

#### *Marginalising the women's experiences*

I contend, however, that the Australian press coverage of the case is marked by a similar indifference towards the plight of the 'comfort women'. Instead of reporting on the 'comfort' system as facilitating mass rape, some articles frame the case in terms of the Japanese Government's embarrassment on the world stage at having

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<sup>47</sup> Talks held by Hosokawa with the Korean leader during his November 1993 visit to Seoul would in fact seem to confirm this assumption. Kim Young Sam told the Japanese Prime Minister that his own administration would provide for South Korean 'comfort women', pressed for increased investment by Japanese firms in Korea, and discussed forging close ties with Japan and the US over the North Korean nuclear issue (Field, 1997: 24).

been caught procuring prostitutes for its troops. The 'comfort women' are described for instance, as one of Japan's "most embarrassing wartime legacies" (*'Comfort' compo hint SMH* 13.3.93, p. 19). And in an article covering the provision of condoms to Japanese peace-keeping troops, it is facetiously reported that "sex for the Japanese contingent is a highly sensitive matter," owing to the fact that the Government "has been embarrassed by a spate of demands for compensation" from former 'comfort women' (*Tokyo UN troops in condom row HS* 16.8.92, p. 27).

More fundamentally however, by examining the 'comfort women' case in terms of Japan's failure to atone for its war crimes in general, the dominant narrative template renders the women's experiences peripheral to what is truly newsworthy. The 'comfort women' issue tends to be cathected into the sphere of 'international relations', as somehow consanguineous with trade and security matters. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, just over half of the news texts analysed alluded only briefly to the 'comfort women', in the context of a consideration of Japanese war crimes, domestic politics, diplomacy or trade. This framing is evident in texts reporting on bilateral talks held in early 1992 between Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, and South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo, alleged to have been "overshadowed by trade frictions and the emotional issue of Korean 'comfort women'" (*Pressure of scandal builds on Japan's PM AFR* 28.1.92, p. 8). Miyazawa "apologised today for his country's World War Two sexual enslavement of Korean women," one text observes, "and [- in the same sentence -] agreed to take steps to redress Japan's huge trade surplus with South Korea" (*Miyazawa apologises for 'comfort girls' SMH* 18.1.92, p. 20).

The 'comfort women' are discursively constructed in these texts as a kind of currency of international relations. It is reported, for instance, that the first official apology for the comfort stations issued by a Japanese Government "did not satisfy the chief plaintiff, the South Korean government" (*Japan's big change scares bureaucrats AFR* 6.8.93, p. 16, emphasis mine). Another article goes so far as to describe a comfort station survivor's testimonial as "the latest broadside in a propaganda battle by North Korea," aimed at winning compensation from the Japanese Government (*'Comfort woman' tells of torture HS* 26.2.92, p. 15).

The women's bodies are thus discursively appropriated as the property of the nation, and their own rights to reparation are rendered marginal. In this sense, their representation in Australian news texts exemplifies what Irigaray has identified as the hom(m)osexuality of the social order, which is premised upon the constitution of women as 'fetish-objects, inasmuch as, in exchanges, they are the manifestation and the circulation of a power of the Phallus, establishing relationships of men with each other' (1985b: 183). The 'comfort women' thus stand in the discourse of the Australian press as symptomatic of the phallic order which ensures that women have existence 'only as an occasion for mediation, transaction, transition, transference, between man and his fellow man' (Irigaray, 1985b: 193).

*Obscuring the direct involvement of the West*

If the Japanese and Korean governments are chastised in the coverage for their willful neglect of the 'comfort women', the same criticism could be justifiably leveled at the governments of the western allies. One article in fact appeared in the *Age* alluding to the involvement of the allied forces in the 'comfort' system (*Allies had to protect brothels – academic Age* 24.9.93, p. 7). The text invokes an expert source, Professor Gavin McCormack, described in the article's tagline as "a leading Australian academic", who speculates that the Allied high command covered up the comfort station system and failed to prosecute its architects in the Tokyo trials, in order to justify "turning Japan into a virtual sex paradise" for the occupation troops. The text then quotes Melbourne academic Yuki Tanaka alleging that the establishment of a nationwide brothel system for Allied soldiers by local authorities, however, "had not prevented the soldiers from raping women," a claim which activates the popular myth of the inexorable male sex drive.

The last word in the text, however, is reserved for Dr Jeff Grey, a lecturer at the Australian Defence Force Academy, who casts doubt on McCormack's testimony by declaring, with some pride, "I devoted four or five chapters on the occupation in my book. I've been through all the materials here and in Britain and the United States and I've found no trace at all of the sorts of claims that he is making."

Yet Dr Grey's confident acquittal of western powers is clearly questionable, given that allied intelligence services compiled extensive inventories of the comfort stations after the war. Dolgopol (1994) notes that British personnel interviewed Korean women discovered in brothels scattered throughout Burma, Manchuria, Borneo, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. And despite obtaining clear evidence of force used against the women, she observes, allied documents mildly referred to the 'comfort' stations as 'amenities in the Japanese armed services', and to the 'comfort women' as 'camp followers' (1994: 27).

In fact as Professor McCormack controversially suggests, it seems likely that allied troops themselves made extensive use of the comfort system infrastructure. Certainly the rapid growth of organised prostitution in postwar Japan was stimulated by the allied military presence. Lie (1997) observes that one of the first acts of Japan's postwar cabinet was to resuscitate the comfort divisions in a new guise, for the benefit of the occupation forces. The Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) was created as both a foreign exchange earner and a kind of preemptive 'shock absorber', protecting Japanese women from lascivious US troops (1997: 257). The RAA employed 70,000 women at its height, and the number of sex workers in Japan continued to grow steadily even after SCAP disbanded the RAA, so that by 1969 for example, one in every thirty-four women aged over fifteen in Okinawa worked as a prostitute (Lie, 1997: 258-9).

The failure of the allied powers to take any action against those responsible for the 'comfort' system must also be understood as a consequence of US security interests in the region after the war, which had the effect of muffling debate over Japan's war crimes in general. Critics have alleged that minimal restitution was extracted from Japan after World War Two in order to facilitate its use as a capitalist stronghold from where Asia could be defended against the encroachments of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (Chungmoo Choi, 1997; Park, 1997; Yang, 1998).

More fundamentally however, the fact that the architects of the 'comfort' system escaped the war crimes trials with impunity points to the racist and sexist contradictions at the heart of western humanism, that philosophical tradition

underpinning the discourse of human rights. The failure to seek justice on behalf of the 'comfort women' at the Tokyo trials may be seen as indicative of the exclusionary devices at work in humanist discourse that effectively disqualify both Asians and women from the category of 'human'. Won Soon Park (1997) has called attention to the racism of the war crimes trials, noting that most of the suits brought by Japan's former colonies were dismissed by juries that were almost entirely composed of representatives from the western allied camp. For Park, the Tokyo trials therefore represent 'little more than a feast whose guest list included the Western Allies but blatantly omitted the Asian victims themselves' (1997: 119).

The 'comfort women's' invisibility at the trials exemplifies also the sexism of human rights discourse, and must be viewed in the wider context of the belated encoding of rape as an indictable war crime. Rape, as feminists have insisted, is always a political act which cannot be 'isolated from the politics of power' (Nordstrom, 1996: 152), even outside its tactical deployment in war as a means of undermining resistance and attacking cultural integrity.<sup>48</sup> Yet the modern formulation of human rights was premised on the delineation of 'public' and 'private' spheres and the exemption of the latter from scrutiny (Okin, 1998: 34), thus ensuring that sexual violence was cathected into the sequestered domain of 'the personal' (Dolgopol, 1994: 236).

The allies' deafening silence on the matter of the comfort stations has compounded the women's suffering. For silence, as Dolgopol recognises, 'can be a form of aiding and abetting' (1994: 36). Yet nowhere in the press coverage is it suggested that western governments bear any responsibility for helping to make restitution in the present. In fact, with the exception of the single article discussed above, the involvement of the allies is entirely obscured in the coverage. Instead, the dominant

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<sup>48</sup> For Nordstrom moreover, that sexual violence occurs in epidemic proportions in times of war *and* peace makes a nonsense of the conventional understanding of the two as antonyms. Put differently, rape might be schematised as a deconstructive lever undoing the falsely reductive 'war vs. peace' binary. The 'peace' in the title of her text is therefore crossed out, following Heidegger's use of the strike-through to denote a concept that simultaneously exists and negates itself. Peace, Nordstrom suggests, is a catachrestic concept that we cannot do without but, neither, as it is defined, can we do with it (1997: 148).

narrative template elects to explain the 'comfort' system by deploying racist tropes of 'Oriental cruelty'.

Furthermore, some texts implicitly encourage the attribution of blame for the 'comfort' stations to uniquely 'Japanese' attitudes towards women and sex, by invoking the 'comfort women' in the context of a critical focus on sexual politics in contemporary Japan. Observing that "30,000 Korean women were traded to Japan last year at the same time that Korean 'comfort women' from world war two were seeking compensation for being forced into prostitution by the Japanese" (*Asian girls 'sold' as sex slaves* HS 6.4.93, p. 21), for example, one article implies that male sexuality in contemporary Japan is marked by the same exploitative drive that engendered the 'comfort' system half a century earlier.<sup>49</sup>

Japanese men are discursively constructed as inveterate sexual predators in an article covering the publication of a Japanese guide to sex tourism in Thailand – whose first two editions, readers are pointedly told, "sold out 25,000 copies in a matter of weeks" (*Japanese sex guide is forced off the shelves* SMH 1.4.95, p. 30). The article reports that "hundreds of thousands" of Japanese men go on sex tours of Asia, earning them "an 'Ugly Japanese' reputation throughout the region." The allegation of an historical continuity of sexual violence and exploitation is explicitly made in the text where the leader of a group called Friends of Thai Women is quoted certifying that "[n]othing has changed since the days of the 'comfort women.'" It is further implied, in a report on the Japanese army's plans to issue condoms to soldiers on peace-keeping missions, that exploitative sexual relations are still officially sanctioned (*Tokyo UN troops in condom row* HS 16.8.92, p. 27). The text cites unidentified "feminists and intellectuals" who claim the plan amounts to "government-approved shopping for sex", and as such is reminiscent of the wartime policy-making that gave rise to the 'comfort' stations.

By representing this type of organised sexual exploitation as a 'Japanese' problem, the press coverage of the 'comfort women' case contributes to an 'othering' process

by which critical attention is deflected from the ethic of exploitative sexuality that is institutionalised in military systems worldwide. The only texts to consider the 'comfort' system in the context of the ubiquitous sexual violence and exploitation that characterise militarised settings, are a series of book reviews, which appeared outside the news proper, in supplementary weekend sections (*Raped, enslaved and conscripted* *Age* Weekend supplement 11.2.95, p. 9; *Hard facts of life in a comfort zone* *Age* Agenda 12.3.95, p. 9; and *Truth is no comfort* *HS* Weekend supplement 18.3.95, p. 13). All reviews refer to the current situation in Bosnia, and contend that more attention needs to be given to rape as a war crime. For "the history of war," as Joy Damousi rightly contends, "is also the history of rape and misogyny" (*Raped, enslaved and conscripted* *Age* Weekend supplement 11.2.95, p. 9).

These three texts do little, however, to dislodge the dominant narrative template's ideological cathecting of the issue, in which 'the Japanese' are vilified as cruel and exploitative sexual predators. The Australian subject is exempted from this critical matrix altogether, emerging instead as a benevolent and just arbiter. The representations thus institute a Manichaean binary, where 'the Japanese' stand in contrast to the implicit self-representation of the subject of representation (the omniscient narrator) and to the implied Australian reader, who is constructed via a mode of address designed to provoke his or her liberal-humanist indignation.

### Conclusion

The Australian press coverage of the 'comfort women' case thus has the net ideological effect, at the level of identification, of shoring up white Australian subjectivity by reference to an inferior Japanese other.<sup>50</sup> This discursive operation is

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<sup>49</sup> This construction invokes the Orientalist trope of Asian men as cruel and lascivious flesh-traders, and emerges also, as I go on to discuss in chapters five and six, in Australian press narratives of sex tourism and the 'traffic' in Asian women as sex workers.

<sup>50</sup> The narrative template acquires a certain psychoanalytic resonance for the white Australian subject in the context of the reconciliation process and the proliferation of discourse around the 'stolen generations' in contemporary Australia. For, much like the Japanese leaders disparagingly represented in the news texts I examined, the present Australian Prime Minister has evinced a distaste for atonement. John Howard has persistently refused to acknowledge what he has termed the 'black

finally contingent upon the news texts' perpetuation of the former 'comfort women's' silence. Their silence, indeed, might be understood as the constitutive possibility of the discourse.

Attempts to restore the former 'comfort women's' lost voices by offering their testimonies for voyeuristic public consumption however, are clearly problematic. Referring to a case of seven Croatian women who committed suicide after being interviewed by male foreign correspondents about their experience of rape in war, Nordstrom warns that 'we must take care not to reproduce systems of violence in speaking about them' (1997: 149). Yet by commodifying the former 'comfort women' as a spectacle even as it strips them of subjective interiority, the Australian press coverage of the case has done precisely that. The former 'comfort women' stand as the overdetermined, mute ground from which the discursive production - in which the sovereignty of the white subject is realised - proceeds.

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armband' view of history, and failed to apologise formally for the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families in the era of official assimilation. By obsessively chastising a Japanese other for failing to atone for the past treatment of its own racial other then, the discourse of the Australian press, as a site of national self-representation, in a sense enacts a ritualistic psychoanalytic process of projection.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SIGNIFYING SEX TOURISM

### Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse Australian press coverage of sex tourism in South and South-East Asian destinations. Owing to the nature and scope of the Australian press coverage of sex tourism, my focus is upon representations of those others involved in the sex industries in Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka. My analysis is initially directed to outlining key elements of the narrative template through which sex tourism is represented in the press to Australian news consumers. Secondly, I inquire into the ideological effects of the dominant narrative of sex tourism developed in the news texts. Ultimately, I read the representations as sites of the discursive construction of self-consolidating others for the Australian subject. I begin this chapter, however, by situating my analysis in the broader context of the cultural politics of sex tourism in general.

Sex tourism is premised upon the exoticisation of female 'third world' or 'Asian' others as objects of desire, a phenomenon which must be understood in terms of the 'global circulation of sexual desire' which Hamilton contends 'so characterises late modernity' (1997b: 58). Yet the construction of 'Asian' cultures as abundantly sexual, and Asian women as exotic-erotic objects, has a long history in western imaginaries. As McClintock notes, the fetishised 'Orient' of the nineteenth century, for instance, had discursive existence as a vast harem, a 'porno-tropics... onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires' (1995: 22). Contemporary representations of tropical Asia as a kind of 'sexual smorgasbord' from which exotic female others beckon enticingly, therefore draw upon a time-honoured set of tropes.

The discourse of tourism promotion – whose advertising, significantly, is often published in Australian newspapers alongside news texts of the kind examined in this thesis – tends to authorise and determine the nature of the tourist gaze in advance, providing potential tourists with a series of ready-made categories through which to fantasise encounters with otherness abroad. Given that the marketing of 'other' places as utopias of uninhibited sexuality, and of female others as objects of sexual desire, is central to international tourism's promotional strategies, there is a sense in

which touristic discourse encourages such metonymic slippages as from 'Thailand' to 'brothel' or 'prostitute'. As Manderson points out, traveling to a destination such as Bangkok, for instance, tends to be discursively collapsed into such emblematic acts as 'going to a live sex show' (1995: 309).

Tourist destinations throughout developing Asia are metonymically signified in the discourse of the contemporary metropolitan West by the figure of the sexually available woman, over whose body the subject can exercise his sexual mastery with impunity. In this sense, international tourism replicates the tradition of the sexual subjugation of others by first world nationals that evolved under colonialism. It is premised on, and arguably further entrenches, an unequal power relation between the developed West and its 'Asian' or 'third world' others. International sex tourism might be understood, then, as a form of neocolonialism deployed at the level of sexuality, which, as Foucault has shown, operates as 'a dense transfer point for relations of power' (1978: 103). Of course where sex tourism is represented in the discourse of the Australian press, its neocolonial replication of imperialist power dynamics is thoroughly obscured. Instead, the focus of the news texts is almost exclusively upon sex tourism as a site of the victimisation of other women at the hands of 'other' men. As I hope to demonstrate, this mode of emplotment is developed in the coverage into a kind of 'moral panic' around sex tourism.<sup>51</sup>

I want to begin by acknowledging that although I am critiquing the ideological encoding of 'Asian' and 'third world' sex workers in the Australian press as unilateral victims, the extra-discursive 'reality' of the sex tourism industry in South and South-East Asian societies is far from rosy. It must also be conceded that the sexual exploitation of 'Asian' women has at times appeared to be sanctioned by their

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<sup>51</sup> The moral panic scheme is generally deployed in the discourse of the press as an 'othering' device. It is premised upon the explanation of a given social problem by recourse to the identification, vilification and symbolic casting out of culprits as 'folk devils' whose deviant activities threaten the community from without. In the case of the dominant narrative of sex tourism developed in the Australian press, blame for the sexual exploitation of Asian and 'third world' women is laid at the feet of the allegedly abnormal perverts who go on sex tours of Asia. As will be discussed later in the chapter, these perverted others thus stand in the texts as scapegoats whose representation permits the disavowal of the more crucial sociocultural, political and economic contexts structuring sex tourism.

own Governments. In the case of Thailand, for instance, official acquiescence in the lucrative sex trade would seem to be reflected in its leaders' perennial failure to ratify or accede to the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (Asia Watch, 1993: 28). Tacit official support for the exploitative sex industry is also suggested by the Thai Government's slow response to the considerable risk of HIV-infection facing sex workers. 'Resolutely ignoring' the problem until 1991, when it became apparent that revenue from sex tourism was threatened by the arrival of HIV/AIDS (Asia Watch, 1993: 129), the Government finally responded by requiring sex workers to undergo regular testing for HIV antibodies, and to carry health cards recording their status (Cook, 1998: 254). As will be discussed later in this chapter, the Thai Government's belated and discriminatory response reflected the fact that its priorities lay not in protecting the women but in reassuring their foreign clients.

Thai women's sexual servitude, then, is undoubtedly 'one of the bases of growth of the Thai economy' (Bonchalaski & Guest, 1994: 1, cited in Cook, 1998: 251). As Cook observes, Thai officials nevertheless 'continue to blame sexual exploitation on contact with the West' (1998: 255), and indeed historically, this is partially correct. For the foundations of the modern sex tourism industry in Thailand were laid as locals sought to profit by meeting the demands for 'R & R' imposed by US military forces during the Indochina conflict (Thanh-dam Truong, 1990: 160). When US forces withdrew from the region, the Thai government embarked on a strategy of export-diversification, in which the widening of 'R & R' facilities into an international sex tourism market played a central role (Thanh-dam Truong, 1990: 167).

The early involvement of members of the Thai military as pimps in the brothels servicing US forces set the precedent for what Thanh-dam Truong identifies as 'a clear policy... to maximise income from prostitution at the level of the state' (1990: 189). Today, the military, the police and government officials are known to be extensively involved in the lucrative Thai sex trade, and consequently the law is enforced arbitrarily, and in such a way as to safeguard the interests of brothel owners, procurers and pimps (Thanh-dam Truong, 1990: 183-4; Asia Watch, 1993: 80; Cook, 1998: 172).

*Interpreting the Australian press coverage of 'sex tourism' in Asia*

A total of 161 articles referring to 'sex tourism' were collected for analysis. The *Age* and *Age Good Weekend* publications, the *Herald Sun* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* had similar levels of coverage of the issue. From 1992 to 1999, the greatest peak in the coverage occurred during April and November of 1996, when allegations of widespread child-sex abuse perpetrated in Asian countries by executive members of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade surfaced. Smaller peaks occurred in August 1996, June, August and October of 1995, with the smallest peaks occurring in November of 1993 and May of 1994. The years 1992, 1998 and 1999 had little coverage of sex tourism.

The favoured thematic template through which sex tourism is represented in the Australian press takes shape around the 'rescue trope'. This construction casts Asian and 'third world' sex workers as helpless victims in need of 'saviours', forced into prostitution tantamount to sexual slavery by abject poverty, suffering disease and exploitation at the hands of cruel Asian brothel owners and pimps. Their sorry condition is explained as a result of their backward, misogynistic and inequitable Asian 'culture', and Asian Governments, officials and police are depicted as unjust and corrupt, benefiting from the women's exploitation.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the ways in which Asian or 'third world' sex workers' status as victims is established as axiomatic in the news texts. Of particular note here, is the overwhelming focus upon the AIDS pandemic or child prostitution in the Australian press coverage of sex tourism. As Manderson has pointed out, both sex and tourism were peripheral concerns within the social sciences until recently, when 'scientific imperatives' in the age of AIDS began to alter the politics of knowledge production (1995: 307). Indeed, it seems likely that sex tourism would receive negligible press coverage in Australia if newsmakers did not have access to these preferred organising templates. My analysis therefore offers considerable support for Bishop and Robinson's identification of HIV-AIDS, and / or the exploitation of children as 'the sine qua non of the contemporary narrative' of sex tourism in the western media (Bishop and Robinson, 1998: 43). Underpinning the

dominant narrative template within which these inequitable international sexual transactions are made intelligible to Australian readers, then, is a conviction that sex tourism is 'exploitation' only when it involves children, or becomes a significant 'social problem' only when a child or a western tourist is threatened. In this manner, I contend, the rights of the child and of the western sex tourist are implicitly elevated in Australian press coverage of sex tourism above those of the Asian or 'third world' sex worker.

In section two of the chapter, I examine the Australian news texts' attribution of blame for the women's victimisation in the sex industry to certain culprits, variously identified as negligence and corruption on the part of Asian authorities, the misogynistic Asian cult of masculinity, barbaric Asian 'family tradition', Asian greed, and poverty. The repetition of such aetiologies of sex tourism in the news texts serves to confirm the impression – fostered also in the child sponsorship advertisements that regularly appear surrounding the news hole in Australian daily papers – that children in developing Asian societies suffer as much from inadequate or reckless parenting as from abject poverty. Section three entails a critique of the victimology narrative developed in the coverage, where I examine the ideological effects of the texts' negative overdetermination of the sex workers as unilateral victims.

In section four I analyse representations of Australians in the coverage of sex tourism. I address the figure of the sex tourist in the Australian press, whose representation is typically framed in terms of 'sin' or 'sickness' in order to distance him from 'normal' men. I then examine the frequently self-congratulatory representation of Australians as rescuers of the women, and heroes in what is metaphorised in the texts as the 'fight' against sex tourism. Finally, I conclude the chapter by discussing the ideological or political effects of exonerating Australians in the discourse of sex tourism.

### **Section one: victimologies of the sex workers**

A predictable collection of rhetorical devices and tropes is repetitively deployed in the coverage in order to persuade the Australian reader that Asian sex workers' status

as victims is unambiguous and irrefutable. As in the Australian press representations of former 'comfort women', many of the news texts are for instance at pains to highlight Asian sex workers' youth and naivete. In the first place, the sex workers are almost exclusively described as 'girls' and seldom as women. The protagonist-author of an article entitled *A feminist goes touring sex city* – a headline whose flippant tone has the rhetorical effect of subtly satirizing both Professor Lillian Robinson, the aforementioned 'feminist', and Bangkok's sex tourism industry – documents her impressions of Bangkok go-go bars, attributing to their workers the adolescent qualities of embarrassed inexperience and painful shyness (*Age* 8.11.93, p. 11). "For a teenager fresh from a country village in the North-East and now awkwardly on stage in a bathing suit," she intuits on the women's behalf, "this public exposure is the first shame – after which, perhaps, all the others seem inevitable." Another article evokes the tarnished innocence of young Asian sex workers by contrasting the purity of their youth with the cheap and sleazy trappings which mark the prostitute in the popular imagination: "Garish pink lights highlight the swirling movement of young girls, their faces plastered with pasty make-up, lurid red lipstick on adolescent lips..." (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex HS Weekend supplement* 5.11.94, p. 5).

An article headlined *The trade that shames a country... and the clients who exploit it* sets the scene for a damning exposé of the Cambodian sex trade thus: "Three young girls sit silently on the edge of a shabby couch, glancing nervously at the strangers standing opposite. The girls' clothes are ragged and dirty, their feet bare," the reference to the nakedness of their feet emphasising the defencelessness of these 'young girls' (*SMH* 26.8.96, p. 8). The text singles out the 'prettiest' girl as particularly helpless and vulnerable, by making note of her virginity, physical smallness, anaemic pallor and frightened eyes: "'She is the prettiest and she is a virgin,' [the pimp] says, gesturing towards the girl sitting next to him... Pich is 15, but looks younger, with her slim child's physique and pale skin. She stares at the floor, her dark eyes filled with fear."

### *Sexual slavery*

In general, the texts display an unwillingness to concede that women might voluntarily enter sex work. Asian sex workers are usually instead constructed as

innocent and naïve victims of deception at the hands of fraudulent procurers, who, according to one text, "pass through villages and towns with promises of jobs for young girls and offers of down payments to their parents of up to \$200, the equivalent of the average annual wage" (*Crackdown on child sex* HS 23.10.95, p. 37). But when a girl arrives in the city, the text continues, "she finds instead she has been sold into a brothel with little chance of escape." An article entitled *Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* constructs an archetypal story of trickery, citing the testimony of Gita, a former brothel inmate: "an agent down the road from our house... took me to Bombay. He told me he was taking me to get a job in a glass factory," before cutting abruptly in the next sentence to "Gita was raped repeatedly until she complied with the wishes of her gharwali (madam) and became a full-time prostitute" (HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5).

Lexical and syntactic elements are deployed to emphasise the women's unenviable predicament as dehumanised commodities. Thus 'feminist' Lillian Robinson, for instance, finds it necessary to point out that "[l]ike the girls in the massage parlours, who are displayed in glass cages for the customers to choose, the dancers have numbers pinned to their costume" (*A feminist goes touring sex city* Age 8.11.93, p. 11). A simile is deployed to similar rhetorical effect in another article where readers are told that young prostitutes "are openly bought and sold" in Cambodia, "[l]ike the AK47s and bags of marijuana at Phnom Penh's Pochentong Market" (*Crackdown on child sex* HS 23.10.95, p. 37). And a text which in parts reads like a travelogue, describes 'cages' lining the streets of Bombay's red-light district, allegedly 'filled' with "[g]irls who can be bought for 30 rupees (\$1) for sex" (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5).

The notion that Asian sex workers are always-already victims is lent further credence in the many news texts, which report on alleged instances of 'sex slavery' in Asian brothels. Associate Professor Michael Horsburgh, Sydney University academic and secretary of the Anglican General Synod's Social Responsibilities Commission is quoted in a *Sydney Morning Herald* article claiming to have discovered "evidence that women are kept in virtual captivity, that they are beaten, they are raped" (*Anglicans condemn sex tourism promoters* SMH 11.6.93, p. 12). Stories of sexual violence and physical abuse suffered by the women at the hands of

brothel-keepers abound in the coverage. An article covering sex slavery in Bombay brothels reports that on arrival at a brothel, a newly procured woman had chili powder blown in her eyes and vagina (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5). The article continues with the testimony of a Bombay doctor, who claims to have treated “many women with knife and burn scars from cigarettes covering their thighs,” and others “with torn up tubes and uteruses” incurred during abortions performed by the madam using a primitive “bamboo whisk-like tool.”

Working conditions in Asian brothels are invariably described as exploitative and inhumane in the extreme. According to one article, a young Cambodian woman allegedly “sold to a brothel owner when she was 14,” was enslaved for three years, during which time she received no money and was “forced to service between 10 and 15 men a day, sometimes collapsing from exhaustion and pain” (*The trade that shames a country... and the clients who exploit it* SMH 26.8.96, p. 8). Bombay brothel workers, it is reported elsewhere, “live like animals in small crowded rooms with 15-20 girls divided by hanging sheets.” Even more heart-rending is the picture of wronged innocence constructed in the sentence following it: “Often they have babies kept under the beds and drugged to keep them quiet” (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5).

An article covering the ordeal of a young Cambodian sex slave at times reads more like a description of a pitiable wild animal. “Hunched in a chair with knees pressed tightly together,” the article opens, Uk Touch was sold to a brothel and “kept in a small, dark room” before being sold on to another brothel owner “who locked her up and began offering her to customers” (*Crackdown on child sex* HS 23.10.95, p. 37). It is reported that welfare workers who had examined Touch “fear she may have suffered permanent brain damage from an injection she received to subdue her.”

### *Child prostitution*

Of a total 161 articles collected on sex tourism, 84.5 per cent took some aspect of child prostitution as their main substantive topic,<sup>52</sup> so that the coverage in a sense worked to maintain a continual slippage from sex tourism to *child*-sex tourism. Throughout the 1990s, Australian news consumers have been regularly offered alarming – albeit often discrepant – statistical information appearing to signal the advent of child prostitution as a new social problem on a global scale. “Up in the hills, dirty business is transacted daily,” a late 1993 article alleges, evoking the child sex trade as a pollution contaminating even the remotest parts of Asia (*Cry Freedom Age Good Weekend* 27.11.93, p. 12). The author goes on to lament that “[b]artering for children, some as young as five, in a system known as ‘green-selling’, has become commonplace.” Elsewhere, moreover, the unsubstantiated assertion is made that “[t]he going rate in Asia is as low as \$4 per child per hour, or \$10 for the night” (*Ending the sex tours SMH* 23.6.95, p. 17, emphasis mine). In late 1995 it is reported that the number of prostitutes in ‘Asia’ aged 17 and below is estimated at one million (*End child sex tourism call HS* 2.12.95, p. 14). A later article places the number of children entering the sex trade worldwide each year at “more than one million” (*AIDS orphans’ dying hell HS* 30.11.97, p. 48).

The allegation that “[s]exual exploitation was increasing, with at least five international networks trafficking in children from African, Asia and Latin America” is made in a text reporting on a study released by the ILO in 1998 (*Quarter of the world’s children forced to work HS* 29.5.98, p. 34). Indeed, one text anthropomorphises the child sex industry as a colonising invader set on world takeover, identifying child prostitution as “a huge problem in Thailand,” and claiming that “[t]here are fears the trade is poised to invade Indonesia and there is evidence that the Indian subcontinent is being increasingly affected as attempts are

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<sup>52</sup> While 34 articles covered child sex tourism as a global problem, a further 48 reported on the Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Amendment Act 1994, and on instances of paedophilia perpetrated by Australians, 24 articles addressed the issue of alleged paedophilia in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and 30 articles covered the high profile committal hearing of a former Australian Ambassador to Cambodia arrested on paedophilia charges.

made to crack down elsewhere" (*UK crusade against child prostitution* Age 26.3.98, p. 13). The existence of a child sex trade in Australia goes unmentioned in the text, so that the implied reader's confidence that the sexual exploitation of children is not happening in ordered, rational and *white* Australian society remains unshaken.

Figures reportedly obtained from a 1995 study undertaken by Vietnam's Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs are cited in an article identifying 13 per cent of the estimated 70,000 prostitutes in Vietnam as children (*Women's abuse of boys stirs outcry* Age 6.8.98, p. 4). Another article cites vague "official estimates" which "put the number of child prostitutes in Sri Lanka at 30,000" (*Saving the children* SMH 3.2.98, p. 11). It goes on to allege that "the children earn on average 75 cents (Australian) per encounter." According to UNICEF statistics reported on in another article, "almost half" of Cambodia's "more than 50,000 sex workers" are under 18, with many of Phnom Penh's 20,000 prostitutes being identified as "street kids, some as young as eight" (*The trade that shames a country... and the clients who exploit it* SMH 26.8.96, p. 8). By comparison, "most girls working in brothels in Thailand and India," another article claims authoritatively, yet without disclosing the source of the figures, "are aged between 14 and 20," with the affecting tag-on phrase "although child prostitutes as young as 10 are common" (*AIDS orphans' dying hell* HS 30.11.97, p. 48, emphasis mine). The number of children involved in Thailand's sex industry in the previous year was claimed to be 25,000 (*Filipinos turn to the death penalty* SMH 31.8.96, p. 18). While Thailand's "child sex industry" is claimed in the same text to be "worth \$US1.5 billion (\$1.9 billion) a year," it is subsequently alleged that "India's child sex industry," however, "is the biggest in sheer numbers," with the author surmising that "[i]ts huge population and enormous poverty are a potent cocktail, with many finding their bodies, or those of their children, are all they have to sell."

#### *Asian indifference*

The apparent willing participation of the children's parents in the child prostitution system is often claimed to be conditioned by a cruel and hierarchical 'Asian' social

structure that subordinates the rights of children.<sup>53</sup> One text surmises that “the child sex trade in Asia is normally a crime without an official complainant” (*Ending the sex tours* SMH 23.6.95, p. 17). While parents themselves are often indicted as perpetrators of their children’s enslavement in brothels, it is sometimes suggested that many other Asians must be complicit in the child sex trade by virtue of their indifference to the children’s plight. An article exposing the misery of child prostitution in Cambodia opens by deploying this construct: “At a restaurant table in a Phnom Penh guesthouse, an overweight German tourist enjoys a plate of fried rice with a teenage Cambodian boy half his age. They eat in silence, the boy staring down at his plate barely tickling his food. The tourist pays the bill and walks with the boy towards his upstairs room. *The receptionist pays no attention*” (*Crackdown on child sex* HS 23.10.95, p. 37, emphasis mine). A delegate at an international travel industry conference is quoted elsewhere claiming that “[m]any big hotels” not only had “informal arrangements to turn the other way when guests turn up with child prostitutes,” but “often profited directly by charging guests ‘unregistered partner’ fees” (*End child sex tourism call* HS 2.12.95, p. 14). And while ‘Asians’, it is implied, prefer to ‘turn a blind eye’ rather than confront the sinister trade being conducted under their noses, child-sex tourists go unpunished. Indeed, one article cites Australian Judge Elizabeth Evatt estimating that “hundreds of thousands of children in countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka were being exploited by tourists, who were lured by cheap sex and the remote chance of punishment” (*Call for laws on tourist sex* HS 11.11.92, p. 25).

Culturally marked as asexual, children are available for discursive deployment in the news texts as figures whose representation will generate an uncomplicated pitying response in readers. Thus readers learn that in sex tourism destination zones such as the Philippines, “childhood is haunted by loneliness, abuse and the constant alertness demanded by the need for self-preservation” (*Cry Freedom* Age Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12). This emotive text continues with the heart-rending report that “[b]ehind the allegedly closed-down bars and the elegant hotels of Ermita, children huddle together at night. There are thousands and thousands of them.” Another

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<sup>53</sup> Later in this chapter I discuss the way in which parents’ sale of their own children into bonded sex work is constructed in the coverage as a barbaric kind of ‘tradition’, which, it is suggested, is

article reports that a conference paper on what is described as "the thriving child sex industry in Asia," given by UN special agent Mr Vitit Muntarbhorn, "read like a Dickensian nightmare" and "left senior lawyers and even silks weeping" (*A hero for the children* HS 10.7.93, p. 19). In keeping with the preference for news stories composed of heroes and villains, the article hails the unassuming Muntarbhorn, a "softly spoken Thai," as "the international voice of child sex slaves," valiantly exposing "crimes against children on a scale never imagined."

### *Barbaric Asian cultural beliefs*

While the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are typically identified as "male paedophiles travelling to Asia" (*Anglicans condemn sex tourism promoters* SMH 11.06.93, p. 12), or more explicitly, as "paedophiles visiting this region... from Australia, North America, Europe, Japan and the Middle East" (*Children 'victims of sex tourists'* HS 3.7.93, p. 33), local men are also often reviled in the coverage as child-sex predators. A former Finance Minister in Cambodia is quoted in one article admitting that "it's a bit unfair to look only at foreigners," since "[m]any Cambodians themselves, including high-ranking officials, are involved," adding that "[i]n Cambodia you can buy a young girl, a virgin, for a few hundred dollars" (*Paedophile activity in Asia verified* SMH 27.9.95, p. 3). Elsewhere, an Australian welfare worker in Cambodia is quoted asserting that "[a]bout 60 per cent of brothel workers are under 16," because "[t]he culture here is such that younger girls are particularly prized" (*Crackdown on child sex* HS 23.10.95, p. 37). Margie Cook reports that in Sutasan Road, Bangkok, where "a virgin can fetch up to 10,000 baht a night," newly procured girls stay several weeks, thanks to a barbaric operation that a western doctor, readers are invited to assume, would never agree to perform. "Doctors in Bangkok and Hat Yai will re-sew the hymen of a girl up to three times," it is claimed, "especially if she has an 'innocent manner' and can continue to be passed off as a virgin" (*Cry Freedom* Age Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12).

"In the brothels serving local men, where there is a premium on extreme youth and virginity, a girl who has not yet menstruated brings a price that is more than 60 times

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apparently ubiquitous throughout Asia's poor, rural areas.

the usual," claims Lillian Robinson (*A feminist goes touring sex city* Age 8.11.93, p. 11). Referring to young sex workers as "fresh prepubescent crops... bought [sic] into the city for good luck at the Chinese New Year," she goes on to invoke what is often alleged in the coverage as a peculiarly Oriental superstition that "[d]eflowering a virgin is said to increase virility." Proclaimed "child sex abuse expert" Ron O'Grady, coordinator of the End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) group, is quoted elsewhere propounding the theory that "growing numbers of wealthy businessmen from China and oil-rich Arab nations were flocking to Asia to buy child prostitutes," owing to "[o]ne of the strange, mythological beliefs in Chinese and Arab culture... that to have sexual relations with a child is a way to feed your own sexual prowess, strength and wealth" (*Australians profit from sex tourism* Age 6.7.93, p. 3). A variant of this 'Oriental lore' construction found in the coverage holds the demand for young prostitutes among local Asian clients to be a result of an even more disturbing form of quackery, as described in article reporting on the Bombay sex industry, where apparently "many workers and old men believ[e] that sleeping with a virgin will magically cure HIV" (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5).

The argument, echoed in a subsequent text, is that "the AIDS pandemic has fuelled the [child prostitution] problem, with many in India believing sex with virgins cures sexually transmitted diseases and restores virility, and that children are immune to HIV" (*Filipinos turn to the death penalty* SMH 31.8.96, p. 18). This generalisation is then easily applied to other unenlightened 'Orientals', viz. "[t]he same ingredients of sheer numbers, great poverty and sexual superstition are mirrored in China" (*Filipinos turn to the death penalty* SMH 31.8.96, p. 18). For the child-sex tourists on the other hand, whose actions are not assumed to be guided by bizarre Oriental mythology, the preference for sexually inexperienced children is represented as logical – "because they are obviously less likely to be carrying AIDS" (*Saving the children* SMH 3.2.98, p. 11). Nevertheless, one article's sensational tagline pronounces that a recent study "estimates that 50 per cent of the child prostitutes in Thailand are HIV positive" (*A feminist goes touring sex city* Age 8.11.93, p. 11). "In every pocket of the world where AIDS is killing, children are the biggest sufferers," another text asserts melodramatically, locating the cause in what it describes as "the burgeoning child prostitution industry in the third world," in which children are

"virtually powerless to demand safe sex" (*AIDS orphans' dying hell* HS 30.11.97, p. 48).

*Victims / vectors of HIV-AIDS*

Asian sex workers frequently appear as potentially lethal vectors of HIV-infection. Their bodies are discursively constructed at once as 'exotic-erotic' objects and as sites of contamination, harbouring a dangerous threat. The representation of these feminine others in the discourse of the Australian press is thus marked by an ambivalent fear / desire split.<sup>54</sup> The caption of a photograph appearing in the feature article entitled *AIDS the hidden costs*, goes so far as to draw a derogatory parallel between the disease and the prostitutes themselves: "AIDS is rife in India," it reads, "and so are the prostitutes. Some villages are almost entirely devoted to prostitution" (HS 2.8.92, p. 33). Elsewhere, an aid worker based in Thailand is quoted claiming that many sex workers who return to their villages, having regularly had unprotected sex to maximise their earnings, "may have HIV and, without condoms or visits from local doctors, they may spread the disease in their home" (*AIDS fear the price of sex tourism crisis* Age 25.10.98, p. 3). "HIV will be disseminated," she pronounces, and readers are left in no doubt as to the culprits' identity. She goes on to identify the bodies of "cheaper males and females imported illegally from Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia and Southern China" as an even greater threat, alleging that "[t]hese women have no knowledge of HIV or safe sex," and that "[i]t's useless. They can't read or speak Thai and we can't go into the brothels because the mafia don't want us to see their illegals [sic]. These women are at real risk of spreading HIV."

"Sex tourism is believed to be shrinking as foreigners begin to fear for their health," one article reports. "And with good reason," it affirms, citing the case of a nurse who reported that 80 per cent of women in a Bangkok 'tea house' tested positive for HIV, "despite the fact," the author hastens to point out, "that most had been certified free of the disease" (*AIDS the hidden costs* HS 2.8.92, p. 33). The assumption that AIDS is endemic throughout Asia's sex industries is construed as objective mathematical

truth in the many texts which recite actual 'statistics' affirming the catastrophic spread of the disease – "60 per cent of sex workers in Kamathipura have AIDS" (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5); "in the hill tribes of northern Thailand, of every 20 girls who return home, 15 are HIV-positive" (*Cry Freedom* Age Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12); "up to 600,000 [Thais] are carrying the virus, many of them prostitutes" (*Sex tours harming Thai links* HS 28.4.93, p. 13); and "up to 70 per cent of [Thailand's] 800,000 prostitutes have the disease" (*Act now on sex threat, say doctors* HS 13.3.92, p. 28). Australian readers faced with such apparently authoritative 'statistics', albeit of invariably undisclosed origin, are left with the impression that HIV-infection is inevitable for those engaging in sex with Asian prostitutes. Interestingly, the news texts' representation of Thai sex workers as death-traps for unwary tourists is corroborated at one point in the coverage by a 'native informant', where a Thai AIDS worker is quoted suggesting that sex tours "should be called suicide tours, kamikaze tours," adding that Australians contemplating sex tours to Manila or Bangkok "would do their families and their bank accounts a great service if they were just to stay home and buy rat poison," since "[t]hey would come to the same end more cheaply" (*Sex tours harming Thai links* HS 28.4.93, p. 13).

At other times in the coverage, however, news texts take a more sympathetic view of the sex workers, representing them less as vectors of HIV-infection than as abject victims of AIDS. A feature article bearing the pop-culturally loaded headline *Cry Freedom* makes the sweeping assertion that women working in Thai brothels invariably "end up like Nate," a young innocent from North-east Thailand, who was "deceived by a procurer" and sold to a brothel. "Nate has advanced AIDS," the following sentence pronounces. Even more affecting is the subsequent disclosure that "her friend Nada, age 20," also of guileless hill tribe extraction, "is pregnant, and has AIDS" (Age Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12, emphasis mine).

An extreme picture of abjection is constructed in a feature article on Bombay's sex industry. Opening with a lyrical account of the exotic young women to be seen in the

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<sup>54</sup> Press coverage of migrant Asian sex workers in Australia also makes extensive use of the abject 'AIDS vectors' construction. In chapter six, I discuss the echoes of nineteenth century medicine's

red light district, the article goes on to make the sobering claim that “these are young prostitutes destined to die of AIDS by the time they are 30” (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5). When brothel workers are told that “if the customers don’t wear condoms you could get AIDS and die in 10 years, do you think that frightens a prostitute?” a local doctor is quoted asking later in the text. The article concludes with the doctor’s melodramatic assessment on the women’s behalf, that “[t]hey can’t even imagine what they’ll be doing in 10 years. For many, death is the answer to their prayers.”

In any case, as another article alleges, Asian brothel workers may be too timid to insist that their clients use condoms, and thus powerless to protect themselves against AIDS. This construction invokes the time-honoured trope of the self-effacing Asian woman, and is particularly evident in a feature article covering the good works of an Australian Government funded project in Indonesia, where a peer counselor is quoted complaining that her “biggest problem” lies in convincing the sex workers to use condoms because “[t]hey think they will shame the customers if they insist, and then the customers won’t come back” (*Shame shadows a dangerous game* SMH 25.1.97, p. 24). She goes on to tell the sorry tale of some former sex workers infected with HIV who, out of shame and ignorance, disappeared from public altogether: “[t]hey were even too scared to go to the market because people were afraid of them; they were too confused to go back to the village because they didn’t know what medicine to take. They had heard this disease goes on until death.”

#### *Asia as crisis zone*

The social problems of AIDS and / or child prostitution thus comprise the dominant organising templates through which ‘sex tourism’ is narrated in the Australian press. I contend that this framing device must be understood in terms of the western news media’s persistent discursive production of ‘third world’ or ‘Asian’ reality as pathology, as discussed in chapter one. By overdetermining ‘Asia’ as crisis-ridden spectacle for the entertainment of the benevolent – yet voyeuristic – news consumer in the civilised West, the narratives of sex tourism in the Australian press reproduce

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iconography of the ‘polluting native’ present in representations of this kind.

that time-honoured Orientalist trope which figured the East in terms of its putative disorder.<sup>55</sup>

These kinds of discursive constructions have proliferated in the representation of HIV-AIDS. While AIDS came late to the 'pattern 3' countries of the Asian region, its rapid spread throughout Asian countries in recent years was heralded in several alarmist articles published in the early 1990s, which predicted a raging 'Asian' AIDS epidemic by the year 2000. *Asia 'AIDS timebomb'*, proclaims the grim headline of an article published in early 1992, in which it is reported that "most of the 40 million people worldwide expected to be infected by [2000] would be in Asia" thanks to "the region's big sex industry" and "a growing intra-Asian tourist industry" (*HS* 12.4.92, p. 34). In South-East Asia alone, it was reported a few months later, "infections could surge from less than 10 per cent to more than 40 per cent of the world total by the year 2000" (*AIDS the hidden costs* *HS* 2.8.92, p. 33). By late 1997, 'Asian AIDS' was being identified as potentially even more threatening than the notorious spectre of 'African AIDS', for "[w]ithin 2 years, Asia is expected to surpass Africa as having the highest incidence of AIDS in the world" (*AIDS orphans' dying hell* *HS* 30.11.97, p. 48). Readers learn that in both regions in the meantime, AIDS "is no longer considered in epidemic proportions," that is, confined to relatively well-bounded groups within these communities. Rather, it is claimed, "it has become a pandemic" (*AIDS orphans' dying hell* *HS* 30.11.97, p. 48) so widespread as to be practically universal.

Dubbed in one text "the nexus of the Asian sex and drug traffic" (*A feminist goes touring sex city* *Age* 8.11.93, p. 11), Thailand is typically singled out in articles published in the early 1990s as the epicentre of the disaster, with "more than 1000 additional Thais" every day being infected, so that western experts at the Harvard AIDS Institute reportedly "expect that, by the year 2000, the number of Thais infected with HIV will balloon by up to four million out of a current population of 58

<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, Mr Lee Kuan Yew is quoted in an article which alludes to 'sex tourism' only in passing, complaining that, by concentrating almost exclusively upon "stories of sex tourism or alleged political repression or natural or other calamities" in its coverage of Asian countries, the popular Australian news media had perpetuated the myth of Asia as "a third world hell-hole of sweat shops, sex tourism and repressive regimes" (*Media stereotypes Asia, says Lee* *Age* 21.4.94, p. 4).

million" (*AIDS the hidden costs* HS 2.8.92, p. 33). A more recent text reports that "some villages have no surviving people between the ages of 20 and 45, all having died of AIDS" (*AIDS fear the price of sex tourism crisis* Age 25.10.98, p. 3). In the same article it is alleged that the "budget cuts to AIDS programs" forced by the 'Asian economic crisis' will push earlier gloomy predictions much higher. "An HIV plague" is reportedly "spreading across Thailand like a bushfire," leaving a trail of carnage and destruction in its wake, and "scar[ing] away the tourists," according to the manager of a Bangkok Hotel quoted in the article (*AIDS the hidden costs* HS 2.8.92, p. 33). Lillian Robinson informs readers that meanwhile, "Trink, the egregious nightlife columnist of the 'Bangkok Post', assures visitors... that there is no AIDS or HIV among the bar girls of the Soi Cowboy and Patpong" (*A feminist goes touring sex city* Age 8.11.93, p. 11). For the reader well-versed in the lexicon of 'Asian AIDS', the implication is this cannot possibly be a truthful representation. Furthermore, this misleading claim poses a deadly risk to tourists, and is but another reflection of what are constructed as unscrupulous and unclean 'Asian' sexual practices.

"Heterosexually transmitted HIV flows freely today in the sex parlours of Thailand [and] along the truck routes of India," readers are informed (*AIDS the hidden costs* HS 2.8.92, p. 33), and its rapid transmission rate in the region may be expediently invoked as 'proof' of the appalling lack of hygiene in Asian communities, or even of Asian primitivity and moral turpitude. One article sketches out the inevitable downward spiral to death facing an HIV-positive sex worker in Indonesia, via a series of allegations about Indonesian cultural backwardness. "Knowledge about AIDS, indeed, about all aspects of reproductive health... is very limited," the text asserts disparagingly, "[d]iscussion of sex is culturally taboo," and "traditional herbal medicines [read: primitive quackery], not western medical science, are relied upon for cures" (*Shame shadows a dangerous game* SMH 25.1.97, p. 24). 'Third world' and 'Asian' health-care systems are contemptuously decried as ill-equipped to cope with the epidemic, and as one text points out, "just six per cent of total global spending on HIV prevention in 1990-91 took place in developing nations, which account for more than 80 per cent of worldwide HIV infections" (*AIDS the hidden costs* HS 2.8.92, p. 33). The sheer scale of the AIDS disaster in Asia, it is implied elsewhere, renders any attempt at intervention hopelessly inadequate, and the

example of Bombay's red-light district is held up as proof of this fact. Here, it is reported, "a condom supply program is protecting 5000 sex workers who claim a 100 per cent condom use rate. But there are about 250,000 sex workers in Bombay and their average age is 15" (*AIDS orphans' dying hell* HS 30.11.97, p. 48).

'Asian' governments are represented as irresponsibly failing to respond to, let alone acknowledge, the AIDS epidemic. One article reports that "despite the Indonesian Government's official figures of less than 500 infected people nationwide, and only 66 deaths," the release of "alarming new figures" supported by a "panel of doctors," suggest that "12,000 to 31,000 people are currently dying every year" from AIDS (*Shame shadows a dangerous game* SMH 25.1.97, p. 24). This backwardness in dealing with the epidemic is implicitly attributed to the culture of moral repression assumed to characterise Asian societies such as Indonesia. Indonesia's Muslim population is targeted as particularly repressive, and thus a major obstacle to AIDS prevention, with Muslims allegedly pressuring the Government "to restrict condom distribution on the grounds that it would 'promote promiscuity among young people'" (*Shame shadows a dangerous game* SMH 25.1.97, p. 24), the scare quotes indicating the author's disdain for such outdated conservatism. It is reported that the Indonesian Government has therefore eschewed the type of safe sex campaigning undertaken in Thailand, and that contraceptives are available only to married couples.

By 1999, however, Cambodia was being touted as the new AIDS-crisis zone. One article reports that while its first case of HIV infection was not detected until 1991, "now the virus is infecting 100 people a day," so that "Cambodia is suffering the highest rate of infection with the AIDS virus in Asia" (*Tiny victims of Cambodia's new crisis* HS 10.8.99, p. 22). The sex industry is singled out in this text as the villain of the story, and innocent orphans and HIV-positive babies as the victims in need of a hero. "Cambodia's thriving sex industry is seen as the main culprit," it is alleged, and in the next sentence: "[t]he saddest cases are the infants." A health ministry official is then quoted verifying that "[o]ver the next year, as many as 1700 Cambodian children will die from the virus."

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## Section two: identifying the culprits

An attempt is made in many texts to construct aetiologies of Asia's illegal and exploitative sex trade, and blame is variously imputed to cruel and unscrupulous Asian officials, sexist 'Asian culture,' inadequate parenting, and above all, the extreme class inequality of Asian societies, such that many are condemned to live in abject poverty. In short, the dominant narrative of sex tourism in the Australian press takes the position that when it comes to Asia's sex industry, 'the law can do little against the combined strength of a sexist culture, rationalising religion, amoral exploitative economy, and corrupt government' (Bales, 1999: 78). Significantly, as will be discussed in part four of the chapter, sex tourists themselves do not feature in the aetiologies of organised sexual exploitation favoured by the Australian press.

### *Official corruption*

Asian Governments are often charged in the coverage with culpably failing to act to stem the sex tourism trade. One text cites the case of a "village headman, from whose village 79 girls have disappeared," to mount a thinly veiled critique of the Thai Government's negligence. "Procuring has been going on in his village for 15 years," the text alleges, "and for the past two he has been waiting for promised government project money for vocational training" (*Cry Freedom Age* Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12). In any case, Asian legal systems are elsewhere derided as pathetically impotent in the face of the illegal sex trade. Reporting on child-sex tourism in particular, one text observes sadly that "all too often," Asian countries (and here the Philippines, Cambodia and Thailand earn special mention,) lack "the appropriate laws, and a sufficiently effective legal justice system, to bring offenders to account" (*Stamping out child sex tourism SMH* 25.5.94, p. 14). Cambodia's "ramshackle policing and judicial systems" are singled out in a later text as particularly "ill-prepared for this [child-prostitution] problem" (*Crackdown on child sex HS* 23.10.95, p. 37). What follows is a gloomy prognosis for Cambodia, along the lines of the familiar trope of Oriental disorder. "With money laundering and drug trafficking," it is asserted, "the sex trade is helping to turn the new Cambodia into the economic dustbin of Asia fit for the sort of business other countries have worked hard to outlaw."

Much of this type of criticism of governmental inaction on the industry was occasioned by Fidel Ramos' August 1995 visit to Australia. Articles leading up to the visit portrayed the Philippines Government as having washed its hands of the significant social problems associated with the sex trade. One text contends that Ramos, disingenuously blaming the exploitative commercial sex industry entirely on foreign tourists, has "called for other countries to play their part in stopping prostitution in his country" (*Plea on child sex tours HS* 8.8.95, p. 9). The text then quotes Bernadette McMenamin, national director of ECPAT, claiming that since "child sex was poverty-driven and many patrons were local men, not just foreign tourists," the primary responsibility for the prostitution problem must lie with the Philippines itself. In another text, Ramos' "high-profile threats of death penalties" for paedophiles are construed as mere posturing (*Ramos warning on child sex tours Age* 21.08.95, p. 3). An Australian Democrats spokesman is quoted in the text insisting that "President Ramos must be put on the spot and challenged" to follow-up his hitherto empty threats "with a sustained law-enforcement campaign to stamp out the obnoxious sex tourism industry." Elsewhere it is implied that what limited action his government *has* taken against the sex trade so far has been only in the interests of cajoling concerned Australians. The arrest of "more than 40 bar girls in a crackdown" is thus described in one text as "a 'goodwill message' from the President, Mr Fidel Ramos, before his state visit to Australia next month" (*Crackdown on sex bars SMH* 26.7.95, p. 14). Speculating that "[t]he women who were arrested seem to be pawns in a game that goes well beyond hardline city politics," the text contends that "several political observers in Manila believe the arrests are intended to assuage the properties of the 'conservative' people of Australia to smooth the way for Mr Ramos' visit." In any case, the 'crackdown' is construed as laughable tokenism, with the so-called "partial clean-up of the sex industry" ordered by the Mayor of Angeles following the arrests allegedly involving "little more than keeping under-age girls out of bars and asking the women plying their trade to wear the tops of their bikinis."

Articles in the *Age* and the *Herald Sun* covering "a noisy protest" drawn by Ramos as he arrived at Melbourne University, where he was to receive an honorary doctor of laws degree during his Australia visit, portray him as the archetypal indifferent and

imperturbable Oriental tyrant. "Surrounded by police and security guards, a calm President Ramos smiled and waved as Filipino women chanted 'no sex trade' and 'punish the pimps, not the women,'" in reference to the recent arrests, the *Herald Sun* article observes. The text concludes by noting pointedly that "Mr Ramos said he was not embarrassed by the protests" (*Ramos in call for stronger Asia ties HS 22.8.95*, p. 2). The *Age* article then quotes the national coordinator of the Centre for Philippines Concerns Australia, Ms Melba Marginson, dubbing Mr Ramos "the 'Philippines' biggest pimp' as long as his government continued to tolerate the sex-tourism industry" (*Ramos faces angry women protesters Age 22.08.95*, p. 5). It is implied that the greedy Ramos Government cares more about money than about the Filipino people's welfare and is therefore reluctant to stop the lucrative sex trade. Noting "a degree of hesitation on the part of the Philippine authorities" in attacking child prostitution, one text surmises that "[n]o doubt there are some who are weighing the 30 pieces of silver to be earned from this dirty trade which is boosting Philippine tourism" (*Ramos warning on child sex tours Age 21.08.95*, p. 3). This text was published with a photograph of Ramos whose caption - "President Ramos enjoys a cigar while playing golf" - drew attention to some key indicators of his wealth.

The Thai Government has been similarly condemned in the coverage, for having not only tolerated but actively promoted sex tourism as a pillar of economic growth. Lillian Robinson cites a public speech given by Thailand's vice-premier in 1980, in which he is alleged to have asked provincial governors "'to consider the natural scenery in your provinces, together with forms of entertainment that some of you might consider disgusting and shameful, because we have to consider the jobs that will be created'" (*A feminist goes touring sex city Age 8.11.93*, p. 11). When Thais chase the dollar, it is implied, the end justifies any means, however immoral or abhorrent. Another text lamenting the child-sex trade describes Thailand as "a country which sometimes seems to value the tourist dollar more than its children" (*Aussie outrages Thailand HS 15.2.94*, p. 28).

Unsurprisingly, much is made of allegations of 'official corruption' in the narratives of the Australian press. It is claimed that Asian officials themselves not only use but profit from illegal brothels, either through extorting protection fees or direct ownership. Father Ray of a Pattaya orphanage is quoted observing that "it's not

much good reporting things to the authorities" (*Suffer the children Age* 4.2.96, p. 17). In Cambodia, it is alleged, many police and soldiers patronise the brothels and are often involved in their operation and protection" (*The trade that shames a country... and the clients who exploit it SMH* 26.8.96, p. 8). This text cites as proof an incident in which a young prostitute was killed "by a police sergeant who ran the brothel" during a raid on a red light district. It is sensationally claimed that "[d]espite evidence that the policeman had severely beaten the girl before electrocuting her," he was not charged.

It is sometimes further implied that police corruption is sanctioned by Asian governments courting powerful sex industry figures (*HS* 1.2.94 p. 22). One text for instance alleges that brothel owners have "sought political influence" by the payment of bribes to political parties, citing the assurance of native informant Mr Sanphasot Koompranphat, director of the Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights, that "[e]verybody takes bribes" (*Suffer the children Age* 4.2.96, p. 17). The article represents an official clamp-down on child-sex trafficking in Thailand as cosmetic, claiming that industry figures have simply "disguised the way they do business," legitimating themselves by "replacing brothels and massage parlours with restaurants, bars and dance clubs." "Gross abuses against children," another text asserts, therefore "continue to be perpetrated, often under the direct gaze of officialdom" (*Cry Freedom Age Good Weekend* 27.11.93, p. 12). What is described in the text as "a pervasive criminality" at the level of law enforcement itself means justice cannot possibly be done for victims of the child-sex trade. Viti Muntabhorn is quoted insisting that "[w]e must break the monopoly of the law enforcement police." Another article reporting on the child-sex industry goes so far as to suggest that Australian police should be stationed in Asian countries to protect "innocent tourists and businessmen" from "corrupt foreign police" (*Stamping out child sex tourism SMH* 25.5.94, p. 14).

These 'foreign police' are represented as figures of terror for sex workers and tourists alike. For illegal prostitutes working on the streets in Surabaya, Indonesia, according to one reporter, the biggest fear is "that tonight the police may come to collect, either in money or in kind" (*Shame shadows a dangerous game SMH* 25.1.97, p. 24). The police are represented as cruel and merciless villains bent on filling their jails – even

with children as young as five, if an article on child prostitution in the Philippines is to be believed. The hero of this narrative is "24-yr-old Anwit," whom readers first meet as she "squats over tubs of dirty suds" at a World Vision-funded drop-in centre for street children (*Cry Freedom Age* Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12). "Fearlessly wandering through the notoriously dangerous Luneta Park at night," our intrepid heroine rescues seven abandoned children. On their return to the World Vision centre, however, "they are confronted by the police," who, evidently looking for some pretense on which to make arrests, "demand to smell the kids' hands for evidence of glue." While the author concedes that "the kids were all spaced out from solvents bought for ten pesos (50 cents) a bottle," their delinquency is somewhat mitigated by the subsequent qualification that "it's the cheapest and easiest way to take away the pain." Had Anwit not made them wash their hands, it is alleged, "the kids may well have ended up in jail. Even the five-year-old."

#### *The misogynistic Asian cult of masculinity*

Many of the representations seem to imply that such bullying or cruelty is a mark of 'Asian masculinity' in general. This notion finds expression in the description of an odious pimp, "a fat Cambodian in his 20s," smoking a cigarette as he casually toys with the fate of several young girls, their "dark eyes filled with fear" (*The trade that shames a country... and the clients who exploit it SMH* 26.8.96, p 8). With a dismissive wave of his arm the pimp announces that "[t]hey are ordinary country girls, not very good-looking. We can negotiate a price," and their young lives are summarily cheapened. According to a social worker quoted elsewhere lamenting "the ruin of children's lives" brought about by the sex industry, "[y]ou can't talk to local hotel owners about ethics, they don't have any" (*Crackdown call on child sex providers Age* 1.9.96, p. 11). These contemporary representations of Asian men as cruel and conscienceless traders of flesh resurrect an older Orientalist trope, in which non-western women are deemed to need 'saving' from shocking abuse at the hands of rapacious non-western men. Underpinning this trope is a patriarchal rescue fantasy that would cast western men as the women's saviours. The trope is ultimately premised upon a belief in the superiority of sexual politics in the West, and it has effectively supplied an apologia for western imperialism in the Orient (Shohat, 1993: 62-3) and Asia (Hyun-Yi Kang, 1993: 8). Significantly, the topos of rescue features

in the justificatory lexicon deployed by western sex tourists, who may envisage the money they give in exchange for sexual services as a means of releasing 'girlfriends' from the 'poverty trap' that is assumed to have forced them into the sex industry in the first place. The redemptive gesture of the 'gift' thus conceals the sex tourist's participation in a form of neocolonial sexual exploitation.<sup>56</sup>

According to Lillian Robinson, sex is sold cheaply in enough places in Bangkok "to confirm the first world view that the whole city is an erotic theme park" (*A feminist goes touring sex city* Age 8.11.93, p. 11). Her feature article fuels the perception that the commodification of women's bodies is somehow intrinsic to Thai culture itself. The text opens with a quotation from a travel guide which implies that the sex industry exemplifies the extreme gender inequality assumed to characterise 'Asian' societies such as Thailand – "[t]he stories you've heard about the sex shows are all true... It is not a place for the squeamish or those with feminist leanings." This construction of Bangkok's red light district as a shocking misogynistic spectacle is then elaborated in an anecdote, in which the author is persuaded that "as a feminist," a tour of this evil place is obligatory. "You have to do it," Ryan tells me. "You have to go there the way you have to visit Dachau."

Having completed her obligatory tour, Robinson's diagnosis, made without consulting a single sex worker, is that "[w]hat is missing from all this talk of sex bars, sex tourism, sex workers is, of course, sex – at least, sex as women imagine and experience it." She finally dismisses Thai sexuality altogether, in all its historical modalities, as an exclusively 'male' prerogative, offering no place for female desire: "[c]lassic Thai love poetry, with orgasm as a divine gift of grace, articulates a male fantasy. Elsewhere on the erotic register, established Thai institutions like

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<sup>56</sup> The impossibility of the myth of the sex tourist-as-saviour is illustrated in Dennis O'Rourke's documentary fiction film *The Good Woman of Bangkok*. Having already participated in the sexual exploitation of sex worker Aoi, O'Rourke's Australian-in-Bangkok imagines he can save her from a life of depravity in the sex industry and effect her return to the wholesome ways of rural Thailand by buying Aoi a rice farm. Aoi however refuses to be assimilated into O'Rourke's arrogant and misplaced fantasy of rescue. In a postscript at the end of the film, O'Rourke informs viewers that a year later, he returned to discover Aoi "working in Bangkok in a sleazy massage parlour called 'The Happy House'" (cited in Williams, 1997: 84).

concubinage and prostitution put arguably less delicate male fantasies into action." Her article concludes with the bleak assessment that "[d]esire and fulfillment seem to have no female voice in either the traditional or the contemporary culture of Thailand. For women, Eros took a holiday and it wasn't a trip to Bangkok."

#### *Family tradition*

Other texts locate the cause of young women's exploitation in the sex industry in what is constructed as the 'tradition' of poor, rural Asian families selling their children into bonded labour. Asian children's obedience to their parents is represented as unquestioning, and children sold to brothels by their parents therefore "will not complain," one text alleges, because "even if they do not like it they are influenced by the family" (*Aussie outrages Thailand HS* 15.2.94, p. 28). Girls in particular are allegedly relegated to the bottom of the pile in the patriarchal Asian family. "In the hierarchy of the family, a girl's workload is staggering," according to an article reporting on the sale of Nepali village girls to Bombay brothels (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex HS* Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5). It is claimed that "a young Nepali girl works an average of eight hours a day in contrast to her brother who works three." The text then quotes Kusum, a former Bombay sex worker, recollecting her childhood of hardship, spent "hauling firewood and water from the forest over four hours away" and going hungry, since "there was never enough food and, as a girl, I was always fed last, as is our custom."

Common to many texts is the suggestion that in the context of these alleged 'traditions' of gender inequality and total submission to parental authority, the sale of a daughter to a procurer is an acceptable solution for a family faced with extreme poverty (*Call for laws on tourist sex HS* 11.11.92, p. 25). One text alleges that in Nepal's Sindu Palchowk region, described as an area renowned for its "grinding rural poverty" as well as the "beauty of its women," the sale of a daughter is "rooted in cultural tradition and history" (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex HS* Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5). Consequently, it is claimed, some villages are "largely bereft of women between the ages of 14 and 30," and "up to 90 per cent of girls have

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been sold" to brothels in India. A combination of 'rural poverty' and 'family tradition' is thus held to explain why so many young Asian women dutifully sacrifice their freedom and well-being in sex work for the sake of their families (Thanh-dam Truong, 1990; Manderson, 1995; Cook, 1998). Cook however questions the accuracy of this well-rehearsed narrative, identifying in it a 'middle-class glossing of rural social values' (1998: 267), which has the effect of distorting the activities and motives of sex workers themselves.

More generally, I would argue for the need to interrogate whatever is claimed as an 'Asian tradition' in any western discourse. In a different context, Lata Mani (1989) has exposed the notions of 'indigenous tradition', held up in opposition to liberating 'western modernity', as constructs of colonial discourse. Specifically, she has shown how the assumption of complete indigenous submission to the inhumane dictates of *satidaha* was instrumental in justifying colonial Britain's civilising-modernising mission in India during the nineteenth century. Yet the 'pre-existing tradition' of *satidaha*, which colonial authorities challenged from the perspective of 'modernity', was in fact itself constituted in and by colonial discourse in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the specifically colonial production of *satidaha* as 'a transhistorical and ubiquitous force acted out by people' (1989: 117) in isolation from the 'material' world of history and politics, crucially precluded any consideration of the role of the women's agency. The valuable insight of Mani's analysis, then, is that 'tradition' is not to be understood as a static rite performed universally and unquestioningly by 'the people' throughout the ages, but has existence as a discursive construct, which, moreover, has often been in the service of cultural imperialism.

### *Greed*

In any case, at times Australian press reports on sex tourism concede that the contemporary trade in young girls is less sanctified by 'family tradition' in poor rural areas than it is fueled by parents' consumer greed. One article for instance laments the fact that in rural Nepal, the time-honoured tradition of "offering a beloved daughter to a temple or nobleman has degenerated into the current practice of selling one's kin for immediate profit" (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5). A front page article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* cites unidentified "experts" who believe that a key factor in an alleged "rise of child sex abuse" in certain societies lies in "the drive towards western-style consumerism" combining with "traditional beliefs that young children were simply property to be traded," to create a situation in which "families simply sell their children for something they want more" (*Summit targets global child sex boom* SMH 29.8.96, p. 1). Another text alludes to cases "uncovered" by the End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism group, where children were sold not to alleviate "dire poverty such as hunger," but "in exchange for a black and white television set or other highly prized consumer items" (*Australians profit from sex tourism* Age 6.7.93, p. 3). In rural Thailand, it is reported elsewhere, a father sold his 12-year-old daughter for "a breathtaking 100,000 baht," with which "he renovated his house" (*Cry Freedom* Age Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12). Here, it is claimed, "rotten parents," for whom "the traditional excuse that poverty is the cause of exploitation" no longer holds true, "usually sell one or two [children] in a year for prices ranging from 20,000 to 30,000 baht."

Parents who sell their children to procurers are represented in the Australian press as naïve and ignorant at best – "how [little] do they understand about AIDS, or the wiles of the procurers who promise a better life, or the loan sharks who suggest to humiliated parents that if their daughter comes to work for him, their debt will be repaid?" (*Cry Freedom* Age Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12) – and cruel and heartless at worst. "In most cases," one text alleges, "parents have become de facto pimps willingly renting out their children to paedophiles, albeit through an agent" (*Aussie outrages Thailand* HS 15.2.94, p. 28). Reporting on the Australian trial of Bradley Pendragon, an Australian sex tourist charged with sex offences involving

two Thai girls, the text notes that “[t]he grandmother of the 8-year-old and the mother of the 12-year-old, apparently willing partners in the transaction, each received... \$54 from the agent”. Elsewhere, parents and relatives are often identified as abusers themselves. Tales abound in the coverage of girls “repeatedly raped” by stepfathers or other relatives before being sold to brothels (*The trade that shames a country... and the clients who exploit it* SMH 26.8.96, p. 8; *Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5). A feature article entitled *Betrayed- daughters sold for sex* recounts the shocking tale of Gita Dunwar, sold into prostitution by her mother at age 13. Having contracted HIV during her stay in the brothel, Gita was sent home only to be cruelly shunned by her parents (HS 5.11.94, weekend supplement, p. 5). “My mother wouldn’t even give me a glass of water,” she is quoted remembering. “Please mother,’ I begged her, ‘I’ve come all this way. Please give me a glass of water. Let me come in.’” Gita’s parents stand revealed in the text not only as cruel but also as disingenuous. Her father is quoted claiming that he had gone to Bombay to bring his sick daughter home, when “[i]n fact, Gita was escorted home by a social worker and a female doctor who witnessed her parents’ rejection.”

### *Poverty*

On the whole, then, the Australian press coverage of sex tourism suggests that the women never freely choose to work as prostitutes. Where they are not sold by unscrupulous family members, it is usually claimed that the women are forced into sex work out of their own desperate poverty. Surabaya’s sex industry is for instance described as “a magnet for the divorced or dispossessed women of the strict Islamic villages who... [have] limited options for survival” (*Shame shadows a dangerous game* SMH 25.1.97, p. 24). In the Philippines, it is claimed, poverty “resulted in large numbers of Filipinos working in the sex industry” (*Ramos faces angry women protesters* Age 22.08.95, p. 5). A similar equation is made in another text which quotes a spokeswoman who calls for a re-channeling of Australian aid in order that local women no longer need to “prostitute themselves” (*Women wage sex war on bar owners* HS 19.6.95, p. 29).

Indeed, poverty is routinely identified in the coverage as "the root cause" of prostitution in Asia (*Anglicans condemn sex tourism promoters SMH* 11.06.93, p. 12; *Saving the children SMH* 3.2.98, p. 11).<sup>57</sup> An article reporting on the sex trade in the Philippines draws attention to the conditions of extreme class inequality in which the exploitative child-sex industry flourishes. Opening with a melodramatic scene-setting device – "in Manila, Nic Arriola, a former priest, is near tears" – the text describes a visit to a drop-in centre for street kids by "a few busloads of privileged children" on "an 'excursion' to see how the other half lives" (*Cry Freedom Age* Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12). The text recounts how the conscienceless children of the rich, "crisply decked out in white school-shirts," had walked through the centre with "noses pinched and hankies at their faces," before leaving behind "a bag of rags as a clothing donation" which only "[added] insult to injury."

As Cook (1998: 265) points out, the argument that women only turn to prostitution out of poverty is also commonly held by sex tourists themselves, who often deploy it as a means of legitimising their activities. The 'culture of poverty' narrative permits the unequal client-sex worker relationship to be recast as a form of income redistribution which rescues the women from abject poverty. Sex tourists are thereby able to assuage their guilt and continue exercising their social and economic power to objectify the women as objects of sexual pleasure with impunity (Tranh-dam Truong, 1990: 180). This point is made in a letter published in the *Age*, in which the author expresses concern about an article, which compared Monica Lewinsky to Thai bar girls. Such a comparison "suggests that the prostitute is willingly choosing what she does, and even enjoying it," the author complains. "Of course this is what sex tourists would like to believe" (*Age* 11.10.98, p. 24).

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<sup>57</sup> As will be discussed in chapter six, in the discourse of the Australian press, poverty is also held to explain the migration of Asian women to Australia as 'mail-order brides' or illegal sex workers.

### Section three: a critique of the victimology

In general, the news texts deny the women any other role than that of the 'innocent victim', forced into the sex tourism industry by abject poverty, or lured into it by the false promises of procurers. An article intriguingly titled '*Women wage sex war on bar owners*' cites the coordinator of a group of 17 Australian women embarking on a tour of the Philippines, where they plan to "lift the lid on the men who profit from or take part in prostitution," arguing that "up to now attention had been focused unfairly on the prostitutes themselves, women who she regarded as victims" (HS 19.6.95, p. 29). "We would like to change the focus to the buyers," she is quoted saying, because "[t]hese are first world men preying on the poverty of third world women."

Interestingly, this construction of the sex workers as the helpless victims of lascivious men bears a strikingly resemblance to the explanations for prostitution promulgated by nineteenth century abolitionist discourse.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, as Shannon Bell has observed, the nature of the discursive production of the prostitute's body has altered little over the centuries. For dominant discourses and feminist counter-discourses alike have almost always entailed what Bell describes as 'a negative construction and reproduction of the prostitute body that focuses on the undeniable suffering and oppression bound up with prostitution' (1994: 4). To assume that women do not willingly enter the sex tourism industry but are forced into it by poverty or deception is to refuse to accept 'Asian' or 'third world' sex workers' potential for exercising choice. I turn now to examine the ideological effects of this and other elements in the victimology of 'Asian' and 'third world' sex workers constructed in the Australian press.

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<sup>58</sup> Feminists led a movement to repeal the oppressive Contagious Diseases Acts in Britain (passed in 1864, 1866 and 1869), which required all prostitutes to undergo fortnightly medical exams and those found to be infected to be detained in designated hospital wards. The movement was premised upon a view of prostitutes as coerced innocents, 'victims of male vice, who needed to be rescued' (Doezema, 1998: 35). In chapter six, I contend that the construction of sex workers as helpless victims in the discourse of the Australian press continues to serve what is in fact an updated version of the old abolitionist agenda.

*Asian sex workers as archetypal 'third world women'*

The hegemony of victim narratives in representing sex tourism is for the most part unchallenged in the Australian press. Readers never really get a sense of sex workers' agency, because the women seldom appear in the news texts as speaking subjects. While the difficulty in 'finding' the sex workers' voices, owing in part to the widespread criminalisation of prostitution and in part to language barriers, must be acknowledged, all too often the women are simply objectified in the coverage. They are the exotic-erotic "[g]irls who can be bought for 30 rupees (\$1)... Girls in mini skirts. Girls in jeans. Girls in bright-coloured saris" (*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend supplement 5.11.94, p. 5). In the discourse of the Australian press, then, 'Asian' and 'third world' sex workers remain as that disenfranchised 'other' site upon which multiple practices of discursive power converge. These representations, I contend, are symptomatic of the persistent overdetermination, in 'first world' narratives, of the figure of the 'third world woman'. Chandra Mohanty (1991) has shown how in theorising the 'plight' of women in the developing world, western feminists have produced a monolithic 'third world woman', whose existence is essentially truncated by virtue of her being female and 'third world'. As Mohanty observes, this gender-race-class nexus is invariably taken in the West to signify 'uneducated', 'poverty-stricken', 'oppressed by religion and tradition', 'submissive', 'bound in servitude to the family', etc (1991: 56).

Paradigmatic instances of such overdetermination abound in the Australian press coverage of sex tourism. An article reporting on the implications of HIV-AIDS for the industry asserts that "[t]he burden of the disease falls disproportionately on women in poor countries where they may have low status and are often less educated than men... preventing them from making informed decisions regarding the prevention and treatment of AIDS" (*Asia 'AIDS timebomb'* HS 12.4.92, p. 34). Another text sketches a vignette of an impoverished Cambodian woman being turned away from an orphanage where she came to abandon her "sickly seven-month-old probably ill with AIDS" (*Tiny victims of Cambodia's new crisis* HS 10.8.99, p. 22). The text invites readers' pity by noting that "tears fill her eyes" as they "search the faces of strangers for any sign of compassion, trying to make her pleas for help heard over the traffic." The abject creature's impotence is sealed in the article's conclusion,

where "[q]uietly, the woman gathers herself and the baby and disappears." The iconographic 'third world woman' fictioned in texts such as these is above all a victim. This familiar category in the western imaginary discursively colonises the lived heterogeneities of millions of women outside the developed West, erasing all 'marginal and resistant modes' (Mohanty, 1991: 73), and effectively robbing them of their personhood and autonomy. In this sense, an analogy may be drawn between western (and even 'feminist') texts which portray women in the 'third world' as quiescent victims of male domination, and conventional chauvinistic discourse which labels women weak and emotional (Mohanty, 1991: 56).

In the context of Mohanty's critique, the significance of the news texts' obsession with the extreme youth of the women servicing sex tourists, and / or their dangerous, exploitative working conditions, can be appreciated. In this manner, women employed in the sex tourism industry are assimilated in Australian newspaper representations into the 'third world woman' archetype, and are thereby stripped of their agency. Their iconic portrayal as abject others, I would further argue, bears the marks of an attempt on the part of representing subjects (and their audiences) to consolidate their own sovereign status. As triply 'other' archetypal 'third world women', the sex workers stand in sharp contrast to the implicit representation of Australian women, such that they are 'the image of ourselves undressed' (Rosaldo, 1980: 392). Mohanty's warning that the construction of such monolithic 'third world women' in western feminist texts is premised upon the conceited privileging of gender politics in the West, and as such, betrays a latent form of neo-imperialism, is salient here. The indiscriminate portrayal of the sex workers as victims in need of rescuing from the misogynistic cultural practices upholding the sex industries in their countries, signals an ethnocentric superiority complex, in which emancipation for the women is equated with westernisation. The critique of this imperialistic mode of representation, at the centre of a well-known debate in feminism during the 1980s, that saw the 'universal sisterhood' splintered in the face of a new concern with cultural relativity, is in fact cursorily referenced in a feature article on sex tourism written by an Australian 'feminist'. "First world feminists are frequently criticised for culture-bound insensitivity to differences in the values, needs and desires of women in other parts of the world," Lillian Robinson admits, before disqualifying the critique entirely in the case of her representation of sex tourism, since "it is worth

noting how neatly the enlightened relativist position dovetails with the language of the sex tourism industry, which also promotes cultural difference" (*A feminist goes touring sex city* Age 8.11.93, p. 11). Ultimately, this mode of representation is an exercise in self-validation for the Australian reading public.<sup>59</sup> Since the 'Asian' and 'third world' sex workers never transcend their pitiful generalised 'objecthood', the outraged Australian reader becomes the real subject of the dominant narrative of sex tourism in the Australian press.

### *Contesting this neo-imperialist mode of representation*

The mode in which these other women are represented in the Australian press is, then, deeply problematic. It fails to recognise Asian and 'third world' sex workers as self-directing agents who struggle with complex sets of constraints and opportunities within diverse sociocultural contexts. It overlooks the fact that, financially, sex work may be a worthwhile option for many women seeking to maximise the limited opportunities they have.<sup>60</sup> It is also blind to the possibility that, even if sex work fails to confer social power, it may not necessarily be experienced by women as disempowering. In the first place, the possibility should not be discounted that some prostitutes may actually enjoy their work. Secondly, as Cook speculates, the imperative for Thais to maintain 'outward form' creates scope for a variety of activities to occur in the private domain, and this 'cultural code' permits sex workers to maintain a sense of identity which is unaffected by what takes place in the privacy of rented rooms or brothels (1998: 270). Put differently, (and without attempting to

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<sup>59</sup> Cook has criticised the discourse of local middle-class feminist organisations 'helping' Thai sex workers, on similar grounds. She observes that such groups present themselves as the 'deserving guardians' (1998: 271) and 'saviours' of young, often HIV-positive women whom they represent – in contrast to themselves – as 'poor, ignorant and passive' (1998: 278). The sex workers thereby remain 'modernity's "other",' their lack of agency providing an inverted, or mirror image of that of the middle-class activists.

<sup>60</sup> Sex work certainly offers far greater returns than any other form of employment available to uneducated women in particular. Noting the high rate of personnel turnover in the Thai sex industry, Cook suggests that many women may view sex work as a temporary measure, undertaken to improve their economic position within a relatively short space of time (1998: 268-9). Bishop and Robinson have however cautioned that this argument risks equating income or consumer power with sociocultural power (1998: 145-6).

attribute any specific 'cultural traits' to Thai people,) women may not experience commercial sex transactions as violations owing to the very performative nature of sex work. All touristic encounters, sexual or otherwise, involve what Cohen (1989) has termed 'communicative staging', the art of persuading tourists that they are having an 'authentic' experience (cited in Craik, 1997: 114). Identity politics are central to this dramaturgical metaphor of tourism employment, since employees in the industry produce *themselves* as part of the 'product', a process which entails 'producing their bodies... their expressions; their feelings; in sum their "performed selves"' (Crang, 1997: 152). Yet since tourists are not privileged to get the 'back-stage' view, performing others are able to maintain the inscrutability of their private selves.

I conclude this critique of the 'victimology' narratives of sex tourism by suggesting that in the very performativity of their work, the locus of the sex workers' agency, and even a mode of resistance, might be found. Manderson's research on public sex acts performed for western tourists in Patpong bars, points to the double-edged nature of this type of work. While the women are objectified on stage in a way that panders to male fantasies of sexual mastery, their subjectification is not complete. For their performances may caricature or parody the male fantasy of the Oriental female's sexual passivity. Manderson notes in particular how 'Thai notions of pollution, and the profaneness of the genitals, allow – with or without intentionality – a nice inversion within the bars, as women, genitals displayed, literally perform over the heads of men. The fact that most bar patrons are unaware of this insult only adds to its power' (1995: 314). Manderson's case study exemplifies what Cook describes as the 'dynamic of intercultural misunderstanding that has so successfully fuelled the Thai-western sex trade' (1998: 269).

#### Section four: representing the sex tourists

Sometimes the tourists themselves are represented in the news texts as the innocent and naïve victims of sex tourism encounters. This image is empirically verified in an article entitled *Sex tour yob image debunked*, which cites the results of a survey carried out on Australian customers in Thai 'sex bars', by Dr Graham Fordham of the Australian National University (HS 27.7.94, p. 10). Contrary to the stereotype of the "drunken Aussie yob," the research is reported to have shown many of the tourists to be "well-rounded, charming and witty people, often with a good job and education," who "just happened to be in Thailand on holiday or business having a drink and chatting up a girl." They have the added virtue, it is claimed, of being tender-hearted, romantic men who go innocently looking for "love, caring and real relationships" in the wrong places. Dr Fordham is quoted insisting that it is "too easy to dismiss it as just sex tourism," since "many of them develop strong emotional responses and even fall in love, or believe they do." He cites as proof his finding that only half the men wore condoms when "having sex with prostitutes."

Transported to South-East Asia – a site which, recalling the 'Asia-as-crisis-zone' trope, is 'tropical' in representational as well as climactic terms – "where the rules are different," and "criteria of every day rationality" are allegedly "thrown overboard," these otherwise decent, morally upright men, it is implied, are well out of their depth and cannot be expected to behave decorously. Dr Fordham's expert assessment is that "[t]hey see pretty girls. They are thrown off balance by what is happening, but at the same time they are certain they are in control. This is very dangerous because, in fact, they are totally out of control." The subtext of this narrative is that these vulnerable creatures are at the mercy of unsentimental and shrewd businesswomen who are completely *in* control, and whose 'pretty' veneers treacherously conceal their inevitable HIV-positive status.

The further implication that the sex tourists are also at the mercy of their 'natural' masculine urges is also developed in another article headlined *Cory calls on wives to fight ugly tours* (HS 6.7.93, p. 4). Here, President Aquino is quoted giving vent to a patriarchally inspired logic by suggesting that since men are effectively slaves to their uncontrollable carnality, "[p]erhaps the wives could try as much as possible to

accompany their husbands every time (they visit the Philippines),” thereby acting as guardians of virtue and teachers of temperance.

*The making of a folk devil*

As a function of the continual slippage from sex tourism → *child*-sex tourism, however, sex tourists are more typically distanced in the coverage from ‘normal’ Australian men. An article misleadingly entitled *Ending the sex tour*, for instance, does not concern ‘sex tourism’ at all (SMH 23.6.95, p. 17). Instead it sketches a profile of the paedophile tourist, claiming that “groups of paedophiles are known to operate together with up to half a dozen children at a time in organised orgies,” and alleging that they have a “propensity to keep souvenirs from their conquests, ranging from photos and videotapes to the soiled underwear of the child victims.” For the most part, then, sex tourists appear in the news texts as a subspecies of paedophile. Furthermore, they might usefully be understood as ‘folk devils’, since press reporting on their activities appeared to trigger a ‘moral panic’ in the early 1990s, which eventually resulted in the 1994 amendment to the Crimes Act.

Stanley Cohen coined the phrase ‘moral panic’ to describe the process whereby the discursive construction of certain events in the news media has the rhetorical effect of escalating the ‘threat’ represented by such events (Hall et al., 1978: 223). In the case of Australian newspaper coverage of sex tourism, the overwhelming focus upon *child*-sex tourism – with 63.3 per cent of the news texts taking allegations of child sex abuse perpetrated by sex tourists as their main substantive topic – was effective in fostering the impression that a new ‘wave’ of sex crimes against children in Asian and ‘third world’ countries was being perpetrated by Australians and other westerners on ‘paedophile tours’. Yet as Fishman (1981) has demonstrated, ‘crime waves’ may have no basis in official statistics but are conjured by journalists who perceive and report on events in the news in terms of ‘themes’. As observed in chapter three, such themes are bureaucratically expedient because they lend a presentational order to news texts, rendering what is otherwise a chaotic glut of singular incidents accessible to news consumers. ‘Crime waves’, then, are facilitated by the journalistic device of ‘convergence’, the linking of events in the process of

signification in order to implicitly or explicitly draw parallels between them (Hall et al., 1978). The net effect of this type of reporting, as Hall et al. point out, is 'amplification, not in the real events being described, but in their "threat-potential" for society' (1978: 223).

The escalation of a moral panic is invariably accompanied by the emergence of the 'folk devil', that 'bearer of all our social anxieties' (Hall et al., 1978: 161). The folk devil appears in the dominant narrative of sex tourism in the guise of the 'paedophile tourist', or what subtitles headlining articles reporting on sex tourism in the *Age* termed "the ugly Australian" (*End this vile trade Age* Opinion 8.11.93, p. 13; *Parties close ranks on child sex law Age* 3.1.94, p. 8). It is clear that the identification of a folk devil occasions the articulation of a society's normative boundaries. This is another way of phrasing Marx's observation that the criminal 'renders a service by arousing the moral and aesthetic feelings of the public' (1968: 387, cited in Sparks, 1992: 32). Thus, assertions are regularly made that "the great majority of Australians would agree with the Australian Federal Police Association when it describes the activities of child-sex offenders as 'abhorrent'" (*A vile practice Age* 7.04.95, p. 17), or that "[m]ost Australians find these men who visit Asia 'for only one purpose' a shameful embarrassment" (*Sex Tours of Asia breed corruption Age* Opinion 23.10.93, p. 20). There is, then, an effort on the part of the press to represent child-sex tourists as "completely un-Australian," in the words of an Australian aid-worker quoted in one article (*Crackdown on child sex HS* 23.10.95, p. 37).

Numerous news reports published in the early 1990s enthusiastically hailed an impending 'get tough' approach to child-sex tourism. The 'paedophile tourist' construct had evidently taken 'its own kind of stranglehold on the public and official imagination' (Hall et al., 1978: 5), unambiguously installing child-sex tourism as 'an urgent public matter' (Hall et al., 1978: 75-6). From mid-1993 and throughout early 1994, articles regularly appeared covering the proposed amendment to the Crimes Act, which would make possible the prosecution in Australia of Australians who had sex with children overseas, or who profited from child-sex tours. It would also allow for the imprisonment of those convicted for up to 17 years (*Jail for sex tourists HS* 3.8.93, p. 6; *Sex tourists crackdown on the way Age* 5.11.93, p. 5; *Sex tourists to face jail Age* 28.11.93, p. 1; *Clamp on child sex planned HS* 14.7.93, p. 20; *End this vile*

*trade Age* 8.11.93, p. 13; *Stamping out child sex tourism SMH* 25.5.94, p. 14; *Kerr will fight changes to sex tours laws Age* 29.5.94, p. 5; *Tough child sex laws on way SMH* 1.6.94, p. 9; *Kerr avoids delay on sex tour laws Age* 5.6.94, p. 8; *Overseas sex offences are under siege SMH* 16.6.94, p. 12). A letter to the editor by Bernadette McMennamin of the ECPAT group, published during this time, lamented that “[w]hile the politicians in Canberra deliberate the technical aspects of the proposed child sex tourism legislation, thousands of children are being raped by Australians overseas,” and reaffirmed that “[h]arsh penalties are necessary to deter. The law must go ahead and must be enforced... We must stop these ugly Australians. They will certainly be laughing now while the men in Canberra are delaying the introduction of the law. Decent people will not let this continue. I look forward to seeing the laughs of the cynics and criminals in another place – behind bars” (*We must stop these criminal ‘sex tourists’ Age* 25.5.94 p. 20). The Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Amendment Bill was passed in Federal Parliament on 29 June 1994.

By transmitting a belief system which justified the introduction of a harsh new form of social control, the Australian press coverage of sex tourism exemplified the prototypic moral panic schematised as follows by Cohen (1987: 143): *initial deviance → media inventory → over-estimation of the deviance → escalation of the control culture*. The role of the press in triggering the legislative changes was in fact acknowledged in a self-congratulatory manner in several articles published in the *Age*. An “extensive investigation” into Australian child-sex tourists in Asia published in April 1993 is credited in one article, for instance, with creating “pressure for new laws” (*Sex tourists to face jail Age* 28.11.93, p. 1). Similarly, an article reporting on the Crimes Act amendment bill notes that “the bill follows a Walkley Award-winning investigation of Australian paedophiles travelling to Asia by *Sunday Age* journalist Paul Robinson” (*Kerr will fight changes to sex tours laws Age* 29.5.94, p. 5). And a more recent article commends the *Sunday Age* for having “exposed the key role Australians played in the sexual exploitation of children in Thailand and the Philippines” (*Police scale down war on sex tours Age* 20.7.97, p. 4). The article goes on to claim proudly that “as a result of a series of articles on the scandal, the Government enacted the Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Amendment Act 1994.”

In December 1994, newspapers reported that Bradley Pendragon had become the first Australian to be convicted in a Thai court of child sex offences. An article covering his case concludes by quoting a child welfare worker who warns that Pendragon's actions cast "a slur on Australia and Australian family values," begging the unsettling question of "[w]hat kind of family, what kind of society would produce a man like this who would commit these kinds of acts in Thailand?" (*Aussie outrages Thailand HS* 15.2.94, p. 28). By implicating Australian society as a whole in the sexual exploitation of Thai children, the quotation signals a momentary crisis in the dominant narrative's characterisation of sex tourism as the exclusive preserve of abnormal perverts.

For the most part, however, sex tourists are symbolically 'cast out' in the news texts as uniquely perverted individuals. The discursive exorcism of sex tourists as 'folk devils' – or as the news texts variously describe them, "evil and foolish people" (*Ending the sex tours SMH* 23.6.95, p. 17); "cringing coward[s]... pandering to their baser instincts" (*Stamping out child sex tourism SMH* 25.5.94, p. 14) – is often accomplished in the texts by representing them in terms of their putative pathology. Metaphorising sex tourism as disease, Lillian Robinson writes evocatively that "[t]he sickness of head and heart that I see in these transactions in Bangkok is not the only disease they foster. Nor is that sickness entirely eclipsed by the concrete bodily realities of AIDS. Each is the deadly mirror of the other" (*A feminist goes touring sex city Age* 8.11.93, p. 11). Meanwhile, an editorial published in the same edition of the *Age* decrees that "Australians who exploit the poverty of children in other countries to satisfy their own sick desires deserve little sympathy" (*End this vile trade Age* 8.11.93, p. 13).

In their tendency to consider sex tourism as concerning only a minority of sick or perverted individuals, the news texts make extensive use of the rhetorical device of personalisation. Personalisation is a cardinal news value, as it is an immediately cognisable mode of representation, and tends to evoke straightforward emotional responses in readers (Sanders & Lyon, 1995: 30). However, in casting the individual subject as the exclusive motor of history, personalisation is far from innocent. As Althusser warns, 'the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology,' and, to the extent that it appears to have existence outside ideology, it effects 'the practical

denegation of the ideological character of ideology' (1971: 175). In the Australian press coverage of sex tourism, the deployment of personalisation operates to deflect attention from the popularity of sex tourism among 'normal', heterosexual Australian males. This permits the texts to bypass any analysis of the wider sociocultural and politico-economic context structuring sex tourism.

*Vilifying sex tourists as a powerful and corrupt minority*

Sex tourists, effectively encoded in the Australian press as "hardcore paedophiles" (*Saving the children SMH* 3.2.98, p. 11), are further distanced from 'average' Australian readers in texts where they are represented as belonging to an elite whose impunity is guaranteed by their high status and wealth. They are described, for instance, as "rich and powerful" men (*Deterring paedophiles Age Opinion* 9.4.96, p. 10), "from prominent and trusted backgrounds" (*Cry Freedom Age Good Weekend* 27.11.93, p. 12), who are "protected by networks of influence, money and the colour of their skin" (*Saving the children SMH* 3.2.98, p. 11).

Of the total 161 articles analysed, 33.5 per cent reported on allegations of child-sex abuse perpetrated in the Asia-Pacific region by Australian diplomats and other senior members of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The high level of media attention accorded such allegations would seem to confirm Roshier's observation that in the case of crime news, the involvement of high profile persons in any capacity guarantees significant press coverage of an issue (1981: 46). More importantly, however, by reporting so extensively on allegations of corruption contaminating not only Asian officialdom, but also even the highest echelons of the *Australian* government, the press is able to impress upon readers the importance of its exclusive role as the fourth estate, unflinchingly brokering 'truth', however unpalatable, in the interests of the public good. In its coverage of sex tourism, then, the Australian press, having annexed for itself the transcendent realm of objectivity, neutrally observes and reports on an apparent crisis in governmentality both at home, and, as discussed earlier in the chapter, in Asia, the crisis-zone *par excellence*.

In June of 1995 it made front-page news that Mr Ken Aldred, a Victorian Liberal backbencher, had made "an extraordinary series of allegations in Parliament,"

accusing “about 20 senior executive members in the DFAT of being paedophiles” (*Paedophilia claims ‘not investigated’ SMH 7.6.95, p. 1*).<sup>61</sup> It is reported that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Gareth Evans, subsequently stated in Parliament that previous allegations of paedophilia made against Australian diplomats in Asia had been found to be unsubstantiated after a “full investigation” conducted in 1993 by the Australian Federal Police (AFP). However, the text continues, “inquiries by the *Herald*” had revealed that the allegations had never been formally investigated.

The tagline of a feature article provocatively entitled *Diplomatic impunity – The guilty secrets at Foreign Affairs*, observes that “[i]t was commonly said that Australian diplomats in Asia were involved in paedophilia – it was even joked about at dinner parties. ‘Did you hear the one about the creche they are building at our new offices in Canberra?’ asked the Australian diplomat in an Asian capital this week” (*SMH 27.4.96, p. 23*). The subsequent claim that “[j]ust about anyone who has had intimate contact with Australia’s foreign service over the last decade has an anecdote to retell,” is backed up in the text with the testimony of an apparently law-abiding former diplomat, who was reportedly “disgusted at the behaviour of some senior foreign service officers on postings overseas and... made his displeasure known.” The article reports that at “one key Asian embassy” where the diplomat served, “up to 6 Australians were sexually abusing children.” He is quoted asserting that “[f]or some of these men, going overseas was like being a kid in a chocolate factory... They were able to have delights not available to them in Australia. We had dozens in the department – they were everywhere.” In the same text, *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent David Lague reports that the *Herald* had “revealed” that in the early 1980s, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) had “intercepted child porn

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<sup>61</sup> An extract from Aldred’s speech, entitled ‘A National Disgrace’, was later reproduced as follows in a *Sydney Morning Herald* feature article: “Mr Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of the House, an extremely disturbing situation in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I refer to the tolerance, indeed, promotion, of senior diplomats known to DFAT and the Australian Federal Police as paedophiles. The main areas of operations for the DFAT paedophiles are the Philippines, Cambodia and Vietnam. I have been reliably informed by senior departmental sources in DFAT and senior investigating police officers that there are approximately 20, I repeat 20, Senior Executive Service

being exchanged between diplomats in a diplomatic bag". The article claims that the confiscated "photos of young, naked Asian boys," moreover, had remained undisturbed in DFAT security files for more than a decade. It credits the Herald's new "revelations" with having "forced the Federal Government to call an independent inquiry." The article cites the suggestion of a DFAT officer, that the inquiry will need to offer immunity to those 'paedophiles' prepared to come forward with evidence about others in "the network." "They all know each other," the officer is quoted claiming. The text concludes with his sensational prediction that "[t]he first one that rolls over will name names. Watch the stampede then."

Another front-page article reports that "several long-standing Australian diplomats" had speculated that Foreign Minister Alexander Downer's call for an independent inquiry might break what is claimed as "a tradition within the Department for diplomats to keep quiet about suspected sexual offences committed by colleagues overseas" (*Downer tells police to go after paedophiles* Age 18.4.96, p. 1). Downer is described elsewhere as being "shocked at a series of child-sex allegations," including the latest "claims that Australian diplomats had used aid money to buy access to orphans for sex" (*Diplomats face 'ruthless' child-sex inquiry* Age 22.4.96, p. 3). He is quoted assuring Australians that there will be "no cover-ups," and that any paedophiles among Australian diplomats would be "ruthlessly exposed."

#### *Outing a paedophile diplomat*

In May 1996 it was reported that John Holloway, described as "one of Australia's highest-ranking diplomats," having held "a series of important posts in the Department of Foreign Affairs, including Ambassador to the Philippines and Cambodia, Director of the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau and senior postings to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and India," was to appear in a Canberra court in August, charged with having had sexual intercourse with a Cambodian boy aged under 16 between July and September of 1994, while he was working as an Australian-paid adviser to Cambodia's Foreign Ministry

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(SES) officers who are engaged in paedophile activities within Australia and overseas" (*Diplomatic impunity - The guilty secrets at Foreign Affairs* SMH 27.4.96, p. 23).

(*Diplomat charged with sex offence* Age 1.5.96, p. 9). The case had a very high profile in the Australian press, with a total of 30 articles in the sample covering developments in his trial.

Two Cambodian boys – “alleged minors” – were flown to Canberra by the Australian Federal Police to testify against Holloway under the new Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Act (*Boys flown in for sex court case* HS 14.8.96, p. 9). Their evidence soon became “for all intents and purposes worthless” (*Envoy cleared of child-sex charge* Age 14.11.96, p. 1), however, and the charges against Holloway were dismissed. One of the boys is described as having “given three different versions of the first time he allegedly had sex” with Holloway, and when confronted with the discrepancies in his testimony, offered the feeble excuse that “a blow on the head had left him with memory difficulties” (*Boy’s story differed, says lawyer for diplomat* Age 6.11.96, p. 4). The boys’ credibility is further undermined in texts which describe them as disingenuously “attempting to convince the court” that they were not “child prostitutes” (*Envoy cleared of child-sex charge* Age 14.11.96, p. 1; *Exonerated diplomat: Now I want to resume my career* SMH 14.11.96, p. 1). Elsewhere, (recalling the trope of Asian mercenariness and greed discussed earlier,) it is suggested that they concocted the allegations against Holloway in order to collect compensation payments from the AFP of “\$US5 (\$A6.36) a day” – “five times the monthly average salary of Cambodian public servants and armed forces personnel” (*Envoy cleared of child-sex charge* Age 14.11.96, p. 1) – which “in Cambodian terms” made them “rich” (*Court doubts over boy’s testimony* Age 7.11.96, p. 3).

#### *Exonerating the falsely accused*

Following the disclosure that the “alleged victim” was “a teenage Cambodian prostitute” and his evidence was “worthless” (*Cleared diplomat wants to get on with his life* Age 16.11.96, p. 7), Holloway was generally represented in the texts as the legally vindicated wronged innocent, his reputation unjustly stained beyond repair “by the smear of child abuse,” and “his diplomatic career... effectively over” (*My once brilliant career’ – Paedophilia charge unproven but the damage is done* Age News extra 16.11.96, p. 21). One text for instance maintains that the paedophilia

charge was “a rude interruption to a distinguished diplomatic career” for “one of Australia’s most capable diplomats in Asia,” whose “powers of analysis were respected, his observations succinct and his diplomatic skills finely tuned” (*Diplomat inquiry warning* HS 14.11.96, p. 9). Another text reads like a eulogy for a national hero, describing Holloway as “one of the brightest diplomats of his generation,” who had heroically “re-established Australia’s embassy in Phnom Penh after two decades of civil war in Cambodia,” and whose “work during the United Nations-sponsored election process so impressed the Cambodians that they seconded him to reorganise and effectively run their own foreign ministry – a rare honour for a foreigner and for Australia” (*‘My once brilliant career’ – Paedophilia charge unproven but the damage is done* Age News extra 16.11.96, p. 21).

Holloway’s moral uprightness is indicated in this text by his continuing support for “the controversial law that brought him down.” “I fully support the moves against paedophiles overseas,” he is quoted asserting, even “as he now contemplates the ruins of his once brilliant career.” Thus in the aftermath of his acquittal, irreproachable Holloway stood in sharp contrast to the emerging representation of Ken Aldred as a “maverick MP”, who, it is pointedly noted, “had lost his Liberal Party endorsement for the March 2 Federal Poll,” and whose “objectionable abuse of parliamentary privilege” effectively “besmirched DFAT” and instigated a “homophobic witch-hunt” (*Diplomatic impunity - The guilty secrets at Foreign Affairs* SMH 27.4.96, p. 23).

Several articles further suggested that the Holloway case pointed to an unfortunate consequence of the 1994 amendment to the Crimes Act, namely, that it had had the effect of rendering Australian officials posted overseas vulnerable to blackmail or attack. Holloway himself is cited contending that, given that Australian foreign policy interests often conflict with the agendas of foreign governments, non-government aid organisations, and privately owned companies, the Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Amendment Act affords such groups “a powerful weapon to use against all Australian officials without providing any corresponding protection against false allegations, collusion or perjury” (*Envoy cleared of child-sex charge* Age 14.11.96, p. 1). The dismissal of the Holloway case thus had the effect of further discrediting the allegations of paedophilia in the DFAT, which had already been

described as a baseless smear campaign that threatened Australian security interests. Several months before the dismissal of the Holloway case, John Walker, a teacher of politics in the Australian Defence Force Academy, in an opinion piece entitled *The paedophile card*, claimed to have identified "a direct correlation between media and other claims of official paedophilia in particular areas and the intensity of strategic rivalry over the same areas" (*Age Opinion* 12.6.96, p. 15). Walker decries the legislation as "a significant strategic error by the previous Government, compromising the capacity of Australian officials... to pursue our interests in the region," and argues that "Australia's rivals, adversaries and enemies" can now simply claim that Australian officials are "paedophiles".

#### *Australia's heroic 'fight' against sex tourism*

Notwithstanding the dangers associated in Walker's text with the Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Amendment Act, the legislation is more often commended for providing what one text describes as "a potent weapon in Australia's efforts to curb the flow of hundreds of paedophiles to Asia each year in the belief they could abuse children with impunity" (*Ending the sex tours SMH* 23.6.95, p. 17). This text cites the contention of Superintendent Paul Kirby, the officer in charge of the AFP's paedophilia intelligence group, that the lack of "solid evidence" of Australians committing child sex offences overseas since the legislation was passed, "gives a fair measure of the effectiveness of the deterrent element of the act." Duncan Kerr is then quoted claiming that while Australians do not "seek to be the police of the world... when it comes to the abuse of children, we are taking a lead." His confident assertion is echoed in other texts, where a spokeswoman for the Australian-based group ECPAT is quoted congratulating Australia for "doing more than any other country to combat this" (*Plea on child sex tours HS* 8.8.95, p. 9), and proclaiming that "Australia has a lot to show the rest of the world - and a lot to be proud of... [t]here's no doubt we are the world leaders in doing something about this issue" (*Under-age prostitutes top 20,000 HS* 14.8.96, p. 21).

Indeed, several Australians are lauded as heroes in what is metaphorised as the 'fight' against sex tourism.<sup>62</sup> One of these is Australian aid worker Tony Culnane, project manager for World Vision International's Cambodian street children ministry, who, according to one text, "has spent the past three years trying to rescue youngsters like Pisith" (*Crackdown on child sex* HS 23.10.95, p. 37). Another is Michael Kearney, described in another text as "a courageous and committed former Australian policeman," whose heroic "rescue effort[s]," it is claimed, provide some of the only "glimmers of hope" in the war on Cambodia's ever-growing child-sex trade (*The trade that shames a country... and the clients who exploit it* SMH 26.8.96, p. 8). The 35 year old senior Queensland Police officer-turned-undercover agent is credited in the text with having organised a recent raid by police and child protection agencies on "a notorious child prostitution enclave on the northern outskirts of Phnom Penh," in which four Vietnamese girls aged between nine and 13 were rescued, and Xuan Lan, the alleged mastermind of "a network smuggling girls into Cambodia for a large clientele of local and international paedophiles" was arrested. Kearney, the article continues, also personally "rescued" two Cambodian teenage girls who had been kidnapped and forced to work in a brothel, by posing as a tourist, and paying \$10 to take them to his hotel. "Their father was the first Khmer person ever to give me a hug," he is quoted reminiscing.

### Conclusion

In the dominant narrative of sex tourism developed in the Australian press, sex tourism is only addressed as a 'problem' when it involves AIDS and / or child prostitution; sex tourists are individualised as 'perverts'; other Australians are represented unproblematically as 'rescuers'; and Australia is generally congratulated for 'getting tough on sex tourism'. The cumulative ideological effect of these

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<sup>62</sup> Young's analysis of the militaristic rhetoric of the 'war against crime' may be usefully applied to understand this metaphor. The rhetoric of 'war', as Young observes, is premised upon the drawing of rigid lines between the community and the offenders, 'the establishment of sides and the belief in an ultimate outright winner, no matter that the victory be Pyrrhic' (1996: 7). It casts the agents of criminal justice as incontrovertible heroes, whose representation is in stark contrast to the construction of offenders as 'threats to the state, the social contract, the community and the individual,' and whose very existence automatically turns everyone else into victims (Young, 1996: 8-9).

rhetorical constructions is that attention is deflected from the sociocultural, political and economic contexts in which the industry has taken shape and flourished.

At least in the case of Thailand, geopolitical inducements have historically been central to the evolution of the sex tourism industry. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the seeds of modern sex tourism were sown in 1967 when the Thai Government signed a treaty with the US military, allowing GIs stationed in Vietnam to come to Thailand on 'R & R' leave.<sup>63</sup> Within three years, earnings from the rapidly expanding 'R & R' market reached US\$20 million, a quarter of the value of rice exports (Thanh-dam Truong, 1990: 161). Owing to the early involvement of US forces, and although recorded history shows evidence of a thriving Thai sex industry dating back at least to the early fourteenth century, when prostitution was legal and subject to government taxation (Cook, 1998: 252), the contemporary sex industry in Thailand might best be understood as a kind of cultural hybrid.<sup>64</sup>

In 1971, the World Bank provided an additional geopolitical inducement for the development of the sex tourism industry by recommending mass tourism as the key to Thailand's economic growth in the years following the Indochina conflict (Bishop

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<sup>63</sup> An article published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in fact reports on allegations that 'R & R' leave for Australian troops in foreign ports was sanctioned by the Australian Government as recently as the 1990s. The text cites Susan Mitchell – whom it dubs a "feminist author" – claiming that Australian warships returning from the Gulf War were "deliberately diverted to Thailand so troops could visit brothels – with Government approval" (*Navy rejects claims of brothel visits SMH* 5.3.96, p. 3). Although Brigadier Adrian D'Hage, chief spokesman for the defence forces, is then quoted categorically denying the existence of such a policy and rejecting Mitchell's allegations as "an appalling broad smear on all of the members of the Royal Australian Navy," Mitchell is awarded the last word in the text. "After all the anti-discrimination legislation and the equal opportunity legislation and the affirmative action legislation and the placing of women on boards and committees," she observes, "in the end the male culture hasn't changed."

<sup>64</sup> The authors of the Asia Watch publication, *'A Modern Form of Slavery'*, suggest that, given its formative role in the modern Thai sex industry, the US has a particular responsibility to address sex trafficking and other social problems associated with the industry (Asia Watch, 1993: 148). However, the authors note, no American aid is targeted to stop the traffic in young women, and US support of Thailand's National AIDS Prevention and Control Plan (AIDSCAP), which punitively targets sex workers, may have done these women more harm than good (Asia Watch, 1993: 149-150).

and Robinson, 1998: 38). The World Bank's role in encouraging the industry's early growth is in fact acknowledged by Lillian Robinson, who notes that the Bank's counsel "led to what is routinely described today as a \$US4 billion-a-year business involving fraternal relationships among airlines, tour operators and the masters of the sex industry" (*A feminist goes touring sex city* Age 8.11.93, p. 11). Indeed, in 1982, tourism overtook rice, Thailand's traditional export leader, as the nation's major foreign exchange earner (Thanh-dam Truong, 1990: 163).

Thailand's relatively open economic policy, moreover, has facilitated a high level of foreign investment in the entertainment sector (Thanh-dam Truong, 1990: 162). Several articles in the sample in fact alluded to evidence of Australian involvement in both the Philippine and Thai sex industries. In 1993, under the scandalous headline *Australians profit from sex tourism*, an article published in the *Age* quoted Mr Ron O'Grady, the coordinator of ECPAT, contending that "a survey had shown" not only that "Australians owned one-third of the brothels in Ermita, the red light district of Manila in the Philippines," but that "Australian businessmen" also "played a large role in the child sex trade of the Philippines and Thailand and many boasted of their involvement" (Age 6.7.93, p. 3). The blow discursively dealt to Australia by this damning allegation is somewhat softened later in the text, however, where O'Grady concedes that "the values of western countries could not be solely blamed for the increase in the sex trade involving foreign tourists," since "growing numbers of wealthy businessmen from China and oil-rich Arab nations were flocking to Asia to buy child prostitutes," in accordance with what he claims is their "cultural belief" that having sex with children was "a way to feed your own sexual prowess, strength and wealth." Two years later, an even more damning allegation is made in the headline of a *Sydney Morning Herald* article which proclaims: *Australians run Philippines' sex trade: inquiry* (SMH 12.7.95, p. 7). The article reports that an Australian delegation investigating the Philippines sex industry had found that "up to 83 per cent" of bars and hotels used as fronts for prostitution in the Angeles City area north of Manila, were owned and controlled by Australians. A later article refers to the same report, and adds that these establishments allegedly "cater for a largely Australian market" and "offer sex with children" (*Manila in call to help end sex tourism* Age 7.8.95, p. 3).

The sex tourism industry has clearly flourished under conditions of international capitalism, as a part of what Bishop and Robinson describe as a 'global system of exchange, domination, and exploitation that functions on the economic level' (1998: 248). Jeremy Seabrook characterises the interaction between sex tourists and the women servicing them as 'a doomed encounter between victims – the wounded (if privileged) of the West and the most impoverished of the South,' who enter into 'an unsatisfactory symbiosis, based upon mutual desire for escape, from loneliness and poverty' (1991: 12, cited in Bishop and Robinson, 1998: 126). For Seabrook, the temporary relationship between sex tourist and 'rented wife' is premised on a fundamental 'reciprocity'. Indeed, as discussed earlier in the chapter, sex tourists themselves may invoke this notion in order to justify their activities, recasting their purchase of commodified sex (albeit at bargain rates,) as a way of 'helping' disadvantaged women in poor countries. In such accounts, however, the grossly inequitable international economic system upon which every sex tourism encounter is premised is elided (Bishop and Robinson, 1998: 143). If sex work is experienced as alienating in the psychological sense, visiting social isolation and abjection upon women, it is also alienating in a material or economic sense, to the extent that its value is appropriated (Bishop and Robinson, 1998: 247). In opposition to the 'mystique of reciprocity,' therefore, I argue for the need to recognise sex tourism as founded upon the dehumanisation of sex workers as commodities, and their exploitation in a profoundly alienating form of labour.

I further contend that the labour performed by these women for the pleasure of sex tourists exemplifies the ethic of feminine servitude upholding all tourist industries worldwide. The very structure of international tourism is not only thoroughly gendered, but, as Cynthia Enloe has pointed out, it also '*needs patriarchy to survive*' (Enloe, 1990: 41). Historically, travel has been discursively constructed as a properly 'masculine' pursuit. The feminine, meanwhile, has been relegated to 'respectable' geographical confinement in the domain of the home. Men have been assigned the task of actively seeking out otherness abroad, and the tourist gaze has therefore been normatively masculine. Women, by contrast, have been called upon either to passively embody otherness or the 'exotic' for [sexually] intrepid [male] adventurers, or to cater for their needs by working as hostesses, waitresses, cooks or 'cleaning ladies'. These gender divisions have been perpetuated into the present in the

structures of international tourism, which, like any service industry, with its multitude of 'feminised' job categories, is heavily dependent upon 'unskilled', often part-time, and consequently *female* labour (Enloe, 1990: 36). When viewed in this wider context, then, sex tours are best understood not as anomalies but rather as archetypal instances of a mode of gender inequality, which is entrenched in international tourism.<sup>65</sup>

The encounter between western sex tourist and Asian or 'third world' sex worker should also be understood in terms of the commodification of otherness which defines all forms of tourism. The popularisation of the notion that the world and its cultures were 'out there for the taking by ordinary citizens' (Enloe, 1990: 25) occurred in tandem with the rise of modern mass tourism. Indeed, as Urry (1995: 165) contends, the right to consume other places and cultures through travel and tourism became a mark of modern citizenship for those in the developed West. The consumption of sites as tourist attractions, moreover, entails the commodification not only of landscapes and cultural products, but also of the bodies and persons of others themselves. In accordance with the commercial imperative that they project what the western imaginary would hold to be their 'traditional' or 'authentic' ethnic attributes, then, others are transformed into commodities for the entertainment and edification of tourists. In this manner, modern mass tourism has accomplished 'the reduction of otherness to caricature in complicity with multinational capitalism' (Culler, 1988: 167).

In short, the touristic experience of otherness is thoroughly mediated by signifying structures that homogenise and reduce it to a predictable collection of stereotypes. Modern mass tourism therefore does not permit any meaningful exchange or communication between cultures. Instead, tourists consume a fictive kind of otherness from the comfort and safety of their 'tourist bubble', deluding themselves that they are discovering the truth of the other. A tourist venturing into the space of the other thus resembles the purchaser of commercial sex who pays money to have a

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<sup>65</sup> The gendered 'division of labour' is particularly marked in established sex tourism destinations such as Bangkok, where, as Enloe observes, 400,000 more women than men resided permanently by 1990 while male tourists outnumbered female tourists three to one (1990: 35), and the Philippines, where, by the mid-1980s, 85 per cent of tourists were male (1990: 38, n. 32).

simulated experience from which s/he can walk away without consequences. To the extent that s/he is best defined, in the words of Paul Fussell (1972: 42; cited in Culler, 1988: 156), as 'a fantasist equipped temporarily with unaccustomed power,' then, 'the resemblance between the tourist and the client of a massage parlour is closer than it would be polite to emphasise.'

Sex tourism articulates a complex set of inequitable social relations, which are almost entirely obscured in the discourse of the Australian press. Indeed, the Australian press coverage would rather disavow the existence of such inequities in the spheres of global capitalism, cultural politics and gender relations, played out so clearly in the transactions of sex tourism. This disavowal finds expression in the deployment of a dominant narrative template premised upon a set of discursive 'othering' devices whose combined effect is to portray sex tourism as the exploitation of other women at the hands of 'other' men. The ideological function of this disavowal is finally to exonerate the Australian subject from what press has defined in advance as the victimisation of helpless other women.

## CHAPTER SIX: IMAGING SEXUALISED OTHERNESS WITHIN

### Introduction

In this chapter, I examine Australian press representations of 'mail-order brides'<sup>66</sup> and immigrant Asian sex workers in Australia. As in the previous case studies, which examined constructions of Asian otherness *outside* Australia, the dominant narrative template through which these women are represented centres upon a victimology. I contend that the subtext of the women's representation in this case, however, may be read as the white Australian subject's persistent anxieties about admitting racial or cultural otherness within its borders. I introduce the chapter by situating the Australian press representations of these immigrant Asian women in their extra-discursive context.

The migration of Asian or 'third world' women as sex workers or 'mail-order brides' to developed metropolises must be conceptualised on the same analytical plane as the isochronous movement in the reverse direction, of western sex tourists to Asian and 'third world' destinations, discussed in the previous chapter. Both movements enact what MacCannell (1992: 8) terms a 'double displacement of culture (centre to periphery and vice versa),' producing hybrid subject-effects. The resulting international sexual interactions are also inflected with a fundamental inequality. In both cases, the bodies of sexualised others from the periphery are available to be consumed as objects by powerful subjects of the West.

It should be noted that these contrapuntal movements are directly connected in the sense that the large-scale international migration of Asian and 'third world' women as sex workers was triggered by the expansion of sex tourism industries in their countries of origin. Thus the growth of sex tours in Thailand during the 1970s and 1980s stimulated the traffic in Thai women overseas (Thanh-dam Truong, 1990: 182), and in the Philippines, as campaigns against sex tourism led to a decline in sex

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<sup>66</sup> By suspending this term in quotation marks in my text I mean to indicate its problematic semantic status, since it effectively objectifies the women it refers to as a kind of merchandise, as if they were listed in a catalogue of available stock for perusal and possible purchase by discerning male consumers in the developed West.

tours from the 1980s onwards, an extensive migration industry emerged to facilitate the deployment of Filipinas' sexual labour overseas as entertainers and brides (Tyner, 1996: 81).

More generally, the movement of women as sex workers or 'mail-order brides' out of Asia and the 'third world' needs to be viewed in the context of the rise in women's active participation in labour migration. Women from developing Asian nations feature prominently in the so-called 'feminisation' of international labour migration, described in a 1996 ILO report as 'one of the most striking economic and social phenomena of recent times' (cited in Kempadoo, 1998: 17). Indeed, Asian nations, and the Philippines in particular, are currently the biggest exporters of female labour to developed metropolises (Kempadoo, 1998: 17; Piper, 1999: 69).

Immigration laws have however failed to keep pace with the entry of women to the labour market as autonomous economic agents and their increased involvement in international population flows. Instead, women continue to be defined almost exclusively as dependents of male labour migrants in official policy and research (Wijers, 1998: 71; Piper, 1999: 70). In this sense, patriarchal ideology shapes and determines the migratory process, ensuring that there are few opportunities for women from developing countries to migrate legally for work purposes. Many of these women are forced into relations of dependence with questionable third parties for their passage, and upon arrival, are relegated as illegal migrant workers to unskilled, poorly paid and traditionally feminised employment categories such as domestic labour and sex work. Indeed, in the absence of other opportunities, many immigrant women from developing Asian countries find work within the sex industry, where potential earnings far exceed those offered by any of the other forms of employment normally open to women migrants of non-English speaking backgrounds.<sup>67</sup>

The existence of an 'Asian sex industry' in Australia since the mid-1980s (Brockett and Murray, 1994: 191), is indicative of the development of an extensive

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<sup>67</sup> Brockett and Murray estimated in 1994 that women migrants working in Sydney's sex industry were receiving incomes ranging from \$700 to \$2000 per week (1994: 196).

underground migration industry in the face of the lack of legal avenues for Asian women's immigration as workers. A 1994 study of Sydney's sex industry found that Asian women were employed in over half of the city's commercial sex establishments, 20 per cent of which specialised in Asian workers and catered largely to Asian clients (Brockett and Murray, 1994: 191). Most of these women were found to have come to Australia from rural North and North-East Thailand via Bangkok, and the total number of Thai sex workers employed in Sydney parlours was estimated to be between 200 and 300 (Brockett and Murray, 1994: 193).

The marriage business has evolved in tandem with the local 'Asian sex industry', providing women from developing Asian countries with the otherwise unavailable opportunity to migrate to Australia. The vast majority of women who have migrated to Australia as 'mail-order brides', however, have come from the Philippines. Filipinas' extensive involvement in this type of sponsored migration since the late 1980s accounts for the fact that the number of Filipino women residing in Australia is more than twice the number Filipino male migrants. Holt (1996: 74) cites an Australia Bureau of Statistics study which showed that, contrary to the pattern exhibited by most migrant groups in which men outnumber women, of a total 91,834 Filipinos residing in Australia in June 1995, 59,188 were women and only 27,108 men. This pattern has encouraged a kind of slippage in the popular Australian imaginary from '*Filipina*' → '*mail-order bride*', so that Filipina-Australians are almost always indiscriminately constructed in popular discourse as the wives of white Australian men (Holt, 1996: 64).<sup>68</sup>

Women who utilise the marriage and sex industries as underground immigration channels are clearly vulnerable to what is conventionally described as 'sex trafficking'<sup>69</sup>, defined by Wijers (1998: 69) as

<sup>68</sup> The ribald representation of the outback-dwelling Filipina wife in the 1994 Australian film *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (whose acclaim has, significantly, occasioned considerable national pride) exemplifies this tendency.

<sup>69</sup> Several international instruments concerning 'sex trafficking' were created during the early twentieth century, beginning with the *International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, Paris (1904)*, and followed soon after by the *International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic (1910)*. In 1949 the United Nations adopted the *Convention for the*

the process in which migrant women are brought into prostitution through the use of coercion, deceit, abuse or violence and in which they are denied fundamental human rights and freedoms such as the right to enter and leave the sex industry, the right to refuse certain customers, the right to refuse certain sexual acts, the right to freedom of movement, the right not to be exploited, and so forth.

The perpetration of such human rights abuses against 'mail-order brides' and women migrants working illegally in the sex industry may arguably be read as a symptom of Australia's restriction of female labour migration from developing countries.

In some instances, the marriage industry may operate as a form of 'sex trafficking'. The prevalence of 'serial sponsorship' by Australian men of women mostly from the Philippines, Fiji and Thailand, as wives or fiancées, was identified as a significant social problem in a 1992 report commissioned by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. *Serial Sponsorship: Immigration Policy and Human Rights*, revealed that numbers of Australian 'serial sponsors' had been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s, and that some of these men had subjected at least one of the women they had sponsored to abuse or exploitation.

Women from developing Asian countries employed in the sex industry are similarly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and enslavement. Owing to their status as illegal labour migrants, these women lack bargaining power, rights and protection. This would seem to be confirmed by Brockett and Murray's finding that some of the Thai sex workers they interviewed had had their passports been confiscated, that others had not been permitted to leave their workplace without a 'minder', or had been

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*Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others*, which superseded the earlier agreements (Doezema, 1998: 36). The issue subsequently re-emerged in the early 1980s as a concern, albeit with a slightly different geo-political focus. Specifically, the modern feminist-backed anti-trafficking lobby, headed by GAATW (the Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women), identifies those women from undeveloped peripheral states in Asia and Eastern Europe trafficked into Japan and the West as the victims. The Geneva-based International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has recently claimed that up to 500,000 such women are trafficked into Western Europe alone each year (cited in Bertone, 2000: 7).

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physically forced to keep working (1994: 197). The women were often powerless to contest such abuses, since most of them had arrived in Australia under contracts which outlined the terms and conditions of their employment as well as the schedule for repayment of debts incurred for their recruitment, passage, and placement within an establishment (Brockett and Murray, 1994: 191).

It should be noted, however, that since the sex industry is an 'invisible', largely unregulated and heavily stigmatised employment sector, sex workers are in general relatively disempowered. The legislative reforms removing the punitive criminal sanctions designed to suppress prostitution enacted in most Australian states during the 1980s and 1990s certainly awarded Australian sex workers greater bargaining power. Yet migrant women working in the sex industry remain comparatively powerless. Language and cultural barriers ensure that they seldom enjoy the benefits of solidarity with other sex workers, and their status as illegal workers means they are more easily subjected to exploitative and dangerous working conditions. Brockett and Murray found for instance that by 1994, Thai sex workers, who were not always able to insist that clients used condoms (1994: 198-9), were largely meeting the demand for unsafe commercial sex. This failure to practice safe sex consistently contributed to their ostracism by Australian sex workers, as well as posing a considerable risk to the women's health (Brockett and Murray, 1994: 200).

The situation for immigrant Asian sex workers, however, improves dramatically once their initial contracts expire, and they become increasingly empowered over time as they acquire more knowledge of the language and culture. Yet as Brockett and Murray point out, their potential for success in Australia is increasingly compromised by such factors as the impact of HIV/AIDS on the sex industry, tighter immigration controls and police crackdowns (1994: 202).

*Interpreting the Australian press coverage of Asian women's migration for the sex and marriage industries*

Before turning to the main body of this chapter, which examines Australian press constructions of the 'plight' of migrant women from developing Asian countries within Australia's sex and marriage industries, I comment on the sample analysed.

Key word searches using the terms 'mail-order bride[s]', 'serial sponsor[ship]', '[sex] trafficking', 'sex slave[s/ry]', 'illegal sex worker[s]', 'Asian prostitute[s]', and 'Asian immigration', yielded a considerably smaller sample of news texts than those analysed in chapters four and five. Of a total of 21 articles collected from the *Herald Sun*, the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* for the years 1992 to 1999, five reported on the 'mail-order bride' industry, including two feature articles. The remaining 16 news texts included in the sample covered the immigration of Asian sex workers, examining this issue largely in terms of the themes of 'sex trafficking' and 'sex slavery'.

It is significant that these issues received limited coverage in Australian newspapers throughout the 1990s. The few articles reporting on the 'mail-order bride' industry in particular tended to be relegated to supplementary sections of the newspapers, being thereby framed as 'weekend' or 'leisure' reading, as opposed to 'hard news'. In fact, the particular focus of my analysis of representations of 'mail-order brides' and immigrant Asian sex workers is upon three feature articles published in supplementary sections of the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. One of these, headlined *Red light traffic* (*SMH* Agenda 19.10.94, p. 17), reports on the 'sex trafficking' issue, and the remaining two, entitled *Plight of the Filipina* (*Age* Accent 12.4.95, p. 20), and *The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* (*SMH* Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46), address the social problems associated with Australia's 'mail-order bride' industry. Since they are typically presented in Australian newspapers as leisure reading, articles covering these issues might be expected to deploy textual devices in such a way as to maximise the entertainment value of the 'information' conveyed. Indeed, the texts examined in this chapter display a particularly marked investment in the melodramatic, their arguably gratuitous descriptions of the alleged sexual victimisation of 'mail-order brides' and migrant Asian sex workers affording the implied Australian reader ample opportunity to indulge his or her voyeurism. Ultimately, the almost monotonous repetition of gratuitous detail in the texts has the effect of obliterating all explanatory frameworks but the stereotype of the Asian women as an 'erotic-pathetic' object.

My analysis of the news texts is divided into four sections. In section one, I discuss the rhetorical devices and stereotypes that are repeatedly deployed in the texts to

accord migrant Asian brides and sex workers the status of victims. I consider the effects of the extensive – indeed, excessive – reporting on alleged abuses suffered by these women, and examine the means by which their ‘innocence’ is established as axiomatic. Section two of the chapter concerns the implicit identification of ‘villains’ and ‘heroes’ discernible in the press coverage of the social problems associated with Australia’s ‘mail-order bride’ and ‘Asian’ sex industries. As in the dominant narrative of sex tourism, Australians emerge as the heroes, while the villains are typically identified as ‘Asian’ others. Where the involvement of Australian men in the women’s alleged victimisation and sexual exploitation cannot be denied, the texts deploy the ‘folk devil’ construction to distance such men from Australians in general.

In section three of the chapter, I develop a critique of the dominant narrative’s victimology. I attempt to expose the inaccuracy of the texts’ persistent troping of migrant Asian brides and sex workers as helpless ‘trafficking victims’, and examine the ideological effects of such a belittling construction. I conclude the chapter with a final section addressing White Australia’s lingering fears of ‘Asian invasion’ provoked by the figure of the migrant Asian woman, which is present as a subtext in much of the coverage.

### **Section one: images of innocence**

Australian press representations of ‘mail-order brides’ and migrant sex workers take shape around a narrative template in which naïve young women from poor Asian countries are tricked or forced by evil ‘traffickers’ into lives of sexual servitude in the degenerate West. As in the newspaper coverage of the ‘comfort women’ and sex tourism issues, these representations of Asian women are premised upon the celebrated image of the ‘defiled innocent’. My analysis of the Australian press coverage of the issue thus provides support for Doezema’s observation that contemporary narratives of ‘sex trafficking’ resuscitate the trope of ‘innocence in

peril' (2000: 34), earlier popularised by the late nineteenth century feminist discourse on 'white slavery'.<sup>70</sup>

### *Naiveté*

The blamelessness of immigrant Asian sex workers, much like that of their counterparts working overseas in the sex tourism industry, is typically established in the texts by emphasising the women's youth and naiveté. They are thus described as "young women under 20," duped into migrating here by "organised crime figures" (*States fail to support laws on sex slaves* Age 18.04.98, p. 6), who "give them an air ticket and the promise of a new life" (*Bid to foil sex slave traders* HS 29.12.97, p. 17). Once they arrive, these deceived innocents – allegedly lured to Australia "on the pretext of finding restaurant or nanny work" – "discover they have a huge 'debt' to pay off" (*States fail to support laws on sex slaves* Age 18.04.98, p. 6). It is claimed that "about 300" such ingénues are currently being forced to work as "sex slaves" in Sydney and Melbourne, "to pay off debts of up to \$50,000" (*States fail to support laws on sex slaves* Age 18.04.98, p. 6).

Women entering the marriage market are also portrayed as being regularly deceived by the false promises of sex traffickers. Thus it is alleged that in some cases, "women who think they are coming here to marry Australian men" are unwittingly "brought here for prostitution" (*Plight of the Filipina* Age Accent 12.4.95, p. 20). Others are reportedly beguiled by 'serial sponsors', who "spend their money generously, dress well, and generally act in a manner which their mates back home might not recognise" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). This construction of the women as unsuspecting dupes is elaborated in one text with a cautionary tale about 'Tess', a Filipino woman who married a seemingly "good man" from Australia and paid a heavy price for her gullibility (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). "When she first met him in the Philippines," the narrative begins, Tess's future husband "had seemed so nice; a tourist asking for directions." After writing and

<sup>70</sup> The discursive construction of 'white slavery' grew out of allegations that white women and girls were being procured by force, deceit, or drugs, for prostitution in South America, Africa or 'the

telephoning her regularly from Australia, the tale continues, he eventually returned to the Philippines and "begg[ed] her to marry him". The article describes how Tess returned with her new husband to Australia, innocently "full of optimism about her marriage." She stands in the text as a kind of object lesson about the naivete of women who enter the marriage market, because "once in Adelaide," the reader learns, "the man she had met in the Philippines changed dramatically."

"I'd heard that white people had good futures, and plenty of money," admits 'Rebecca', whose story of victimisation at the hands of her Australian husband is also recounted in the text. Women from developing Asian countries are typically represented as easy targets for unscrupulous traffickers and 'serial sponsors' because they are unworldly and simple-minded, and Australian 'experts' are invoked to corroborate this belittling representation. A "lecturer in women's studies" is for instance cited in one text claiming that "women from countries such as the Philippines were vulnerable because they believed life in the West would be better than at home" (*Aussies in serial brides racket* HS 4.7.96, p. 28). Another text quotes Deborah Wall, of the Sydney-based Filipino Women's Working Party, likening the deception practiced by serial sponsors to "the influence of Hollywood. Selling a dream," and asserting that even "educated women believe in these men" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). The cause of their vulnerability to victimisation at the hands of 'serial sponsors', the text goes on to assert disparagingly, lies in "the way tourism and a diet of western television have taken hold of the romantic imaginations of Filipinos."

### *Poverty*

As in the press coverage of sex tourism, the women's innocence is also established in the texts by means of the rhetorical deployment of 'poverty', as a catch-all rationale or driving force behind the entry of 'Asian' and 'third world' women into Australia via the marriage and sex industries. This equation is made in an article which quotes Melba Marginson suggesting that Australia "re-channel its foreign aid to the Philippines away from military projects and towards development projects for

Filipino women so they do not have to prostitute themselves or look for foreign husbands" (*Women wage sex war on bar owners* HS 19.6.95, p. 29). A subsequent news text defines 'serial sponsorship' as the "buying and dumping of brides from poverty-stricken nations" (*Aussies in serial brides racket* HS 4.7.96, p. 28, emphasis mine).

By invoking 'Asian poverty', texts such as these draw out one strand of the well-rehearsed Asia-as-crisis-zone trope, discussed in the previous chapter. Underpinning this trope is precisely the kind of western superiority complex described in one text as a weapon of psychological abuse used against a Filipino woman by her Australian husband (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). 'Rebecca', whose husband had allegedly "begun insulting her nationality, to a point where she completely lost her confidence," is quoted explaining – in a "faltering" voice – that "I couldn't do anything anymore. I couldn't face people anymore." The text gives a description of an incident in which Rebecca's husband "insulted her in front of their guests, pointing to the steak and remarking, 'She didn't even know what that was until she came here... you should have seen how she lived.'" Returning to Rebecca's "softly" spoken testimony, the text continues: "I was so humiliated... To say such things about how you live in the Philippines, is such an insult."

Filipino women such as 'Rebecca' are in fact generally represented in the texts as having emigrated as 'mail-order brides' to escape their home countries, which tend to be over-determined in the coverage as poverty-stricken. Filipino women are characterised in one text as being desperate to marry foreigners since "[f]or many, it is the only way to escape lives of economic hardship, and to help their families in the Philippines by sending money back to them" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). Elsewhere, an Australian criminologist is cited explaining that "extreme poverty forces Filipino women to seek greener pastures overseas, even when it means marrying a complete stranger" (*Move on sex tours* HS 26.2.95, p. 22).

A favoured construction of the 'mail-order bride' industry thus holds that "in their pursuit of economic uplift" (*Move on sex tours* HS 26.2.95, p. 22), Filipino women

are easy prey for 'serial sponsors', who "hold a winning hand because of the social and economic circumstances of countries such as the Philippines" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). Cheryl Hannah, the chief migration officer at the Australian Embassy in Manila, is quoted describing the Philippines as "an extremely determined out-migrating country," and claiming that "these women want to leave" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). Her statement merely confirms the view of a known Australian 'serial sponsor' quoted later in the text asserting that "It's easy to get a woman from the Philippines" because "Filipino [women] are crawling to get overseas."

While some texts concede that Filipino women may set out to marry foreign men with the arguably mercenary intention of attaining a higher living standard for themselves and their families back home, they are also construed as honorable women who essentially dream of being good wives. Serial-sponsorship victim 'Rose' "doesn't hide the fact that she married an Australian husband in order to have a better life," one text admits, before stressing that she however "also wanted her marriage to work" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). 'Rebecca' is also quoted asserting that she "tried very hard to be a good wife," while fellow-victim 'Tess', it is reported, "never had the chance to be a 'good' wife." The text then goes on to explain that "in the Filipino culture, marriage is highly valued, and to fail as a wife is a great humiliation." This text effectively adheres to the same view of Filipinas' wifely qualities propounded by a Brisbane man who reportedly divorced his first Anglo-Australian wife and is quoted maintaining that "Filipina women are more loving... They put more into a marriage than Australian women do. They don't drink, they don't smoke, they don't hang around the house with a cigarette hanging out of their mouth."

The cautionary tales of "reckless Rose" and 'Rebecca', who married Australian men only three days after meeting them are told in the text to illustrate the rash decisions made by Filipino women in their alleged desperation to leave the Philippines. 'Rebecca' is quoted admitting that, as a 19-year-old solo mother, she was "in a hurry" to get married. "I said yes," she explains, "I looked at my baby and I thought, this is good for my baby's future and mine." It is noted in the text that she

went ahead with the marriage even after discovering that her 59-year-old future husband had been married three times previously. Allegedly desperate women like these, it is claimed, suffer from what is described as a kind of pathological inability to perceive 'warning signs' about potential husbands. "Our interview with Rebecca illustrates this syndrome," the text pronounces authoritatively, backing up its diagnosis by referring to three incidents in which Filipino women were warned by staff at the Australian Embassy about the men sponsoring them – "including a man who was on to his seventh sponsored spouse" – and chose to ignore the advice. Blame for this 'syndrome' is partly attributed in the text to the Filipino community's alleged failure to meet its "responsibility to tell the truth about aspects of Australian culture and lifestyle to their relatives back home." The text implies that confirmation of this assertion is offered by the case of an Australian man recently acquitted of his Filipino wife's murder, who subsequently began courting a second Filipino woman introduced to him by her sister, who was a friend of the murdered wife.

The dominant narrative template through which immigrant Asian sex workers are represented also holds that, much like 'mail-order brides', women from developing Asian countries risk being trafficked as prostitutes to escape the grinding poverty of their home countries. "Why would they want to stop coming here when conditions are so much better than they get in Asia?" the director of Sydney's Sexual Health Centre is quoted asking (*Red light traffic SMH Agenda* 19.10.94, p. 17). As I pointed out in chapter five, however, in favouring this 'poverty as force' argument, the news texts cannot accept that some Asian women might enter sex work voluntarily. It is implied that women suffering appalling living conditions in Asia are prepared to place their fate in the hands of sex traffickers despite the heavy penalties they may incur and the considerable dangers they are likely to face. By maintaining that they are effectively *forced* into sex work out of poverty, the news texts are able to preserve the innocence even of women who were aware that they would be working as prostitutes prior to their arrival in Australia. "As a clothing machinist in the Philippines unable to feed and house her small son," one text for instance reads, "Susie readily accepted the job offer of sex work in Sydney" (*Red light traffic SMH Agenda* 19.10.94, p. 17). That the implied reader's sympathy is supposed to lie unequivocally with this woman in spite of her immoral career choice, is made clear in the next paragraph, where she is quoted describing how "I used to cry just before I

started my shift because I knew how much the sex was going to hurt... But I kept going to pay off my debt and soon I will be earning money."

*Narrating the women's victimisation*

*(a) illegal Asian sex workers*

Asian women working illegally in the local sex industry are represented in the texts as being at the mercy of sex trafficking syndicates who invariably subject them to exploitative and dangerous working conditions. "Often they are paid so little for having sex," one text for instance claims, that "they have no hope of paying off their debts" (*Bid to foil sex slave traders HS 29.12.97*, p. 17). The story of "19-year-old Susie," described as "an illegal worker from Manila with a false passport organised by an international syndicate," who "will not reveal her real name," but is known to have worked "somewhere in Sydney's west" for the past two months, is recounted in another text as an example of the extreme exploitation suffered by illegal Asian sex workers in Australia (*Red light traffic SMH Agenda 19.10.94*, p. 17). It is alleged that 'Susie' is required to have sex with "up to 20 men during each 12-hour shift," and that while her clients "often refuse to use condoms," she is too "frightened to object for fear that the syndicate will turn her over to immigration officials," and is consequently forced to live "in constant dread of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases." Asserting that her working conditions contravene "a fistful of United Nations conventions," the text then itemizes the terms of what is construed as 'Susie's' virtual enslavement. It is noted that her passport and return air ticket were confiscated on arrival in Australia, that she is obliged to work without pay until she has repaid the \$20,000 debt incurred for her placement in the brothel, and that she is escorted at all times by a minder between her workplace and the syndicate-run boarding house where she sleeps.

The article goes on to allege that 'Susie' is "one of thousands of women from Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and China trafficked to Australia and other first-world countries on tourist visas or false passports organised by crime syndicates each year." Once in Australia, it is claimed in a later text, these women are "effectively slaves with little personal freedom" (*Bid to foil sex slave traders HS 29.12.97*, p. 17).

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This article, published in late 1997, identifies most of the "sex slaves" currently working in Melbourne and Sydney as having come from "South-East Asian countries such as Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines," with a minority originating in "former communist countries in Eastern Europe." An article published four months later reported that there was "a growing trend," centred largely in Sydney and Brisbane, whereby women (whom it described as "mostly Asian") were being "forced to work in virtual slavery in brothels" (*States fail to support laws on sex slaves* Age 18.04.98, p. 6).

In mid-1999, the sensational news broke that a case of 'sex slavery' involving trafficked Asian women had been uncovered in Melbourne. A bail hearing for the Australian man – named as 'Gary Glazner' – accused of masterminding the "scheme" alleged to have brought more 40 Thai women to work in Melbourne brothels, received front-page coverage in the *Age* (*Pub boss on pimp charges* Age 9.5.99, p. 1). It is reported that evidence obtained by the AFP suggested that the women were bound under contract to have sex with 500 men before receiving any payment for their work. The article also claims that, for the duration of their stay in Australia, the women were transported to and from brothels by a minder, and when not working, were "effectively unlawfully imprisoned" in "small rooms with no private facilities," behind "a large, locked steel gate" in Glazner's Kew hotel. Some of the women are claimed in the text to have escaped from the hotel through a second-storey window by climbing down a tree, and Glazner is alleged to have subsequently chopped down the tree and barred the window.

An article covering his committal hearing in the Melbourne Magistrates Court six months later describes Glazner as "a Melbourne hotel owner who headed an international prostitution ring," and claims that he was known as 'Pa' to the women he employed, who are referred to in the text as "his girls" (HS 1.12.99 p. 13). This text, published in the *Herald Sun* under the eye-catching headline *Girl tells of brothel ring*, reports on testimony presented at the hearing by one Thai woman who "managed to 'escape' from Mr Glazner". It is reported that the woman, named as 22-year old Arunsi Atcha, claimed to have been recruited in Thailand in August 1998 by "a man named Mr Chang," who obtained a visa for her from the Australian embassy and arranged her flight to Australia. "'He sent me to Pa,'" Atcha is quoted

testifying, "then I belonged to Pa and that was it." She is later cited describing how her freedom of movement was severely restricted by Glazner, who insisted that she had to "let him know when I went anywhere," because "I was his girl" (*Girl tells of brothel ring* HS 1.12.99 p. 13).

Additional details pertaining to the woman's contract are published in article which appeared on the same day in the *Age*, entitled *Thai women tell of unpaid brothel work* (1.12.99, p. 3). In this text, Atcha is quoted describing to the court three alternative variants of the contract initially offered to her by Chang: "The first condition was 500 jobs, after I finish 500 jobs I would receive \$40 or \$50," she explains. "The second condition was 700 or 800 jobs and I could do whatever I want, and the third condition I need to pay \$36,000 or \$37,000." The text reports that Atcha claims that once Chang "sold" her to 'Pa', she was forced to do "500 jobs" without receiving any money, unless she worked on Mondays, the designated "free day," when she was given \$45 for each client she saw.

(b) 'mail-order brides'

Narratives detailing the alleged victimisation of 'mail-order brides' at the hands of the men who sponsor them also abound in the Australian press. All too often, it is claimed in one article, women who enter Australia on 'fiancée' visas are sponsored to do so by "Australian men who traffic in third world women under the guise of pursuing happiness" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). A later text reports on a conference in Britain, where it was revealed that Australian men were "going on wife-seeking tours overseas," which allowed them to "have as much sex as they like with women being proffered for sale as brides," before 'dumping' the women and "leaving them destitute" (*Aussie 'in serial brides racket* HS 4.7.96, p. 28). In fact, with its almost exclusive focus on 'serial sponsorship', the dominant narrative template through which the marriage industry is represented in the coverage casts 'mail-order brides' as victims of what is effectively a form of 'sex trafficking'.

The discursive construction of 'serial sponsorship' as a significant social problem is attempted most comprehensively in a feature article by Nikki Barrowclough, which

appeared in mid-1995 in the *Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend* publication, entitled 'The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands' (6.5.95, p. 46). The article opens with an inordinately protracted prologue, in which it is claimed that 2,000 women are sponsored to come to Australia from the Philippines each year as wives or fiancées, and that between 15,000 and 20,000 Australian men now have Filipino wives. Its substantive topic, alleged to lie "concealed within the figures," is introduced as the "harrowing" and "shameful" story of 'serial sponsors', whom it defines as "men who make a habit of wooing, abusing, then discarding, Filipino women."

Barrowclough proceeds to list a series of "documented cases" that had come to *Good Weekend's* attention in the course of journalistic investigation, involving Australian men who had sponsored wives or fiancées from developing Asian countries on more than one occasion. In one case, the text claims, an Australian man had changed his name by deed poll in order to obtain a visa for a third 'fiancée' from the Philippines without being questioned about the two Filipino women he had previously sponsored. It then refers to the case of a "notorious Adelaide man," who reportedly "hands out instructions to his friends on how to bring in Filipino women on visitor entry visas," telling a friend in the presence of one of the many women he had sponsored that "[i]t's cheaper to get someone like (her) on a visitor's visa for six months than to see prostitutes." Another tragic case listed in the text involves "a South Australian man now in his 70s," identified as having sponsored "at least five" women from the Philippines, who "dumped" a 23-year old Filipino woman outside Adelaide's Migrant Resource Centre, allegedly telling employees that "she was no longer 'good in bed.'" 'Serial sponsors' such as these men are vilified throughout the article as conscienceless exploiters who "go shopping for wives and fiancées in countries which they regard as bargain bins of docile, domesticated, disposable women." As I hope to demonstrate, however, underpinning most of the news texts reporting on the 'mail-order bride' industry, is a strikingly similar conception of women from developing Asian countries as passive, submissive and inert objects, there for the taking by western men. Indeed, Filipinas are effectively assigned the status of commodities in the very first sentence of Barrowclough's article, which describes the Philippines as a traditional "source of women for Australian men."

Her article goes on to claim that 'serial sponsors' "import" women as brides or fiancées to work as their "as housekeepers, cooks and sex partners." Readers learn that the women they sponsor are expected to provide "on-call sex," which, it is subsequently implied, explains why such men "frequently import much younger women." Other sponsored women are allegedly subjected to what the text describes as "housebound slave-labour," and an attempt is made to substantiate this claim by alluding to the fact that "at least one woman was expected to dig drains and concrete." Further confirmation of the slavery allegation is offered in the 'true stories' of 'mail-order brides' 'Rebecca' and 'Tess', who were enslaved by the Australian men who sponsored them. Rebecca's husband is alleged to have boasted to his friends: "Look at my wife. She'll do anything I ask. Cook, wash, do the gardening." There follows an account of how Rebecca's husband forced her to work "harder than she ever had in her life," becoming angry if she stopped for a rest, and telling her "I bought you. I spent money on you. So you do what I want." When she began working outside the home, the story continues, "he demanded almost half her wages every week," reminding Rebecca that she "owed him a debt for bringing her to Australia." The story of Tess's enslavement by her inhumane sponsor is represented as even more horrific. The text recounts how Tess was tied to the bed "if she refused to have sex," and practically starved on a meagre ration of biscuits, which she was forced to eat "on the floor in the corner" while she watched her husband eat the food she had cooked for him.

The archetypal 'serial sponsor' is allegedly characterised by what the text refers to as a "diabolical need to control." This trait is exemplified in what is claimed to be "a bizarre marriage 'bond'" written by a South Australian man for his Filipino wife, which is quoted in the text as follows:

I will be obedient... and do the things he advises me to do; I will go with my husband to any place to care for him; I will not go to or contact any commission, public department, dispute party or court; I agree for my husband to collect and post all letters to or from the Philippines and Australia and any other country; I agree for all letters to be written in English so my husband can read them.

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It is claimed that cases of 'serial sponsorship' exhibit "a common pattern," whereby the man takes his wife or fiancée "somewhere isolated to live," and restricts her contact with the outside world by doing the shopping himself. These men's authoritarian management of household finances is also singled out for mention, where it is noted that the sponsor typically arranges for his wife's social security payments to be placed in a joint bank account to which she is denied access. The men 'Rose' and 'Tess' married are invoked in the text as archetypal serial sponsors. 'Rose', whose husband initially would not allow her to leave the caravan in Cairns where they were living, is quoted explaining that "[h]e didn't want me to go out, he didn't want me to meet anyone. He said he didn't want me to learn anything." Tess's husband is represented as even more controlling, forbidding her to go outside, to raise the blinds, to use the telephone, or even to write to her family, and effectively forcing her to live as "a prisoner in the house." The text goes on to describe how Rose and Tess were subjected to extreme psychological and physical abuse. Their husbands are taken to exemplify what that the text alleges about "many of these men" being "outright tyrants," who use "violence, including sexual violence, and threats of deportation to keep the women in a state of stress and insecurity." In what is described as the "final, brutal episode" which ended their marriage, Rose's husband "deliberately dropped two large, heavy pot plants from an upstairs balcony," striking her on the neck and shoulders. It is implied in the text that this incident caused Rose's collapse and paralysis with quadriplegia 11 months later, although it is conceded that her doctor had not conclusively established the link between these events.

'Tess's' experience is constructed in the text as an even more horrific case of 'mail-order bride' abuse, "so ugly that it has taken years of counseling for her to be able to deal with the past." Her story, described as "the hardest to listen to," commences with the dramatic opening line: "[f]or two days and two nights Tess lay on the bathroom floor, wrapped only in towels, still bleeding heavily." The reader is then taken back to the beginning of this shocking story of victimisation, where the text describes the escalation of conflict in the early days of their marriage, and how Tess's husband soon began "slapping her, kicking her, punching her, dragging her by the hair." The text attempts to arouse the reader's pity by describing how Tess "struggles to explain this part of the story... the beatings, the choking, the monitoring

of her every move." When she became pregnant, the text alleges, her husband told her to "get rid of it," and when, "deeply shocked," Tess refused, he "kicked her viciously in the crotch, to provoke the abortion she refused to have." That she is a defenceless victim is unequivocally established in the text by emphasising her diminutive stature - "like many Filipino women, Tess is tiny" - in relation to "such a big man's" great strength. "Screaming with pain," the story continues, Tess "started bleeding almost immediately." It is alleged that her husband then "stuffed a towel in her mouth" and "dragged" her to the bathroom, where he left her "lying on the tiles" in a pool of blood for two days. It is then alleged that Tess "tried" to leave her husband "several times," but that her attempts to assert her agency in this manner were consistently ineffectual, and that she kept being persuaded by him to return. She was only able to "[get] out for good," the text notes, thanks to the heroic intervention of the neighbours, her husband's parents and the police. The story ends with the disclosure that Tess's husband received a two-year prison sentence for multiple assault, and an addendum in brackets, for the benefit of any reader who has not yet appreciated the extent of this man's barbarity, noting that "he is still in prison, on separate charges."

The representation of 'Tess' in fact exemplifies the persistent construction in the Australian press, of 'mail-order brides' as submissive victims of domestic violence and murder. 'Expert' sources are invoked in some texts to provide statistical support for this dominant mode of representation. A "senior Australian criminologist" is for instance cited confirming that "migrant women" in general are "up to twice as likely to be murdered by their husbands as other women in Australia" (*Move on sex tours* HS 26.2.95, p. 22). And news consumers reading the article poignantly entitled *Plight of the Filipina*, learn that, according to a Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission study, "Australian-Filipino women have a 5.6 times higher risk of being victims of domestic murder than any other ethnic group in Australia" (*Age Accent* 12.4.95, p. 20). The same unreferenced statistic, that 17 Filipino brides have been murdered in Australia since 1987, is reiterated in articles published two years apart (*Marriage business 'invasion' of Asia* HS 18.9.93, p. 10; *Plight of the Filipina* *Age Accent* 12.4.95, p. 20). A more comprehensive inventory of their victimisation is offered in another text, which notes that, since 1980, "four children [of Filipino-Australian marriages] have died, 14 [Filipino] women have been

murdered or killed, five women and a child have disappeared, two women and their husbands have died in a mass suicide and one woman has died suspiciously in a fire" (*Move on sex tours* HS 26.2.95, p. 22). In Barrowclough's text, a special section titled *The Highest Price*, is devoted to enumerating instances of fatal violence perpetrated against Filipino women in Australia by their husbands or fiancées (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). Here, readers are regaled with the 'true stories' of Mila Milagros, "who was deaf and mute," [read: powerless to defend herself] and was "repeatedly bashed on the head with a blunt object by her de facto husband," and Elma Young, who was "five months pregnant" [also read: vulnerable and defenceless] when she was "found dead and dumped by the roadside" in Brisbane. It is noted that both victims' husbands are currently serving lengthy prison sentences. The text also alludes to the case of a Victorian man whose Filipino wife "died in violent circumstances," who, in what is implied as an appalling miscarriage of justice, has since been acquitted of her murder and "remarried another Filipina." This litany of bloodshed ends with the somewhat self-important claim that although "[m]ost of the women interviewed for this report posed willingly for photographs," *Good Weekend* elected not to publish most of these "in the interests of the women's future safety."

Nevertheless, the author's self-representation is framed in the article in terms of her dogged commitment to uncovering the women's lived 'truths', as a tribute to those Filipinas who have not "survived to recount their experiences," and instead "bear silent witness." Barrowclough's subjectivity is constantly foregrounded in the text, in contrast to that of the women whose stories she brokers. Her research for the article is metaphorised in the text as a "journey" in pursuit of "stories that scuttle away in the darkness like crabs, waving their pincers to keep you from getting too close." These "pincers recede only a little" when she eventually manages, apparently against all odds, to "get close" to the 'truth', "talking to women it has taken weeks to find." The first of these elusive sources is 'Rose', described as "a pretty, wise-cracking, 34-year old Filipina," who escapes the afternoon heat by driving herself down to the pier to go fishing, "in air made fragrant by frangipanis." The first indication that a sinister tale lurks behind this delightful vignette comes with the disclosure that, according to Bong Ramilo, the Darwin representative for the Centre for Philippine Concerns, "in the Philippines, frangipani blossoms are used for funerals." The reader then learns

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that sometimes Rose “uses her walking-frame to get herself to the edge of the pier,” and “other times she fishes from her wheelchair.” Ramilo, the text continues, “knew about Rose, and what happened to her...”

The article goes on to introduce ‘Rebecca’, the “survivor,” and ‘Tess’, who “survived.” These are similarly broken and scarred Filipino women the author claims to have met on her heroic truth-seeking “journey”. “There is no respite” in their stories, Barrowclough warns readers, “no moment when the sense of oppressiveness lifts.” For these women are to be understood above all as unilateral victims of men who had “no scruples in exploiting third world women in a way they wouldn’t dare with women from their own culture.” In this sense, Barrowclough’s text reproduces the conventional Orientalist assumption of Asian women’s passivity. For the purposes of her narrative, moreover, the Filipino women whose testimonies are offered up in the text as ‘case studies’ for the Australian reader’s consumption, are effectively the same person, defined almost exclusively in terms of the legacy of their victimisation. “Rebecca resembles Rose in many ways,” Barrowclough asserts, finding in these women “the same straightforward defiance, the vulnerability beneath the hard edge.” For while “women like Rose” might “try to keep up the bravado as they tell their stories,” Barrowclough decrees that “there is always a point... when the bravado crumbles.” This trait is illustrated, she implies, by the tears that “run down her face” when Rose is asked “how soon her mother, back in the Philippines, guessed how she was being ill-treated.”

Barrowclough apparently feels qualified, after what she describes as “many hours of conversation” with her subjects, to make the diagnosis that the Filipino women’s trademark “vulnerability” stems as much from their “grief” as from the “humiliation” they experienced upon “discovering how exploitable they are considered to be.” The claim that Filipinas are figured in popular representations as defined by and indeed reduced to their exploitation by powerful others, is also made in an article headlined *Plight of the Filipina by Age* reporter Pamela Bone. Her text opens with the observation that “in Europe when people want to say ‘I’m not your slave’ they say ‘I’m not your Filipina’” (*Age Accent* 12.4.95, p. 20). It is reported in the next sentence that a British publishing house recently released a dictionary defining ‘Filipina’ as ‘domestic helper or maid’. In the article’s conclusion, the March

execution of "Filipino housemaid," Flor Contemplacion, in Singapore, is invoked as a "symbol of the exploitation of Filipino women around the world."

## Section two: villains and heroes

### *'serial sponsors'*

By reporting on the marriage industry almost exclusively in terms of the 'serial sponsorship' theme, the news texts enact a form of discursive othering, or personalisation, that distances men who sponsor Filipino or other Asian wives from 'normal' Australian men. As in the dominant representation of the sex tourist-as-paedophile, the 'serial sponsor' emerges in the coverage as a distinct social type, defined by a designated pathology. "As contemptible as they are, it is intriguing how they come to resemble each other," Barrowclough for instance opines, describing the archetypal serial sponsor as a generally "ill-educated," aging man and a "hopeless social misfit." The dominant narrative of 'serial sponsor as [pathological] other' is only briefly interrupted at one point in Barrowclough's text where it is conceded that these men "haven't come from nowhere." Rather, they are alleged to manifest an extreme form of what is described as "the conscious or unconscious attitude of many Australian men towards Asian women," exemplified in the widespread use of the "brutal turn of phrase" "'little brown f...ing machines'" to describe Filipino women.

Serial sponsors are "the kind of men," Barrowclough later asserts, whose previous relationships have failed. "Many," it is pointedly noted in brackets, "are divorced." Others "have difficulty finding partners in their own culture," and are forced to look, it is implied, for needy women from Asian societies who are easily led into marriages which, as Justice Elizabeth Evatt is later quoted insisting, are "riddled with structural power imbalances such as age difference, isolation, language difficulties, economic dependency and race." Unable to cope with western women who are their equals, these maladjusted men order brides by mail in the belief that Asian females are submissive and servile. One serial sponsor is for instance alleged to have told a former wife that "he married Filipino women because he could push them around in a way he could not do to 'women.'" The text subsequently alleges that these men are often even "mentally disturbed," citing expert source Joan Dicka, described as "a

well-known Filipino welfare worker in Adelaide (and a former anti-Marcos activist)," referring to the case of one man, "a former patient at Glenside, an Adelaide psychiatric hospital, who has had five wives at least one of whom was a Filipina." Further confirmation of their alleged pathology is offered later in the text where readers learn that 'serial sponsor' victim 'Tess's' abusive husband was on a sickness benefit, and "a heavy user of antidepressants and other medication."

Additional discursive othering of the men who sponsor 'mail-order brides' is attempted in the text with the demonising portrait of known 'serial sponsor' Emilio Chignola, described as a 64-year-old invalid pensioner recently returned from the Philippines with his fifth Filipino wife; his seventh wife altogether. Chignola's story begins with a lyrical description of how the author traveled deep into the outback with her investigative team to interview him, where, her text endeavours to imply, he has effectively imprisoned his new wife. Thus his home in Coober Peddy is mythicised as being "at the end of the world," where "the hot, harsh wind and the red earth, littered with holes from opal mining, only reinforce the sense of isolation." The house itself is reported to be "hidden from view" behind "a long wall of corrugated iron," and it is noted that the team had been advised by "a local policeman" not to approach it "without warning." The "atmosphere" inside the house is described as having been immediately "strained". Chignola's demeanor is portrayed as generally "suspicious", and it is claimed that he "seems unnaturally aware of noises elsewhere in the house." His new Filipino wife, it is pointedly noted, "is nowhere to be seen." Tension reportedly escalates when Chignola gestures at the tape-recorder, threatening "'turn that on and I'll smash it.'" The author's hostility towards Chignola is made clear in her claim to have "faced" him across the kitchen table, "neither of us taking our eyes off the other."

The content of the interview is then brokered in such a way as to present Chignola as an emphatically obnoxious character. It is variously implied, for instance, that he has fascist sympathies, having been greatly influenced as a child by a schoolteacher who was "an admirer of Mussolini"; that he values subservience in a wife above all else, remarking that "you can't get the kind of wife anymore who will look after her husband with real devotion down to washing his feet"; and that he uses emotional blackmail to control his new wife, "saying that he knows she doesn't really love

him," a tactic which, "he says with some satisfaction, makes her plead with him, telling him she does love him." While the text implies that he has treated his wives like slaves, essentially importing them to "build his house", it is reported that Chignola considers his marriages as "mercy missions," claiming to have "rescued women from lives of poverty in the Philippines."

When Chignola's new wife 'Jocelyn' finally appears in the text, the author predictably belittles her, observing that "she is 27, but seems younger," and plays up her submissiveness, describing how she "walks into the room and leans shyly, devotedly, against her husband's shoulder." That she is above all an object in his possession is implied later in the text, where it is reported that Chignola "suddenly gets up and moves to the other end of the table, remarking that he wants to look at his wife." The author then describes a "strange, uneasy moment" in which 'Jocelyn', apparently failing to understand, "picks up his coffee cup and walks around the table to join him." 'Jocelyn' functions in the text as an uncomprehending pawn in the standoff between Chignola and the author grasping at straws to find evidence of abuse. When the author finally succeeds in getting "a moment... alone" with her, she asks "if she is happy," and Jocelyn reportedly "smiles and nods." The author resorts to explaining Jocelyn's disappointing failure to make a sensational confession about her victimisation by representing her as a naïve young woman who "has never been out of the Philippines before."

## 'sex traffickers'

'Sex traffickers' are also discursively distanced from 'normal' Australian men in the coverage. In news texts reporting on alleged cases of 'sex trafficking', the culprits' fundamental otherness is easily established by revealing their ethnic origin as 'Asian'. Australian readers are for instance offered a sensational exposé of an 'other' sex trafficker in article headlined *Importer whose product is people* (*Age* 21.8.99, p. 1). The text opens by introducing "Sunny Liu" as "an importer," who "officially... trades in seafood," before revealing the gruesome fact that "in truth his business is far more lucrative: the international trade in human flesh." It is alleged that, having "imported more than 1000 Asian prostitutes" to work in Sydney and Melbourne brothels, Liu is "Australia's biggest people trader." Expert source 'Chris Payne', a "former federal agent" who ran "the biggest Australian police operation against the sex slave trade, Operation Paper Tiger, from 1992 to 1996," is cited confirming that Liu is the illegal industry's "biggest operator." It is claimed that "according to [other unidentified] industry and police sources," he has "amassed a mini-empire of brothels to house his ready-made workforce." "Business has been good to Liu," the text claims, going on to contrast his apparent wealth as "a well-dressed, smooth-talking, 37-year-old," who is "a valued high roller at Crown casino," with the deprivation to which his victims are allegedly subjected. It is claimed that the "mainly Chinese or Thai" women he "trades in" are "effectively imprisoned" in brothels and "overcrowded safe houses," and are forced to "prostitute themselves seven days a week" to repay him "'debts' of more than \$30,000."

It is reported that Liu first "attracted police attention" after an Immigration Department raid on his sister's three-bedroom villa in Sydney revealed it housed 22 people, "including 19 young Thai women with false passports." Liu was charged with conspiring against the Commonwealth Migration Act, but cunningly escaped conviction on this occasion, it is implied, by dispensing with any witnesses as soon as he was released on bail, "immediately" paying for the women to return to Thailand. The text ends by implying that although Liu is unjustly still on the loose, journalists are hot on his tail. It is noted that newspaper staff had "observed carloads of 'contract girls' being delivered... between 5 and 5.30 every evening," to 74 Rose

Street, Fitzroy, a brothel catering exclusively to "Asian men," and "ultimately controlled" by Liu.

The representation of "a Melbourne businessman and hotel owner" allegedly responsible for the enslavement of Thai women as prostitutes, by contrast, is noticeably less castigatory. In May 1999 it was reported that a man identified simply as "Mr Gary Glazner, 56," had been "charged with being an unlicensed prostitution provider, living off the earnings of prostitution, false imprisonment and possessing an unregistered firearm" (*Pub boss on pimp charges* Age 9.5.99, p. 1). It is alleged that he had made "substantial amounts of money" from the [international prostitution] scheme." While it is conceded that police had initially opposed bail for Glazner, deeming that he "presented an 'unacceptable risk'," since "he could approach and intimidate witnesses in the case and had the capability and financial resources to obtain false documents and flee the country," it is subsequently reported that the next day he was been released on bail with a \$50,000 surety (*Man, 56, bailed on brothel scheme* Age 11.5.99, p. 11).

Articles covering his committal hearing seven months later report that Ms Atcha, one of the Thai women involved in the scheme testified Glazner had attempted to bribe her by sending a messenger known as 'Dan' to see her several times, who "asked her to nominate a cash payment" – "no matter how much money" (*Girl tells of brothel ring* HS 1.12.99, p. 13) – and offered to take her back to Thailand (*Thai women tell of unpaid brothel work* Age 1.12.99, p. 3). Atcha's veracity is however soon made to appear questionable, when it is revealed that she had in fact asked for \$50,000, and telephoned Glazner to confirm that she would be paid the money, despite having "earlier denied having contact with Mr Glazner this year" (*Thai women tell of unpaid brothel work* Age 1.12.99, p. 3). This text also picks up on discrepancies in another of the Thai women's testimonies, where it is reported that Ms Srisawang testified in the committal hearing that a man called Chang recruited her for Glazner's scheme. When asked why she had initially told police the man's name was 'Chi,' Srisawang reportedly "denied she tried to change his name out of fear." It is subsequently reported that Glazner was committed for trial "on unlicensed prostitution charges," and there is no further mention in the news text of 'sexual slavery' (*Magistrate slams prostitution scheme* Age 3.12.99, p. 4).

*Commending the heroes*

Australia is represented in many of the texts as a watchdog and saviour of the helpless women from developing countries victimised by 'sex traffickers'. This dominant mode of representation compares favourably with what is implied in one article as the appalling negligence of Asian Governments. The construction of official Asian corruption and immorality favoured in Australian newspaper narratives of sex tourism as well as in coverage of the 'comfort women' case, thus surfaces in this text covering 'sex trafficking'. Reporting on the 'plight' of Filipino women trafficked through the marriage trade, Pamela Bone exhorts readers to "[b]lame... a former corrupt government in the Philippines, for a start" (*Plight of the Filipina Age Accent* 12.4.95, p. 20). Bone goes on to locate the cause of the exploitation of the "3.5 million Filipinos, most of them women," working around the world today in "something akin to slave labour," in the Marcos regime's introduction in the 1970s, of "an official policy of exporting Filipino labour as a means of getting foreign capital," and a solution to the "economic chaos caused by massive foreign borrowing and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few."

Australia's firm commitment to rescuing helpless Asian women from exploitation by traffickers is signified in texts that report on the AFP's anti-trafficking operations. An October 1994 article for instance reported that the Federal Police Special Crime Branch had since 1991 been involved in an operation code-named Paper Tiger, which aimed to end the "trafficking of women" by targeting "syndicate leaders" (*Red light traffic SMH Agenda* 19.10.94, p. 17). Detective Sergeant Chris Payne, head of the four-officer team, is quoted in the text claiming that his "crack team" had identified and is monitoring "several groups either importing women and placing them in brothels owned by other people, or running their own brothels with the women they bring in." Reassurance that the Australian police are "winning the fight" against the syndicates is offered in a later article headlined *Raids on brothels*. Here it is reported that, following a nine-month investigation – code-named 'Operation Podium' – into the trafficking of Thai prostitutes, AFP raids in Melbourne had resulted in the arrest of a man identified as "Van Chau Lee, 37," effectively "smashing an international prostitution racket" (*SMH* 3.12.96, p. 2).

Six months earlier, it had been claimed in the *Age* that the Federal Government was “planning tough laws” to combat the trafficking and “enslavement” of Asian women as indentured prostitutes in Australia (*Sex laws aim to end trafficking Age* 23.6.96, p. 11). It is implied that the push for new legislation was triggered by “the discovery of a 13-year-old Thai girl in an illegal brothel in Melbourne in 1994, a 15-year-old girl in a Sydney brothel last year, and a prostitute travelling on a 15-year-old’s passport last month.” A “senior officer” in the Attorney General’s department is quoted asserting the need for a series of “draconian” laws to deter traffickers, and lamenting that the woeful inadequacy of Asian domestic laws in dealing with sex trafficking meant the AFP was restricted to targeting those people apprehended in Australia. By late 1997, federal Justice Minister, Senator Amanda Vanstone was quoted heralding an impending “crackdown against sex slave operations” (*Bid to foil sex slave traders HS* 29.12.97, p. 17). “Tough laws” aimed at “break[ing] the sex slave trade” by “get[ting] at the operators” were currently being “hammered out between the Federal Government and the states,” and would be in place within six months. The new legislation, the text alleges, would compliment the laws already in place to protect people who had been “kidnapped and forced” into sex work, by extending protection to the “young Asian girls” brought into Australia under false pretences and later tricked into prostitution.<sup>71</sup>

By reporting on the immigration of Asian women as ‘mail-order brides’ or sex workers via a dominant narrative template which stigmatises pathological or Asian others as villains, while celebrating Australia’s role as watchdog and hero, however, the press coverage deflects attention from the politico-legal context which arguably expedites Asian women’s exploitation and abuse by ‘sex traffickers’ or ‘serial sponsors’. In the first place, it is reasonable to assume that, as illegal migrant workers living in fear of deportation, Asian women employed in the Australian sex industry will be reluctant to seek help from the police. For some women, the prospect of being deported – which itself incurs a substantial fee – before their debts are repaid, may in fact be more frightening than the experience of sexual enslavement in an Australian

brothel. For as Wijers (1998: 76) points out, unlike the jurisdiction of the AFP, the power of trafficking syndicates does not stop at the border. In any case, given the prevailing public opinion that women who have entered prostitution voluntarily are simply not entitled to the law's protection, Asian sex workers may be unwilling to complain to police unless they fit the stereotype of the 'innocent victim', tricked or coerced into the sex industry.

The continued stigmatisation – and partial criminalisation – of prostitution in Australia, and the inability of Asian sex workers to obtain work visas to come here therefore combine to create the scope for the sex trafficking industry. In this sense, the law effectively works in favour of traffickers and against those women seeking to improve their prospects through migration, and blame for the women's exploitation by traffickers lies to a great extent with Australia's racist immigration policy.<sup>72</sup> Thai sex workers migrating to Australia, for instance, are therefore forced to rely upon what Murray (1998: 57) describes as 'a complex array of big and small operators, such as agents in Bangkok, passport forgers in Kuala Lumpur and travel agents in Singapore,' consequently arriving with debts of up to \$30,000. Crackdowns by Australian immigration authorities and police, moreover, ensure that these costs are pushed up (Murray, 1998: 58). While some women manage to pay off this debt, and may eventually move into managerial positions in brothels, the terms and conditions of the women's employment are often exploitative and dangerous owing to their doubly illegitimate status as illegal migrants and as sex workers.

### Section three: critiquing the victimology

As I have shown, the 'trafficking' of helpless Asian women into Australia as sex workers or 'mail-order brides' is effectively constructed as a major social problem in

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<sup>71</sup> It was reported the following April, however, that the states refused to introduce laws complementing the federal Government's Australia-wide legislation outlawing sex slavery and servitude (*States fail to support laws on sex slaves Age* 18.04.98, p. 6).

<sup>72</sup> Noting that 'young women from the UK and Canada have no problem getting work visas under bilateral agreements,' Murray quotes an Australian immigration official pronouncing that "no attractive young woman, and by that I mean a woman under 60, is going to get a visa in Bangkok unless she's dripping with gold or has a business background" (1998: 57-8).

the discourse of the Australian press. However, there is little verifiable statistical evidence to support any such construction. Murray has for instance criticised 'quasi-academic' publications such as the 1993 Asia Watch report '*A modern form of slavery*', a text which is often referenced in Australian Government and UN documents, for elevating unverifiable 'trafficking' figures to the status of 'facts' through what is only 'the repetition of the rhetoric' (1998: 53). She points out that the report, based on interviews with 30 Burmese women in shelters and detention centres in Thailand, misleads readers by emphasising that the women were not aware that they would be working in the sex industry before they were 'trafficked' into Thailand. For given that prostitution is illegal in Thailand, she argues, how could the women admit otherwise? And as Doezema (2000: 32) has pointed out, even the Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) has conceded that finding reliable statistics on trafficked women is virtually impossible.<sup>73</sup> 'Trafficking' is perhaps best understood, therefore, as a constituent part of the mythology surrounding Asian women in the western imaginary. The construction of 'sex trafficking' in the discourse of the Australian press, then, entails a familiar mode of representation whose purpose is to overdetermine Asian women as exploited victims.

Although the conception of all prostitution as coerced<sup>74</sup> has to a great extent been supplanted by a recognition of the distinction between 'forced' and 'voluntary' prostitution,<sup>75</sup> the overwhelming focus of news reports – and human rights activists –

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<sup>73</sup> Doezema further contends that, to the extent that it is premised upon a largely unsubstantiated stereotype in which young innocents are tricked or forced into the sex industry, anti-trafficking discourse replicates the moral panic triggered a century earlier by the myth of 'white slavery'. Noting that historians have found the actual number of 'white slaves' to have been very low, Doezema reads 'white slavery' as a metaphor for and marker of turn of the century European society's fears of women's growing independence, of the alleged breakdown of the family, and of the threatened loss of national identity through the influx of immigrants (2000: 40).

<sup>74</sup> The notion that since all prostitution constitutes a human rights violation, there is no such thing as 'voluntary' sex work, is upheld by the neo-abolitionist lobby, founded by Kathleen Barry, author of the movement's seminal text '*Female Sexual Slavery*' (1979), and headed since 1991 by the US-based organisation the CATW (the Coalition against Trafficking in Women).

<sup>75</sup> The distinction between 'forced' and 'voluntary' prostitution, which aims to respect sex workers' right to self-determination, was influenced by sex workers' rights movement, and developed in opposition to neo-abolitionist ideology (Doezema, 2000: 33). It has been embraced by the anti-

is upon cases of forced prostitution, encouraging the popular perception that most sex workers are victims. Indeed, sex work involving women from developing Asian countries is almost indiscriminately construed as abuse in the discourse of the Australian press. This dominant mode of representation is shaped by an implicit racism, so that while the discourse might be prepared to accept that western women enter the sex industry – or marriage – voluntarily, it automatically tropes Asian sex workers – and ‘mail-order brides’ – as passive and exploited victims, unable by definition to make any independent, non-coerced decisions.

Underpinning this paternalistic and arguably hysterical representation of immigrant Asian sex workers – and ‘mail-order brides’ – is what Murray (1998: 60) refers to as the ‘erotic-pathetic’ trope of the Asian woman. This racialised trope is a variant of the iconic image of the ‘third world woman’ addressed in chapter five. Its permutations, as discussed previously, combine to portray women from developing Asian countries as poverty-stricken, ignorant, childlike, naïve, unemancipated and passive, and it has the ideological effect of eclipsing these other women’s agency. The perpetuation of this stereotype in the discourse of the Australian press, moreover, may have tangibly detrimental effects upon immigrant Asian sex workers, ultimately contributing to their experience of abuse and discrimination. As Murray points out, it seems likely that the erotic-pathetic trope encourages Australian brothel owners and their clients, as well as the sponsors of ‘mail-order brides’, to think of Asian women as ‘easy prey’ whose human rights may be violated with impunity (1998: 58).

Thoroughly obscured by the Australian news texts’ dominant construction of migrant Asian sex workers and brides as passive and powerless ‘trafficking victims’, is the fact that these women have made courageous decisions to change their socioeconomic circumstances through migration. Contrary to what the discourse of the Australian press would maintain, Asian women who migrate as sex workers or ‘mail-order brides’ should be properly recognised as enterprising risk-takers who have refused to accept the limitations of their situations at home (Kempadoo, 1998:

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trafficking organisation GAATW, and from the mid-1980s has found expression in United Nations instruments dealing with women’s human rights (Doezema, 2000: 38).

17; Wijers, 1998: 70; 77). The news texts' representation of migrant Asian sex workers as victims of coercion or deceit is further discredited by the evidence that most 'trafficked' Asian women are aware that they will be working in the sex industry prior to migrating, and that many have previously worked as prostitutes (Doezema, 2000: 24; 32). On the one hand it is clear, then, that Asian women who migrate to Australia for work in the sex industry or as 'mail-order brides' are not wholly 'coerced' into doing so. On the other hand, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the nature of their cross-national movement is undoubtedly determined to a great extent by such factors as the patriarchal restriction of such women's opportunities for legal labour migration. In this context, I would agree with Piper (1999) that a more nuanced conception of migrant Asian women's involvement in the marriage and sex industries than that provided by the reductive forced-versus-voluntary dichotomy is required.

The dichotomy is furthermore premised upon a fundamentally conservative distinction between 'good' and 'bad' sex workers, with the disturbing implication that the latter have forfeited their right to the state's protection.<sup>76</sup> The subtext of the Australian press focus upon migrant Asian sex workers as the coerced innocents of the sex industry, then, is a refusal to accept that 'voluntary' sex workers also have human rights which need protecting. The dominant narrative in which innocent Asian women become victims of forced prostitution therefore provides implicit support for the old abolitionist agenda, which would strip 'voluntary' sex workers of their rights. Ultimately, the distinction between 'forced' [read: good] and 'voluntary' [read: bad] prostitution provides ideological support for the patriarchal control of female sexuality. And while the discursive construction of 'sex trafficking' is ostensibly concerned with the protection of helpless Asian women, its real agenda is

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<sup>76</sup> As Doezema points out, this whore/madonna division within the category of 'prostitute' has been enshrined in legislation by several governments. The question of a woman's virtue is thus at the heart of sex trafficking laws in Germany, Canada, Japan, Brazil, Columbia and Uganda, where penalties for traffickers are reduced if their alleged victims were aware that they would be working in the sex industry (1998: 45). Doezema goes on to argue that the focus upon instances of forced prostitution provides a convenient smokescreen behind which the international community can continue hide from the issues raised by the sex workers' rights movement.

arguably the restriction of women's economic autonomy and their confinement within the domestic sphere. In the case of Australian press constructions of the issue, it is also fundamentally concerned, as I now argue, with keeping polluting racial others out of Australia.

#### **Section four: immigrant Asian women as threatening others within**

It is clear that the immigration of others from the margins provokes considerable anxiety over boundary maintenance in the national imaginaries of post-imperialist metropolitan states such as Australia. Bhabha reads the crisis produced by the figure of the migrant other within in psychoanalytic terms, as a kind of return of the repressed. For her presence, far from evoking an harmonious cultural pluralism, instead articulates what Bhabha describes as an alienating and agonistic 'narrative of cultural difference which can never let the national history look itself narcissistically in the eye' (1990b: 318). Fear of the other is thus reflected in restrictive immigration policies and in the specific form of policing – whose instruments are detention, extradition and deportation – which has developed in western metropolitan societies at the intersection of immigration law and the criminal justice system (Young, 1996).

This is the context in which news media reporting on police operations against illegal immigrants must be understood. News texts covering the deportation of such persons might usefully be schematised in terms of their Durkheimian function, as representations aimed at mending holes torn in the social fabric by offenders through the public affirmation of law and order. In this sense, Australian press coverage of raids on brothels and the arrest and deportation of sex workers as illegal immigrants arguably represents an attempt to assert the triumph of national integrity in the face of the threatening other's intrusions. A 1992 article for instance proclaims that, following a Federal police raid on a Belfield townhouse, which "found 19 people living there, 13 of them Thai women with false passports," three women, identified as "Suttida Chaininwong, 26, Sirorat Grawtangtang, 23, and Sasimimon Kongsomboon, 25," had "appeared in court on charges of conspiracy and possessing false papers" and were refused bail (*Thai women had false passports, police claim SMH* 27.11.92, p. 8). Later articles covering proposed anti-sex trafficking legislation report that "in September, Sydney police raided inner-city premises and arrested 19

illegal immigrants" (*Bid to foil sex slave traders* HS 29.12.97, p. 17), and, five months later, that "Immigration Department figures show 54 people were deported for working illegally in brothels in 1996-7," and that a further "67 were deported in the seven months to the end of January last" (*States fail to support laws on sex slaves* Age 18.04.98, p. 6).

In the rare instances that they are not troped in the coverage as helpless victims, moreover, Asian women who have migrated to Australia for work in the sex industry are portrayed as money-hungry opportunists. One such construction appears in a text which claims to have uncovered evidence that people whom it describes as "male and female Asians" were "being offered up to \$3000 a week to work in brothels and escort agencies in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast" (*Act now on sex threat, say doctors* HS 13.3.92, p. 28). Elsewhere, 'May', a "Chinatown sex worker," admits that her decision to migrate to Australia from Thailand was solely motivated by money (*Red light traffic* SMH Agenda 19.10.94, p. 17). "It's simple," she is quoted explaining. "A good night in Sydney, I make \$400. A good night in Bangkok I make \$20." Even 'mail-order brides' are at times represented in the coverage as gold-diggers "seeking a better life for themselves" (*Marriage business 'invasion' of Asia* HS 18.9.93, p. 10). In their ambition to transcend "economic hardship," one text claims, Filipino women are "dogged in their pursuit of foreigners to marry" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). 'Asia expert' Alison Broinowski is called upon in another article to provide support for the text's implication that many of these women are disreputable types. Broinowski, described in the article as an 'author and former diplomat', is quoted pointing out that "bar girls are said to figure prominently among fiancées applying for migration and anecdotes suggest that some are already married and have children" (*Marriage business 'invasion' of Asia* HS 18.9.93, p. 10). In their mercenary quest for self-betterment, another article implies, these women will not hesitate to take advantage of hapless Australian men, whose representation echoes that of the gullible love-seeking sex tourists discussed in chapter five. This text notes that the fact that "many of these women are educated and had good jobs in the Philippines," has fueled "cynicism which already exists in some quarters" about the women's motives, and asserts that "inevitably", some women do "exploit the men who bring them here" (*The shameful story of Australia's serial husbands* SMH Good

Weekend 6.5.95, p. 46). This text goes on to point out that these women's self-serving and nepotistic plans to save themselves and their families from Asia's poverty problems are ultimately at the expense of the Australian taxpayer. For in the event that their mail-ordered marriages fail, these women and their families are no longer provided for by Australian sponsors, and "the government picks up the tab." "Very few" dumped 'mail-order brides' are deported," the text alleges, and while some "vanish into the community and become 'illegal,'" it is claimed that "most of them end up in refuges or in social security offices."

Yet another implicit argument against Asian women's immigration may be discerned in a text which reports that Australia, and the state of Queensland in particular, is "being flooded with Asian prostitutes" (*Act now on sex threat, say doctors* HS 13.3.92, p. 28). This representation invokes the western imaginary's persistent association of Asian women with commercial sex, a construction rooted in the trope of the erotic-exotic Oriental woman. Indeed, their reputedly extensive involvement in prostitution has historically been used to justify restricting Asian women's legal migration to the West. Uchida (1998: 162-4) for instance observes that anti-prostitution and anti-'picture bride' rhetoric have been regularly deployed in the United States since the beginning of the 'anti-Chinese' period in the 1870s, to bar Asian women from US citizenship.

In the discourse of the Australian press, moreover, migrant Asian sex workers, much like their counterparts working in sex tourism industries at home, often appear as a source of physical as well as moral contamination. Reporting that "[f]our Queensland men are said to have returned from South-East Asia holidays with HIV last year," a particularly denigrating article whose headline identifies migrant Asian sex workers as a "sex threat", quotes a member of the Australian Medical Association expressing grave concern about the risk of pollution posed by the reputed importing of Asian prostitutes to Australia: "It's a hell of a worry," he is quoted as saying. "Why spend the money to go to Thailand when you can get HIV from Asian prostitutes on the Gold Coast?" (*Act now on sex threat, say doctors* HS 13.3.92, p. 28). It is then claimed that "doctors have urged the Queensland Government to regulate the sex industry" so that migrant Asian sex workers might be submitted to "enforced" health "checks", which would effectively control "the spread of sexually transmitted

diseases." The article ends with the disclosure that "Queensland sex workers have also expressed concern over the Asian newcomers, who they fear could jeopardise their '100 per cent safe sex' record."

While some texts (albeit by invoking the trope of the self-effacing Asian woman,) may concede that illegal migrant sex workers from Asia lack the bargaining power which would enable them to insist on safe sex,<sup>77</sup> these women are nonetheless construed as potential vectors of infection whose presence in Australia threatens the general population. By representing Asian women's bodies as sites of disease, these texts resuscitate nineteenth century colonial medicine's iconography of the pathogenic native. European colonisers' anxieties over cultural boundary maintenance, in the face of their location within, and indeed, dependence upon the other's society, were expressed through sanitary science's 'language of contagion' (Ching-Liang Low, 1996: 162). The discourse of colonial medicine, moreover, which took as its disciplinary object an unhygienic native other whose noxious bodily wastes constantly threatened to contaminate the settler population, became a key instrument for regulating the sociopolitical and cultural space of the colony. In seeking to expel anything that 'confused or contradicted cherished classifications,' and thereby defiled the sacred cultural space of the settler society, colonial medicine operated as a form 'pollution behaviour' (Douglas, 1984: 36, cited in Ching-Liang Low, 1996: 163).

Ironically, the discursive construction of the pathogenic native concealed – by inversion – the fact that real medical catastrophe wrought by colonisation lay in the introduction by Europeans of a plethora of potentially lethal infectious diseases to the colonies. A similar disavowal by is played out in contemporary Australian press discourse. For the rhetorical construction of migrant Asian sex workers as AIDS

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<sup>77</sup> Here I have in mind the article brokering 'Susie's' story, examined in part one of this chapter. Readers may have been shocked to learn that 'Susie' had continued to work as a prostitute in Sydney's inner West while suffering from a serious pelvic infection, and, as discussed earlier, that she was living "in constant dread of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases" because she was too frightened to protest when her clients refused to use condoms (*Red light traffic SMH Agenda* 19.10.94, p. 17).

vectors – and of Asia as an AIDS-crisis-zone, as discussed in chapter five – would belie the fact that HIV/AIDS had reached epidemic proportions in Europe and the United States long before it was introduced to ‘pattern three’ countries in South-East Asia. Yet the figure of the migrant Asian woman and the spectre of HIV/AIDS are assigned the same discursive location in the coverage, as alien invaders and agents of both moral and physical decay, whose threatening presence in Australia evokes a desire to expel. Migrant Asian sex workers may be cast out as ‘illegal immigrants’, in a process of abjection which is at once psychic and sociopolitical, in order that the Australian social body can maintain its purity. Yet as Kristeva has observed, that which is abject can never be entirely obliterated, remaining instead as the subject’s constitutive repudiation, and an ever present threat to his or her identity as ‘civilised’ (cited in McClintock, 1995: 71).

### Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by suggesting that, whether they are represented as innocent victims or as vectors of physical and social contagion, the persistent construction of migrant Asian sex workers and ‘mail-order brides’ as abject others in the Australian press, betrays a lingering hostility towards the presence of otherness within, which has survived the demise of ‘White Australia’.

The legitimacy of the White Australia policy was gradually eroded in the post-war years, and formally dismantled between 1966 and 1975, on the advice of the Department of Foreign Affairs, which perceived that the restriction of Asian immigration was no longer in the economic or political interests of an Australia now perceived as ‘part of Asia’ (Jupp, 1995: 210).<sup>78</sup> One quarter of a century after the

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<sup>78</sup> By the mid-1960s, the mass migration programmes launched in the immediate post-war period had resulted in the entry of large numbers of non-English speaking Europeans, including migrants from Turkey and the Middle East, whose presence rendered the cultural justifications for the White Australia policy untenable, exposing them as nothing more than crude racism (Jupp, 1995: 209). And, as discussed in chapter two, the cultural basis of the policy was further eroded in the post-war era as Australia reoriented its national identity in terms of its geographic location within the Asia-Pacific region. The shift was determined by political recognition of the need to foster close relations with the newly independent Asian states, as Britain began to withdraw from its Asian and Pacific possessions,

official end of White Australia, trade, investment and immigration patterns, in which Asian countries feature prominently, have effectively made this construction a reality. Yet, as several critics have observed, the geopolitical re-orientation has not been accompanied with a corresponding sociocultural reorientation (Broinowski, 1992; Hanan, 1993; Jupp, 1995; Dever, 1997a; Stratton, 1998). An entrenched Anglo-American cultural dominance, or 'antipodeanism' remains, marking Australia's refigured relationship to Asia with a profound ambivalence. My analysis of representations of immigrant Asian sex workers and brides in the Australian press would seem to support Dever's further suggestion, that the real agenda behind the official rhetoric is the potentially neo-colonialist strategy of *Australia in Asia*, and emphatically not *Asia in Australia* (1997a: 3). In short, it would seem that the cherished myth of a White Australia has yet to be fully displaced. Even as Australia plays the friendly neighbour in diplomacy and trade, it keeps an anxious eye ever turned on the fences that keep Asians - indelibly marked as other - in Asia and out of Australia's national imaginings.

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and to reduce its trade and investment commitments in the region (Jupp, 1995: 210). This geopolitical reorientation combined with the eventual lack of incentive for Europeans to migrate to Australia, to spell the official end of white Australia (Jupp, 1995: 209).

## CONCLUSION

My analysis has revealed a common set of thematic templates, archetypes and tropes running through Australian news texts covering the issues of the 'comfort women', sex tourism and the alleged 'traffic' in Asian women as sex workers and 'mail-order brides'. A dominant narrative trajectory centred upon the identification of victims, villains and heroes is reproduced in the coverage of each of these three 'social problems' inscribed upon and figured at the level Asian women's bodies. The archetypal image of the Asian woman as a silent, sexually exploited victim constitutes the narrative's a priori. The Australian subject, meanwhile, is implicitly assigned the roles of hero, judge and arbiter. The villains, by contrast, whether by virtue of their Asianness, or as a function of the activation of the folk devil structure, invariably appear in the news texts as other.

I read the reproduction of this narrative structure in the Australian press coverage of each issue as an othering device. Its ideological purpose is to exempt Australians from blame for the women's plight, through a mode of address which constructs them as innocent – indeed, morally outraged – bystanders, and furthermore, to present Australians as the saviours of Asian women. The dominant narrative template thus invokes the time-honoured trope of 'rescue', wherein the liberty of non-western women is represented as contingent upon western heroism in the face of barbaric non-western cultural practices. The rescue trope, as discussed in chapter five, has historically been invoked as an implicit apologia for imperialism, since its subtext is a western superiority complex whose implication is that liberation for non-western women is to be attained through a process of 'westernisation'. I conclude this thesis by considering the implications of the deployment of the rescue trope in the dominant narratives of the 'comfort women', sex tourism, and the 'traffic' in Asian women, in the discourse of the Australian press.

In the first instance, the rhetoric of rescue disavows the pervasive historical reality of non-western women's sexual exploitation at the hands of western men. Indeed, while colonialism created conditions which effectively authorised the rape of indigenous women by white colonisers (Scully 1995: 337), this historical fact has been thoroughly obscured in popular western representations, by the reverse troping of

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non-western males, discussed in chapter one, as cruel traders in female flesh or as rapists of white women.<sup>79</sup> As Said (1978) has shown, this Orientalist construction was a key element in the Manichaean division between the civilised western male and his barbaric eastern other, which structured imperialist representation regimes of the nineteenth century.

As one of many 'tropologic operations' constituting 'a kind of figurative substratum within the discourse of empire' (Shohat & Stam, 1994: 137), then, the image of the lascivious other played an important role in the imperialist acquisition of territory. It was for instance implicated in the management of anti-colonial rebellion in nineteenth century India, where the figure of the dark rapist was invoked to legitimise the brutal means of retaliation used by colonial authorities against insurrectionary natives following the 1857 mutiny (Scully, 1995: 338). And, as my analysis of contemporary Australian newspaper representations suggests, the efficacy of the trope persists into the present. In the dominant press narratives of 'sex tourism', 'sex trafficking' and the 'comfort women', the villains tend to appear as Asian others, even as western socioeconomic and geopolitical hegemony facilitate the continuing sexual exploitation of women from developing Asian countries by western men. In Australian newspaper constructions of these three 'social problems' transacted through Asian women's bodies, then, the figure of the sexually rapacious non-western male operates as the catalyst for the surreptitious cathecting of neo-imperialism as an heroic rescue mission undertaken by the western subject.

The cultural superiority complex underwriting the rhetoric of rescue, moreover, is premised upon a refusal to recognise the entrenched patriarchal ideology structuring gender relations in western societies. Trinh Minh-Ha suggests that the reformulated brand of patriarchy operative in the contemporary West might usefully be termed 'progressive' as opposed to 'orthodox' (1991: 148). The difference between the two is captured by Gunning, who highlights the hypocrisy in the western media's vehement condemnation of other cultures in which female genital surgery (FGS) is

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<sup>79</sup> Several critics have read colonial literature's persistent preoccupation with the sexual threat posed to white women by the figure of the black rapist on a psychoanalytic level, as disavowed white male desire projected (see, for instance, Shohat, 1993: 66; and Pieterse, 1992: 180).

practiced, given its virtual promotion of such dangerous cosmetic procedures as breast augmentation with silicone implants. For Gunning, then, it is clear that 'the attitudes and assumptions about gender roles that provide the justification for female genital surgeries remain largely in place in our contemporary western culture' (1997: 354). Yet, by implying that patriarchal ideologies and practices are feudal remnants observable only in backward communities outside the developed West, the rescue trope perpetuates the myth of the West's sexual egalitarianism, and enshrines an image of western women as liberated by virtue of their westernness. As such it might serve the reactionary purposes of those who would turn a deaf ear to the critiques of contemporary gender politics mounted by feminists in the West.<sup>80</sup>

It is clear that patriarchies are perpetually reconstituted and reconfigured over time and in different cultural settings (Sangari & Vaid, 1989: 25). 'Development' has therefore failed to deliver emancipation for women in the 'third world', who remain overwhelmingly relegated to the margins of the production process (Sangari & Vaid, 1989: 2). In some respects, moreover, the myth of development, which I deconstructed in chapter one, has arguably had devastating consequences for women in 'third world' communities. The structural adjustment policies enforced by the World Bank in the name of development have meant drastic cutbacks to government spending on education and social services, with the negative effects being felt most acutely by women. McClintock (1995: 393) further contends that multinational corporations are the real beneficiaries of the development process. 'Third world' governments, she alleges, are forced to meet debt repayments through the aggressive pursuit of currency devaluation, cash-crop exports and the removal of trade barriers, whose combined effects permit the 'refinement and streamlining of surplus extraction.' In this context, the discourse of development appears as the instrument of a form of imperialism more subtle than the direct colonisation of the nineteenth century, but equally aimed at securing western geopolitical and socioeconomic hegemony.

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<sup>80</sup> As Shohat (1993: 77-78) observes, the historical precedent for this rhetorical manoeuvre was set in the nineteenth century, when the allegedly low status of indigenous women in the colonies was invoked partly as 'a didactic *Bildungsroman* addressed to women at home,' in response to the threat presented to institutionalised patriarchal power by the women's Suffrage movement.

Together with 'progressive' patriarchal power, a reformulated brand of imperialism structures the experience of women in 'developing' Asian nations. These two forms of oppression cannot be treated in isolation at the level of such women's lived realities, since they are inextricably linked in symbiotic relations. Patriarchy and hegemony, as Trinh Minh-Ha (1991: 148) observes, are

[n]ot really two, not one either. My history, my story, is the history of the First World / Third World, dominant / oppressed, man / woman relationship. When speaking about the Master, I am necessarily speaking about both Him and the West.

Thus in the Australian press coverage of sex tourism and sex trafficking, a dominant narrative template that is ostensibly a critique of gender dynamics in developing Asian countries is deployed to justify an implicitly neo-imperialist position. And in this sense, by deploying the rhetoric of rescue, the discourse of the Australian press enacts a process which replicates the profoundly gendered nature of the colonial enterprise. The apparent concern in the West with the rights and welfare of non-western women has in fact all too often operated as a smokescreen for imperialist motives. In particular, where colonisation was cathected as 'civilising mission', the alleged subordination of indigenous women was invoked as a means of legitimising colonial rule, and was thus central to the maintenance of the British Empire up until the First World War (Liddle & Joshi, 1985: 75). Yet as Liddle and Joshi note, colonial authorities in India were in fact highly selective in their much vaunted attempts to extend rights and privileges to Indian women (Liddle & Joshi, 1985: 74). Imperial Britain had vested interests both in emancipating the women and in maintaining their subjection – 'the former to show that India was not yet fit for self rule, the latter to confirm Britain's superiority in relations between the sexes' (Liddle & Joshi, 1985: 73). Similarly, Asian women's sexual exploitation and putative generalised victimhood is represented in Australian news texts in such a way as to perpetuate Australia's cultural superiority complex vis-à-vis 'Asia'. The discourse of the Australian press may therefore be read as a form of knowledge / power, transacted through the bodies of feminine others, which is complicit in the state's neo-imperialistic ambitions.

The discursive neo-imperialism discernible in the news texts' rescue narratives, is, finally, underwritten by the elision of the Asian women's agency and their constitution – indeed, commodification – as silent victims. The discourse denies the women the status of speaking subjects and Australian journalists presume to speak in their place, invariably writing them as the unfortunate objects of a cruel 'Asian' patriarchy. Thus stifled in the coverage beneath the homogenising 'third world woman' archetype, these other women cannot be properly recognised as historical agents who are actively negotiating the complex sets of constraints and opportunities specific to their locations in particular class-race-gender systems. The women's subjectivity is registered in the texts and becomes intelligible to Australian readers only to the extent that they manifest a desire to line up on the side of the West in order to be 'saved'. For where the women's utterances are translated and brokered by journalists and appear in the texts, their speech only serves to confirm the assumption that these women need rescuing from the backward, cruel and despotic realm of the Asian other. Their comprehensibility as speaking subjects is thus contingent upon the women's deprecation and symbolic rejection of their own ethnic communities.

In each of the three case studies I have examined, the Australian subject's implicitly neo-imperialistic, self-consolidating critique of Asian cultural practices, political institutions and economies, is transacted through Asian women's bodies stripped of any genuine subjective content. My analysis thus lends support to Irigaray's contention that subjectivity denied to woman 'provides the financial backing for every irreducible constitution as an object: of representation, of discourse, of desire' (1985a: 133). These other women are the mute substratum whose alleged victimisation launches the neo-imperialistic discourse of the Australian press upon its course. They only emerge in the texts at the moment when they are 'needed in the space of imperial production' (Spivak, 1985: 128). And as Mani (1989: 117) has argued, this type of discourse is not *about* them as such; the women themselves are marginal to its central concerns. Instead Asian women stand in the discourse of the Australian press as 'empty signifiers', the sites upon which the Australian subject's neo-imperialistic ambitions are implicitly elaborated.

The women's silence, which remains unbroken at the conclusion of this thesis, is emblematic of the current crisis of representation, such that any attempt to rescue a

suppressed subaltern voice from obscurity is fraught. For the speech of the other is refracted through that of another representing subject, the journalist or academic who 'discloses' it, and although it may seek to 'speak the text of female exploitation' (Spivak, 1988: 288), such a project, benevolently 'postcolonial' or otherwise, necessarily entails the kind of 'manipulation of female subject-constitution' (Spivak, 1988: 305) which has occasioned Spivak's (1988: 308) contentious claim that

[t]he subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish.

In this context, the task of the postcolonial academic cannot be to transparently 'render vocal the individual.' To argue otherwise would be to betray the kind of dangerous 'nostalgia for lost origins' (Spivak, 1988: 307) which would finally only replace one homogenising episteme with another. This thesis has therefore not arrived at a solution for restoring Asian women's lost voices. Insulated within the privileged, hegemonically white enclosure of an Australian University, I can responsibly neither 'speak for' nor even 'listen to' these subaltern women. Instead, I have attempted to track the itinerary of their silencing, and the interests this serves, in the discourse of the Australian press.

## APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF PRESS CLIPPINGS

### Australian press coverage of the 'comfort women' case

#### 1992

- Army Recruited Prostitutes, Japan admits* SMH 15.1.92 p. 7
- PM's Visit Draws Anti-War Demo* HS 17.1.92 p. 16
- Miyazawa apologises for 'comfort girls'* SMH 18.1.92 p. 20
- Pressure of Scandal Builds on Japan's PM* AFR 28.1.92 p. 8
- War Brothel Recruits not coerced, says Tokyo* AFR 7.2.92 p. 12
- 'Comfort women' make claim* SMH 27.2.92 p. 6
- Kim gets new title to bolster his status* SMH 14.4.92 p. 9
- 'Comfort woman' tells of torture* HS 26.6.92 p. 15
- Japan tells of 'comfort women'* HS 7.7.92 p. 16
- Japan faces up to ugly past* SMH 8.7.92 p. 13
- Sex slaves: Miyazawa says sorry* SMH 18.7.92 p. 22
- Tokyo's sex slave poser* HS 2.8.92 p. 32
- Codebreakers: Japanese tricks exposed* SMH 15.8.92 p. 11
- More bear witness to sex slaves outrage* SMH 15.8.92 p. 15
- Tokyo UN troops in condom row* HS 16.8.92 p. 27
- Woman says she was a sex slave in war* SMH 19.9.92 p. 13
- Japan may comfort* SMH 10.10.92 p. 16
- 'Comfort' woman tells of Japanese brutality* SMH 10.12.92 p. 3
- Australian woman tells Japanese of wartime sex abuse* SMH 11.12.92 p. 3

#### 1993

- More sex slaves* Age 6.2.93 p. 7
- Funeral rekindles hope for apology from Tokyo* SMH 10.2.93, p. 11
- 'Comfort' compo hint* SMH 13.3.93, p. 19
- Slave compo* HS 30.3.93, p. 19
- Philippines sex slaves sue* SMH 3.4.93, p. 22
- Asian girls 'sold' as sex slaves* HS 6.4.93, p. 21
- The Martyrs of Gona* SMH 26.4.93, p. 8
- Japan's texts to refer to 'comfort women'* HS 12.5.93, p. 21

- Atrocity recorded – briefly* SMH 3.7.93, p. 24
- Japan's circus of new faces make it up as they go along* Age News Extra 31.7.93, p. 14
- Japan set to bow & issue war apology* SMH 4.8.93, p. 11
- Brutal experiments on prisoners shock public* SMH 4.8.93, p. 11
- Tokyo hints at apology for war* Age 4.8.93, p. 8
- Japan comes face to face with the horrors of WW2* Age 4.8.93, p. 8
- Admission on women* HS 5.8.93, p. 18
- Japan apologises to 'comfort women'* Age 5.8.93, p. 11
- Japan's moral debt* Age Opinion 5.8.93, p. 17
- Japan admits army enslaved women for sex* SMH 5.8.93, p. 7
- Japan's Big Change Scares Bureaucrats* AFR 6.8.93, p. 16
- Apology demand* HS 10.8.93, p. 18
- Sex service anger* HS 12.8.93, p. 18
- Backlash as nation faces war claims* HS 13.8.93, p. 18
- Japan prepares to pay dearly for its WW2 crimes* SMH 16.8.93, p. 1
- Japan may set up \$14b war crimes compo fund* Age 16.8.93, p. 1
- War claim* HS 17.8.93, p. 21
- Japan rejects fund share for Australian war victims* Age 19.8.93, p. 3
- Japan rules out war compo for our veterans* SMH 19.8.93, p. 6
- Sex slaves* HS 31.8.93, p. 18
- Compo sum* HS 1.9.93, p. 18
- War claims bill rises to \$275b* HS 8.9.93, p. 20
- Allies had to protect brothels – academic* Age 24.9.93, p. 7
- Unlocked; Japan's wartime chamber of horrors* SMH Spectrum 2.10.93, p. 7
- Japanese compo sought* SMH 16.10.93, p. 23

#### 1994

- Seoul sheds shadow of the rising sun* SMH 29.1.94, p. 30
- War apology stands, says new minister* SMH 29.4.94, p. 12
- War apology stands, says new Foreign Minister* Age 29.4.94, p. 10
- Japanese minister sparks Asia outcry* Age 6.5.94, p. 10
- Japanese PM sacks minister* SMH 9.5.94, p. 12
- The ugly secret of the treatment Japan metes out to a minority* Age 5.7.94, p. 12

- Horror of war rape exposed* SMH 14.7.94, p. 22
- Japanese war brothel fund offer rejected* SMH 18.7.94, p. 9
- Korean 'comfort women' reject Japan's \$1.25b war fund plan* Age 18.7.94, p. 11
- For the comfort of strangers – a journey into hell* Age 22.7.94, p. 13
- Cold comfort for Japan's war women* SMH News Review 23.7.94, p. 32
- Forgotten Force's sad duty won't be forgotten* Age Green Guide 4.8.94, p. 4
- Topsy-Turvy rulers of the Universe* SMH 8.8.94, p. 15
- War compensation bid* HS 12.8.94, p. 26
- Minister sacked for war comments* SMH 15.8.94, p. 13
- War slaves haunt PM* HS 24.8.94, p. 22
- PM offer on women* HS 25.8.94, p. 22
- Trade, not war, tops Vietnam, Japan visit* SMH 26.8.94, p. 8
- Japan's mountain of aid can't bury past* SMH 27.8.94, p. 19
- Asia wary of Japan's attempts to say sorry* Age 29.8.94, p. 8
- PM's peace deal to aid understanding* HS 1.9.94, p. 28
- Murayama forced to drop war compo* Age 1.9.94, p. 10
- Japan drops war reparations* SMH 1.9.94, p. 8
- Japanese Bearing Gifts* HS 4.9.94, p. 25
- Japan's UN Bid is Premature* AFR 27.9.94, p. 19
- Triumph against war atrocities* Age Green Guide 29.9.94, p. 3
- Forgive, urges sex slave* HS 2.10.94, p. 26
- The sad legacy of the Vietnam war* SMH Letters 14.10.94, p. 16
- Payout call for comfort women* HS 23.11.94, p. 26
- No compo for Japan's sex slaves* SMH 24.11.94, p. 12
- Japan shuns war brothel ruling* Age 24.11.94, p. 1
- Facing up to the past* Age Opinion 25.11.94, p. 15
- Atrocities: Japan offers \$500m* SMH 16.12.94, p. 1
- Japanese to offer \$500m for atrocities* Age 16.12.94, p. 8

## 1995

- Remember the horror* Age Opinion 28.1.95, p. 23
- Heroes & Villains* AFR Weekend Review 3.2.95, p.3
- Raped, enslaved & conscripted* Age Saturday Extra 11.2.95, p. 9
- Sorry seems the hardest word* SMH News Review 18.2.95, p. 30

- Japan agrees to probe on sex slavery* HS 26.2.95, p. 39
- North bales out of war crimes talks* HS 27.2.95, p. 21
- Veteran's death frees hand of N Korea leader* SMH 27.2.95, p. 9
- Japan's planned war apology silenced* SMH 8.3.95, p. 1
- Japanese to offer war apology* Age 8.3.95, p. 1
- Rap for apology retreat* HS 9.3.95, p. 8
- A compelling, repelling night pondering rape in Bosnia* Age Arts and Entertainment 10.3.95, p. 20
- Hard facts of life in a comfort zone* Age Agenda 12.3.95, p. 9
- Truth is no comfort* HS Weekend Supplement 18.3.95, p. 13
- Japanese sex guide is forced off the shelves* SMH 1.4.95, p. 30
- Fund for war sex slaves* HS 9.4.95, p. 38
- Japan may abandon its 'apology' for war* Age 28.4.95, p. 9
- Sarcastic Rage* SMH Letters 29.4.95, p. 32
- War graves damn Japan's silence* Age 27.5.95, p. 16
- Confronting the Past* Age Opinion 27.5.95, p. 23
- Driving hard on one-way street* HS 28.5.95, p. 6
- Japan yet to admit to the horrors of its past* SMH 6.6.95, p. 16
- Ghosts of formers conquests that will not lie down* SMH 8.6.95, p. 12
- Coalition saved, Asia outraged* Age 8.6.95, p. 8
- Comfort women snub Japan deal* SMH 16.6.95, p. 10
- Army sex slaves scorn Japan's compromise* Age 16.6.95, p. 8
- Fight for justice after horror of war* Age 17.6.95, p. 7
- Murayama apology to comfort women* SMH 14.7.95, p. 10
- In Peace Park, 60,000 remember – Hiroshima mayor says sorry for invasion* Age 7.8.95, p. 1
- Japan faces war suit* HS 8.8.95, p. 20
- Beijing moves to silence war victims' campaigner* SMH 8.8.95, p. 10
- Death rail ceremony opens up old wounds* SMH 16.8.95, p. 12
- What war? In Japan, 'sorry' sometimes means something else* SMH 17.8.95, p. 15
- Chinese on women alert* HS 28.8.95, p. 22
- Japanese cardinal is sorry about the war* SMH 11.12.95, p. 7

**1996**

- Pay comfort women, UN tells Japan* SMH 7.2.96, p. 11
- UN report blasts Japan on wartime prostitution* Age 7.2.96, p. 10
- Right-wingers threaten Nagasaki bomb exhibit* SMH 28.3.96, p. 8
- Japan sex apology* HS 5.6.96, p. 30
- Sex slaves furore* HS 6.6.96, p. 27
- Comfort women 'did it for money'. MP sparks war outrage* SMH 6.6.96, p. 10
- Sex slave comments embarrass Japan PM* Age 6.6.96, p. 10
- World Cup pairing recipe for disaster* AFR 25.6.96, p. 11
- We inherit their obligations* SMH Letters 20.7.96, p. 38
- Let's stop apologising, says PM. Hashimoto visits shrine to Japan's war dead* SMH 30.7.96, p. 12
- Justice Dept bars entry to 16 accused of wartime atrocities* SMH 5.12.96, p. 12
- Comfort women* SMH Letters 13.12.96, p. 14

**1997**

- Sex slaves win payouts* HS 14.1.97, p. 20
- The offensive military* HS 4.2.97, p. 17
- Why sorry seems to be the hardest word* SMH 2.7.97, p. 17
- Brave woman dies* SMH 20.8.97, p. 12
- Court condemns war censorship* Age 31.8.97, p. 11
- Time to admit surgical atrocities, court says* SMH 1.9.97, p. 15
- Dark history* SMH Opinion 5.9.97, p. 16
- Former Filipina WWII sex slave* Age Metro 22.9.97, p. 2
- Historian calls on Japan to come clean* Age 1.11.97, p. 26
- North Korea* Age 15.11.97, p. 20

**1998**

- Terror stole youth* HS 5.3.98, p. 10
- Small comfort for 152 women who refuse to forgive Japan* HS 16.4.98, p. 10
- U-turn on Japan's sex slave payouts* SMH 22.4.98, p. 15
- Claims dropped* HS 22.4.98, p. 30
- Compensated* Age 23.4.98, p. 18
- Govt ordered to pay damages for war sex slavery* SMH 28.4.98, p. 12

- Cold comfort for victims of abuse in war* SMH 2.5.98, p. 25  
*Deny the dark side and bury the past* Age 2.5.98, p. 23  
*Ruling party divided as ultra-nationalist make leadership run* Age 17.7.98, p. 9  
*The way to say sorry* HS 2.8.98, p. 19  
*'Comfort women' doubted by paper* SMH 12.8.98, p. 8  
*Little comfort to wartime sex slaves* SMH 1.10.98, p. 17

### 1999

- Toy brings home war's tragic toll* HS 12.3.99, p. 15  
*Horror of cold comfort* HS 13.3.99, p. 103

### Australian press representations of sex tourism

#### 1992

- Act now on sex threat, say doctors* HS 13.3.92, p. 28  
*Asia 'AIDS timebomb'* HS 12.4.92, p. 34  
*AIDS the hidden costs* HS 2.8.92, p. 33  
*Call for laws on tourist sex* HS 11.11.92, p. 25  
*Lauda says sorry in child-sex row* HS 19.11.92, p. 17

#### 1993

- Children 'victims of sex tourists'* HS 7.3.93, p. 33  
*Asia* Age 7.3.93, p. 13  
*Sex tours harming Thai links* HS 28.4.93, p. 13  
*Anglicans condemn sex tourism promoters* SMH 11.6.93, p. 12  
*Australians profit from sex tourism* Age 6.7.93, p. 3  
*Cory calls on wives to fight ugly tours* HS 6.7.93, p. 4  
*A hero for the children* HS 10.7.93, p. 19  
*Clamp on child sex planned* HS 14.7.93, p. 20  
*Jail for sex tourists* HS 3.8.93, p. 6  
*Sex tours of Asia breed corruption* Age Letters 23.10.93, p. 20  
*Sex tourists crackdown on the way* Age 5.11.93, p. 5

*A feminist goes touring sex city* Age 8.11.93, p. 11

*End this vile trade* Age Opinion 8.11.93, p. 13

*Cry Freedom* Age Good Weekend 27.11.93, p. 12

*Sex tourists to face jail* Age 28.11.93, p. 1

## 1994

*Sex claim* HS 1.2.94, p. 22

*Aussie outrages Thailand* HS 15.2.94, p. 28

*Media stereotypes Asia, says Lee* Age 21.4.94, p. 4

*Our view of Asia distorted – Lee* HS 22.4.94, p. 5

*Options open on child-labor imports ban* Age 6.5.94, p. 9

*We must stop these criminal 'sex tourists'* Age Letters 25.5.94, p. 20

*Stamping out child sex tourism* SMH 25.5.94, p. 14

*Kerr will fight changes to sex tours laws* Age 29.5.94, p. 5

*Child-sex clampdown may infringe rights – committee* Age 31.5.94, p. 6

*Tough child sex laws on way* SMH 1.6.94, p. 9

*Kerr avoids delay on sex tour laws* Age 5.6.94, p. 8

*Overseas sex offences are under siege* SMH 16.6.94, p. 12

*Parties close ranks on child sex law* Age 3.7.94, p. 8

*Sex tour yob image debunked* HS 27.7.94, p. 10

*A need to act on child exploitation* Age Letters 11.10.94, p. 14

*Betrayed – daughters sold for sex* HS Weekend Supplement 5.11.94, p. 5

*Police call for help to fight child abusers* Age 4.12.94, p. 9

## 1995

*Australian jailed on Thai sex count* Age 1.1.95, p. 3

*Move on sex tours* HS 26.2.95, p. 22

*Children in distress* SMH 16.3.95, p. 12

*Paedophiles likely to flout new law* HS 22.3.95, p. 19

*Child prostitution escalates* HS 30.3.95, p. 35

*Sex tourists seek new destinations* HS 30.3.95, p. 27

*A vile practice* Age Opinion 7.4.95, p. 17

*Plight of the Filipina* Age 12.4.95, p. 20

*Aid groups target Australian paedophiles* SMH 5.6.95, p. 1

- Paedophilia claims 'not investigated'* SMH 7.6.95, p. 1
- Child sex tourists* Age Opinion 13.6.95, p. 17
- Tour agents to help stop sex tourists* HS 15.6.95, p. 28
- Women wage sex war on bar owners* HS 19.6.95, p. 29
- Ending the sex tours* SMH 23.6.95, p. 17
- Australians run Philippines sex trade: inquiry* SMH 12.7.95, p. 7
- Action urged against child sex* Age 13.7.95, p. 5
- Crackdown on sex bars* SMH 26.7.95, p. 14
- Manila :. call to help end sex tourism* Age 7.8.95, p. 3
- Plea on child sex tours* HS 8.8.95, p. 9
- Ramos oversees new deal with Australia* Age 19.8.95, p. 4
- Ramos warning on child sex tours* Age 21.8.95, p. 3
- Ramos faces angry women protesters* Age 22.8.95, p. 5
- Ramos in call for stronger Asia ties* HS 22.8.95, p. 2
- Moral issues and questions of state* Age 25.8.95, p. 14
- Paedophile activity in Asia verified* SMH 27.9.95, p. 3
- Senior diplomat may be charged with paedophilia* Age 30.9.95, p. 1
- Net tightens in Cambodia paedophile case* SMH 7.10.95, p. 3
- Diplomat in child-sex investigation* Age 11.10.95, p. 3
- Diplomat child sex link query* HS 11.10.95, p. 11
- Child sex videos allegedly recovered* SMH 19.10.95, p. 4
- New diplomat child sex probe* HS 23.10.95, p. 7
- Crackdown on child sex* HS 23.10.95, p. 37
- Australians named in child sex scandal* Age 19.11.95, p. 12
- Child sex suspect won't be charged* Age 1.12.95, p. 1
- Foreign official in sex trial bid* HS 1.12.95, p. 7
- End child sex tourism call* HS 2.12.95, p. 14

## 1996

- Suffer the children* Age 4.2.96, p. 17
- Navy rejects claims of brothel visits* SMH 5.3.96, p. 3
- Diplomat facing paedophile count* Age 7.4.96, p. 1
- Department acts on sex claim* HS 8.4.96, p. 4
- Top Australian diplomat on child sex charges* SMH 8.4.96, p. 1

- Detering paedophiles* Age Opinion 9.4.96, p. 10
- Downer tells police to go after paedophiles* Age 18.4.96, p. 1
- Paedophile crackdown ordered* Age 18.4.96, p. 4
- Shocking abuse claims rife* HS 18.4.96, p. 5
- Crackdown on envoy child sex* HS 18.4.96, p. 5
- Child Pornography increasing* Age 20.4.96, p. 13
- Diplomats face 'ruthless' child-sex inquiry* Age 22.4.96, p. 3
- Envoys face sex abuse inquiry* SMH 22.4.96, p. 3
- Files to be examined after child-sex claims* Age 23.4.96, p. 6
- A shadow of doubt* Age Opinion 23.4.96, p. 12
- Child taskforce funding denied* Age 24.4.96, p. 2
- Sex abuse link to aid school* Age 26.4.96, p. 1
- Pedophile tourist jailed* HS 26.4.96, p. 3
- Two-year child sex sentence slammed* Age 27.4.96, p. 3
- Need for perspective in the hunt for paedophiles* Age 27.4.96, p. 17
- Diplomatic impunity: the guilty secrets at foreign affairs* SMH 27.4.96, p. 23
- Sex inquiry* SMH Opinion 27.4.96, p. 32
- Sex tourist jailed* HS 27.4.96, p. 2
- Executive quits after child-sex allegations* Age 28.4.96, p. 9
- Diplomat charged with sex offence* Age 1.5.96, p. 9
- Grudge claim in sex charge* SMH 1.5.96, p. 3
- PS to run inquiry on paedophile allegations* Age 25.5.96, p. 4
- Paedophile inquiry too weak, Govt told* SMH 30.5.96, p. 3
- The paedophile card* Age 12.6.96, p. 15
- Boys flown in for sex court case* HS 14.8.96, p. 9
- Under-age prostitutes top 20, 000* HS 14.8.96, p. 21
- Americans top child-sex arrest list* Age 24.8.94, p. 12
- The trade that shames a country... and the clients who exploit it* SMH 26.8.96, p. 8
- Summit targets global child sex boom* SMH 29.8.96, p. 1
- Australia pleads: stop child sex scourge* SMH 29.8.96, p. 8
- Canberra backs child sex war* HS 29.8.96, p. 32
- Gesture against sex slavery* SMH 30.8.96, p. 15
- Filipinos turn to the death penalty* SMH 31.8.96, p. 18
- Crackdown on child sex providers* Age 1.9.96, p. 11

- Strengthening Thais* HS 29.09.96, p. 111
- A first under child sex tourism law* Age 17.10.96, p. 3
- Sex tourism still thriving* SMH 1.11.96, p. 8
- Diplomat paid \$2 for sex, boy alleges* Age 5.11.96, p. 1
- Diplomat on sex charges* HS 5.11.96, p. 9
- Boy's story differed, says lawyer for diplomat* Age 6.11.96, p. 4
- Court doubts over boy's testimony* Age 7.11.96, p. 3
- Contempt charge bid on diplomatic sex case boy* HS 7.11.96, p. 11
- Boy sex bribes claims denied* Age 8.11.96, p. 7
- Boys were turned into prostitutes by diplomat, court told* Age 12.11.96, p. 8
- Teen says envoys used boys* HS 12.11.96, p. 12
- Envoy cleared of child-sex charge* Age 14.11.96, p. 1
- Exonerated diplomat: now I want to resume my career* SMH 14.11.96, p. 1
- Court throws out sex case* HS 14.11.96, p. 9
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