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This collection of papers reflects on the many dimensions of contemporary narratives of iconography in public culture in Australia and Asia. The idea for the volume arose from a series of seminars held at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research in 2002. The series ‘Iconographies’ was convened by Penny Edwards and centred on research undertaken in the Asia-Pacific, with papers that interrogated national and cultural icons. Just as a biography might examine the makings of a particular personality and her or his shaping of inner and outer worlds, so also iconographic narratives that trace and explore both the evolution and appropriation of particular icons help us mark key moments in the cultural politics of communities, nations and global public spheres. The present volume has two papers (Taylor and Seth) from that series and others on the themes of iconography and iconoclasm that were solicited from a group of interdisciplinary authors working on these themes.

In this collection of papers on iconography (literally meaning ‘writing in images’) the meanings and salience of cultural imagery are explored across a spectrum ranging from sites of pleasure and mourning at one end to those icons that reconfigure the political economy of a particular nation at the other. In between are iconographic accounts that map aspects of popular culture, the interface of indigenous and colonial histories, narratives of modernity and Marxism in the Third World and the liminal precariousness of being human. None of the analysis undertaken is strictly formalistic in nature. The focus rather is on the total symbolic horizon of the icons concerned.

The term ‘iconography’ has often referred to the painting or sculptures of religious icons, where the icons are seen as the embodiment of the religious figures they represented. Icons as ‘representations of the divine’\(^1\) have attracted a long history of scholarly interest that goes back to the Renaissance. The idea that the human being was made in the image or likeness of the Creator gave an impetus to the critical study of religious icons. The study of iconography from the Renaissance onwards referred to the often painstaking work of describing, classifying and relating these religious motifs to the wider cultural frameworks within which they operated.\(^2\) The gradual secularisation of intellectual labour from the post-Renaissance period to Enlightenment and beyond saw the opening up of the study of icons to incorporate visual imagery that constituted ‘figures of knowledge’. One can
think, for instance, of Marx’s powerful deployment of the *camera obscura* and the ‘fetish’ as icons figuring his conceptual elaboration of two key categories, ‘ideology’ and ‘commodity’, respectively. It is, of course, fairly common knowledge that the etymology of the term ‘idea’—a mentalist construct—can be traced to the very act of ‘seeing’ in Greek, *eidos*. This correspondence worried Plato enough to push him toward making a distinction between *eidos* and *eidolon*, so that the former could connote only ‘suprasensible reality’ (the Platonic world of ideas and perfect forms), and the latter the actual physical sensation of ‘seeing’ likeness (*eikon*) of the Platonic forms in the world around us.\(^3\) But Plato notwithstanding, the tension in meaning generated from genealogical linkages between *eidos* (idea), *eidolon* and *eikon* (to visualise semblance, likeness) continues to affect knowledge production in very fruitful ways. There are numerous reasons why the study of iconography has been considered an important intellectual pursuit. One dominant justification has been that in the evolution of human history across a range of cultures, images and visual symbols appeared earlier than texts. Thus, they have been and continue to be a particularly effective means of cultural communication, especially in societies which are not text-based, or where not all members are literate. In addition, in cross-cultural encounters the visual is given prominence in the immediate exchange of cultural meaning across heterogeneous boundaries.

Presently, the power of visual imagery is even more marked and influential, and although texts still have undeniable interpretive potency, icons often hold a particular challenge for us to understand them. They are everywhere—part of political and religious spectacles, as part of marketing strategies for key multinational products and productions, even part of a global exchange of cultures through discourses of tourism and travel, to mention only a few sites of iconic circulation. Furthermore, as digital media and other forms of visual material and popular culture circulate with ever more velocity in late modern global public spheres, so too does the aspiration to acquire skills to interpret this visual onslaught gain even greater intellectual significance. When speaking of icons we, thus, refer to not only statues and visual art, but to an infinite variety of visual forms that are emblematic of the cultural life of diverse polities around the globe. In doing so the authors in this volume illustrate the power of material and symbolic forms in untangling local, national and global histories and transforming sets of power relations. As Gamboni maintains, the cultural categories ‘icon’, ‘work of art’ and ‘cultural object’ overlap and an emblem’s identity is often multiple and contradictory.\(^4\)

Many of the papers in this collection deploy the term ‘iconography’ to cover those cultural artefacts in public culture which carry forms of authority that exert a peculiarly strong influence over individuals or groups, or over whole societies. The twentieth century has been witness to many polities swayed by the power of icons, especially in Communist and fascist regimes. As Victoria Bonnell has argued in her study of the iconography of Soviet political posters, icons often function to legitimate institutions and establish relations of power.\(^5\) At the beginning of the twentieth century the ubiquity of religious icons in Russian homes and public buildings reflected the notion that the image itself often held
particularly concentrated power. The powerful deployment of iconography from the Ramayana in the 1990s by the Hindu Right in India to mobilise support for its Rama Temple building plans at the site of the demolished Babri Mosque, is yet another instance of the power of images to radically shape public opinion. In India’s case, the fabric of religious or aural imagery that became ubiquitous in the public sphere was not merely a cover for more earthly secular, political and material goals. Its very legitimacy in the eyes of the Hindu masses lay in the fact that it drew deeply on and fed into a certain libidinal investment in the very experience of the ‘sacred’ that pervaded Hindu religious practices.

The ability of visual representations to command an effective reach upon people has been employed in many different societies for a range of purposes. Although the intentions of producers of icons are important areas of analysis it is the reception of icons which most intrigues the authors in this collection. While icons may become charged with notions of authenticity and the implicit power to bestow an aura of legitimacy on their producers and consumers, iconographic places, images or beings are often immersed in ambiguity. Rather than bringing cohesion and certainty icons can produce anxious, uncertain moments replete with a sense of dislocation and apprehension. The diverse vocabularies of this collection destabilise and question the very grounds of belonging on which icons are constituted.

While several of the papers in this collection explore the production of iconographic imagery (Bishop, Taylor, Seth), people (Yipu) and places (Hall, Allon), several of these also detail the ever-present iconoclastic potential that circulates along with iconographic power. The desire to damage the symbols of authority is often an attempt to diminish or disavow the power vested in the given authority itself. Quite a few of the papers dealing with iconoclasm do talk of the impact that iconic destruction has upon relations of control. But they also go beyond that to trace in meticulous detail the gamut of effects that certain iconoclastic acts unleash on the community. To be effective icons must generally convey a set of comprehensible and often standardised ideas and ideologies that invoke intense responses in an audience. Their compelling role as boundary makers together with the political meanings associated with their demolition mean they often attract concentrated sentiments. In term of human sociality, they thus carry a magnetic charge around which communities can cohere and rally. But icons can also mark liminal spaces and politico-cultural borderlands, especially at times when wider social and political transformations at both national and global levels, throw up enormous chaos, confusion and even terror. In such cases they carry multiple charges of meaning marking periods of immense cultural uncertainty and doubt. As an example one can think of the importance of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan as global cultural heritage and the importance of the international community in protecting these icons from the explosive iconoclasm of the Taliban.

Phillip Taylor’s paper, ‘Spirits, Iconoclasts and the Borders of the Market in Urban Vietnam’, inaugurates the theme of the socio-political power of icons and their circulation within a political economy. His specific site is Vietnam and he focuses on the iconic potency of a particular goddess called the Lady of the
Realm whose shrine in a rural village in southern Vietnam attracts an unprecedented number of followers from diverse economic backgrounds. This female icon has become inflected with Vietnamese constructions of their changing social world and reveals new ways of asserting agency, in particular by working women who come to visit the shrine to ask assistance with their personal concerns, specifically those that arise in a commercial context of the marketplace such as requests for assistance in managing money. The meanings that converge upon the acts of worshippers who undertake pilgrimages to visit the Lady’s shrine are related to the new social cleavages in which urbanites find themselves. A visit to the goddess re-asserts one’s position in relation to other urban dwellers as well as bestowing agency to worshippers in relation to the forces of social transformation and globalisation. Most of the women who make the pilgrimage to the goddess are those who have become integrated into a market economy, many of them working in urban markets. Rather than being a rural religious cult, this goddess has recently taken on many new meanings and revitalised religious practices of urban people who have been encountering much more complex sets of social and commercial relations in this period of market reform. In this case the goddess icon becomes a means through which urban people can constitute and maintain their relations with others, at the same time as her image condenses the more complex sets of financial practices that people are located within into more manageable processes. In this reading the goddess icon also acts as intermediary between the state and civil society in Vietnam by renegotiating relationships between the Vietnamese nation-state, the diasporic Vietnamese who make the pilgrimage and between rural and urban dwellers.

In the paper that follows, Fiona Allon’s ‘Bali as Icon: Tourism, Death and the Pleasure Periphery’, the analytic lens is turned on one of Australia’s favourite holiday destinations, Bali. Fiona interprets this tropical resort as an icon of Australia’s expanding territorial reach. In her exploration of the transnational connections between Bali and Australia, Allon finds a reconstitution of Bali as a site of ‘real Aussie culture’ arising from the history of Australian tourist culture which developed in Bali in the 1970s and 1980s. The paper opens up many new insights into the constitution of transnational relations between an ‘Australianness’ at home and abroad, and particularly how iconographic sites like Bali and Anzac Cove in Turkey inflect contemporary Australian nationalism. Allon interrogates the ways in which certain places like Bali become imaginary peripheries of the nation. In doing so Allon rethinks the mapping of the nation. Bali has been seen as a ‘pleasure periphery’ but also harbours traces of its own massacres and disturbing past masked through its rise as a site of global pleasure and as a colonial technique of the governing Indonesian state. Allon describes this process of covering the wrongs of the pasts as a ‘hauntology’, borrowing Derrida’s term, whereby the past always erupts through the masquerade of tourism. In this play of icons in which Bali is simultaneously tourist site, massacre site and Australian ‘territory’ Allon’s study produces a complex array of new mappings of nation for both Bali and Australia.

In the following paper we have a reading of not just the political import of icons, but also the ways in which our interpretations of them can be deployed for epistemological purposes to critique
what the author calls, ‘historicist domest-
ications of difference’. In ‘Smashing Stat-
ues, Dancing Sivas: Two Tales of Indian
Icons’, Sanjay Seth begins by undertak-
ing a form of intellectual iconoclasm by
critiquing the ways in which the category
‘peasant’ has stood for ‘backwardness’ in
India. He does this through an explora-
tion of the meanings behind the destruc-
tion of icons during a period thought
of as a ‘cultural revolution’ initiated by
Maoist students in Calcutta in 1970. Seth
argues that if one took into consideration
the range of icons destroyed in the cam-
paign, this iconoclasm by the students
actually represented an attack on the dis-
tinction between modernity and tradi-
tion. The students seemed to have made
no clear distinction between progressive
and reactionary figures in history. In car-
ying out these actions the students were
unwittingly removing the boundaries
in Indian Marxism between the modern
and the traditional, the advanced and the
‘backward’. If socialism was the means
of becoming ‘modern’, then in the act of
iconoclasm the students were inadvert-
ently critiquing Marxism’s notions of
history and politics. In the second sec-
ton of his paper, Seth moves on to the
intriguing story of a British legal case in
which the God Siva featured as a ‘juristic
personality’ and asks why gods cannot
figure as legitimate agents in history-
writing when even the law can be rede-
finied to include them! He concludes his
paper by pushing the reader to rethink
ways in which the logic of history appro-
priates difference. The icons through
which he mediates his arguments even-
tually themselves become sites of unsta-
bile meanings or as he puts it, ‘the site of
difference to be explored by problemat-
ing our categories rather than merely
applying them’.

The next paper, Lee-Anne Hall’s ‘Sit-
ting Down in the Square: Indigenous
Presence in an Australian City’, connects
with the paper on Bali in its continua-
tion of the theme of an ongoing spectral
presence of that which has been erased
or attempted to be removed from public
memory. Hall writes that in Adelaide the
indigenous Kaurna people have returned
to the city centre to reclaim their hom-
land. Centuries of systematic colonisation
had erased indigeneity from public sight.
In her discussion of the various attempts
to forbid the consumption of alcohol in
public spaces Hall reveals the state’s con-
tinued attempts to ‘purify’ public spaces
of an Aboriginal presence. Hall explores
the attempts to ‘manage’ indigeneity in
the city as a process creating ambiguous
sites of an iconographic Aboriginal pres-
ence which is viewed as disruptive, and
criminal. Finally, Hall argues that the
contradictory and complex character of
an indigenous co-presence in the urban
centre of Adelaide is revealed through
the problematic of imposing an alco-
hol free zone upon Aboriginal sociality.
The indigenous people, she argues, have
within the confines of state restrictions
managed to carve out ‘third spaces’ or
to use Foucauldian terminology, ‘heter-
otropic’ spaces. Such spaces allow them
to express their own unique and alter-
nate modes of sociality while at the same
time managing a deferral of hostile state
regulation. Public space here becomes
iconographic in representing the contra-
dictions that lie at the heart of oppressive
state governmentality. Here, an Abo-
iginal presence in town squares is not
a deliberately iconoclastic act but one
which nevertheless serves as a reminder
of a brutal colonising history and con-
tinuous state management of Aboriginal
sociality and movement. In the process
it disturbs that apparently seamless and
disciplined deployment of power by a
so-called democratic post-colonial state.

In Zen Yipu’s paper ‘Remade in Japan: the Case of Audrey Hepburn’, we turn from public memory and state power to popular culture. The paper explores the modalities through which Audrey Hepburn has become the embodiment of personal desire in aspirational young Japanese women. Rather than being a desire to imitate ‘the West’ or Hollywood culture, the new simulated Audrey Hepburns in Japan are a particularly local Japanese invention. The new Japanese Audrey is suitably futuristic through the digitisation and virtuality of her images that have been required for commercialisation in the local technologised context of Japan. Yipu argues that rather than focus on the notion of ‘authenticity’ of a cultural icon, the new forms of digital media reproduction are deliberately parodying the idea of an original and the loss of integrity that a reproduction may entail. Armed with this notion of the irrelevance of the ‘real’ for the effectiveness of iconographic power, Yipu suggests that Audrey in contemporary Japan was ‘born virtual’. At the same time the paper suggests that the particular forces at work in Japanese popular culture which have led so many young women to idolise Audrey Hepburn involve the flourishing celebrity culture which together with magazines and hyper consumerism condense around certain key iconic figures like Audrey. This interlinked marketing and consumer process has led to very particular ways in which young Japanese women come to aspire to imitate celebrities as well as consume products associated with them.

The boundary making and boundary breaking capacities of icons are also illustrated in the last paper of the volume. In Rebecca Bishop’s paper ‘Journeys to the Urban Exotic: Embodiment and the Zoo-Going Gaze’, the image of the gorilla as emblematic of the indeterminate boundaries between humans and animals is explored. By analysing the reactions of visitors to the gorilla enclosure at Taronga Park Zoo in Sydney, Bishop reveals the human fascination for the indistinct and problematic nature of the boundary between animal and human. While the gorilla is viewed as both a mirror of humanness as well as a spectacle of primitiveness and animality in the contemporary desire to ‘save’ the gorilla from extinction, it also appears to represent the desire of a ‘benevolent’ humanity to protect both the image of human origins and the natural world. In unravelling the many complex ways that gorillas are viewed and imagined, Bishop generates an understanding of the mythologies surrounding human/animal boundaries and transgressions. The gorilla, like the Lady of the Realm in Vietnam, accrues new meanings in different historical milieux but in all these different cultural contexts, continues to be a representative par excellence of categorical ambiguity.

The specific role of iconography in the negotiation of popular consumption, public memory, social identity, and larger political movements are themes which run through the collection of essays. We hope the volume opens up new insights into the relationship between the strategic use of iconographic forms and their recontextualisation for different audiences and in different historical contexts. Where there is uncertainty over meaning, societies often employ icons to seize meaning, distil it and reconstitute public discourse. The icon as a medium of values establishes a cohesive set of public discourses and collective identities. But it also runs the risk of subsequent demolition and the consequent dissolution of established norms of public sociality. To
that extent, the study of icons allows us to trace the rise and fall of diverse public spheres around the globe.

ENDNOTES


6 Bonnell, 4.

This study takes as its object a goddess called the Lady of the Realm, whose shrine is in a rural area in the southern part of Vietnam. This goddess provides a valuable window onto changes underway in reform-era Vietnam for in recent years she has become the focus of a major pilgrimage and the controversial object of much commentary and debate. One of the more remarkable aspects of this figure is that although located in a rural region, she attracts many pilgrims from Ho Chi Minh City, the country’s largest city and one of its most dynamic economic centres. Many of the fiercest critics of the practice of venerating this goddess also reside in Ho Chi Minh City. This study explores the interpretive dimensions of urban people’s approaches to this goddess. It shows the Lady of the Realm to be pivotal to the way residents of Ho Chi Minh City envisage their city’s transition to the market economy and their encounter with global forces. She is a crucial medium through which urban people construe economic agency and delineate their place in society.

My approach to this female spirit is not as much to investigate in depth the religious practice that condenses around this figure,1 as to explore the identity-marking function of such a figure, as an icon who represents and makes phenomenologically cogent such aspects of urban experience as the imagined borders of the urban world, historical subjectivity and distinctions of social status. The goddess at the heart of this story is used by some urban residents to map out differences between the countryside and the city. She is a vernacular construct through which urbanites position themselves within a process that is often abstractly referred to as economic ‘integration’ or ‘globalization’. This goddess also features in the telling of urban history as a key figure through which recent societal transformations are imagined and played out. She is a means by which people employ themselves as actors in a history of economic liberalisation and contest the position of others in such terms. As a marker of social status she is also employed to assert competing visions of urban authenticity. She is an instrument through which status differences within urban society are practically secured. In short, this goddess is a construct around which contemporary Vietnamese urban identities are articulated and defended. Through the views expressed about this goddess we can see that a purportedly universal construct such as the ‘market economy’ is symbolically constituted and locally situated in place, time, and status.

LOCALISING SPIRITUALITY

When I met him, Tien served as the marketing manager of a multinational cosmetics company based in Ho Chi Minh
He was responsible for establishing prices, setting up a distribution network and promoting the brand-names of a line of foreign made products in the rural areas surrounding the city. Tien told me that I would find little material of relevance to my proposed project of investigating the pilgrimage to the Lady of the Realm by staying in the city:

Only people down in the countryside believe in such mysterious kinds of things. Up here in the city, people’s cultural level (trinh do van hoa) is higher; our way of life is modern (van minh), and consequently very few believe in that kind of thing.

Tien’s way of reckoning the urban/rural distinction is widely accepted in Vietnam: the city is regarded as ‘above’ (tren) the countryside, in its cultural and technological ‘level’. From the city one ‘goes down to the countryside’ (xuong duoi que), whose residents, by virtue of their limited attendance of government schools, are said to have a ‘low cultural level’ (trinh do van hoa thap) and whose thatched palm leaf houses are frequently described as ‘poor’ (ngheo). From the perspective of many people who live in the countryside one goes ‘up to the city’ (len thanh pho) a place identified with a built-up environment, elite cultural attainments and prosperity, attributes implied in the term van minh (civilized/modern). One also travels from the ‘deep’ or ‘back’ (sau) regions of the countryside ‘out’ (rang noi) to the ‘market’ (cho), the vernacular term for urbanized areas in the Mekong delta. Those situated in these urban areas themselves look ‘out’ (ngoi) to foreign countries; the term ‘foreign’ attaches principally to those countries that are seen as ‘higher’ (cao hon) in terms of wealth and socio-economic development.

From this perspective, the largest shrine to the Lady of the Realm, in the Mekong delta more than 250 kilometres from Ho Chi Minh City, is indeed ‘down deep’ in the Vietnamese countryside. Urban-based intellectuals such as Tien regard the area around her shrine as ‘remote’ (vung sau, vung xa), separated from the rest of the country by wide river branches that have proven difficult to bridge and that overflow their banks annually, making travel by road impossible for months. The Mekong delta is often seen as a place unto itself, whose geographical inaccessibility has allowed older religions such as Islam and Theravada Buddhism to persist, while nurturing the emergence of new indigenous faiths like the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religions. The western stretches of the delta, where the shrine to the goddess is found, is pervasively associated in Vietnamese historical writings with grassroots prophets, peasant rebellions and unorthodox religious movements, virtue of its distance from the Vietnamese cultural centre. The delta’s rich religious culture is sometimes linked to its unusually abundant environment. Influential historian of the intellectual history of Vietnam and former head of the southern Vietnamese chapter of the Indochinese Communist Party, Tran Van Giau referred to the delta as a living theme park for superstitions: ‘The Mekong delta is an extremely fertile piece of earth, one which has given birth to many strange religions, and where superstitions are rife’. This mocking tone calls attention to the failure of Vietnam’s Marxist historians to reconcile the western delta’s intense religiosity with its prodigious agricultural productivity and its residents’ weak historical commitment to the communist path, despite their high degree of proletarianisation. A combina-
tion of ethnic chauvinism and modernist bias prevents many urban intellectuals from recognising the wealth of local cultural forms found in the delta, including its concentration of Khmer monastic schools, Islamic Madrasas and ethnic Chinese schools, its high incidence of multilingualism and its diverse traditions of religious self cultivation and community medicine. According to many urbanites the thriving cult of the Lady of the Realm, centred in what they regard as a culturally peripheral region, merely confirms their ideas about the Mekong delta as a rural backwater and a site of persistent localism.

An alternative, more positive conception of the goddess is found among Vietnam’s folklorists. These consider her cult ‘the spiritual product of an agricultural people’. Some folklorists associate her with fertility beliefs surrounding wet rice farming, the dominant form of agricultural production in the Mekong delta. Her annual festival, which occurs at the end of the dry season, according to the lunar calendar, encodes age-old and cyclical environmental rhythms that organize the lives of people who are engaged in farming occupations. Shrines of this kind are also seen to demarcate space. Located on the margins of rural settlements and venerated chiefly by the residents of local communities, such religious institutions are thought to mark out the restrictive horizons of the rural world. According to these observers such festivals also serve to reflect, revitalize and reinforce bonds between members of rural society, underwrite their shared collective existence and integrate them into a cohesive community. As a figure who is integral to the temporal, spatial and social existence of the inhabitants of the Mekong delta, her cult is hence seen as an instance of the ritual ‘production of locality,’ according to which logic, ‘space and time are themselves socialised and localised through complex practices of performance and representation and action’.

Such depictions of the cult to the Lady of the Realm as largely a local or rural affair fail to come to terms with the enormous geographical extension of her following. While the shrine to the goddess is indeed found in a small rural village, the majority of those who visit her shrine do not come from this circumscribed territorial unit. The festival attracts people from all over the southern region and pilgrims travel in buses, motorbikes and boats to visit her, many of them bringing along provisions and sleeping in nearby pagodas and guesthouses. The greatest numbers of visitors come from the network of markets and urban centres within the southern region. In an estimate ventured to me by local shopkeepers, forty percent of the visitors to their area come from the one city of Ho Chi Minh City alone. In addition she attracts many visitors from overseas, particularly former Vietnamese citizens. These components of her following, which are scarcely mentioned in the commentaries produced by local folklorists, caution us against seeing this goddess as the spiritual product of an isolated, ecologically autarchic or remote rural community. Her attraction to city dwellers in particular suggests her relevance to the lives of urban residents and the existence of significant relationships between such a site and the urban locales from which the pilgrims are drawn.

The majority of these pilgrims do not attend the annual sacrifice to the goddess and are not directly exposed to the ideas
that folklorists and the shrine’s management committee promote the goddess as a local protector deity. Instead ideas about her efficacy that members of this translocal following entertain are largely dependent on tales that circulate in marketplaces and urban neighbourhoods or are exchanged among followers in the precincts of her shrine. Her repute as a powerful being and conceptions of her magical capacity are forged in contexts far away from her shrine, in discussion between family, neighbours and colleagues, as too are ideas about the appropriate methods of accessing her power. Practices associated with her pilgrimage, such as divination and mediumship, consumerist influences in her festival and the commercialisation of the site around her shrine are taken by some folklorists to mean that this religious practice is losing coherence. These processes are mourned by those who find longevity and local colour in such rites, and who construct the goddess as an ancient, localistic and autarchic practice. Yet rather than see such practice as disintegrative, an alternative picture of this goddess would situate her at the centre of a broad and diffused spatial following whose members identify and transact with her in ways that reflect the diverse contexts from when they are drawn.

DELINEATING MODERN AGENCY

Like Tien, many educated and professional urbanites with whom I have spoken in Ho Chi Minh City consider the worship of the Lady of the Realm to index a past that their city has left behind. Tuyen, a teacher trained in the city, explained to me that the worship of the Lady of the Realm was a survival from an earlier pioneering era’s misapprehension of the forces of nature:

The first Vietnamese settlers in the Mekong delta were only half-civilized. They lived in a dangerous and uncontrollable environment, subject to storms, dangerous animals and unfamiliar seasonal rhythms. Because they were not well educated they explained natural calamities in terms of the actions of spirits and other supernatural forces.

According to this view, spirit worship is a survival from primitive times when people failed to clearly understand the natural forces that influenced their lives, instead explaining them in ways that afforded them a sense of familiarity and control. To Huyen the people who live in the Mekong delta still live close to nature, subject in recent years to floods, storms and pest invasions and lacking adequate technological resources to counter its worst aspects. The worship of whales, rocks, trees and mountain dwelling goddesses, practices that are prevalent in this area, are representative of its residents’ continued resort to the spirit world to make up for their weak mastery of the natural environment.

This evolutionist critique of spirit worship is often associated with the Marxist orientation of the present government but underlying this is the influence of enlightenment thinking shared by Vietnam’s non-Communist intellectuals past and present. Early in the twentieth century Vietnamese intellectuals embracing Eurocentric concepts of science, denigrated spirit worship as functionally unsustainable, considering such practice as a form of false knowledge based on misunderstanding or deceit. In their search for bases upon which to build a viable national community Vietnam’s urban intellectuals thought reliance on the spirit world undermined
people’s self belief and the efficacy of this-worldly answers to social injustice.\textsuperscript{14} Such religious practice was regarded as ‘feudal’ (phong kien) implicated in the sanctioning of power inequalities and the reproduction of exploitative social relations. In the building of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam practices negatively labeled ‘superstition’ (me tin di doan) included those customs and rites considered wasteful of national resources or undermining attachment to socialist programs of collective advancement\textsuperscript{15} Goddess worship was considered a suspect Taoist import from China and in the context of war with America, one prominent theme was the use of such practices by the enemy to subvert national unity.\textsuperscript{16} At the same time the government has not been averse to promoting the veneration of ancestral spirits, who exemplified its view of positive national traditions of heroism, revolution and resistance.\textsuperscript{17} In recent years this resistance pantheon has been greatly expanded to incorporate goddesses, whose worship is now considered iconic of national identity, an expansion aided by the reconstruction of goddess cults as ancient, local and grassroots practice.\textsuperscript{18}

Today the attitudes towards goddess worship espoused by many educated professionals in Ho Chi Minh City diverge from the government’s line in seeing such practice at odds with their vision of Vietnam as a realised modern nation. Tien, who considered goddess worship an embarrassing sign of the nation’s lingering backwardness, is one of many intellectuals I spoke with who variously repudiated the logic of, professed disinterest in, or dismissed the relevance of such practice. One hears the confident view expressed by self-identified moderns that the Lady of the Realm is a phenomenon destined to die out as Vietnam advances further into modernity. A great number of Ho Chi Minh City’s educated professionals, technically trained workers and corporate managers, consider themselves at the avant-garde of liberalization and the localization of prestigious new forms of foreign culture and as agents spearheading the nation’s global integration. In the idealistic and somewhat grandiose conceptions of this encounter often espoused by such people there is no place for the symbolic and ideological supports of ways of life that are considered ‘old’, subsistence-based, autarchic or communalist.

However, one also sometimes hears from urban intellectuals a more moderate view of spirit worship as a mechanism for coping with the dramatic changes unleashed by economic reform. According to some local observers, as a contemporary phenomenon, worship of goddesses such as the Lady of the Realm is a spiritual response to crisis, whose recent growth reflects the extremely high incidence of psychological, familial and economic crises that have attended the complex and unstable transition to a market economy. Goddess worship is a way of coping with the dislocation and confusion of rapid change.\textsuperscript{19}

In a similar vein, although Tuyen consigned spirit worship to primitive circumstances, she also admitted that it had a psychologically useful role to play for those who were struggling to make ends meet:

Many of those who go to propitiate her are poor and endure precarious economic circumstances. One of the most common practices is to borrow a small amount of money from her. This has no real economic benefit, however, it encourages people to think that they have procured the patronage of a powerful being. Belief
in her responsiveness to their prayers increases people’s own self-confidence. It helps them endure uncertainty and economic misfortune.

Such psychologically functionalist views, however sympathetic, wedge open a space for tacit disqualification of the primary reality of such religious practice. To Tien, religion is a compensatory outlet for those who cannot cope with harsh realities. He said that the Asian financial crisis that hit Vietnam in the late 1990s had shattered many people’s lives and had caused them to doubt that a market-based economy could provide a better alternative to the old centralized socialist system. Tien compared the contemporary vogue in spirit worship with the events of the 1930s and 1940s when there had been a succession of political failures on the part of nationalists and communists, as a consequence of which, he claimed, many frustrated anti-colonial protestors had turned to such apocalyptic religions as the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao for solace. According to him people’s contemporary resort to religion was similarly a consolation for failure in the ‘real’ world of the market economy.

The problem with such compensatory theories of religious movements, as Holsten has noted, is that they inevitably ‘relegate manifestations of the popular imagination to the margins of the real business of modern states and societies’. However, to regard popular veneration of a spirit such as the Lady of the Realm as a somehow transitory, escapist or compensatory phenomenon is to miss its most vital dimension, as a set of practices that is nested within Vietnam’s contemporary engagement with market forces. Indeed, to counter suppositions such as Tien’s, while the goddess was indeed propitiated during the economically depressed years of the ‘Asian Crisis,’ she was just as popular during the boom years of the early 1990s, when Vietnamese people were generally optimistic about improving their standard of living and many attributed their advances to her. Indeed by tracing the history of her following we can see continuities in this practice that cast the history of economic liberalisation in a new light.

HISTORICISING THE MARKET

In mid-2003 I asked a class of students in Ho Chi Minh City’s College of Social Sciences why they thought people in their city had such a strong attraction to a goddess in a distant rural area. One of them suggested that the pilgrimage was tied up in the city’s history of migration. According to this person, belief in this goddess had come to the city following a flow of migrants from rural areas and the pilgrimage to this goddess is a way that such migrants retain touch with their roots.

Many of those from the city who undertake pilgrimages to the Lady of the Realm do indeed come from the Mekong delta. There is significant evidence that the identity and powers they attribute to her match constructions of the goddess as a localistic protector deity advanced by Vietnam’s folklorists. Many migrant workers make offerings to the goddess for good health, considering their well-being the greatest blessing she can confer upon them. The goddess is also attributed with conferring bodily security. By physically accessing the image of the goddess, by stroking or tapping her, one can transfer her powers to protect one’s own body. People sometimes seek to obtain robes
or pieces of cloth that have been in contact with the goddess, with which they wipe themselves over. People also seek the run-off water from her ritual bath and use it to wash their faces and bodies. It provides a protective film, defending the integrity of the body against disease, injury and the operation of curses. These approaches to the goddess confirm the view of Hanoi-based folklorist Ngo Duc Thinh who has argued that requests for health, today as in the past, comprise a key attribute of Vietnam’s mother goddess cult.

Yet there is also evidence that such practices represent a response to the circumstances migrants face in their new urban home. Male motorcycle taxi drivers in the downtown area of the city, most of them migrants, told me that one can obtain from Her Ladyship’s shrine a set of blessed offerings or loc sufficient to cover all one’s basic needs. A package of salt and rice will ensure that one has enough to eat throughout the year. Gold and silver painted paper bring one money: ‘enough to spend’ (du xai) for a year. A leaf of gold represents investment capital, and pair of candles allow the light (duoc) of Her Ladyship to fill one’s house. This set of gifts ensures success in making a living (lam an). Given the difficulties of their job, the hopes they invest in the goddess for basic subsistence, although modest, are relatively ambitious. Their view reflects the perspective of those who, at best, live from day to day, for whom fares are scarce, and whose motorbikes are often repossessed by creditors lending money at usurious rates. To be sick might mean defaulting on a loan repayment and courting ruinous loss of capital. If a family member is sick the cost of treatment might require they sell their motorbike, plunging them into desperate poverty.

One of the qualities that is today most frequently associated with the goddess is her assistance in making people’s fortunes grow. Like the goddess Ba Chua Kho, the Lady of the Storehouse, whose shrine is just north of Hanoi, the Chau Doc goddess is widely seen by people in Ho Chi Minh City as a spirit of financial increase. In a similar folk religious tradition to that which Harrell and Gates have studied in China, people ‘borrow’ bank notes from her, which are imbued with the power to magically augment one’s own financial reserves. Nga, a seamstress and dedicated Chau Doc pilgrim told me that the main reason people went to Her Ladyship’s shrine in Chau Doc was to borrow money: ‘The money is wrapped up in red paper envelopes (bao) in trays on the altar. There also is replica money, stamped gold sheets, gold and silver foil and colored paper. There is no shortage of money. You bring it home and place it on the altar to the god of wealth in your house. It will make your money grow, no fear.’ The practice of making offerings to the goddess for assistance with business is widespread among entrepreneurs who associate her with commercial success. One of the requests most commonly made of the goddess – ‘lucky purchases and quick sales’ (mua may ban dac) – is the small businessperson’s mantra.

These appeals to the goddess bear witness to the central role the market has come to play in the lives of most people in this region of Vietnam. The goddess is closely associated with the financial practices that have characterised commerce in recent times. Not only do people borrow from her, but those who lend out money for interest or manage credit associations (huis), often seek her assistance in securing outstanding repayments. Such informal credit practices have become a preferred means of obtaining credit in
a country where institutional banking is not well-established. Much economic activity in this period has been dependent on informal channels of credit and its use is regarded as normal business practice. People who sell in the market routinely extend purchasing credit to customers while simultaneously participating in huis and borrowing from private money lenders. Many people also borrow money for education, health needs, land acquisition and house building. Credit is widely used by young people to finance leisure pursuits and status-oriented consumer purchases. Yet transacting with informal credit brokers in an economically unstable and unpredictable environment is a risky business and many people have experienced the social relations of credit as demanding, threatening and pitiless. Migrant laborers and hopeful petty entrepreneurs who have flocked into the city from the countryside, for instance, have borrowed money for rent, business capital, and assistance for family needs back home. In the precarious circumstances of establishing themselves in the city, they have experienced with particular intensity the volatile and contradictory emotions associated with credit: a sense of freedom, dependence and vulnerability. For such people, this goddess, with her punitive rages, her reputed capacity to trouble people in their sleep, to choke off sales and inflicts violent death is the very face of the finance markets.

The goddess can therefore be seen as an idiom through which a significant proportion of the urban population engage with their contemporary commercialised existence. The goddess symbolically models the experience of market relations and at the same time serves as a critique of its practices. She is a way of making intelligible the new and often disorienting experience of migration to the city according to a conceptual scheme that is familiar to most migrants. This observation recalls Jackson’s discussion of the ‘postmodernisation of Thai Buddhism’. Jackson argues that the rural flavour and traditionalist symbolic aspects of prosperity cults in urban Thailand can be to some extent accounted for as the projection of rural people’s folk conceptual registers onto their new experiences as migrants of urban life and commerce. The advantage of this perspective is that it brings migrant experiences into the heart of the narrative of urban economic history. My only problem with this approach is that it renders such believers as agents after the fact, who offer vernacular interpretations that make sense of, and, through ritual means, attempt to control a system that is otherwise taken as a given.

An alternative view is to see the goddess herself as an agent of historical change. One of the factors feeding into the Lady of the Realm’s notoriety as a patron of business in the early 1990s, and the huge boost in her following at that time, is the perception of her efficacious patronage of trade in pre-reform times. In the decade following the northern-based communist government’s victory in the South in 1975, the socialist state made attempts to centralize its control over the southern economy by eradicating private distribution networks, which for centuries had been dominated by urban based ethnic Chinese, whose allegiance to the new socialist regime was considered suspect. The exodus of the ethnic Chinese in the aftermath of these policies is well known, as are the subsequent years of economic crisis and the state’s dramatic rehabilitation of private markets as a valid component of a socialist economy in the mid-1980s. However, missing from most narratives of these
turbulent times is the role played by the female-dominated informal sector in the urban south, in precipitating or coercing the liberal reforms. My interviews with people who continued trading during this period suggest that after ethnic Chinese business networks were dismantled in the south, women continued to operate illicit rural-urban and urban-rural trading and marketing networks, maintaining such activities both covertly and by bribing state regulators. This informal female-operated distribution system denied the state control of the resources it sought to channel into its centralist vision of the reunification project. In the mid 1980s the Doi moi reforms were announced with much fanfare. However, to a significant extent they merely legitimated the pre-existing arrangements of the informal economy.

Goddesses such as the Lady of the Realm have long accompanied women as spiritual patrons in their trading and other endeavors and this remained true in the post war period, when women continued trading, albeit illegally. Yet some important shifts occurred as well. As more and more members of the ethnic Kinh majority moved into trading activities formerly monopolised by the ethnic Chinese, many were drawn to spirits such as the Lady of the Realm, who were associated with that entrepreneurial community’s successes. As women’s profile in the region’s postwar trading economy grew the goddess herself assumed enlarged significance, mirroring women’s own expanded achievements. The goddess acquired her reputation as especially responsive for overseeing difficult trading ventures at a time when such activity was proscribed and the risks of failure were especially high. Through the 1990s as petty trade became increasingly ubiquitous her fame spread among the influx of new recruits, urban and rural, to the commercial sector. Today, largely as a result of this history, the goddess is viewed as a business gatekeeper; one must seek her permission (xin phep) if one wants to engage in trade. The rise of this goddess to such stature is entwined in the history of women’s informal resistance to economic centralisation. As such, she deserves some credit as an instigator of the liberal reforms, as do female traders who, in their transactions with her, raised her profile and popularised her qualities as a patron of business.

Today considerable prestige attaches to the goddess in attracting offerings from the most successful entrepreneurs in the region, the business class of its wealthiest urban areas such as Ho Chi Minh City, many of whom are women. In the village where the Lady of the Realm’s shrine is found, one periodically sees large entourages of people from the city dressed in fine clothes descend from minibuses and cars and buses. They file in through the shrine’s side entrance, holding aloft trays laden with entire roast pigs, piles of fruit, flowers, items of clothing and gold plaques. A leader parts the crowds and the procession approaches one of the rows of altars set up to handle the large volume of offerings. The ritual offerings are made with dramatic flourish, sometimes with the aid of a medium. The gold plaques and expensively embroidered robes and headpieces that they offer are on permanent display in dozens of cabinets that fill a three-storied hall beside the shrine. They are objects of wonderment and speculation and most visitors to the shrine spend some time viewing them. It is commonly observed that the largest offerings have come from urban business people from Ho Chi Minh City. This has led to a perception of the goddess as a patron of urban prosperity, and stories abound of her
sponsored such ventures as real estate deals, moneylending, and house or vehicle rentals. These are routes to prosperity that many rural residents hope to emulate by migrating to the city. Among the many compacts nurtured in the precincts of the goddess’s shrine include entreaties placed with her for sponsoring migration to Ho Chi Minh City and beyond. To many migrants now working in the commercial sector of the nation’s largest city, their understanding of the goddess as an underwriter of urban fortunes is a view that was formed prior to, and is not simply a consequence of, their relocation to the city.

**SOCIALLY DIFFERENTIATING ‘THE MARKET’**

Modernist critics of goddess worship with whom I have spoken are well aware that the people who work in the markets and commercial service sector of the city number among the goddess’s most ardent followers. This would appear to be acknowledgement that the people who propitiate the goddess do indeed participate in the city’s market economy and are engaged in its global integration through their involvement in trade, transport and small business. However, when confronted by evidence of the proximity and modernity of goddess worship such critics have continued to dispute the representativeness of these practices to the processes of modernisation and globalisation by pointing to their ethnic, gendered, and occupational specificity.

One of these approaches is to regard goddesses such as the Lady of the Realm as evidence of the historical influence on the ethnic majority population of matriarchal cultures such as the Cham. Such cultural borrowings may be of interest to anthropologists, but can scarcely have anything of relevance to offer those who consider themselves in the avant-garde of the transition to a globalised market-based society. Goddess beliefs are also widely seen as a cultural model introduced by the ethnic Chinese, who, notwithstanding their acknowledged business prowess, are often faulted by Vietnamese intellectuals as characteristically predisposed to ‘superstition’. Alternatively, some argue that goddess beliefs find a hold among those lacking a solid education, whose ignorance leads them mistakenly to believe that spiritual forces guide their destiny. People such as market vendors and migrant workers in the commercial service sector, who lack equitable access to the centralized educational system, are likely to be influenced by such beliefs. Either way the propitiation of goddesses fails the culture test, either as influenced by non-Vietnamese culture or as indicating lack of exposure to a modern scientific cultural outlook.

Another approach is to associate the practice of spirit worship with particular generational and gender identities. Often described as a pursuit of ‘old women’ (bà gia) at the end of their days, stereotypes of religious practice as backward-looking, otherworldly, escapist or compensatory, are strongly gendered. Religious practice is often seen as a female predilection, stemming from a natural gender difference. Articles from the 1930s Saigonese magazine ‘Modern Woman’ wrote pejoratively of religious superstition as a problem that was widespread among women. In this vein, urban male acquaintances told me that women are prone to believe in others, or in external forces, rather than themselves. This opens them up for exploitation by religious charlatans. Men’s lack of inclination for matters religious, by contrast, indicates their more self-reliant (tu luc) nature. Such self-reli-
ance is commonly associated with modernity in Vietnam. For example, in the early twentieth century the ‘self-strengthening’ movement among the nationalist literati was an important vehicle for the introduction of ideas that it was thought would aid the modernizing of society.\textsuperscript{32} Science and the ‘new learning’ encouraged people to believe in themselves rather than in the power of obscure forces. Jamieson notes that, compared with the population as a whole, under the heavily urbanized Republic of Vietnam young, educated males had a more lineal view of time, a greater sense of personal efficacy vis-à-vis nature and society, were more individualistic and more critical of traditional ways.\textsuperscript{33} Presented as such, ‘progress’ is a movement towards inclinations that are often gendered male in the Vietnamese cultural context.

Urban modernist intellectuals also approach the issue of goddess worship in terms of a stratified notion of the market economy. Tien imagined the urban project of ‘modernisation’ and international ‘opening’ to be typified by educated, foreign-language-speaking white-collar professionals such as himself. People who worked for a company (cong ty) in corporate planning, personnel management or market research were in the ‘modern’ domain. In such a realm the ‘market’ thi truong is something to be managed, that is to say mediated by ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’ principles. Pertaining to the world of corporate giants with foreign names and consumerist brands with global reach, this sector is located in the city ‘centre’ (trung tam) and new foreign investment enclaves. It is housed in new-style, high-rise, air-conditioned, steel and glass buildings and has its own language and dress codes. By contrast, those working in the unglamorous covered concrete marketplaces and outdoor sidewalk stalls of the city and elsewhere, he linked to ‘superceded’ (loi thoi) or at best ‘transitory’ (tam thoi) forms of economic activity. Tien considered activities in his own local market as unplanned and provisional, and marked by casual speech, dress codes and the proliferation of ‘unscientific’ forms of thinking and superstitious practices.

This distinction is also gendered, the former space predominantly male, the latter almost uniquely female. Such distinctions are encoded in different names given for the types of market, the term thi truong generally refers to the abstract idea of a modern market, where Tien imagined himself to work, while the term cho is used for the concrete, face-to-face, female dominated points of exchange that are ubiquitous features of the social landscape in urban and rural Vietnam. The category of ‘private enterprises’ (kinh doanh tu nhan), whose emergence is an anxiously attended index of the progress of the liberal reforms, does not generally include women’s work in markets, described as ‘petty trade’ (buon ban nho), or as belonging to the ‘informal sector’.\textsuperscript{34} While Tien drew up advertising, marketing and distribution plans for spreading new consumer products through the Mekong delta countryside, he rarely himself set foot in his local market to buy such products for his own domestic consumption. This was done by his female relatives, his mother, wife and niece. Such a gendered division of labor is quite common in intellectual families in urban Vietnam, even as male intellectuals increasingly sell their expertise on the ‘knowledge market’.

The distinction Tien maintained between his own work as a corporate professional and that done by marketers, creditors and traders in his local neighborhood market could be seen to reveal traces
of a Confucian preference for scholarly and administrative occupations over those based in commerce, or of a traditional status hierarchy (si, cong, nong, thuong) that ranked the scholarly elite over peasants, workers and traders along mental/material lines.\textsuperscript{35} As such, the emergence of new professional identities and rationalities in Vietnam’s urban centres has not only breathed new meaning into rural/urban, generational and gender distinctions but has given fresh meaning to older occupationally-based status distinctions. These distinctions confirm Hefner’s observation that the globalisation of the market economy has not inevitably led to the effacement of locally-salient valences of culture or status. Instead, marketing, a rather longstanding practice within Vietnam, has accrued status through being amenable to ‘reason’ and gendered male attitudes, while stereotypically ‘global’ forms such as corporations acquire particular cultural and status meanings as they are divergently localised throughout the world.

However, the distinctions by which many Vietnamese urban professionals contemplate the market are not to be understood solely as time-bound cultural evaluations or traditionalist status reflexes. Rather they are practical strategies by which present-day actors attempt to secure their livelihoods in the complex and unstable economic environment of reform era Vietnam. During a decade and a half of educational and practical exposure to new ways of making a living, members of Vietnam’s educated urban class have struggled to conform to new standards of professionalism and expertise and to carve out a position for themselves as employees working within new corporate forms. However, the premises upon which they engage the market are challenged by alternative avenues for personal advancement that characterise the society in which they live. Corruption, nepotism, access to overseas remittances and unregulated migration have fuelled the recent rise of much of Ho Chi Minh City’s urban middle class, avenues to advancement that many educated professionals regard as provisory, unsustainable or illicit short-cuts to prosperity. Goddess worship is frequently linked by white collar professionals to illegitimate forms of livelihood, the perception being that reliance on protection from the spirit world is all too commonly the last resort of desperadoes and scoundrels. Their disparagement of those who seek refuge in spiritual protectors is tied to their critique of the improper involvement of officials in economic life and the proliferation of nefarious business ethics, which threaten to erode the competitiveness of the sector that employs them. Given that the Vietnamese government devotes as much attention to upholding the validity of goddess worship as it does to promoting Vietnam as a prime site for foreign investment, the critique of goddess worship issued by urban professionals is not necessarily an ideologically dominant viewpoint but one enunciated from a standpoint of threatened vulnerability.

CONCLUSION

The Lady of the Realm occupies a prominent position among the figures responsible for the immense economic changes underway in the cities and market places of southern Vietnam. A spirit who symbolises and makes intelligible contemporary economic processes, she also embodies a form of historical consciousness, a condensation of what is popularly seen to have worked in the past. To those who propitiate her, the goddess is centrally implicated as a causative agent and
contractual partner in their economic relationships. Very much an icon embodying for a significant sector of the urban population their historical experience of the market she is a symbol through whom people navigate the uncertainties of their commercial livelihoods and a reliable partner with whom they transact to achieve their goals.

Conversely, to the government and to many Vietnam’s state-employed ethnologists and folklorists, goddesses such as the Lady of the Realm have been construed as reflecting the essence of ‘national identity’ (ban sac dan toc), an elusive property to be conserved and promoted, in order to provide Vietnamese citizens a cultural anchor in an era of rapid change and a bulwark against the worst ravages of globalisation. While stressing the durability of goddess beliefs and their exemplification of the deep roots of the Vietnamese soul, this appeal to goddesses as representative of the spiritual sources of Vietnamese identity can also be situated in the present. On the one hand the official endorsement of goddess worship as a venerable Vietnamese tradition is linked to government attempts to cultivate new subjectivities such as the ‘family-based economy’ compatible with its decentralised post-collectivist economic vision. On the other hand, the celebration of mother goddesses can be seen as a reactive interpretive project advanced by urban intellectuals to maintain status and cultural relevance during an era of unprecedented socio-cultural change.

Urban modernists’ attitudes towards goddess worship similarly afford such a goddess an iconic status, even if to them she stands for a way of life that they evaluate negatively and wish to see abolished. To these iconoclasts, the Lady of the Realm is the focus of practices that they consider spatially removed, temporally outmoded, and of dubious social value. By mobilising distinctions of space, time and social value, their critical assessment of goddess worship exemplifies an alternative process of identity construction. Vietnam’s iconoclastic modernists assert spatial, temporal and cultural boundaries between themselves and those who practice goddess worship, which circumscribe a position for themselves as the authentic representatives of Vietnamese urbanity, modernity and globalism. Intolerant as their critiques may seem, rather than dismiss such views as modernist fanaticism or, alternatively, as evidence of an enduring traditionalist patriarchy or of elitist disparagement of heterodoxy, we can see in this critique, like the practice of goddess worship itself, a form of action in the present that aims at securing a viable existence for a significant fraction of the urban community enmeshed as they are in a complex and volatile social context.

ENDNOTES


2 Pseudonyms are used for all people whose comments are cited in this article.


4 Tran Van Giau, Su Phat Trien cua Tu Tuong o Viet Nam Tu the ky XIX den Cach Mang Thang Tam (The development of thought in Vietnam from


9 Nguyen Phuong Thao, Van Hoa Dan Gian Nam Bo (The Folk Culture of the Southern Vietnamese) (Hanoi: Education Publishing House), 1997.

10 Thach Phuong et al., Van Hoa Dan Gian Nam Bo (The Folk Culture of Southern Vietnam) (Ha Noi: Social Sciences), 1992, 89.

11 Ibid., 77.


13 Thach Phuong et al., Van Hoa Dan Gian Nam Bo, 1992.

14 For example, early in the 20th century, modernist intellectuals, endorsing a Social Darwinist evolutionist vision, proposed that the European method of honoring past figures for their historical contribution was to be preferred to the Vietnamese practice of making requests to the spirits of dead. See Phan Ke Binh, Vietnam Phong Tuc, annotated translation by Nicole Louis Henard, (Paris: Ecole Francaise d’Extreme-Orient), 1972, 1913–14.


16 Taylor, Goddess on the rise, 40.


21 Taylor, Goddess on the Rise, 124.


23 This goddess, enshrined in Bac Ninh province, obtained something of the notoriety among Hanoians that the Lady of the Realm achieved in Ho Chi Minh City and surrounding provinces at the same time. In the 1990s Ba Chua Kho was primarily associated with the borrowing of money, in contrast with the
Chau Doc goddess, for whom financial assistance was but one element in a multiplicity of functions. Khanh Duyen, *Tin Nguong Ba Chua Kho* (The Lady of the Storehouse belief). (Ha Bac: So Van Hoa Thong Tin va The Thao), 1994.


28 These once illicit trading activities, although they predated by centuries and have continued in tandem with the recent emergence of state-sanctioned private enterprises and foreign-owned companies, are commonly excluded in economists’ historical characterisations of a nation ‘in transition’ from a centrally planned to a market economy (see for instance Adam Fforde, and Stefan de Vylder, *From Plan to Market: The Economic Transition in Vietnam* (Boulder Col.: Westview), 1995.

29 For an account of her reputed sponsorship of overseas migration see Taylor, *Goddess on the Rise*, 107.


31 Bui Thi Hoa, ‘Phu nu voi cuoc van dong ton giao o Nam ky.’ *Phu Nu Tan Van*, 28 November 1933, 225) 13–14. Bui Thi Hoa 1933, 13; *Phu Nu Tan Van* 1930, 5. Cartoons in the journal *Culture and Arts Van Hoa Nghe Thuat* in the early 1980s highlighted the stupidity of those who heeded the advice of fortune-tellers and let their lives go to wrack and ruin. Nearly always their customers were portrayed as older women in rural garb.


33 Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, 304. By contrast under the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in northern Vietnam, where similar goals of independence and social progress were to be achieved through collective effort, the qualities of selflessness and self-sacrifice for the collectivity were described as the key to being an authentic revolutionary, Malarney ‘The Fatherland Remembers Your Sacrifice: Commemorating War Dead in North Vietnam,’ in Hue Tam Ho Tai, ed. *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*, 52.

34 A 1991 survey showed that 78% of the owners of Vietnam’s ‘small to medium-sized private businesses’ were men. Businesses in this category are defined by generally having more capital than the informal sector. They operate out of fixed places of production, are registered by the state, pay fixed taxes and usually require business management skills. According to a 2001 study, women account for 70% of the workers in the informal sector, which contributes 53.8% of the nation’s GDP. See Le Thi, *Employment and Life of Vietnamese Women During Economic Transition*, 87, 77.

35 Luong Van Hy, ‘Engendered Entrepreneurship: Ideologies and political-economic transformation in a northern Vietnamese center of Ceramics production.’ in Robert Hefner, ed. *Market Cultures: Society and


38 Taylor, ‘The Goddess, the Ethnologist, the Folklorist and the Cadre’, 395.
INTRODUCTION

Imagine a map so huge and intricately drawn, so exquisitely rendered, that it forms an exact reproduction of the territory it represents, its details blending seamlessly with the ground depicted, its topographical precision erasing any signs of difference between the land and the cartographic analogue. In his fictional fragment ‘Of Exactitude in Science’, Jorge Luis Borges describes such a map. Drawn by the finest cartographers of the empire, this map is of the same scale as the territory described, and so detailed that every curve and form of the landscape coincides with its two dimensional representation. Forming a copy of the ground itself, the map ends up covering the territory exactly, overlaid like a huge imaginary landscape of signs and traces as a substitution for the real.

Over the years though, the map gradually loses its appeal and is eventually abandoned. As if unable to withstand the burden of representation any longer, the discarded map begins to age and wear, fraying around the edges, growing thinner and lighter until it tears into shreds and gradually reveals the ground beneath. In ruins it collapses, leaving a few traces scattered here and there over the landscape, a few tattered shreds discernible in the sands of the desert, offering shelter for the occasional roaming animal or nomad.

I am, of course, not the only one who has been fascinated by the story of the Borges map. In his article ‘Simulacra and Simulations’ Jean Baudrillard describes the Borges tale as the ‘finest allegory of simulation’, an entry point into a world of simulacra: a world of models and fakes without recourse to stable referents, copies forever severed from the origins and originals to which they once deferred. In his own take on the Borges story, Baudrillard desires to go beyond all claims to any kind of coextensivity
between the map and the territory—the ‘second-order simulacra’ of imitations, maps and doubles. Instead, in this third order simulacra (the *procession* of closed and self-referring systems of semiotic exchange), it is the actual territory which no longer holds any guarantee of privileged access to the solid ground of reality. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it; rather, it is the map which now ‘engenders’ the territory. The map, with its intricate pattern of codes, produces the ground, the land, the real, simply as an effect of the system of signs that it generates. And, continuing this logic, in Baudrillard’s version it is now the territory that, unable to bear the pretence of reality, begins to fall away in shreds, its tattered remains and vestiges rotting away here and there across the face of the map.3

Baudrillard’s elaborate use of the Borges story is a useful point of entry for thinking about tourism, and in particular, international tourism’s mapping of the globe as tourist space. It is also relevant for thinking about the various hyperreal performances or ‘stagings’ of culture, ethnicity, and place that tourism both produces and encourages.4 Tourism, after all, is very adept at creating something which never before existed but which we come to think of as true.

Moreover, the metaphor of the map seems highly appropriate for considering a tourist destination such as Bali, where the massive development of tourist infrastructure and promotion, and the sheer volume of tourists visiting the island, have, at different times, led to fears that continuous expansion would inevitably lead to its ruin, the decline of its physical and cultural splendors, and the eventual disappearance of tourists altogether. Comprehensively mapped by the cultural imagination, Bali has been known variously as a ‘garden of Eden’, as a ‘touristic Shangri-La’, the ‘enchanted isle’, ‘the last paradise’, and ‘one of the world’s great romantic dreams’. In the 1950s film *South Pacific*, Bali was territorialised in the most literal of senses, and was fictionalised as ‘Bali-Hai’, the dream island of American servicemen, a utopian respite from the horrors of war in the Pacific. Through a deft geographical displacement not uncommon to Hollywood, Bali became a generic icon of paradise in the South Seas, with every image of tropical island life rolled into one. Even Nehru, first prime minister of India, and hero of the newly-emerging ‘post-colonial’ globe, participated in this branding of Bali when, as he was guided around the island by his host, Indonesian nationalist President Sukarno, he called it ‘the morning of the world’. Over the three centuries that the West constructed its complex and monumental iconography of the island, Bali’s hyperbolic reputation appeared to grow at the same speed as the pace at which it edged ever closer to overexposure and collapse. But, it was not only the Western powers, Europe and America, who invested in the island’s reputation; by the time of Nehru’s visit, Bali’s image was ‘international property’.5 In this sense then, decades of colonial appropriation and assimilation, anthropological investigation, nation-state driven image-making, tourist promotion, travel writing and popular culture have created a symbolic edifice that, just like Borges’ map, does indeed bear down on the territory of the island, appearing to cover it completely.

In the early 1970s, for example, Bali received around 50,000 tourists a year, and by 1976 the number had reached 113,000. In the 1980s around 400,000 tourists a year visited, and in 1990 the number increased to more than half a
million, growing at an annual rate of about 20%. In Bali’s long history of tourism Australians have been the largest single group of nationals to feature, comprising over one-quarter of all tourists. In fact, the island has consistently attracted the largest number of Australians traveling internationally for short-term trips over the last two decades, and a special kind of mythological relationship has developed between Australia and Bali largely through this process of tourism exchange. One of the results of this has been an almost symbiotic connection between the two places, whereby, for example, a trip to Bali has become established as a crucial rite of passage for one’s national identity as an Australian. Conversely, for the Balinese, Australian tourism has become an integral part of Balinese culture, and has contributed extensively to the shaping of that culture. We can cite as an example (and at the same time also illustrate Baudrillard’s world of fully-blown ‘third order simulacra’ in which the abstraction of the map begins to produce the territory in its own image) the construction, by both Balinese and Australians, of a particular version of Australian culture in well-known and heavily touristed sites around Kuta, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. The image of Australian culture that circulated at the time—beer drinking, surfing, and nearly always ethnically Anglo—an image frozen and static in the manner of all synchronic models, actually worked to produce a concrete reality which thereafter would be lived out by some (often unfortunately so, especially for many Balinese) as ‘real Aussie culture’.

Yet irrespective of whether the relationship between the two places is seen in terms of national stereotypes and conformity (I’ve been to Bali, too!), in terms of simulacra, or, in terms of economic cooperation and benefits, it has given rise to a complex cultural and geographical synthesis that unsettles conventional understandings of cartographic space and the usual distinctions between inside and outside, here and there, centre and periphery, and ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’. As a consequence, Bali has come to occupy a uniquely symbolic, iconic position in the Australian national imaginary. It is also undoubtedly a relationship defined by reciprocal advantages and influences. But the complex, overlapping, spatial system in which this relationship occurs and finds meaning is by no means stable, isomorphic, uniform, or even consensual; rather it is characterised by highly unequal relations of cultural and economic power, and highly uneven and disjunctive relationships between institutional structures.

So, while still bearing in mind these most immediate metaphorical trajectories, I would like now to take the idea of the map in another, slightly different, direction. I would like to use it to talk about the nation-state, colonialism, transnationalism, and in particular, the kind of nation-state driven neo-colonialism that is still structuring the relations between Australia and its neighbours, even within the reconfigured context of intensified interconnectivity and globalisation. I would like to think of these neo-colonial relations as indeed a kind of imaginary map that stretches over territory, superimposed upon it, and collecting everything within its embrace. Indeed, it is a fundamentally colonial impulse that imagines that there could in fact be such a map, extending out and wrapping all geographies within the one empire of influence.

But I am also interested in what happens when the map begins to fray and tear, just like it does in the story, when
it collapses and is left in ruins, changing completely the Empire’s until then confident extension and embrace of, and relationship to, the territories around it. I don’t want to labour this metaphor too much, but I think this is exactly what has happened in the aftermath of the Bali bombings, which took place on 12 October 2002. When the two bombs exploded in the centre of the club and bar district of Kuta Beach, Australia’s relationship to Bali, and indeed to the whole region, was significantly altered. The event catalysed a period of deep mourning and grief for the 88 Australians, mostly young people on holiday having a good time, who lost their lives. But it also caused a reassessment and rethinking of our place in the region. The bombs that exploded in Paddy’s Bar and the Sari Club—an event that quickly became known as Australia’s greatest peacetime disaster—seemed to indicate for many, that an identity and history that had long been shaped by the ‘tyranny of distance’ had well and truly been replaced by the tyranny, and also terror, of proximity.

Rather than focus on the actual events of the bombings though, what I would like to do here is try to find a way of talking about Australia’s relationship with Bali, and other places (Nauru, Christmas Island, Manus Island) that could also, like Bali, be seen as imaginary peripheries of the Australian nation. I also want to consider Bali’s reputation as an icon of Australianness, where one can still find the familiar images and trappings of a national culture that many thought had already disappeared from the Australian nation itself. I also want to explore the development of Bali as a tourist icon, a role forged first by the Dutch colonial administration and later the nationalist practices of the Indonesian government, where its continued promotion as a site of global pleasure is based on the continued repression of its own tragic and violent past. Finally, I will consider alternative mappings of the nation appropriate to the present experience of globalisation, ones that move from neo-colonial appropriation and exploitation towards a greater sense of transnational connection and responsibility.

MAPPING THE EMPIRE

The process of cartography, of mapping, drawing boundaries, measuring distances, and naming places, is central to the imperial enterprise. It is through the cartographic project of establishing spatial and geographical coordinates, of classifying and naming, that territories and spaces are transformed into countries and places, and specific histories are brought into being. As such, maps are instruments of power, and always embody the spatial intentions and imaginative economies of those who first employed them. This process is disclosed in the very term ‘geography’ (geo-graphy: literally, writing the earth’s surface). Geo-political entities such as ‘East’ and ‘West’, ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’ are, from this perspective, not just geographical sites but ideas: mythological and imaginary forms produced from a system of geographical classification, shaped by a Eurocentric imaginary, and haunted by the legacy of the colonial encounter and the violent conquest of various and far-flung ‘others’. In this way, cartography and the mapping of the world relate to what Heidegger termed ‘the gigantic’: the elimination of distance and the ability to represent and reproduce at any time a picture of unfamiliar and distant places and their location. Within the gigantic, all other realities and all other spaces become merely knowable dimensions of the one world.
This is a process that can be readily identified with the project of European imperialism and the mapping of the globe as an exploitable resource. But, the colonised world was also exhorted to reproduce European values and ideologies: namely, the universalisation of the nation-state as the most desirable form of political community. Exported from Europe, the nation-state form became the geo-political normative premise by which Europe interacted with ‘elsewhere’. In this way, the mapping of territorial boundaries and the definition of highly-integrated spaces of national identity and identification as a means of legitimation were the political and military technologies fundamental to European economic expansion. As Hardt and Negri state,

Imperialism was really an extension of the sovereignty of the European nation-states beyond their own boundaries. Eventually nearly all the world’s territories could be parcelled out and the entire world map could be coded in European colours: red for British territory, blue for French, green for Portugese, and so forth. Wherever modern sovereignty took root, it constructed a Leviathan that overarched its social domain and imposed hierarchical territorial boundaries, both to police the purity of its own identity and to exclude all that was other.\(^\text{10}\)

Cartography was central to this process, with the technology of the map functioning not only to embody colonialism’s territorial ambitions but also to reinforce the relations of geographical division and symbolic identity that went hand in hand with it. Mapping functioned, therefore, both strategically and literally, as a means of spatial containment and systematic organisation, and consequently, as a form of ‘cartographic discourse, whose patterns of coercion and containment are historically implicated in the colonial enterprise’.\(^\text{11}\) But the boundaries that colonialism created were often arbitrarily drawn, establishing artificial borders between peoples, linguistic entities, and cultural and political communities that functioned along very different lines of coexistence and connection prior to colonisation. Before colonial rule, territorial arrangements and attachments to land were frequently fluid and relative, with political and sovereign entities often defined not by state or geographical boundaries, but rather functioning as multiple spaces composed and recomposed through wars and the mobility of people and things. As exemplified by the slave trade, highly complex scales of measurement established correspondences between persons and things, and also led to an interlacing of allegiances and connections through trade routes. The imbrication of social ties that resulted from such overlapping spaces of exchange meant that identity was often not reducible to religion, family or kinship relations in any singular way.

The histories of Bali, and the Indonesian nation-state that contains it, can serve as typical examples of this form of colonial mapping. The territory of Indonesia is an archipelago of thousands of islands, scattered over a vast area between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, and Bali is a small island within this expanse. Europeans first visited Bali towards the late 1500s, but the island was officially ‘discovered’ in 1597 by the first Dutch expedition to the East Indies, as this area was then known. By the early 1600s the Dutch East India Company had established a major trade empire, with the Javanese capital, Batavia, at its centre. Bali fascinated the
Dutch: ruled by a King and royal family, the island was irrigated and densely populated, militarily strong, astride a major trade route, and importantly, in contrast to its Islamic neighbours, maintained the Hindu religion. At this time, the Balinese empire stretched from east Java to the island of Sumbawa. The Dutch had wanted to incorporate Bali into the imperial map of the Netherlands from the time of their first presence in the region, and had sought the Balinese as allies against the region’s Islamic radicalism. However, religion was an insufficient basis on which to forge political alliances or enmities for the Balinese, and the island successfully resisted colonial rule for decades. From 1846 until 1908 the Dutch conducted seven separate military expeditions in an effort to subjugate and eventually defeat the Balinese; the island was one of the last regions of the Indonesian archipelago to be incorporated into the colonial empire of the Netherlands.

12 In contrast to its contemporary image as a peaceful paradise populated by gentle and generous people, the island’s reputation at this time was centred on its warlike nature and noble savagery. In fact, Bali was known for the almost constant warfare between the various kingdoms and their rulers, and one of the main aims of the European colonial powers was to ‘civilise’ the uncivilised island and its barbaric practices. Among these, the practices of *sutee* (widow burning) and the sacrifice and execution of slaves were well-established, and indeed became dominant motifs of the European image of Bali as a place of brutality and tyranny. The Balinese slave-trade, a major export economy during the 17th and 18th centuries, also contributed to this image: Balinese slaves were sold throughout the world, to Batavia, the West Indies, South Africa, and to islands across the Pacific and Indian oceans. Although the Balinese had sold slaves prior to the arrival of the Dutch East India Company, the new trading conditions enabled the slave trade to flourish. At the same time, the Dutch also reorganised the established trade routes of the region to suit their own interests. Bali was situated on the periphery of these changed routes, and its trade with the spice islands of Maluku was disrupted. The expansion of the slave trade, however, quickly followed in its wake and was assisted by the global networks of the Dutch East India Company. Despite being outlawed though by the Dutch and other colonial powers, the practices of slavery and *sutee* continued.13

In 1846, frustrated by what (conveniently) looked like disrespect for the international law of free trade, and keen to secure their control of all trade routes, the Dutch invaded one of Bali’s kingdoms. Using Javanese military traditions, including the indigenous form of warfare known as *amuk* (hence the Orientalist expression *running amuk*), the Balinese launched a formidable defence that would become characteristic of their sustained resistance to the imposition of Dutch rule. After a series of defeats, the Dutch were finally able to establish a colonial administration in parts of the island. After the massacres of 1906 and 1908—the two *puputans* (a traditional practice marking by death the ending of a kingdom), in which Balinese royalty and their followers marched into battle and advanced straight into the gunfire of the Dutch forces—the whole island came under full colonial rule. This military conquest was a source of international embarrassment to the Dutch, and the subsequent colonial policies directed towards the preservation of Balinese
culture and its promotion as a tourist attraction were seen as attempts to make amends for these events.

The violence of these centuries receives little or no mention in contemporary images and accounts of Bali. The Dutch colonisers themselves hastily tried to put the violent past behind them, as they effected a swift transition from an image of ‘savage Bali’ to an image of the island as an exotic paradise and tourist destination for the international elite. Almost as soon as the Dutch gained control, they began crafting a new iconography for the island, one that included the dominant images of a sensual, erotic, female Bali (bare-breasted maidens and dancing girls) and a cultured Bali (arts, literature, music and temples). This iconography tended to use highly sexualised representations to construct the island as part of the mysterious, mystical East, a place of exotic and ‘pure’ sexuality and native life. The explicit orientalism of this iconography established a theme that would recur in later tourism promotion materials, and is an image of Bali as a site of erotic pleasures that still persists today. As such, the discourses drawn upon by the Dutch to construct the tourist image of Bali as ineffable, as an object of both Western curiosity and fantasy, are of course the main features of Orientalism, whereby the West both names and fixes the identity of the East, while simultaneously exploiting it as a source of fascination and longing.¹⁴

Ironically, it was these newly constituted ideas of Balinese identity and traditional culture that provided a basis for the nationalist movement and to calls for independence from the Dutch.

At this stage, the Dutch focus on understanding, and also controlling, Balinese life meant that ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’ were gradually disembedded from the history and lived experience of the Balinese, and became distinct categories through which to organise certain cultural practices so that they could be performed and consumed by both Balinese and non-Balinese. The Enlightenment values that the Dutch brought with them and fostered, emphasised education, literature, and the arts, and the harmonious idea of a modern society and progressive cultural development. Adopting this framework, the Balinese used the languages, epistemologies, and philosophical systems of the West to make sense of their own cultural values and religious practices, which could then be presented as consciously articulated culture and tradition. The establishment of ‘authentic’ traditional culture through this process led to an elevation of the island’s Hindu religion and artistic and cultural life that provided autonomy and legitimacy for the Balinese, but also attracted expatriates, colonial scholars, anthropologists, and of course, tourists, and which in turn led to further appreciation and growth. After the state-sponsored cultural policy launched in the 1920s known as the ‘Balinisation of Bali’, the Balinese began to describe themselves as a ‘people’, as a singular entity, and as a particular ethnic group with its own religion and customs.¹⁵

The period of Dutch colonial rule ended with the Japanese invasion in 1942 and the Pacific War. During the struggle for independence after the war, many of the conflicts focused again on questions of how Balinese culture and society were to be defined, and who was to control the island. These conflicts continued after the Indonesian Revolution, and became increasingly intense when Bali officially became part of the Indonesian Republic. The view of Bali as a ‘living museum’, a museum of ancient Hindu-Javanese civilisation (largely created by
the Dutch colonisers), was continued by the Republic’s founder, President Sukarno, and employed within Indonesian state mythology and processes of nation-building. In his efforts to construct a unified Indonesian nation-state and identity, Sukarno combined modern concepts of nationalism with references to tradition and heritage, with the aim of synthesising Indonesia’s extremely diverse regional cultures. Widely disparate ethnic, religious and cultural traditions became sets of abstract principles that were assembled to construct an image of ‘unity in diversity’ (the national motto). An abortive coup in Jakarta in 1965 led to Sukarno’s replacement by Suharto as President of Indonesia. The deaths of prominent army generals during the coup were blamed on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and reprisals led to massacres of communists throughout the country, events that were particularly extreme in Bali. Under Suharto’s ‘new order’ regime a period of sustained international tourism promotion began. Primarily initiated to address a national balance of payments deficit and to attract important sources of foreign currency, the government, assisted by the World Bank, targeted the province of Bali as the focus of development. Tourism policy was, in effect, removed from the provincial government and directed by the central government, and also became part of the strategy for fostering national unity and integration. During the period from 1970 to 1995, both accommodation facilities and tourist numbers increased dramatically, with the total number of hotel rooms growing from less than five hundred to thirty thousand. By 1995 international hotels and hotel chains had appeared, and investments in tourist infrastructure had substantially shifted property ownership away from local businesses to large corporations, many of which were either based in Jakarta or overseas. At Sanur more up-market tourism began, signalled by the construction of the Bali Beach Hotel; at Seminyak, the beachfront Oberoi, one of Bali’s first luxury hotels, and designed by Australian architect Peter Muller, was situated well away from noisy, brash Kuta. More recently, luxury villas, completely self-contained and protected from intruders by armed guards, have also appeared; like the Udayan Military base which has jurisdiction over East Indonesia, including Timor, they are largely insulated from the tourist regions.

PARADISE LOST

The 1975 edition of Lonely Planet’s Across Asia on the Cheap declares, ‘Bali: rapidly becoming one of the world’s premier tourist attractions and equally rapidly going downhill. See it now!’ In the early 1970s the island had become an increasingly popular destination for Australians. Bali was one of the main stops on the ‘hippie overland trail’ across Asia, and groups of ‘world travellers’ arrived in search of cheap lodgings, drugs and mysticism; surfies soon followed. With the arrival of cheap airfares and package tours, ordinary, working-class Australians were suddenly visible in Bali. And as mass tourism increased, the budget-style accommodation of Kuta and Legian was gradually replaced by a concentration of hotels, restaurants and bars, often with names such as Koala Blu and Norm’s Bar. Australian beers displaced the local Indonesian beer on ‘genuine Australian pub crawls’.

After decolonisation, Australia’s relationship to Indonesia changed dramatically. The Australian Government’s
support for the Indonesian revolution had signified, in former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating’s words, a new kind of engagement in the region and ‘our effective resignation from the Colonial Club.’ Yet in many ways this new kind of engagement with Asia, and in particular Indonesia, appeared not to be substantially different from the earlier version, and for many, the colonial club was still very much intact, and indeed well-frequented. Historically, Australia’s relationship to Asia has tended to oscillate between either threat or opportunity, and the connections with the region have been overwhelmingly explained and evaluated in terms of their potential economic, cultural, or political benefits. As such, ‘decolonised’ Indonesia was increasingly seen as a place where greater material opportunities were both possible and potentially profitable.

This exploitative and opportunistic relationship to South-East Asia has resulted in considerable economic benefits for the Australian nation. It is a relationship that has been reinforced by a geographical imagination that has conceptualised the country as a bounded and isolated island-continent surrounded by a sea of Asian otherness, and precariously placed on the ‘edge of empire’. This spatial imaginary has been reflected in the isolationism of the White Australia policy, and the protectionist policies (both economic and military) of Fortress Australia. Both the ‘frontier image’ and the idea of the ‘perilous periphery’ work to contain the familiar and exclude the alien and incomprehensible. To a great extent, the structural racism that in both the present and the past has so deeply troubled regional, national and local political processes, stems from this spatial imaginary conceived in terms of frontiers, boundaries, and peripheries. It has also resulted in a persistent neo-colonialism in which these various peripheries cannot be considered in any other way except in terms of threat, pleasure, or profit, and subsequently, as sites that must in some way be either incorporated, or rejected, from the Australian geo-political imagination. For example, an article by the journalist Paul Kelly on the first anniversary of the Bali bombings, ‘Brought Back to the World’, was especially telling in this respect. Kelly wrote that ‘Bali has touched our soul and revealed our character’. He then continued, ‘For years we thought that engagement with Asia was about profits, holidays and the conference circuit in a mutually beneficial embrace’.

But quite apart from the period of reflection that the Bali bombings precipitated, over recent years a number of different sites at Australia’s periphery have become crucially implicated in the domestic politics of citizenship, sovereignty and identity within the Australian nation. Bali, Christmas Island, Manus Island, Nauru—Australia has had, and continues to have, complex relationships with these ‘peripheries’. Usually exploitative in one way or another, the relationships with these places have fulfilled important roles for Australia’s sovereignty and citizenship; for example, in defining the limits, and therefore the political conditions, in which people can enter Australian territory and claim refuge. Similarly, when John Howard adopted the role of Deputy Sheriff, and took responsibility for policing South East Asia, including raising the option of launching pre-emptive military strikes, he not only asserted a particular kind of Australian national identity, but also reinscribed a conventional mapping of Australia’s position.
of superiority in the region. Moreover, given his electoral success in 2001 with the anti-asylum seeker ‘We Decide’ campaign, it appeared that this was an image of both national and spatial identity that most Australians supported.

In this sense then, these peripheries are actually symbolically central. While Bali is claimed as a de facto part of Australia (a paternalism that has come through strongly in the media coverage of the Bali bombings and subsequent anniversaries), Christmas Island is excised from the Australian migration zone and turned into a convenient component of border control, maintained through millions of dollars of coastal surveillance. But they’re central in another way too: they have provided the raw materials and resources by which the nation has produced and reproduced its very centres and foundations. In the case of Nauru, for example, it was through the exploitation of the small island’s resource of superphosphate, which was mined to the point at which it seemed the very core of island had been removed. Nauru was left devastated, and without a secure income stream, until the Australian government set up detention centres and immigration processing facilities, and one important economy (agricultural fertiliser) was replaced by another (border control). This is leaving aside, of course, the Russian mafia’s discovery of Nauru’s usefulness for money laundering. But that is a very different, though not unrelated, story. At present, Nauru
is essentially bankrupt and is negotiating with the Australian government’s Department of Finance on the best plan of settlement.\(^{25}\)

One of the key reasons there has been such outrage and disbelief over the Bali bombings, I would argue, is that Bali, actually part of another nation, has indeed been considered an adjunct, *de facto* territory of the Australian nation-state. Although Bali is part of Indonesia, it is rarely referred to as either Asian or Indonesian. Instead, the island is often described by, thought of by, Australians as ‘ours’. As one journalist noted, it has commonly been described as ‘Australia’s backyard, a second home for surfers and backpackers, Kuta as a bit of Bondi in Bali … a tropical Earls Court’; in other words, as ‘our tourist colony’.\(^{26}\) Additionally, most references to the place in tourist guide-books and promotional materials simply refer to ‘the archetypal resort island of Bali’. The fact that some Australian tourists have no idea Bali is actually part of Indonesia, or that it is a largely Hindu enclave in the world’s most populous Muslim country, is confirmation here.\(^{27}\) Bali is imagined then as part of Australia not only because of its geographical proximity and status as a popular tourist destination, but because many areas of the island have actually been created for tourists as fantasy ‘Australiana’ zones, where the way of life is more *extremely familiar* than the usual *extremely different* experience of tourism.

A newspaper article on Australian tourists in Bali, published before the bombings, suggested that the appeal of places like Kuta for many tourists was because it was not foreignness, the authentic or the exotic which was encountered, but rather what was already known, familiar and ‘homely’: Australian culture. In Kuta, it appears, a version of Australian culture had been recreated as a tourist paradise, a version that was very much pre-multiculturalism, pre-Paul Keating’s adventure of internationalisation, and very much a throw-back to that era of an Australian identity defined by Anglo monoculture, sport, beer and BBQs. Australian tourists visited Kuta, the article argued, because it was indeed a ‘home away from home’. As the article stated: ‘Victoria Bitter is everywhere; it’s just as easy to get hamburgers, toasted sandwiches and chips as it is *gado gado*. The Kuta street sellers … speak their English with an Aussie accent … the bars have satellite television beaming AFL and ARL games’. And rather than visits to temples, museums, and sightseeing excursions, the entertainment and tourist activities include listening to Indonesian bands playing Midnight Oil songs, and Sunday dinners of roast chicken with pumpkin and potatoes followed by beer-drinking competitions.\(^{28}\)

This creation of a bastion of ‘Aussie culture’, permanently circa 1983, signals a curious sense of geographical displacement that extends far beyond specific individuals; rather it forms part of the larger collective identity and spatial imaginary of Australia as a far-flung outpost of Europe on the edge of Asia. As the *Economist* wrote, ‘More was shattered than lives and families. Australia has lost, perhaps forever, its happy sense of security as a relatively isolated country’.\(^{29}\) Considering this construction of Bali as an imaginary periphery of Australia (and therefore symbolically central to national identity), it is unsurprising that the Bali bombings led to a time of both introspection and sustained contemplation of the issues of security and vulnerability. As one critic commented, ‘After the Bali bombing, no outsider could fail to notice the sense of an inno-
Figure 2: ‘A pamphlet calling for Australians to boycott travel to Bali. Distributed at a public rally supporting Australian intervention in East Timor after the vote for independence from Indonesia in 1999, Author’s collection.'
ence being betrayed and punished … As if the Australians had been somehow “out of it”, and are now being cruelly dragged into the world, made just like the rest of it’.30 Using similar language, Australian Prime Minister John Howard described the event as a ‘brutal awakening’. He added that ‘the Bali atrocity has left its mark on the consciousness of our nation—we understand that this was an attack on our values, our way of life. The threat posed by global terrorists may have changed the world we live in, but it will never change who we are’.31

If, post September 11, the assertion ‘we are all Americans’ became a frequent reprise, ‘after Bali’, our own moment of international terrorism, a similar mobilisation of defensive national identity (‘we are all Australians’) also began to appear.32 Occasionally, individual voices also expressed a feeling of ontological insecurity that obviously resonated on both personal and political scales: for example, in a Four Corners program on the Australian victims and survivors, a number of young people said, again and again, that what they feel they’ve lost is a sense of safety and security, not only in relation to overseas, but here at home, ‘here in our own home’, they repeated.33 This refrain that, after the Bali bombings, ‘everything had changed’, was constant in the media coverage of the event and its aftermath. Commentators struggled to come to terms not only with Australia’s reconfigured status in the region, but the fact that terrorism had shattered its happy isolation and produced another era of perilous proximity. Some pointed to the parallels between the events and Michel Houellebecq’s novel Platform. Written two years prior to the bombings and ending with an attack on a tourist beach-resort by Muslim terrorists, the novel was interpreted as a kind of ‘cultural pre-emptive strike’.34 Few though, connected the novel’s analysis of the global sex and tourist industry with what had happened in Bali. One of the central themes of the book is the consequences of the instrumentalisation and extension of the liberal freedoms of the West, especially in the context of the financial and sexual exploitation of the third world. Yet the few non-Western critics whose commentaries managed to make their way into the Western media, focused precisely on this point. A few days after the bombings, Malaysian writer Rehman Rashid wrote about the Sari Club:

Filthy place. Reeking of beer and sweat; the air thick with smoke and jagged with Strine; packed out and heaving into the night at the scummy end of the Legian-Kuta strip, down past the Gado-Gado, Hard Rock and Peanut … Everybody knew the Sari Club. It had been there about 15 years, sopping up the dregs of the Kuta night … If you couldn’t score anywhere else, you could score at the Sari Club. To that rickety firetrap would lurch the last of the night’s purblind drunken foreigners.35

Similarly, Balinese academic Luh Ketut Suryani commented on the detrimental effects of mass tourism, mentioning that it brought to Bali not only financial rewards but also ‘prostitution, gambling, paedophilia, drugs’, and had undermined much of the traditional culture. While condemning the attacks, she nonetheless hoped that they would force a rethinking of the instrumental processes of cultural exchange characteristic of mass tourism.36 Another critic asked ‘how many learned that the two flattened nightclubs, the Sari Club and Pad-
When I went to Bali in the early 1990s, I arrived completely unprepared for the version of ‘little Australia’ to be found around Kuta Beach. Of course I knew about the continuous traffic of Australians to Bali, but still I had no idea of the extent to which Australian suburban life (which, ironically, I’d been desperately trying to escape for years) had so successfully transplanted itself in this tropical setting of coconut palms and warm seas. Bali was indeed a popular destination for people from the particular suburban environment which, in my youth, I was eager to leave: Sydney’s Sutherland Shire, known iconically simply as ‘the Shire’. In fact, seven young women from the Shire died in the bombings, and a monument to their loss has been erected at Cronulla Beach.

Anyway, after a university education that had involved much discussion of Indonesia and international politics, I was very curious to find out what I could about Balinese perspectives on Sukarno and Suharto, and the massacre of suspected communists in Bali around the time of the coup in 1965. I arrived, for example, already knowing that the death toll for Indonesia as a whole reached somewhere in the vicinity of half a million people, and that for Bali alone it was estimated that around 100,000 people were killed between December 1965 and early 1966. When you know that the country you are visiting has in its recent past witnessed such a tremendous loss of life, you can’t help but imagine how and where it took place. You walk around wondering if the people you meet in the street were involved, or if they lost family and relatives. And in Bali all you can really do is imagine: there are no monuments, no museums, no official historical records about the massacres and where they took place. There are no traces of the destroyed villages or the mass graves. The only historical account I could find was the sketchy potted-history given by my Lonely Planet guide.

Years later I heard that much of the tourist accommodation in Kuta, including the many luxurious five star beachside hotels that I had seen on my visit, were in fact built on top of mass graves of communists. This accommodation was constructed by the government in the early 1970s to encourage mass tourism (at exactly the same time as Lonely Planet’s lament ‘see it now!’), and then soon after privatised. Denis Bryne’s own account of looking for ‘Traces of ’65’, as his article is called, mentions a story, told to him by a friend, of the five-star Oberoi hotel, and the ghosts that were known to inhabit the grounds when she herself lived there in the 1970s.

Whether there really are ghosts at such sites, or whether this is just a way of coping with the utter terribleness of the recent past, is beside the point. Derrida, for example, has called these kinds of stories a ‘global Hauntology’, ‘the ghost that goes on speaking’. Across the borders of our nation-states, these spectral effects, this hauntology of histories and memories, unsettles the neo-liberal regime of globalisation. The ‘euphoria of liberal democracy and of the market economy’, is haunted by the return of the ruined and dispossessed in all kinds of ways. Haunting, he says, belongs to the structure of every hegemony.

Icons, after all, are nearly always
haunted by the wider contexts and histories that they not only embody and represent, but from which they stand apart. For Walter Benjamin, icons such as ‘cultural treasures’ have without exception ‘an origin which [one] cannot contemplate without horror’. As one of his most famous maxims states, ‘There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism’. But few citations of this truism also include the sentence that follows it, ‘And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which was transmitted from one owner to another’.39 As Byrne argues, the ‘structures of forgetting’ which the Indonesian state has put in place to cover the massacres of 1965-66 had a counterpart at the international level in the way nations such as Australia, quickly turned away from, if not openly condoned, what was going on.

To return then, to the metaphor of the map with which I began. If the imaginary map extending over these peripheries has begun to disintegrate, what kind of relationship will develop in its wake? The relationships Australia has with these places will become more rather than less important as globalisation intensifies and accelerates. The transnational trajectories of the nation state, and the vectors of transnational connection, will continue to multiply and to become entangled and ever more complex. Within a globalised world, places and sites are increasingly interconnected, tied as they are into a complex global network of interdependencies and movement. If nations are constituted as much by their peripheries as by their centres, a map that relies solely upon a notion of a cartographically ordered space, of clearly circumscribed distances and differences, is compromised. In a world where people and objects are constantly configured and reconfigured in terms of relative mobility and stasis, static dichotomies of difference and distance, of home and abroad, First and Third, centre and margin, metropolitan and periphery, start to collapse like the map of the empire in Borges fable, slowly dissipating until only remnants and threads remain, waiting again to be rewritten.

But, rather than an imaginary map of colonial or neo-colonial relations, what is needed is a framework in which such trajectories are recognised and understood, and where, instead of neo-colonial embrace and export, transnational responsibility is taken for the nation’s peripheries and what goes on there, activities which are of course carried out most always in the name of the nation. Rather than focusing on the enemies massing at the frontier, and the terrors, real and imagined, that are always ‘elsewhere’, we could start by looking at the contradictions that lie within, especially within the very form of the nation-state itself. And, rather than rejecting the difference of others, and simply increasing the fortifications against external attacks or threats, in whatever form, we could recognise the interrelations and connections that compromise our national imaginaries of isolation and containment. Essentially, the nation-state must be considered in relation to its ‘outside’, and to the kinds of vectors which exist beyond its apparent borders. This would be a move that would also recognise the unevenness of the mobilities and power relations at these peripheries. It would appreciate that within this transnational network of interconnected regions, some sites are constructed as ‘pleasure peripheries’ where transnational citizens move.
freely, able to consume the signs of difference that tourism offers (or in the case of Bali, the signs of familiarity and sameness), while others are constructed as peripheries of persecution, exile, and detention.

To not take responsibility for what occurs at the nation’s peripheries, at places like Nauru and Christmas Island, is to continue a distancing which itself is a form of violence. To not question and challenge what is carried out in the name of the nation and the nation’s sovereignty is also to continue this distancing. This makes it crucial to establish a framework that not only decentres the nation as the privileged unit or object of analysis, but also firmly connects what happens at its edges and beyond to the kinds of national narratives, histories and stories we tell. This is also to recognise and acknowledge the rights and responsibilities both derived from, and owed to, peoples and objects that lie outside the doctrine of national sovereignty and the boundaries of the nation state. This will perhaps provide the possibility of inventing a new image of the relations of connection and reciprocity between national communities, and a reinterpretation of the world map, ‘not as a means of spatial containment or systematic organisation, but as a medium of spatial perception that allows for the reformulation of links both within and between cultures’. 40

On Sunday, October 12, 2003, John Howard and Opposition Leader Simon Crean, along with the families and relatives of victims and survivors, attended the commemorative services in Bali to remember the 88 Australians who died in the bombings. Indonesians, mostly Balinese I believe, suffered the second-highest loss of life, with 37 people killed. However, Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri did not attend, and the memorial service was designed, to a great extent, to be an exclusively Australian event. Yet unlike the complete erasure of traces of the 100,000 Balinese murdered in the anti-communist massacres, this time there was a monument. It wasn’t actually finished in time for the ceremony, but still, the space of remembrance was well and truly marked out.

ENDNOTES


Picard, ‘Cultural Tourism, Nation-Building, and Regional Culture’, 182.


T. Wheeler, Across Asia on the Cheap (Sydney: Lonely Planet), 1975, 50.


Paul Keating, Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia Pacific (Sydney: Pan MacMillan), 2000, 8.


Cooper, ‘Terror on the Beach’, 27.


In this essay I draw upon two previously published essays that I wrote widely apart in time, but which are thematically linked. The two halves of this essay are both concerned with icons. They are also concerned with the ways in which we ‘think’ the difference represented by the non-western world. The most common and significant way in which that difference has been thought has been to view the non-western world as ‘backward’. Politically and ethically, this has served to sanction various attempts (Marxist and liberal) at social engineering; intellectually, it has meant that ‘difference’ has been conceived such that the fact of difference does not call the categories and conceptual schemes through which we view the world as in need of substantial emendation or rethinking. For the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers as for Hegel and Marx and Weber, it is only with the advent of the modern that the ‘pre-modern’ becomes fully comprehensible and rationally explicable; the modern, the concepts to which it gives rise and through which it is thought and understood, is also the key to all that which preceded it and led to it. It is this historicism, a historicism that undergirds much of our politics and our intellectual endeavours, that I seek to question in this essay. It so happens that this questioning proceeds through an encounter with icons—through an examination of the destruction of nationalist icons during a Maoist ‘cultural revolution’ in Calcutta in 1970, and consideration of a legal case involving a Nataraja, or dancing Siva, more than a decade later. At the end of this essay I will suggest that while the fact that my argument against historicism proceeds through icons is fortuitous (that is, an argument about difference and against historicist domestications of it does not have to proceed through icons), nonetheless the concept of ‘icon’, if we are sufficiently attentive to it, is itself the site of difference.

The first part of this essay offers a reading of an episode in the history of Marxism in India. Marxism shares in the historicism that underpins distinctions between the modern and the backward; indeed, in one understanding of it Marxism perfects this historicism. However, I suggest that the much-debated ‘cultural revolution’ unleashed by Maoist students in Calcutta in 1970 represented a more-or-less unwitting auto-critique of the distinction between modern and backward, and of the privileging of the former over the latter. In so doing, it offered a way of engaging with ‘non-moderns’ that did not simply consign them to a past-present which needed to be transformed and overcome.
I say ‘unwitting’ because a rejection of the language of backwardness can occur without calling into question the historicism that enables it in the first place. In the second part of the essay it is the master category of ‘history’ itself that I seek to problematise. Here I ask whether the ethical need (or so I conceive it) to attend to the self-understandings of those whose histories we write obliges us to conceive of history-writing in different ways; whether it is possible and necessary for Clio, the muse of history-writing, to make a place for Siva, the Hindu god of creation and destruction.

SMASHING STATUES

In 1970, at the tail end of a failing rural insurgency which had for a period created small ‘liberated zones’ in a few parts of rural India, Maoist students in Calcutta began a ‘cultural revolution’, comprised principally of attacks on educational institutions and on icons. The first attacks on educational institutions and on the statues and portraits of national heroes began in mid-April 1970. From then, there were almost daily attacks: statues of prominent figures were decapitated, blackened and otherwise vandalised, and their portraits were torn and trampled upon. ‘Victims’ included Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rammohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, Ashutosh Mukherjee and others. These were a diverse array of figures, drawn from the nationalist pantheon as well as from amongst eminent nineteenth and twentieth century Bengali reformers and literati, especially from the period of the ‘Bengal renaissance’. With heads falling all around, the government placed a twenty-four hour guard around Gandhi’s statue in Park Street.

The whole campaign was something of a surprise, for it had not been presaged in any party document or any pronouncement by a party leader. The Naxalite movement had split off from one of the two existing Indian communist parties in part precisely because its Maoist inspiration led it to insist upon agrarian struggle as the first and necessary step of any revolution. The smashing of statues in the name of Maoism was then an unexpected and spontaneous development, originating from amongst students. Nor was this student ‘movement’ possessed of any organisational centre; indeed, the actions were performed quite spontaneously by small local groups without anyone addressing the rationale behind their acts. All this meant that the import of the statue smashing was never made fully clear. To take a stand on it—to praise or denounce it—required interpreting the meaning of these iconoclastic acts.

And interpreted they were: the students’ actions immediately became the subject of endless discussion in the bars, coffee houses and homes of Calcutta. One of the most common readings was that the Naxalite actions were, quite simply, devoid of any meaning; that they were silly, pointless, juvenile, ‘uncivilised’, even ‘perverted’, vandalism rather than politics. This interpretation was advanced not only by the bourgeois press and Congress politicians, but also by many on the Left, who regarded the actions with bewilderment and opposed them as juvenile and counter-productive.

A second reading offered was that the meaning of the Naxalite activities lay precisely in their random and seemingly pointless character. The eminent academic and Naxalite sympathiser Ashok Rudra described them as absurdist actions, the symbolic value of which lay in the fact that, intentionally or otherwise, they revealed the absurdity of
Indian society, and in so doing kept alive the possibility of revolt.\(^4\)

Yet another reading was offered by the leadership of the Naxalite party (the Communist Party of India, Marxist-Leninist) which though it did not instigate the campaign and indeed seems to have been as surprised by it as everyone else, soon endorsed it, interpreting it as the product of a ‘hatred’ which was revolutionary in its origins and in its effects. This hatred, declared party leaders, was not simply destructive, but rather the necessary prelude to the birth of the new: ‘This is not a negative action. They are destroying statues to build new statues. They are demolishing Gandhi’s statue to put up the statue of the Rani of Jhansi.’\(^5\)

Another sympathetic interpretation declared that statue smashing was a protest against a political culture in which the nationalist and cultural achievements of the past were valued indiscriminately. It was a feature of this political culture that, from the Bengal Renaissance of the nineteenth century to independence in 1947, it presented the history of India, and especially of Indian nationalism, as an almost bloodless tale. This ‘official’ version of history excised the betrayals of the nationalist cause and of the peasantry which were, in fact, so important a feature of the true story. Statue smashing ‘was undoubtedly a protest, though unconscious and primitive’,\(^6\) against this tendency. The Naxalite students were entirely right to protest, for there was all the difference in the world between those literary and religious figures of the nineteenth century who had made a virtue of India’s backwardness and stagnation, and the social reformers and modernisers of that period. The former, whatever their contributions to literature and the like, were ‘reactionary’. By contrast, those who sought to reform antiquated and oppressive Hindu social practices ‘became rebels against all obsolete feudal-patriarchal social vices and traditions, became fervent Westernised modernists’, and hence were progressive.\(^7\) A refusal or failure to make such distinctions was anti-revolutionary in its deliberate blurring over of essential distinctions. The politics of statue smashing was by contrast a revolutionary politics, for in opposition to the prevailing tendency it insisted, however unconsciously, that such distinctions be made and preserved.

The problem with this reading, the one undeniable fact upon which it foundered, was that the iconoclasm of the Naxalites did not spare ‘modernisers’ any more than traditionalists. Not only Vivekananda and Gandhi, but also Rammohan Roy and Vidyasagar, were amongst its targets. Nor was any other principle of selection apparent: targets included nineteenth century British loyalists as also twentieth century nationalists, such as Nehru and Bose. It was this—the sweeping nature of the Naxalite’s targets, their apparent failure to distinguish and discriminate—which perturbed even many of those who otherwise were sympathetic to the Naxalites.

Yet the significance of Naxalite statue smashing lay, I wish to suggest, precisely in its failure or refusal to attempt to distinguish and discriminate between the ‘progressive’ and ‘reactionary’ elements of Indian culture. To claim this in no way involves ascribing great subtlety and forethought to the Naxalite students; it is not my argument that the Naxalites shared my interpretation of the significance of their actions, and that they were motivated by such an understanding. It simply involves claiming that even where the motivation and reasoning behind an act might be unthought or juvenile, the
actions may nonetheless be pregnant with meaning, because actions derive their significance from their context rather than simply from the intentions of actors.

In this case, I wish to draw attention to two contexts. The first, a cultural and political context, one in which the leading elements of the Left were drawn from the *bhadralok* (middle-class, gentle-folk) class, a class associated with the nineteenth century efflorescence of Bengali literature and culture known as the Bengal Renaissance. Members of the *bhadralok* belonging to Left parties saw themselves as heirs to this great tradition and took pride in its achievements just as they took pleasure and pride in the fact that India’s only Nobel laureate was a Bengali, Rabindranath Tagore. *Bhadralok* leftists, in other words, were no different from other *bhadralok* in these regards. This was also a period when the Indian state was itself claiming to be on the Left; by the late 1960s, Indira Gandhi’s need for Left support in the course of her inner-party struggle against the ‘old guard’ of the Congress had seen a definite shift to the left on some domestic issues, as well as closer relations with the USSR in the international arena. The chumminess between the USSR and Indian ruling circles seemed to affirm the identity of interests between the two; seemed, that is, to suggest that in India many political differences were only differences *within* the ranks of ‘progressives’. Indeed, in 1970 the Indian state was actively promoting Lenin centenary celebrations, while the bourgeois press sang the praises of Lenin and urged that ways be explored to make ‘Leninism a part of our political heritage’!

In this cosy political and cultural atmosphere, the Naxalite campaign was like a slap in the face. Its very refusal to make distinctions signified a wholesale rejection; through their actions *bhadralok* youth, many of them from an elite college of Calcutta University, seemed to be pouring scorn on the idea that there were any ‘progressive’ aspects to a cultural tradition born of and sustained in privilege. Their rejection reverberated with all the more meaning when read in a second context, that of the Marxist tradition in the colonies. In the colonies, where bourgeois society had not yet established itself, Marxists championed both modernisation and revolution. This meant that they sought to identify, and where possible ally with, trends, classes, parties and movements which were ‘historically progressive’, that is, which furthered progress towards the modern. The assumption was that such movements and trends would also be politically progressive. The rationale for Marxists supporting nationalism in the colonies was exactly this, that in colonial conditions nationalism embodied progress towards the modern in a two-fold sense: the ‘national-democratic’ revolution would be a *historical* step forward, as well as being *politically* progressive, inasmuch as it undermined imperialism. In this understanding of it, Marxism appeared as the theory which provided the criteria by which one could distinguish ‘between the modern and the traditional, the secular and the religious, the progressive and the obscurantist, the advanced and the backward’, and socialism appeared as the fulfilment, the culmination, of modernity.

A great deal of Marxist theorising in the colonies thus consisted of identifying what classes and parties were progressive, and which not. The task was rendered immensely complex by the fact that there was, in reality, no necessary coincidence between that which
was seen as ‘historically progressive’, and that which was politically radical. Classes that seemed bearers of modern ideas, ideals and social relations, such as the bourgeoisie, were sometimes less than plausibly cast in the role of agents of revolutionary change; and politically ‘radical’ (e.g., nationalist) groups were frequently not credibly cast as bearers of historical progress. Nonetheless, it was an article of faith amongst most Marxists that what was politically revolutionary had perforce to be historically ‘advanced’, and great energy and ingenuity was exercised in trying to show this to be the case. To refuse to engage in this exercise, a refusal embodied in the indiscriminate character of the Naxalite students’ statue smashing, was in effect to declare that such distinctions—between modernisers and traditionalists, ardent nationalists and half-hearted ones—were politically irrelevant, for both were part and parcel of the same history and politics.

The refusal to make distinctions is, from a historical point of view, no doubt somewhat naive. However the consternation this aroused, including—perhaps especially—in Left circles, was not simply due to the naivety of these actions, for naivety, even if politically damaging, can be easily dismissed. The Naxalite actions, even if the understanding and intentions which motivated them were simplistic, had a political significance far beyond the intentions of their young authors. In the context of the history of the Indian Left, they represented a rejection of a whole history and understanding of what it meant to be on and of the Left. This was one in which Marxism appeared as the culmination of the past rather than as a break with it, and where therefore ‘intimations of modernity’, in India’s past and present were hunted down in order that they might be praised. It was one where, given that the ‘modern’ was not always politically progressive and the pre-modern reactionary, the essence of Marxist theorising was often an almost scholastic aptitude for fine discriminations. Finally, it was one where the search for the more modern and therefore more progressive inevitably led to privileging the city over the countryside and the worker over the peasant.

By contrast, the refusal to make such distinctions, and make them central to one’s analysis, had the effect of delinking what was politically revolutionary from the question of what was more modern. This pointed in the direction of a re-evaluation of Indian culture and history, one in which it was no longer necessary to treat the Indian past and present as an arena in which two contending tendencies, the one ‘modern’ and historically progressive, and the other ‘medieval’ and hence reactionary, were engaged in constant battle.

I have offered a reading of Maoism in India that sees it as having denied the distinctions—between modern and pre-modern, and progressive and reactionary—which serve to make Marxism a strongly historicist and teleological tradition. However, as I observed at the beginning of this essay, the rejection of such distinctions can occur without explicitly calling into question the historicism that enables them in the first place. In the second part of this essay I address questions of historicism and history writing.

CLIO AND THE DANCING SIVA

Everyone, we moderns believe(d), has a history, though not everyone has historiography. The West developed a tradition of history writing, but most cultures had myths and religious epics instead of history writing, even if they sometimes
confused the former for the latter. But because everyone nonetheless had a history, that history could be narrated in the terms of a rational historiography which would redescribe this past in terms alien to those whose past it was. Their own forms of recording and relating to the past—be they myths, legends, religious epics or other—could serve, at best, as (rather unreliable) raw materials in the reconstruction of this past. This did not occasion any discomfort, for these indigenous intellectual traditions were held to have demonstrated that they were unequal to the task of recording and narrating their history by mixing myth with reality, wish with fact, gods with men. And the epistemic commitments which suggested that these were people incapable of representing their own past were the same as those which further suggested that these people were ‘backward’. Or vice versa: that these people still belonged to the past was indicated, amongst other things, by their inability to properly represent their past.

Let us call this complex of attitudes Reason, or more accurately, the commitment to an idea of a Reason which is singular and universal. Let us note that although this Reason has not been dethroned, under the combined but variegated assaults of feminism, queer theory, postmodernism, postcolonialism, and other intellectual currents, it is nonetheless (to switch metaphors) tottering on its pedestal. But the nature of the challenges raised by these currents, and the movements which have often provided their conditions of emergence, differ. It is an important argument (if by now a commonplace one) that the very idea of Reason was constituted in part through a series of exclusions (of woman, nature, emotion, madness…). One strategy for problematising Reason is therefore to demonstrate the contingencies and exclusions which went into its making.

The case of the non-West is somewhat different, for unlike Woman, say, the ‘savage’ and the Oriental were not so much the excluded but enabling Other of Reason as something that fell short of it. Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us that it was historicism, the idea that the ‘savage’ and the Oriental were ‘backward’ and belonged to a time past, even as they inhabited the present, was the main mode by and through which the reason of non-West was declared to be lesser. Suppose ‘we’ were to reject such historicism intellectually in the same way as we have come to reject it politically: reject the notion that different intellectual traditions and the ways of being which sustain them can be plotted on the same (temporal) grid, such that non-western intellectual traditions are revealed to be inadequate approximations of Reason. Reason would no longer appear as singular; it would become pluralised, and there would be no easy way of comparing intellectual traditions, let alone declaring one superior to all others. If we had to learn to think not of Reason in the upper case, but rather in terms of traditions of reasoning, this would have great implications for history writing. It would mean, for one thing, that we would have to find a place for the interpretive schemes of peasants and others in our own interpretive schemes.

For instance, there have always been many, quite possibly a majority, of the world’s population whose world is peopled by gods who acted in and on the world and whose agency must be registered in any account of the world, just as there are people whose temporality as it is lived allows for their dead ancestors to directly intervene in their affairs. That is, there have always been people
with ‘beliefs’ which historiography can register but not accommodate, because gods and dead ancestors do not populate the world of history. Historicism once allowed all this to be explained as part of the past which survived—just as in Europe’s past such beliefs had existed, so too in Asia and Africa’s present they existed, testifying to the fact that Asia and Africa occupied a time different to our own. In the writing of history, the peasant’s gods, who for him/her were active presences in the world, figured only as the peasant’s ‘beliefs’ (note that to call it a belief is already to exorcise the world of gods), a belief which testified to the peasant’s non-contemporaneity, to the fact that he/she was of our time and yet not of our time. But if that ‘denial of coevalness’ which anthropology and historicism presumed and authorised is now (or should be) deeply problematic, and if we can no longer relegate the peasant’s time to a time-past, we have to find a place in our history for the peasant’s gods.

But how do we do so, how can we find a place for gods and spirits in modern historical consciousness and history writing? And should we bother to do so? If we are to take the pluralisation of Reason seriously, if we are to write history without any a priori claim to epistemic privilege, the effort must be made. It is intellectually incoherent (not to mention ethically unsustainable) to have abandoned the idea that peasants (or Aborigines) belong to a time past, while refusing in our intellectual practices to make them part of our present. A recognition of this has prompted a growing number of historians to find ways of re-writing history in order (in my way of putting it, which may not be theirs) to find a place for the gods in it. But the question remains: how does one go about writing such a history? Since I pose this as a question to which I have no instant solution, I will end with a story—one of how contemporary British law found a place for the Indian god, Siva.

Richard Davis recounts the story in his *Lives of Indian Images.* In 1976 a landless labourer in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu discovered a number of buried icons. One of these was a twelfth-century bronze Nataraja, an image of the god Siva in his pose as Lord of Dance, alternately dancing the cosmos into creation and into destruction. The finder sold the statue, which, through the operations of the international market in ‘art-objects’ (how an iconic figure which houses the spirit of a god becomes an ‘art-object’ perhaps parallels the process by which gods become, in history and anthropology, ‘beliefs’) eventually ended up in London in the British Museum. Concerned at the large numbers of such objects which were being smuggled out
of India, the Indian government made this a test case, engaging in a lengthy and expensive legal battle in British courts which eventually resulted in the statue being repatriated to India. The Indian government funded the case (*India vs Bumper*), but for technical reasons, it did not qualify as a plaintiff. The Indian side therefore nominated as plaintiffs the state of Tamil Nadu, the Visvanatha-vami temple where the Siva statue had once resided, the executive officer of the temple, and later added a fourth plaintiff—the god Siva, who laid claim to the icon which had originally resided in his temple. The British judge accepted the claim that as a ‘juristic personality’ the god Siva was party to the case (the defence argued in appeal that as the U.K. was a Christian kingdom, this should have precluded foreign gods from bringing suit). Siva and the other plaintiffs won the case, which caused some consternation in international art markets, with one dealer warning that potential buyers would have to consider the risk of a ‘writ from Siva’. The god returned to India (accompanied by the Indian High Commissioner to the U.K.), where he was to be restored to his temple and resume his life as an image of worship. (Postscript—sadly, his crumbling temple was not fit to receive him, and plans to rebuild and reconsecrate it never materialised; the Nataraja ended up in the government maintained Icon Centre at Tiruvarur, safe from art thieves, but unworshipped, and ‘in danger of suffocation and heatstroke’).¹⁴

I am aware that recognising Siva as a ‘juristic personality’ is not quite the same thing as treating him as a historical actor. I am also aware that the law provides only limited parallels with, and thus guidance for, the writing of history. But I do find this little episode instructive, nonetheless. If a British court could make room for Siva, can we not find a place for him in the tribunal of history? Is it not possible for Clio to dance with Siva? Or alternatively, should we think not in terms of ‘history’, as something everyone has and which can be represented more or less accurately, but rather in terms of different and multiple *pasts* which do not exist independently of various ways of representing them—and which authorise different and multiple ways of being in the present?

**ON ICONS**

The critique of historicism I have offered here encountered icons all along the way. The fact that icons figure so prominently in this essay is, however, simply coincidental. They figure in the first part because the protagonists of my account, Maoist students, smashed statues; and in the second part because I use the story of a Nataraja to illustrate and develop my argument. But whilst icons are not in any way a privileged pathway into asking questions about difference (if by privileged we mean that the asking of such questions must necessarily proceed through a consideration of icons), the term/concept ‘icon’ can itself be made a site where we register difference, and I will conclude with a discussion of how this can be done.

When Christian missionaries encountered India, they were invariably struck by the profusion of religious icons in Hinduism, of which the Nataraja is only one. They were struck not only by the bewildering variety of icons, but also by the Hindus’ relation to their icons, which was unfamiliar to them. Reverend Sher-ring, for instance, was moved to write, ‘idolatry is a charm, a fascination, to the Hindu. It is, so to speak, the air he
breathes. It is the food of his soul. He is subdued, enslaved, befooled by it.’

The intensity with which Hindus related with their idols was not in accordance with the Christian understanding and defence of idols, namely that they were representations of god which served the function of instructing the unlettered and exciting religious awe. This was because for most Hindus idols or murtis are not, in fact, ‘representations’ of gods that reside elsewhere. At the very least, the idol or image or murti, once its eyes have been pierced and appropriate ceremonies observed, partakes of the shakti [power] of the god; for most Hindus, it is a god. As Diana Eck explains, ‘the murti is more than a likeness; it is the deity itself taken ‘form’. The uses of the word murti in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita suggest that the form is its essence. The flame is the murti of the fire…or the year is the murti of time… the murti is a body-taking, a manifestation, and is not different from the reality itself.’ Thus Hindus did not ‘believe’ in their ‘mind’ that gods exist, and then ‘represent’ them as idols; they knew that their gods exist because they manifest themselves as icons, aniconic figures, spirits and ghosts, and in so doing form part of the everyday world of humans. Ashis Nandy writes, ‘Deities in everyday Hinduism…are not entities outside everyday life, nor do they preside over life from outside; they constitute a significant part of it…Gods are above and beyond humans but they are, paradoxically, not outside the human fraternity’. And there is, as C.J. Fuller notes, no sharp separation between a sacred realm inhabited by gods and a mundane one of men, for popular Hinduism is ‘premised on the lack of any absolute divide between them…human beings can be divine forms under many and various conditions, and the claim to divinity is unsensational, even banal, in a way that it could never be in a monotheistic religion lacking 330 million deities.

Most observers have found it difficult to concede that Hindus may actually regard their religious icons as gods. Some have sought to translate Hindu religious icons into more familiar terms—such idol worship was a corruption of a purer Hinduism, which knew the difference between the image and the god; and/or, these were (as per Christian understandings) devices necessary to render the supreme God of Hinduism ‘intelligible to the vulgar’. Others saw this identification of god with his image, and other examples of Hindu intellectual ‘inconsistency’, as the mere absence of logic, rather than as reading it as evidence that Hindus might have a different way of conceiving and being in the world. Such resistance to accepting that many Hindus see their religious icons as gods is a sign of the fact that terms/categories like ‘religion’ and ‘icon’ are not neutral descriptors, but rather come as part of a more general understanding or metaphysic. When the thing we designate by this term does not accord with this general understanding, we then either ignore its difference and force it into this understanding, or else we find in this difference not another logic at work, but the absence of any logic.

‘Religion’, for instance, is a category which already has built into it the idea that certain ‘beliefs’ pertaining to the ‘sacred’ are of its essence; different religions are then distinguished by their differing belief-systems and different conceptions of the sacred. But this understanding of religion, far from being universal and trans-historical, in fact is itself a product of a history, as some scholars of religion have come to recognise. Peter Harrison
argues that in England in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ‘religion’ was constructed along essentially rationalist lines, for it was created in the image of the prevailing rationalist methods of investigation…inquiry into the religion of a people became a matter of asking what was believed…’

‘Religion’ and ‘belief’ emerged as mutually constitutive categories. Thus the very notion of ‘religion’ is itself ‘a Christian theological category’, a modern invention which the West, during the last two hundred years or so, has exported to the rest of the world.’ But it may not be a useful export. For not all ‘religions’ have undergone the same history, one that rendered them into systems of belief; and thus ‘religion’ may not be a useful mode for approaching what we have come to call Hinduism.

The same is true of ‘icon’; it is tied up with a metaphysics of consciousness where humans subjects encounter a ‘real’ that they represent to themselves. To be able to even recognise that figures of their gods may not have had the same meaning for Hindus, entails recognising that the concept ‘icon’ has certain presumptions and conceptions built into it, and that these may be an obstacle to understanding. From this perspective, ‘icon’ becomes not the name of something we all recognise when we see it, but the site of difference to be explored by problematising our categories, rather than applying them. And the investigation of cultural politics and iconography becomes a mode of enquiry which brings its own thought into question by bringing it into contact with that which reveals its limits.

ENDNOTES


2. The Amrita Bazar Patrika darkly warned that the fact that the people of Calcutta acted as either ‘helpless spectators or worse, willing abettors’ in the face of such ‘uncivilized act and attitude’ was ‘a phenomenon which needs a close study by all interested in the mental health of the nation’, April 18, 1970.

3. Congress politicians and other declared enemies of the Naxalites had a field day, condemning them for their vandalism as for their ‘unpatriotic’ attacks on national heroes. For instance, Y.B. Chavan, Home Minister in the central government, condemned the ‘perversion of those who have insulted the Father of the Nation [Gandhi]’, The Statesman, April 18, 1970.


This ‘we’ is never an essentialist ‘we’, and certainly not a particular race or peoples.

The phrase is taken from Johannes Fabian’s *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1983


Davis, 259.


This, for instance, was the defense of religious icons offered by St Thomas—see Daniel Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1989, 162.

After quoting Thomas Aquinas as I have done, Davis goes on to draw the following contrast between the role of icons in medieval Christianity and medieval Hinduism: ‘Medieval Christian images...are instrumental and representational. Aquinas and Bonaventure locate them within a semiotic aesthetics, where the image is seen as conveying a message separate from the image itself.’ By contrast, ‘Vaisnava and Saiva theologians locate their holy icons within an aesthetics of presence. As an instantiation of the godhead, the image is ultimately the message.’, Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1997, 32–33.


This was a common interpretation, see for instance: L.S.S. O’Malley, *Popular Hinduism: The Religion of the Masses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1935.

The Principal of a missionary college in the nineteenth century attributed Indian inconsistency to absence of any tradition of Aristotelian logic, and thus to knowledge of the law of noncontradiction: ‘The mind of the South Indian student works paratactically rather than hypotactically; opinions formed on different grounds remain side by side within their consciousness without mental contact, and there is little effort at combination.’ Cited in Eleanor McDougall, *Lamps in the Wind: South Indian College Women and their Problems* (London: Edinburgh House Press), 1943, first published 1940, 80, 79. In Hegel’s view Hindu ontology displayed a cavalier disregard for the categories of logic: he told the students attending his lectures on religion, ‘there is here no category of being. They [Hindus] have no category for what we call the independence of things, for what we articulate by the phrase “there are” or “there is”’. Hegel also refers to the ‘shocking inconsistency’ of a religion which has a concept of totality, of a singular god, but which at the same time particularises that Oneness into numerous gods, ‘a wild particularity in which there is no
system...no understandable totality or systematisation, much less a rational one': Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* [The Lectures of 1827], ed. Peter C. Hodgson, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1988, 272, 289.


INTRODUCTION

Writers with a particular interest in post-colonial geo-politics have argued that colonisation as an imperial project was dependent upon the occupation and control of space through planning and development. It is suggested that in taming the unruly ground, planning of space and the building of structures, the colonists of the new world would create places which might be known and where they could hope to feel secure. One such case was the new colony of South Australia. Adelaide is a planned city. In 1837, Surveyor-General Colonel William Light, under directions from the Colonising Commission in London, produced a city plan befitting of nineteenth century utopian ideals regarding urban civility. Key to Light’s plan was the inclusion of wide boulevards intersected by five City Squares distributed equidistant to each other, and a parkland belt surrounding the city itself. The design, anticipating future use, sought to provide adequate space for ease of carriage and commerce, whilst its parkland spaces and squares were to both beautify and to provide recreational opportunities for those in and around the City. When taken as a whole, Light’s plan might be understood as an emblem for how city life might be purposefully and humanely lived in the industrial age.

The creation of the city of Adelaide upon the Kaurna land of Tandanyungga (place of the Red Kangaroo Dreaming) was both an attempt to erase what was, and an act of colonial palimpsest. As Paul Carter has poetically suggested of the Surveyor’s task, they were ‘to flatten out the ground, to eradicate it of an uneven, even shadowy history’. The ‘shadowy history’ here was the cultural belonging and memory of a living people, the Kaurna of the Adelaide Plains. Through physical transformation of their environs the colonisers sought to subsume Indigenous people and their primacy of place by inscribing themselves upon the land. This process was thought to be complete with the forced removal of the Indigenous population to government reserves and missions. Such conscious determination can now be seen as the folly of the colonial actors. The theft of land, the subjugation and banishment of Kaurna, neither erased their relationship to place, nor stopped their eventual homecoming.

The land to which Kaurna finally returned in the post World War Two period had been transformed by colonial ownership and authority. They were henceforth to share this place with both
Figure 1: Surveyor General Colonel William Light’s Plan of the City of Adelaide in South Australia. (Map courtesy of the State Library of South Australia #SLSA: C974)
the settler culture, and with other non-Kaurna Indigenous people who had migrated into Adelaide following similar severe disruption to their own lives and lands. For decades thereafter Indigenous people of the City suffered paternal governance and economic hardship which greatly circumscribed their freedom of movement and activity. Perhaps in response to these social conditions Indigenous people found strength and support in their own congregations, be they in private homes or nearby public spaces. The City Squares of Adelaide were to become an important venue for Indigenous sociality and solidarity. In the most public of City spaces Indigenous people were able to enjoy the intimacy of family and friends and assert for themselves a place and identity within the City. Indigenous sociality played out in the City’s heartland did not however enjoy the approbation of the wider community. Rather it was to become subject to intensified surveillance and official attempts at control.

This paper considers contested Indigenous sociality and use of urban space such as is apparent in Adelaide’s City Squares, with particular reference to Victoria Square and the consumption of alcohol within. In a return to the intentions which informed Colonel Light’s idealised City plan, it becomes apparent that the Squares of Adelaide are in part consciously determined iconographic spaces in the creation and sustaining of the City’s vision of itself as ‘ideal’. Indigenous people in the Square, particularly those drinking and involved in non-purposeful activity disturbs both notions of the picturesque salubrity of the Square and the Squares as iconic representations of public space. The picturesque in this regard suggests the Squares to be contained and ordered aesthetic environments—‘culturally mediated’ representations of nature in the service of civility and industry. To draw on Carter’s argument regarding the removal of the Indigenous people from the Adelaide Parklands in the mid-nineteenth century, the Squares may only be preserved as ‘common ground’ if they are not seen to be occupied by one particular group, particularly a ‘drinking’ population for whom there is little regard in the City.

In the Squares of Adelaide Indigenous people have been subject to, and subjects of, a ‘gaze’ which both criminalises and pathologises their presence and behaviour. In the Squares there is a presumption that Indigenous users are variously alcoholics, mendicants, and/or having a ‘flaw of character’, and therefore have no legitimate place in public space. The discourses which support the gaze are deeply entrenched in the institutions of the state and capital. In turn they are supported instrumentally by acts of legislation, the police, welfare, the media etc. acting in concert to regulate, control and remove Indigenous behaviour deemed problematic. Through the use of a case example – the recent introduction of ‘Dry Zone’ legislation (alcohol free public spaces), this paper follows a Foucauldian analysis in suggesting that the controlling gaze of the City is not in all circumstances successful. Indigenous congregations are observed to resist total regulation, and indeed make counter claims upon public space by their retreat/entering a third/heterotopic space.

The relationship between the City governors and Indigenous people is one of contradiction and unease. As Adelaide moves towards regeneration and urban renewal as outlined in the City Council’s 2001 plan, New Directions – Capac-
ity, Vivacity, Audacity, the city council wishes to promote the cosmopolitan lifestyle and social and political values and virtues of the City of Adelaide, such as cultural diversity, tolerance and democracy. Despite the rhetoric, it appears that the City still puzzles in its embrace of its Indigenous population. As it does so, the more discomforting expressions of urban Indigeneity continue to be subject to governance. With the stated commitment of the Adelaide City Council (ACC) and South Australian Government to the formal process of Reconciliation, it remains both necessary and possible to be hopeful when considering cross-cultural relations within post-colonised City environments. The Squares of Adelaide may in the future operate as shared sacred spaces, replete with possibility for cohering populations, for as Zukin reminds:

... As both site and sight, meeting place and social staging ground, public spaces enable us to conceptualise and represent the city—to make an ideology of its receptivity to strangers, tolerance of difference, and opportunities to enter a fully socialized life, both civic and commercial.

HOMECOMING

The Second World War and changes to community attitudes coupled with the emerging policy of assimilation greatly increased the numbers of Indigenous people returning/migrating to the city region. Dispossessed Indigenous people from remote areas of South Australia, refugees from the Government Reserves and Church sponsored Missions, such as Point Pearce (Bukkiyana) on Yorke Peninsula and Point McLeay (Raukkan) at the mouth of the River Murray all made their way into Adelaide. In Adelaide they joined other Aboriginal people who in receipt of ‘Exemption’ certificates (official exemption from the provisions and restrictions imposed upon Aborigines, under the *SA. Aborigines Act 1911: 1934-39*) had lived in the City with ‘white’ identities. The time spent on the missions and reserves led to dispersal, and fracturing of kin relationships and a further decimation of the population through disease and enforced Christianising and intermarriage between tribal groups. Pierson suggests (perhaps contentiously) that this period of institutionalisation ‘effectively eliminated separate traditional cultural components’, and led to the adoption of ‘mission identities’. Hence, the movement of non-Kaurna Indigenous people to Adelaide was not so much trespass, but took place in the context of relatedness – individuals related through birth and/or intermarriage to Kaurna, the rightful owners of the Adelaide plains. Perhaps in recognition of this complex cultural mix, the appellation ‘Nunga’ came to be used as an embracing self-referent by Indigenous people resident in Adelaide and the nearby settled regions (generally Kaurna, Narungga and Ngarrindjeri).

Conceptualisations of the drift into Adelaide by Indigenous people differ. However, in this regard there is no doubting the significance of both the South Australian Government’s policy of assimilation and the *Aboriginal Affairs Act, 1962*. The Act provided formal carriage for policy change, from ‘protection and isolation’ to one of ‘assimilation’, ensuring the closure of Government Reserves. After a lifetime of being institutionalised on Reserves and Missions, many people
did not wish to go to the City and instead found new lives for themselves in bush and rural communities. Nevertheless, the push and pull towards the City was strong. People saw great opportunities in the City, where assimilation would lead to improved lifestyle, access to jobs and education. Not the least important was the necessity to increase the pool of potential marriage partners to avoid marrying close relatives.¹⁵

The lives of Aboriginal people in the City at this time was undoubtedly tough. In 1969, Kaurna Elder Gladys Elphick, gave the following account of City life:

> Our people come to the city from the country. This is an attempt on their part to solve their urgent problems regarding employment, housing, health and education. However, in the city many find these problems even greater. Employment is often hard to find; accommodation is generally available only in areas of poor housing, and high rents and overcrowding are persistent problems. The health of mother, father or children is frequently worse through poverty, poor diet and bad living conditions. As a result they are unable to benefit from the better education facilities available to them.²⁶

In Adelaide, Indigenous people had hope but few opportunities. The new freedoms of the 1962 Aboriginal Affairs Act, and the 1966 Prohibition of Discrimination and Commonwealth Referendum of 1967, (including the right to drink alcohol, freedom of movement and association) did not assure people of a ready welcome in the institutions of white society. Without a friendly pub or club to enter, without a community centre or the resources to establish their own, Indigenous people were not an integrated part of the social life of the City. As a result, Indigenous people established their own social networks and places within the City.¹⁷ In the late 1960s the newly established Department of Aboriginal Affairs, its offices, waiting rooms, and nearby grassed areas became places of great social contact in the City.¹⁸ There was a strong tendency to live with or close to extended family in neighbourhoods with cheap rental stock.¹⁹ Interestingly, where one chose to live in the City depended greatly upon the Mission from where one had originated. Those living and using the central City district were largely Point McLeay people. In contrast the Point Pearce people saw Port Adelaide as their ‘centre of gravity’.²⁰

Social life was largely restricted to the over-crowded homes of friends and family. Funerals and school holidays with an associated influx of relatives or return to the originating regions also provided settings for larger scale gatherings.²¹ A significant exception to such private gatherings was the use of the race track, the City parks along the River Torrens corridor and City Squares for community purposes. In the Squares and City Parklands, Indigenous individuals and family groups were choosing to meet, greet and socialise.²² The use of urban open space in this respect was not unusual. Within each capital city and regional centre in Australia are public spaces, be they riverbanks, parks or pavements, where Indigenous people informally congregate.²³ Such sites have served as preferred venues for indigenous community sociality, political discussion, dispute resolution, and occasionally as rallying points.

It would soon become clear to Indigenous users of public space, that it was not available to all despite the rhetoric which surrounded the occasion of their nineteenth century design.
THE CITY SQUARES AND
INDIGENOUS USE

Colonel William Light, Surveyor-General of Adelaide was under instructions from the Colonisation Commissioners in London to make Adelaide a city of human proportions with a manifest concern that public spaces reflect the needs of community life. The inclusion of public leisure domains in the city was increasingly understood in the nineteenth century as being functional to both bourgeois desire for an aesthetic and leisurely dimension to city life, and bourgeois determination that the leisure time and activities of the working classes would be spatially and rationally ordered. Light’s design solution was to create a Parkland belt surrounding the City with the inclusion of five public Squares; Victoria, Light, Hindmarsh, Whitmore and Hurtle.

The Squares of Adelaide have provided respite from the activity and pace of city life for a number of generations. The five scrubby paddocks that Colonel Light set aside were rapidly transformed in the nineteenth century with an active tree planting program, largely sponsored by the Adelaide Botanic Gardens which saw it as its duty to provide young trees for the beautification of city squares. Over the years the Squares have undergone various redesigns and replantings; they are now formally planted with trees and flowerbeds, arrayed with benches, litter bins, public toilets, sun dials, fountains and commemorative statuary. All this loveliness is intersected by the noise and carriage of the City’s main boulevards. The Squares have their ‘regulars’: City residents and their children, friends catching up, office workers, shop assistants and university students taking a break, commuters, vagrants and drinkers.

For many years Indigenous people have also sat down in the City Squares. Historical evidence suggests that Indigenous congregations emerged in the City Squares because they were convenient and convivial surrounds to meet in the City; this was especially prevalent following the dissolution of Government Reserves and Missions. However, for Kaurna, their use also represents a necessary homecoming to traditional meeting and ceremonial grounds.

In the north western corner of the City is Light Square. It is surrounded by many modest homes once occupied primarily by working class families. Its Indigenous use can be dated to the early twentieth century when Indigenous people camping in the western Parklands would make regular forays to Light Square during daylight hours. Preceding the Second World War a number of Aboriginal families lived proximate and adjoining Light Square along Waymouth, Sturt, Wright, Gouger and Logan Streets. The natural aspect of the Square and the centrality of the location to residents made it attractive to family groups (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who, without backyards, used Light Square as a recreational space. Long before it received the first of its makeovers, Light Square resembled a bush park with tall gum trees, and dug out trenches in readiness for when and if the war came to Adelaide. Here, during summer evenings, children would play games and sleep out in the open while mothers and aunties would talk away the hours.

...we’d go down to the Square, Light Square, and most of the Aboriginal people living in that area at that time congregated there and I remember playing around with the young people, playing the guitar, it was Point McLeay, Point
Pearce and the Kaurna people who were living here in Adelaide at that time’.30

We’d take cold drinks and everything up there, cordials—mainly cordials and ice and we’d be set...they’re sitting down there having a yarn and we’re all sleeping and then about four o’clock they’d wake us up. We’d walk home with our blankets around us half asleep, going home, but that was good, in them days it was good….31

In the years immediately following World War Two, Light Square became a meeting and drinking place for discharged men and their families. It was also convenient to the entertainment strip Hindley Street which intersected the Square. With its cafes, pubs, cinemas and pinball halls Hindley street was a drawcard for many young people. With prohibition still firmly in place for Aborigines up until the mid 1960s Indigenous young people chose alternative places to pubs to congregate. According to Brodie, these included ‘Roboteria, a jukebox place...pictures at the Majestic and the old Rex and the West and the Metro.32 For Indigenous people staying in Hindley Street at ‘The Coffee Palace’ (a government approved accommodation and meals centre for Indigenous people with business in the City), Light Square was a place to also catch up. Any tendency to idealise Light Square and its near vicinity as a meeting place is tempered with the knowledge that Indigenous people suffered the close surveillance of authorities. The immediate post War period was a time of unrest, with the Square, and its Indigenous congregations attracting police attention as they sought to ‘clear the streets’ of those effecting undesirable behaviour.33 Policing Prohibition led to sly drinking in the Squares and also on the banks of the River Torrens. For ‘returned’ men who had fought alongside other Australians at war, the ban on alcohol use was perceived to be especially humiliating. A snapshot image from 1951 gives insight to the situation of Indigenous users of Light Square:

On fine weekends or on holidays ‘aboriginal’ and white residents of the West End gather in the city squares at their end of town to enjoy the sunshine; but the usual tendency is for them to stay in separate groups. Plain clothes policemen keep an eye on them, to see that no liquor is passed and that there is no soliciting. And while their elders sit on the benches and gossip, or furtively gamble at cards, the children play about on the lawns.34

Whitmore Square, in the south west of the City was used in a similar way by local Indigenous residents, to gather and camp out on hot evenings.35 The Square was later to become a ‘drinking’ Square favoured by alcoholics and the homeless from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In response to the use of the Square by drinkers, hostels and boarding houses run by sobriety groups and social welfare agencies came to fringe the Square. Gale reflects that the attitude of the welfare agencies and authorities was dutifully paternalistic. In the daytime drinking was tolerated, but in the evening the drinkers would be rounded up by the Salvation Army and given a bed.36

Hurtle Square in the South-Eastern Corner of the City was used as a place for Indigenous people to gather in the years after prohibition ended. Kaurna Elder Lewis O’Brien speculates that Hurtle Square’s proximity to the Carrington Hotel—a known ‘Aboriginal’ pub, made this Square an attractive meeting place.37 The Carrington pub was not a private
space however, as Pierson observed in 1972. It was ‘almost continually under police surveillance’ and it is likely that those meeting in Hurtle Square were subject to similar police attention.\textsuperscript{38} Hindmarsh Square in the city’s North-Eastern corner began to attract Indigenous people after the Department of Aboriginal Affairs moved premises in the late 1960s from Kintore Avenue off North Terrace, to what was known as the Hindmarsh Building (now AAMI Insurance) in Grenfell St, Hindmarsh Square.\textsuperscript{39} This habit of using the Square to wait for appointments continued the practice of waiting at the War Memorial on North Terrace for the Departmental doors to open. Although they are largely gone from Hindmarsh Square, Aboriginal people today continue on occasion to frequent the War Memorial site and the adjacent sheltered areas along the Government House fenceline.

The central City Square, Victoria Square, did not attract Indigenous families in the same numbers or for the same purpose as did Light and Whitmore Squares. However, it has long been recognised as significant to Kaurna. Oral history accounts have presented the City area and the vicinity of Victoria Square and across from it, the imposing General Post Office, as original meeting and camping grounds for Kaurna,\textsuperscript{40} albeit some accounts suggest it to be a place where women’s business was conducted. In 1927, Ivaritji\textsuperscript{41} the last known Kaurna native speaker identified Victoria Square as Tandanya ‘headquarters of the Tandanya clan’.\textsuperscript{42} Kaurna Elder, Lewis O’Brien suggests Colonel Light may have been cognisant of the Square’s significance to Kaurna and planned the city with the Square as a central motif in reference to Tandanyungga, the Red Kangaroo Dreaming.\textsuperscript{43} From the 1960s onwards it became common practice amongst Indigenous users of the city to use Victoria Square as pleasant and proximate environs to await court appearances, or attend to personal business.

For many Indigenous persons, their reasons for meeting in the Squares have fallen away in recent decades. The creation of the first Indigenous community centre nearby in Wakefield Street, self help organisations and legal and medical services in the 1970s all provided dedicated Indigenous spaces within Adelaide. In addition, changes to government policies, community attitudes and life circumstances afforded many more opportunities to meet and socialise elsewhere. Yet for some, Victoria Square remained desirable as a point of social and political encounter. The social movements of the 1970s saw Victoria Square emerge as a popular site of public assembly for Indigenous and non-Indigenous groupings. Memorably, it was Victoria Square where the Aboriginal flag was unfurled at a NADOC\textsuperscript{44} celebration for the very first time on July 12, 1971. It was and remains Victoria Square where the annual NAIDOC march begins before continuing down King William Street. It is Victoria Square where Indigenous people of the City and the bush have campaigned with their supporters for social justice. Apposite and illuminating of the Indigenous relationship and claims to land, it was Victoria Square where Pitjantjatjara\textsuperscript{45} Elders chose to hold tactical discussions, while awaiting their meeting with Premier Don Dunstan in their struggle for freehold title to their land.\textsuperscript{46}

During this period Victoria Square was to become a focus for more transient members of the Indigenous population.

…that’s where they go to meet and have a drink and that...if anyone comes in
they go there and they ask where this person is...they reckon it’s a good spot for them to sit there too because they might know that person and they just tell them where to go if it’s hard for them to find their way. If they come from another state or something, you know, they just go there.47

These were not static congregations. Rather these gatherings in the Square and Parkland fringes had a seasonal ebb and flow, whereby those from the bush or further afield would come to town following events such as the Royal Adelaide Show (in September), or perhaps escaping the heat of the bush in late summer.48 Anecdotal evidence also suggests the Squares, along with designated parkland areas in Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane became points where members of the ‘stolen generation’ and dislocated others might go in order to locate family.49

From the 1970s onwards Indigenous drinking circles were to become an increasing part of the sociality of Victoria Square. Just why drinking circles emerged away from the resident social services of Whitmore Square or the Carrington Pub near Hurtle Square remains unclear, although it would appear that the gatherings in Victoria Square were generally Indigenous, not ‘mixed’ congregations and therefore enjoyed a different tone and purpose. Ascertaining the specific cultural identity of the users of the Square is difficult. Some Kaurna Elders suggest they are not locals but interlopers from the North of the State50 another individual suggests a historical use (1970s) to be biased toward Nurungga people of the Yorke Peninsula to the immediate west of Adelaide.51 When I last visited Victoria Square, a straw poll of four grouped individuals revealed a mix of visitors from Tasmania, Ernabella in the far north of SA, Northern NSW, and one resident of Adelaide. This group was playing cards and drinking Muscat from a cask, they had business in the City, and were using the space to while away some hours. As they did so they kept watch for the police—having observed the officers ‘move on’ a like congregation in the previous half hour.

During the 1980s and early 1990s the Victoria Square congregation included young and old, enjoying the environment of the Square and each other’s company.52 The users of the Square were a loosely organised configuration, albeit one of the most prominent users, Donny Smith, was known as ‘the Mayor of the Square’, for his regular occupancy and willingness on occasion to represent the interests of the Victoria Square ‘mob’.53 According to O’Connor who had contact with this group in the early 1990s the group cohered, not only through drinking, but as kin (of Kaurna and Narrindjeri origin) who shared personal suffering attributed to colonisation and goonyahs/white people. Children were observed to be periodically part of the congregations, and to be looked after by the group.54 This viewpoint is shared by Veronica Brodie, a Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri Elder who wrote in her 2002 autobiography that the ‘Nungas’ who inhabit and drink in Victoria Square are those who suffer greatly from the memory of being under the charge of the Aboriginal Protection Board and from ‘being taken away’ from families as part of the stolen generation. ‘We have men here in Adelaide – some of who you will find in Victoria Square—who can sit down and tell you of traumatic experiences in their childhood. Victoria Square is where our people get together – some go for drink, but many go to sit there and gather for a yarn’.55
It is clear from the stories told, that despite the range of opinions expressed in Adelaide’s Aboriginal community about the practice of drinking in the City Square, this group was never abandoned by its fellows. In the past the Aboriginal Sobriety Group (ASG) ran a soup kitchen a few blocks away at the rear of St. Paul’s Anglican Church (Cnr Pulteney and Wakefield Streets). Accommodation of a type was available for those with relatives or friends, while others relied on services such as the Mobile Assistance Patrol, sponsored by ASG to find them a bed. Hence, although there have been ‘homeless among them’ the drinkers were not generally left vulnerable on the streets. The intervening years have been witness to changes in this population. A representative from the ASG now estimates the core group to number approximately forty to fifty and to be primarily males in their late twenties to early forties, those for whom alcohol is a touchstone.

PROBLEMATISING USE

Indigenous use of alcohol in the public sphere coupled with conduct deemed to be lacking in purposeful activity has been variously problematised. The discourses surrounding public order, civility, the work ethic, sobriety, and urban aesthetics have contributed towards the creation of negative community attitudes concerning Indigenous use of the City. The Indigenous drunk is a view which ‘dominates the consciousness of the general non-Indigenous population’. It is the pervasiveness of this view which disturbs the picturesque ideal of containment and idyll in the City itself. Such perspectives are evident in casual conversations with Adelaide residents. Discussion often brings forth images of small Aboriginal groups sitting on the ground in loose circles, under the trees, taking up the shade. Some observe these configurations to be relatively harmless if also untidy gatherings where people talk and drink together. Yet other observations suggest the people to be both a menace and menacing—perhaps unkempt, drinking, laughing, talking, swearing, staggering drunk, calling out to passer-bys, and on occasion pressing for money or ‘ciggies’. Such observations reveal the gaze of the settler community to be unsteady, variously tinged with mirth, pity, distrust and fear. As both Hamilton and Bhabha in writing respectively of the colonial quests of Australia and the Indian subcontinent suggest, the gaze of the European upon these others may be understood as ambivalent; driven by attraction and fear of difference/the slippage of the same.

The threat that Indigenous populations might represent, particularly when gathered in a public place and using alcohol, is perceived to require containment in order to achieve a compliant if not invisible population. When drinking took place out of view, in the city back blocks of Whitmore or Hurtle Square, Aboriginal drinking in public was ‘manageable’—a problem that most in the community did not have to face. The dynamics of sitting quietly in the less frequented Squares, and being ‘looked after’ by the welfare agencies changed in the move to Victoria Square. In Victoria Square they were ‘in everybody’s face’. Here they risked giving offence that was to eventually become a political issue for the authorities.

Commonly, urban planning measures are used to create amenity, manage community fears and/or actively discourage some populations in their use of public space. Such measures may
involve the removal of public seating, locking public toilets, installing night-time lighting, use of amplified music, fencing off shaded areas, increasing ratio of paving or garden beds to lawns etc. While these measures are not targeting any particular population, they do affect itinerants or loose assemblies eg. Indigenous drinkers who may require relative comfort in which to gather.

Criminologist Chris Cunneen argues that too often Indigenous presence in public places is conflated with criminal potential and being, whereby our system of governance relies upon ‘criminal sanctions as a substitute for social policy’. The day to day role of managing compliance falls to the police whose zeal for keeping the peace is observed in pulling the ‘blackfellas’ aside, asking questions, giving warnings, upturning bottles, and removing people. By their close attention, and the offences they choose to prosecute, police criminalise the behaviour of idleness and broadcast to a wider public, the undesirability of such Indigenous formations in the city. As Cunneen observes, Indigenous people suffer from ‘over-policing’ and ‘…adverse use of police discretion’. Long time resident of Adelaide Bob Agius recollected the long term disparity of treatment metered out by police to Indigenous and their non-Indigenous fellows. ‘You go home—sleep it off’, if it’s a white man, and ‘Come on’ to the black man, ‘lock up’.

Veronica Brodie attributes the behaviour of police towards Indigenous people as a legacy of powers given to the police in their relationship with the Aboriginal Protection Board. ‘The police were bastards. They hung onto the authority that the Protection Board had given them’.

The hostility suffered by Indigenous people in their use of public space begs the question: Why do they continue to meet in these formations in such public arenas? A range of political arguments could be struck here; certainly, the public drinking of alcohol has long been seen as a ‘symbol’ of equality. However, it is also interesting to consider such congregations as patent refusals of the gaze and its controlling effects, whereby Indigenous culture, its forms and behaviours are mobilised in order to assert dominion over their subject status.

THIRD SPACE

Although the space of the City Squares and their congregations may be conceptualised in various ways, the notion of, Third Space or in Foucauldian terms heterotopia, is useful here. For Foucault heterotopias existed as actual places that stood separate and ‘alternate’ in society, with their own freedoms and logic of behaviour. Foucault gave institutional examples where behaviour considered deviant by society’s norms might be both allowed and confined. Heterotopias have also come to be interpreted as abstracted spaces, whereby they may not exist in an actual place, but be a space where the threshold is entered imaginatively, through association, or in the company of others. In his reading of heterotopias Hetherington (1997) has drawn on the work of Turner (1986) to include the transgressive power of ’liminal’ spaces, and Bakhtin’s ‘Carnival’ to suggest permissiveness, a deferral of the everyday routines and prohibitions within the scope of heterotopics. Feminist sociologist Wearing suggests heterotopias as places willingly entered as points of escape and refusal of subject identities. In Wearing’s conception, leisure time, and/or leisure sites ‘provide(s) a space for
reconstituting the self and rewriting the script of identity’. They provide a ‘venue for making marginalised people visible and in solidarity or coalition movements with others’. The value of the heterotopic space for Indigenous groups would appear manifold. For the Indigenous users of the Square, space may be shaped as a consequence of the dominant culture’s institutions, but it is not shaped by the coloniser culture. Heterotopic space is created, shaped and lived through Indigenous cultural discourses; knowledge, culture, values and systems of logic. Using Foucault it is possible to argue that the mobilising of culturally specific discourses considered ‘discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges’ is both counterpoint and refusal of the self-appointed ruling culture. The resulting zones enable an intimacy in a highly supervised environment such as the City Square, while also being a space where Indigenous identity and authority is affirmed. In such environments heterotopias function as ‘insulating’ spaces within which there is a managed deferral of that which is hostile. Their insulating capacity and purpose reminds us of the profound ways in which Indigenous culture has been disrupted. These spaces are both Indigenous creations and post-colonial artefact, for as Jacobs reminds us, space and cultures are constituted by ‘their necessary positioning in the modern’.

Without wishing to conflate the distinct practices of Indigenous groups, insights to such postcolonial heterotopic formations may be found in the work of various authors. Cowlishaw uses Sennett and Cobb to forward the notion that an ‘arena of dignity’ may be strategically created by Aborigines as both defence and guard of the group. ‘Arenas of dignity’ may have a prosaic form as exemplified through small Indigenous groups sitting on the ground playing Bingo. In this setting, ‘members of a group can gain their sense of honour from the group’s integrity rather than from those who dominate the economic political arena’. Morris and Sansom offer readings of Indigenous gatherings as defiant and on occasion self consciously resistant to the conventions of the dominant European culture. By way of an example Sansom provides insight to a Darwin fringe camp where drinking circles are prevalent, and which plays a crucial role in managing visitors, and motivating activity and social behaviour. Particularly relevant here is Sansom’s consideration of how the fringe camp functions to exclude the non-indigenous population; a place where there is freedom from ‘inter-racial dealings’, and where they might conduct ‘Blackfella business’ (and) assert their own independence and authority.

Indigenous users of Victoria Square do not find themselves secreted away from ‘inter-racial dealings’. Their heterotopic formation exists upon a ground which maximises the potential for surveillance and control by the City administrators and police. As objects of the authoritarian gaze it would appear that they have opened themselves to rule and subjugation. Yet, their use of space might also be read as a strategic engagement with the City. By never being lost from view Indigenous users of the Square confront their observers with those they have sought to dispossess, and who continue to refuse to go away. As to whether their heterotopic formations are knowingly iconoclastic, and therefore a deliberate attack upon the venerated settler space, is unknown. What does seem certain is their insistence that this space is
also theirs. Hence, Indigenous presence in the Square may be understood as both reterritorialisation of the City centre and a reinscription of the space as still Aboriginal ground.

PANDORA’S BOX—DECLARATION OF A ‘DRY ZONE’

In early 2001 the state Liberal government initiated a parliamentary bill to curb the drinking of alcohol outside of licensed premises in the City of Adelaide, encompassing the CBD and North Adelaide. Premier John Olsen, facing an upcoming state election (which he subsequently lost) pushed the populist barrow of ‘Law and Order’. His government argued that the security of Adelaide denizens was at stake; drinkers and their carousing put ordinary citizens at risk, subjecting them to intimidation, begging, soliciting and theft. The rhetoric of the Olsen government played upon the fears of ordinary people; that City space was populated by loathsome characters and their equally loathsome behaviour. As David Harvey in *Spaces of Hope* remarks of modern alienated cities, they exist as:

site(s) of anxiety and anomie. It is the place of the anonymous alien, the under-class...the site of incomprehensible otherness (immigrants, gays, the mentally disturbed, the culturally different, the racially marked, the terrain of pollution) ...and of terrible corruptions, the place of the damned that needs to be enclosed and controlled...”

The sites generally understood to be of concern to the Government and its supporters were Victoria Square, and along North Terrace; the lawns in front of the Governor’s residence, the steps of Parliament House, and in front of the Railway station. These were coincidently sites frequented by Indigenous people. The fact that minor offences such as being drunk and disorderly were already being dealt with through provisions under the Summary Offences Act seemed to be near irrelevant as the media swung behind the Premier’s campaign. Political pressure (including the interceptions of individual Liberal Party aligned Councillors) was brought to bear on the Adelaide City Council to accept and partner the legislation on a one-year trial basis.

That Indigenous drinkers and the homeless of the City Squares would be hardest hit by the proposed legislation was not lost on the critics. They argued that, for Indigenous users of the Square, it was discriminatory in effect, if not in intention. Dr. Judith Bryant was one of a few Councillors to oppose the Dry Zone. Her view was that the proposal was ‘blatantly racist’, and this was borne out by the correspondence Council had received which called for Council to act, ‘get the blacks, the drunks out of Victoria Square.” Despite a period of consultation which sought the views of key stakeholders, including Aboriginal people, there was little confidence in the process, and little doubt that the legislation would be enacted. The opinion amongst Adelaide’s Indigenous community was mixed. Many considered it to be vexatious and discriminatory legislation, which denied Indigenous access to traditional meeting grounds. Another sector of the Indigenous community believed the legislation might serve a useful purpose in tackling the serious public health issue of alcoholism. Public drunkenness brought shame on the wider Aboriginal community, and did little to further the hopes and aspiration of Indigenous young people. Lewis O’Brien and Shirley Peisley, members of Adelaide City
Council’s Reconciliation Committee both recognised that the legislation was racially targeted. They were however mindful of the swag of complex issues involved, and thus chose to offer their qualified support for the Dry Zone legislation. For Shirley Peisley, dual chair of the ACC’s Reconciliation Committee, she argued, that the Indigenous people using the Squares and now the Parklands are ‘lost’ individuals, who required assistance to move beyond their alcoholic state and regain self esteem. The errant behaviour of certain drinking individuals she described as ‘not anything about culture – that’s all about people who are lost, it’s all about people who don’t recognise who they are anymore’. Peisley sought change in the immediate and short term by active involvement with the State Government’s Social Inclusion Unit Dry Zone Committee. She is hopeful support services and resources will reach those who seek them. Aboriginal Sobriety Group support for the legislation was sought and received on a similar basis and on the understanding that support services would be established for Aboriginal drinkers. This was to include a stabilisation program, a ‘sobering up’ unit and the establishment of designated hostel beds for Aboriginal client use. 

For Kaurna Elder Lewis O’Brien, he was of the view that the City’s focus on Indigenous drinkers was disproportionate to the City’s wider social problems. In particular he believed the City should draw its greater attention to ‘cleaning up’ Hindley Street—‘a blight on the city’. ‘We said, “what are you going to do about Hindley Street? You’re worried about 12 people sitting in the Square?”’ O’Brien’s eventual support of a ‘Dry Zone’ which would encompass Victoria Square, related to his Kaurna identity and attendant beliefs, that it is a sacred space, which drinkers risk desecrating with their behaviour.80

In the wider community the proposed legislation was criticised on various levels. The proposed legislation attempted the impossible – to protect the populace from the dissonance of difference; the legislation was an erosion of the personal rights and responsibilities of the individual; the legislation had a narrow focus. It did not adequately address anti-social behaviour within the City limits. In targeting drinking in the City precinct it ignored that anti-social behaviour is not the province of public drinkers alone; rather, it is connected to factors such as youth boredom, illicit drug taking, criminal intent, patrons exiting pubs and clubs in high spirits, possibly inebriated and looking for further entertainment or transport home, etc. Despite significant community protestations, and hotly contested debates within Council itself Declaration of a Dry Zone, was regulated under the Liquor Licensing Act of 1997, (Gazetted 14th October 2001), it came into effect 29th October 2001. Once again in Australia, the image of the ‘drunken Aborigine’ had been successfully mobilised for political gain.81

Evaluation of the trial legislation was undertaken by a private consultancy group, Social Options Australia. Due to the time constraints of the brief, the evaluation period began and ended within six months of the legislation being bedded down. Evaluation of the City of Adelaide Dry Zone was made available to the South Australian Parliament in September 2002. The evaluation document outlined the problematic nature of any such legislation. It noted that programs for city drinkers, and Aborigines in particular which were to have been put in place during the period of the trial were not fully enacted (Stabilisation Facility
The Review cautiously noted the benefits to the community to be inconclusive.

The legislation had not caused people to abstain; rather they had found other places to meet. For Indigenous drinkers of Victoria Square, and the North Terrace precinct, alternative sites were found close by in the Adelaide Park Lands, which were exempt from the ‘Dry Zone’. Sites identified include the western perimeter near the Rotunda between Adelaide High School and the Adelaide Cemetery on West Terrace, the South-East parklands, near the sports fields, Hutt Street and South Terrace, and near the Victoria Park Raceway. Proximity to the city centre and their open aspect made the Parklands an obvious alternative for people to meet. In these areas Indigenous people are now to be found in small groups often using available shelters and seating, sometimes around makeshift campfires with the occasional clothesline pegged out. They meet together until they are disturbed or moved on by city officials, police or the mobile assistance patrol, run by the Aboriginal Sobriety Group.

The move to the Parklands may be evidence of a modest agency where drinkers continue to meet rather than disband, yet it also has increased their vulnerability. In the Parkland environs drinkers put at risk their personal security. In the evenings the Parklands are largely unlit, forbidding places, where few people choose to habituate or take a leisurely stroll. This may offer the former Square ‘sitters’ privacy, but it does not provide a hedge from hooligan harassment or the threat of violence. To this effect former ACC Councillor Greg Mackie and dual Chairperson of the ACC’s Reconciliation committee, made the comment that the wrong message was being sent to the community stating: ‘the lid to Pandora’s Box with regard to racial intolerance has been lifted’. In the Parklands, Aborigines are not only out of sight, but they are back on society’s margins, where their fate is their own. Despite the Review outcomes, the doubts expressed within the ACC and significant public outcry, including noises made by Aboriginal Legal Aid Movement (ALAM) to mount a challenge in the courts (Oct 2002), the new State Labor government agreed to continue the trial for yet another year.

Light might be brought to bear upon the ACC’s motives for supporting the ‘Dry Zone’ legislation in an examination of the Council’s emergent development objectives for the City. Preceding the ‘Dry Zone’ legislation the ACC had begun an extensive program of urban renewal for Adelaide. This program included plans for the management, upgrade and development of the City West precinct, Parklands and City Squares. It is largely the case that such improvements to the amenity of the City were couched in terms of the intended boost to small business, tourism and residential development.

In February 1999 Victoria Square was specifically targeted for overhaul with a view to ensuring ‘that the Square and its management are a source of pride for all South Australians’ (ACC 2002). Following the findings of the committee of management a Victoria Square master plan was adopted and endorsed by Council in June of 2001. This was to be subsequently embraced by the wide sweeping development policy for the City New Directions – Capacity, Vivacity, Audacity, launched in July 2001. Within the new plan, the Squares of Adelaide and in particular Victoria Square were to
play an important role in the transformation of the city landscape into a vibrant heart, attractive to tourists, residents and business.

The Square is under-utilised as a gathering venue for entertainment, cultural and artistic expression. The Plan proposes the Square should be the cultural and artistic hub for Adelaide, attracting tourists and facilitating social and economic development opportunities in a positive, dynamic manner.

Recognised here is the larger potential of a cleaned up Victoria Square to be emblematic of the aspirational City itself. A bunch of Nungas drinking in the Square, surrounded by the Hilton and Grand Medina International Hotels would do little for the image Adelaide was trying to create for itself. In the context of achieving New Directions – Capacity, Vivacity, Audacity, it is observable that the ‘Dry Zone’ legislation has been ‘helpful’. To borrow Shaw’s term, the moves by the ACC might be understood to partner ‘capitalism’s recolonisation of (the) inner city…’ despite there continuing to exist an unaccommodated marginal and marginalised population therein.

What is perhaps not recognised, remembered or valued in the ACC’s plans for its future is the value Indigenous people and in particular Kaurna, place on the open public spaces of the City. In its commissioned report of the Indigenous Cultural Significance of the Adelaide Parklands (1998), Adelaide City Council sought the opinion of Indigenous leaders. An interim statement was subsequently authored by the Kaurna Aboriginal Community Heritage Association (KACHA) and Kaurna Yerlo and issued within the Report. In part it reads:

The Adelaide Park Lands and Squares are part of this place (Red Kangaroo Dreaming) and hold special cultural significance for us – the Kaurna people… We as Kaurna people, must walk on these places to maintain our cultural strength.

**RECONCILIATION**

The tentative steps of the Adelaide City Council towards developing a Reconciliation policy and program of engagement had been formalised in 1997 with Council’s adoption of a Reconciliation Vision Statement. As an aide memoir to those who would govern the city, the original Reconciliation Vision Statement, signed by the serving Council of 1997, was hung at the entry point of the Lord Mayor’s Office in the Adelaide Town Hall. The statement highlighted six guiding principles for Reconciliation: 1. Participation 2. Negotiation 3. Communication and Public Awareness 4. Service Provision 5. Cultural Identity and 6. Heritage and Commemoration.

The enthusiasm of those who authored the 1997 Reconciliation document was reflective of a new respect and commitment to working in partnership with Indigenous leadership in the city. Yet, in the ACC’s subsequent ongoing support of the ‘Dry Zone’ legislation the Adelaide City Council put at risk its public commitment to Reconciliation. Dual Chair of the Reconciliation committee, Councillor Greg Mackie reckoned there was a loss of faith in Council by some Indigenous individuals who were willing to ‘boycott’ the ACC Reconciliation program. This was an ‘embarrassment’ to the Council who recognised the need to restore the faith of the local Indigenous community. This provides
a possible explanation for the hastened introduction of the ACC’s Reconciliation Committees’ recommended program for the city. Just two months after the Dry Zone was enacted, the ACC gave approval in December 2001 for Victoria Square to be used as a performance venue for the 2002 Adelaide Festival of the Arts, and for the Square to be renamed Tandanyungga for the duration of the Festival in acknowledgement of the Festival theme and celebration of the world’s Indigenous peoples.

At its May 27, 2002, meeting, the ACC deliberated over a broad ranging agenda related to the Indigenous presence in the City of Adelaide. That Victoria Square featured prominently in ACC resolutions to commemorate Indigenous presence in the City was further recognition of the site as a space of historical intersection. The recommendations made to Council were that:

1. The City be recognised as a location of particular importance for the Kaurna people.
2. Council issues a formal statement of that recognition.
3. Council endorses the following actions for Victoria Square as the heart of the city:
   3.1. Erection of a sculpture representing Ivaritji;
   3.2. Victoria Square dual named Tandanyungga (the place of the Red Kangaroo Dreaming);
   3.3. Permanent flying of the Aboriginal flag in Victoria Square;
   3.4 Provision of educational and interpretive signage providing information about the Aboriginal flag, the dual naming of the Square, Kaurna history and culture and other significant places in Adelaide.

As at October 2004 a number of the recommendations have been adopted. Perhaps key to these changes was the endorsement in June 2002, of a formal statement acknowledging Kaurna custodianship. The commissioning of a commemorative sculpture of Ivaritji is still awaited, as is the full implementation of interpretive signage in the Square and dual named parks throughout the city. The Reconciliation committee has no budget to act on these matters, and must await Council’s attention to these recommendations.

It would be easy to conclude that the machinations of Adelaide City Council have been disingenuous. Once part of the forced removal of Indigenous people from traditional grounds, the City fathers now wish to control the means and extent of an Indigenous reappearance—in so doing allowing only tokens of a ‘noble’ Indigenous presence. Token measures have been critiqued as having little effect on Indigenous relationships within the city or the economic advancement of Indigenous people. Yet, the token may also carry symbolic weight and hence be substantive. In taking two examples of Reconciliatory measures adopted by Council, their reverberating effects cannot be denied. First, at the beginning of every formal session of Council, formal acknowledgement of Kaurna as traditional custodians of the Adelaide city area is now spoken. This acknowledgement reads:

Adelaide City Council acknowledges that we are meeting on the traditional country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains. We recognise and respect their
cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kaurna people living today.

The fact and frequency of such acknowledgement serves to hold Councillors to account for the means and manner in which they seek to serve their constituency. Secondly, the permanent flying of the Aboriginal flag in Victoria Square (endorsed as part of the Flags and Banners Policy July 8, 2002) offers a symbol of near talismanic quality. As its giant form weaves and waves above the Square alongside the national flag, it speaks of the past and the future, a nation within the nation, an aspirational people and an aspirational city. And while it flies hope lives.

CONCLUSION

At Adelaide City Council’s regular meeting on Monday 13th October 2003, Council voted to apply to the State Government to have the Dry Zone Trial extended by another year. This action followed the delivery to Council of a second report appraising the success of the ‘Dry Zone’. At this point in time Council voted to have the findings of the second report remain confidential. A Council ‘source’ was reported in the City’s only daily newspaper, The Advertiser, as commenting that the second report ‘did not tell us anything we didn’t already know’. What are we to assume from such a comment? That the Dry Zone is achieving its aim to enhance public safety? As Mayor Michael Harbison stated, or in the words of Monsignor David Cappo, Chairman of the State Government’s Social Inclusion Board, the Dry Zone is ‘very bad public policy’? Monsignor David Cappo urged South Australians in previous months to respond to the injustice of such policy with anger.

...We should have a sense of anger that people are sleeping rough here in Adelaide and throughout the state. Anger at a system that allows this state of affairs to develop…. Anger at public policy that is racially discriminating and allows the Dry Zone in Adelaide to produce the situation where many Aboriginal people are living in harsh circumstances along West Terrace.89

Admonishments from Church leaders appear to mean little. At the end of October (29.10.03) Mayor Harbison released a statement to the media. The statement approved the continuation of the Dry Zone, as one means in achieving a safe city. The city would remain on guard as there is ‘still much more which can and must be looked at’.

Declaration of a Dry Zone (2001) clearly and unfortunately supports Cunneen’s proposition that where Indigenous people are concerned ‘criminal sanctions continue to be used as a substitute for social policy’.90 In the emphasis upon control of populations through punishment and or banishment, the social ‘problem’ of the inebriated Aborigine is ‘exported’.91 Conversely, the ‘Dry Zone’ legislation may have managed to remove Indigenous people from the City Squares, but there has been no abandonment of the abstract space of the congregation itself. It would appear evident that such sites are desired social and political spaces. What they offer to individuals and communities and what they mean as acts of resistance, and for self-governance and identity maintenance deserves further attention.

Indigenous habitation and use of City spaces confronts Adelaide residents with the fact of Indigenous dispossession, and
reminds all residents of their responsibility towards Reconciliation. No matter what the content or reason of the formation, Indigenous presence is a potent metaphor of the Indigenous refusal to be invisible. To return to the City, to its heart and sit down, where all around is the movement and achievements of the colonist culture is necessarily disturbing and destabilising of the colonising culture.\textsuperscript{92}

Maintaining a place for Indigenous people in the centre of the City would hence appear essential as Adelaide seeks to telegraph its position as a modern and accommodating city. Indeed, Adelaide’s reinvention of itself ‘Capacity, Vivacity, Audacity’ is a challenge for the city of the future. To create a City where all might find a place to be, requires governing ideological and institutional willingness and openness to difference. This according to Young is a necessary feature of democracy, ‘In the unoppressive city people are open to unassimilated otherness’.\textsuperscript{93} If the ideal of a city based upon democratic principles is to be achieved in Adelaide, both the State Government and the Adelaide City Council need to take the lead in being committed to sharing city space and imaginatively honouring cultural difference. Dare Adelaide create a modern city where the depth and range of Indigeneity might be accommodated beyond token representations? And, dare it consider the possibility and necessity that cultural differences be spatially recognised and legitimised, and be a place where Indigenous people might without impunity ‘articulate the distinctive forms of their urbanity and modernity’?\textsuperscript{94}

\textbf{INTERVIEWS AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATION}

Norman Blakely, Salvation Army Officer, Historian, (telephone conversation 24/7/02).

John Harran — Adelaide City Council (ACC), (telephone conversation, 31/8/02).

Warren Guppy — Community Development Officer — Reconciliation, ACC (telephone conversation 1/8/02, and interview, 8/9/03, Adelaide).

Greg Mackie — ACC Councilor, and Dual Chairperson of the ACC Reconciliation Committee (telephone conversation 7/8/02, and interview 3/10/02, Adelaide).

Tauto Sansbury — Aboriginal Justice Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (interview, 9/10/02, Adelaide).

Luisa O’Connor, Researcher and Indigenous Health Worker (telephone conversation, 24/10/02).

Dr. Judith Bryant, ACC Councilor, and Dual Chairperson ACC Reconciliation Committee (interview 7/7/03, Adelaide).

Lewis O’Brien, Member, Reconciliation Committee, ACC, (interview 10/9/03, Adelaide).

Shirley Peisley, Dual Chairperson, Reconciliation Committee, ACC, (interview 11/9/03, Adelaide).
ENDNOTES


2 Carter, The Lie of the Land, 229.


9 Education Department of South Australia (EDSA), The Kaurna People – Aboriginal People of the Adelaide Plains (Adelaide: EDSA), 1989, 174.


12 Amery. 14. Nunga is a term for Indigenous people of the settled regions of South Australia. It encompasses but does not subsume separate tribal/language identities.


18 Pierson, 248–9.


20 Gale, Urban Aborigines, 110.

21 Gale and Wundersitz, Adelaide


24 The Pamphleteer Edward Gibbon Wakefield in his writings on social and community design and organization was the intellectual force behind the development of Adelaide.


26 Hutchings and Bunker, With Conscious Purpose, 13.


28 Luisa O’Connor, Researcher and Indigenous Health Worker (telephone conversation with the author, 24 October, 2002)

29 State Records of South Australia, GRG 24/6A/1844/712.


32 Brodie and Gale, My Side of the Bridge, 86.


34 Berndt and Berndt, From Black to White in South Australia, 257.

35 Wilson in George, ACC Oral History Project 12/12/1998, 30, Agius in George, 18/11/98, 74)

36 F. Gale in personal conversation with the author, 8 September 2003.


39 Shirley Peisley, dual chair of the ACC’s Reconciliation Committee in personal conversation with the author, 20 April, 2004.
Ivaritji was born in Adelaide and died in 1929. Her English name is noted as Amelia Rodney, daughter of Parnadaitya (King Rodney) of Adelaide and Tankira of Clare. At the time of her death she was thought to be the last person of full Kaurna descent. See C. Mattingley and K. Hampton, *Survival in Our Own Land, Aboriginal Experiences in South Australia Since 1836*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press), 1998, 139. Ivaritji was also known as Amelia Taylor. S. Hemming and R. Harris, *Tandanyungga Kaurna Yerta — A Report on the Indigenous Cultural Significance of the Adelaide Parklands* (Adelaide: Adelaide City Council), 1998, 17. Through her descendant Gladys Elphick (now deceased) there is some knowledge regarding Kaurna use of land within Adelaide.


O’Brien, in personal conversation with the author, 10 September, 2003.

NADOC — National Aboriginal Day of Observance Committee. In later years the committee recognized the Indigenous people of the Torres Strait Islander peoples, and changed to NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Observance Committee). NAIDOC involves celebratory activities over a week-long period each July. It is celebrated Australia wide.

Pitjantjatjara people are Indigenous people of North Western South Australia. As the nearest capital city Adelaide is visited by members of remote Indigenous communities as and when required.


Peisley, in personal conversation with the author, 20 April 2004.

O’Connor, in personal conversation with the author, 24 October 2002.

Warren Guppy, Community
Development Officer, Adelaide City Council, in telephone conversation with the author, 8 September 2003.

54 O'Connor, in personal conversation with the author, 24 October 2002.


56 Brodie and Gale, 118.

57 Alban Kartinyeri, employed officer with the ASG, in conversation with the author ASG, Adelaide, 9 October 2002.

58 Blakely, 24 July, 2002, comment with regard to Indigenous drinkers and use of social services, such as beds.


61 Gale, in personal conversation with the author, 8 September, 2003.


63 Cunneen, *Conflict, Politics and Crime*, 188, notes that South Australia and Western Australia have the highest proportion of Indigenous people arrested. More damning of the ‘style’ of legislature, policing and judiciary, he states ‘…the jurisdiction which stands out as ‘punitive’ on a number of measures is South Australia’.

64 Cunneen, 29.


68 Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’.


75 Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, 158.

76 Dr. Judith Bryant, ACC Councillor, and Dual Chairperson ACC Reconciliation Committee, interview with the author, Adelaide, 7 July, 2003.
Personal conversation with Bryant, 7 July, 2003.

Tauto Sansbury—Aboriginal Justice Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, interview with the author, 9 October 2002, Adelaide. The Aboriginal Justice Advocacy committee with Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement were in agreement that the proposal was ‘racist and against human rights for Aboriginal people’.


Hemming and Harris, Tandanyungga Kaurna Yerta, 16.

Personal conversation with Mackie, 7 August, 2002.


D. Cappo, ‘Memorial Service for those who have died while Homeless’, address at St. John’s Anglican Church, Adelaide, 19 June 2003.

Cunneen, Conflict, Politics and Crime, 188.


See Jacobs, Edge of Empire, 1, 4.


Rowse, White Flour, White Power, 203.
REMADE IN JAPAN:
THE CASE OF AUDREY HEPBURN

ZEN YIPU

Generations of Japanese female audiences who have idolised and imitated Audrey Hepburn must know precisely what Barthes meant. In 1998, five years after her death, Kirin Beverages Co. made a television commercial featuring Audrey Hepburn drinking a canned tea. A year later, Asahi Graph (AsahiGraph Extra 1999) published a special issue on Audrey Hepburn. In it, twelve Japanese idols told the readers how much they themselves idolised Audrey Hepburn. She, herself, of course does not know about her newfound career as a tea aficionada and TV commercial star in a far foreign land. Were she alive, however, she might be glad to know that this time around there would be no more death—she would remain eternally young and beautiful. She has been reproduced, digitised and saved, in bytes—a computer language enables many visual forms. Is this the same Audrey Hepburn Barthes talked about in 1957? Does it matter?

‘POSTMODERN’ JAPANESENESS
AND ITS CULTURAL PRODUCTION

One of the most visible themes of studies on Japan since the 1980s has been the ‘postmodernity’ of Japanese society. Many of the phenomena in the current Japanese consumerist society seem to be rooted in its ‘generic postmodernity,’

The face of Audrey Hepburn [...] is constituted by an infinite complexity of morphological functions. As a language, Garbo’s singularity was of the order of the concept, that of Audrey Hepburn is of the order of the substance. The face of Garbo is an Idea, that of Hepburn, an Event.'
visible in its mass media and commodification of cultures, and made more acute by the revival of semiotic and semantic interpretation of the Japanese domestication of the foreign\(^3\) and exoticisation of the native.\(^4\)

This view of Japan arguably evolves around one aspect of postmodernity, the notion of cultural authenticity. ‘De-differentiation’, ‘cultural pastiche’, ‘mechanical reproduction/copying’ and of course the idea of ‘hyperreal and of simulation’, all lay significant emphasis on the idea of ‘original and copy’.\(^5\) In large part, this view presumes a hierarchical order of authenticity in cultural production—in terms of a chain of ‘copies’ of an assumed ‘original’ in the cultural industry.

Benjamin’s ‘aura’ essentially is a by-product of the ‘authenticity’ of art, the loss of which signifies the decay of authenticity. To Benjamin, authenticity is ‘the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced’.\(^6\) Thus, this ‘aura’ is the privileged experience tied to the inaccessibility of singularity and history. In his famous work ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ Benjamin gives an example of how aura contributes to the uniqueness of art:

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the cleric of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura.\(^7\)

What will ‘aura’ and ‘authenticity’ mean in a time when digitisation and networked communication are the norm of our media landscape? If the loss of ‘aura’ caused the decay of authenticity, what happens to ‘aura’ when authenticity no longer remains the question? As Benjamin pointed out, technology

\[\ldots\] detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.\(^8\)

Urry puts it from a different angle:

\[\ldots\] Postmodernist culture is anti-auratic. Such forms do not proclaim their uniqueness but are mechanically and electronically reproduced. There is a denial of the separation of the aesthetic from the social and of the contention that art is of a different order from life. The value placed on the unity of the artistic work is challenged through an emphasis on pastiche, collage, allegory and so on. \[\ldots\] Postmodernism is anti-hierarchical, opposed to \[\ldots\] vertical differentiations.\(^9\)

Culture, the other attachment to the idea of authenticity, is also often seen as the result of time and adherent historical narratives. However, Appadurai sees ‘culture’ simply as a ‘thing/object’, which, ‘in the contemporary world, \[\ldots\] is part of the capitalist civilising process’.\(^10\) In this view, ‘Culture’ in the form of ‘code’ is attached to goods and media content and can also be seen as no more than a by-product of the production and consumption process. In other words, alongside other commodities, the
immense flow of information and knowledge produces ‘culture’—one more addition to go with other non-essential ‘things’ for the masses. Baudrillard calls this highly mediated culture ‘kitsch’, and the products, ‘gadgets’. He suggests that ‘Kitsch is a cultural category’ produced as a pseudo-event in ‘current affairs’ or as a pseudo-object in advertising. It can also be produced from the medium itself and its referential code becomes a standard package with what is being produced and consumed. \(^{11}\)

This essay is an analysis of ‘auratic culture’ in the age of digital production, an age in which the question of ‘copy’ and ‘original’ has become irrelevant. The production, in the case of Japanese Audrey Hepburn is very much cultural, and indeed is produced from the ‘medium itself’ and comes as a ‘standard package’ in the process of commodification.

I analyse the phenomenon of Audrey Hepburn’s popularity among Japanese women to provide an example of how imagery and its ‘aura’ can be effectively commodified, and then either attached to goods or sold as a form of media content. I argue that Hepburn’s lasting popularity is not just a passing fad, like many other imported foreign trends; rather, the (re)production of the Japanese Hepburn symbolises an integral part of the local economic ‘tradition’ of how female idols are perceived. This can be seen by analysing the functions of such idols in Japanese popular culture and comparing the rhetoric employed to describe Hepburn’s image in the popular press, mainly women’s magazines. I argue that the Japanese Audrey Hepburn is indeed ‘authentic and original’. Although different from that of the western, European, Hollywood Audrey Hepburn, the ‘culture’ and ‘aura’ which her presence signifies in Japan, is no more exotic than that of her American counterpart. I will argue that the reproduction of Audrey Hepburn not only confuses the order of authenticity, it produces a particular kind of ‘authenticity’ and adopts an instant ‘aura’ that is only relevant to the current social milieu. Moreover, in the case of the Japanese Audrey Hepburn, the Japanese consumers re-authenticate themselves in the imagination of the reproduced virtual idol.

**THE MILIEU**

Audrey Hepburn, or rather, Edda van Heemstra Hepburn-Ruston, the Belgian-born Hollywood film-star from the 1950s and 60s, still remains vastly popular in Japan. She is popular not only among middle-aged women who have grown up watching her movies, and therefore might have nostalgic memories of her, but also among young women in their mid 20s who would have no such recollections of her. This latter group has learnt about her either through watching old films or through seeing her ‘reincarnations’ in the marketplace. There is no other western idol who enjoys the same level of popularity in Japan, a popularity which endures even today, in 2004 more than a decade after her death.

Japan is popularly believed to be racially homogeneous, culturally singular and monolingual. However, in the environs of post-war rapid economic development and the maintenance of continual economic growth, an essential feature of its fashion, culture and other trends has been ‘transience’. It is commonly expected that today’s pop stars will be seen as trivial passing fads by tomorrow. Like fashion, the idols of the variety shows, pop singers, models, and
serialised TV drama actresses will be out of vogue when the trends they embody are over. Like the fast changing worlds of fashion and rapidly developing consumer electronics, the idols too are the transitory indicators of pop culture. However, since Audrey Hepburn’s first popular film Roman Holiday arrived in the antiquated fashion centre of Ginza in Tokyo in 1954, her popularity has continued, flourished, and even been ‘renewed’ through time to the present day. With an audience who cannot racially, culturally and linguistically identify with her, one cannot help but ask a seemingly simple question: Why would a Hollywood film star of European descent from the bygone days defy the power of time and passing fashion and continue to be idolised by an anachronistic audience who are so different in race and culture?

The idolisation of film stars often can be expected where ‘authenticity’ of the star, real or constructed, occurs. By the same token, with the involvement of nostalgia and identification, the revival of popularity of old film stars might not be extraordinary. In many cases the identification in star-audience relations often takes the form of ‘the desire to become’, ‘imitating’, and ‘copying’ — all of which involve identification with the physical appearance. However, judging by the surface, Hepburn’s popularity in Japan certainly does not offer the so-called cultural ‘aura’ for ‘authenticity’. Here it is difficult to imagine a straightforward identification process, whether culturally or physically.

This might lead to a simple dismissal of Audrey Hepburn’s popularity as entirely accidental and irrelevant, a conclusion which would be rather inattentive, for her popularity in Japan has now continued for some fifty years. Her magazine cover appearances rank first amongst all foreign stars in the last half a century and still remain popular amongst the readers of the popular press. What precisely then is it about her that generations of Japanese women admire, ‘desire to become’, and identify with? And if her popularity in Japan is comparable with that of other idols in Japan, then what provides the ‘aura’ for the authenticity of a Japanese Audrey Hepburn?

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING FAMILIAR—PHYSICAL RESEMBLANCE?

Hepburn’s appearance is the feature most often cited in the Japanese popular press, commanding praise notably for her dark eyes, dark hair, small physique, and even her small breast size and skinny body. In one of the very early articles about Hepburn written in 1954, it was her androgynous looks that attracted first comment:

Her eyes are clear and large, her face heart-shaped; she is capable of arousing powerful passions even though her body almost completely lacks ‘volume’ and is stick-thin.

The description of her small physique as a component of her popularity has not changed some 40 years later:

[Hepburn] has black hair, black eyes and a slender physique just like the Japanese. Unlike the blonde glamour of a [Marilyn] Monroe type, her appearance has a feeling of familiarity with that of the Japanese female.

Comments on the smallness of her features and her dark hair and eyes are still prevalent in almost all articles
appearing in the popular press. Analysing the relationship between female spectators and their idols, Stacey has noted:

… there are numerous points of recognition of similarities between the spectator and the star. These are not based on pretending to be something one is not, but rather selecting something which establishes a link between the star and the self, based on a pre-existing part of the spectator’s identity which bears a resemblance to the star.\(^\text{18}\)

This insight explains, in part, one of the important reasons for Hepburn’s popularity in an environment that would normally be perceived as unfamiliar. The recognition of similarities between Hepburn and her Japanese female audience might give hints as to why Hepburn has been perceived as a locally identifiable idol rather than just another imported foreign star.

**BECOMING HEPBURN**

The coverage accorded Audrey Hepburn in women’s magazines indicates that her popularity has come from both the dramas and facts that rendered her. The dramatic ones are the screen roles she played during her career as a film star. The facts are the ‘real life’ stories in which Hepburn herself is the main protagonist. Typical of the former are stories of a young girl falling in love, with happy endings blessed by wealth, glamour and (of course) good taste. *Sabrina* (1954) is a typical example, and *Roman Holiday* is another. As for her real life, the most common version is that she was born in 1929 into a wealthy aristocratic family, and endured the World War II Nazi invasion of the Netherlands as a teenager. She worked hard and eventually made her break into acting in *Roman Holiday* in 1953, which won her world-wide acclaim and an Oscar. She continued to flourish on the silver screen until the early 1970s. In 1986, she became a Goodwill Ambassador and spokesperson for UNICEF. She is seen first and foremost as a beautiful Hollywood actress with a European aristocratic background and, at the same time, a person of kindness who helped the poor and unfortunate during her role at UNICEF. The combination of her screen appearances and real life stories is seen as a kind of ideal model for women, and indeed imitated and admired in manners widely transcendent of social classes and age groups in Japan.

A comparison between her and contemporary local Japanese pop idols would suggest similar ‘qualities’ said to be possessed by both current Japanese idols and Hepburn. Despite her foreign attributes, Hepburn is being idolised and emulated in similar ways as the local stars. However, although Hepburn’s foreignness has not significantly distanced her audience, I suspect it remains an essential element at play in the construction of her popularity. She is more identifiable in her physical features when compared to other western stars (such as Monroe and Julia Roberts), but she remains unachievable in the identification process at the same time, precisely because of her physical differences (however small) and her Euro-American background. Thus the image of Audrey Hepburn is admired but forever inaccessible, identified but unachievable.

To bring her closer to the local audience, Hepburn is often differentiated from other famous Hollywood stars—both ones from around the same period, such as Marilyn Monroe,\(^\text{19}\) (see Figure 2: Hepburn Vs. Monroe Test), and more contemporary examples of the Ameri-
can female star such as Julia Roberts (see Figure 3: Hepburn Vs. Roberts Test). These comparisons indicate that they are seen as women of fundamental differences—as might well be expected to happen if they were done in the United States. In the Japanese popular press, however, the comparisons and analysis have gone as far as comparing the different types of love life one would have (‘Hepburn type or Monroe type’) with a descriptive test supplemented by graphs showing the result. Monroe and Roberts are seen primarily as representatives of American women, perhaps in similar ways as Tokyo Disneyland represented America and Venus Fort, Italy. These analyses in the popular women’s magazines suggest that Hepburn is compared against the quintessential western stars, contributing to her unique status in the local media. It may also explain why, despite the fact that she is considered as identifiable and even emulatable for her Japanese fans, she is rarely ever compared with any Japanese media stars. She occupies a special position as the ‘fairy’, as claimed by many popular women’s magazines since 1954, amongst the pedestrian stars, representing beauty and transcendental feminine values to Japanese women.

Comparing descriptions of Hepburn and the most popular Japanese idols in women’s magazines will help to demonstrate the common ground. Hepburn is seen as an eternally young, pure, child-like woman, with desirable female elegance and a good work ethic, as well as being a good mother to her son. Amongst innumerable similar articles, More (a magazine targeted at 20 to 25 year old women) published an analysis in 1999, giving ten essential qualities of the most idolised Japanese female pop stars. The first example was the immensely popular Matsushima Nanako, a model, who is also active in television dramas and popular movies. The description of her in the article is strikingly similar
to that of Hepburn. Her face is said to be amiably Japanese, her physique to be slender; she is described as having 'a clear voice, a body with no superfluous flesh and an overwhelming sense of cleanliness'. All this has also been said about Hepburn. Matsushima is also said to have a 'good work ethic'—an attribute also often used to describe Hepburn. Qualities of other popular stars include 'maiden strength', 'personal maturity', 'charisma', 'strength of the eyes', 'strength of continental beauty', just to list a few. Compared with the commentaries on Hepburn, it is not difficult to see the commonalities in popular perceptions.

THE DISNEYFICATION OF HEPBURN

There are also manuals teaching how to dress like Hepburn, behave elegantly like her, attain her hair style and even travel like her—all indicating the desire to 'become Hepburn'. Dressing up to look like the idolised is a common practice and an important trait in female spectatorship and idolisation. For the admirers of Audrey Hepburn in Japan, there is no shortage of manuals in the popular press for just this purpose. In these manual-type analyses of the Hepburn styles, readers are encouraged and given detailed instructions regarding how to do makeup, hairdo, and even dress up as Audrey Hepburn, and even cook with her recipes. (See Figure 4: Manual for Audrey’s makeup and hairdo.) Such manuals and feature stories on Hepburn and her styles have become a regular event for popular women’s magazines since 1954. Some of the examples given earlier were published well after her death in 1993. Today, in 2004, a decade after Hepburn’s death, her idolisation continues.

But what distinguishes this from dressing up like Joan Crawford or imitating Betty Grable in the US is that dressing up like Hepburn is far detached from the Japanese cultural environment. For her Japanese fans Hepburn’s European flavour provides yet another layer of dramaturgy. In tradition and cultural terms, there is no previous historical background for Hepburn styles in Japan, making her imitation both topographically erroneous and anachronistic—much the same way that Disneyland and Mickey Mouse are consumed in Japan. In fact, a popular writer Nakatani Akihiro interestingly claims that Audrey Hepburn ‘died at the age of 23! [sic]’ By which he means that Audrey Hepburn is idolised in the same way as Mickey Mouse—in that, neither of them age. In deed, Hepburn is mostly presented in

Figure 4: How to look like Audrey by make-up and hairdo
the visual context of her films from the 1950s and 60s, especially in *Roman Holiday*, made when she was 23. Like Mickey Mouse, she is also idolised by three generations of fans. To make the point even more complete, both Mickey Mouse and Hepburn have been culturally de-odoured and now both sit comfortably in the Japanese marketplace.

Today, Disneyland, Audrey Hepburn or Mickey Mouse, present no discrepancies with the ‘native’ culture—rather, these media products are very much part of the local media staple. Today, it is hard to imagine a Tokyo without Tokyo Disneyland, and Japanese women without their ‘Ōdorii’ (Audrey), in one incarnation or another. Cultural products such as Mickey Mouse and Audrey Hepburn provided foundations for the localisation of foreign. It can be argued that they have effectively become ‘Japanese’—both as media products and, in more ways than one, as cultural icons.

### VIRTUALISING THE IDOL

Hepburn’s popularity today in the Japanese media presents important evidence of her posthumous existence, albeit in the binary form that assembles her digitised image. This new lease of life is founded on a new career as an advertising star. Her reincarnation lives on television screens and billboards—the ultimate embodiment of the commercial nature of her posthumous existence. In other words, Hepburn is only ‘alive’, quite literally, when her audience is buying. Her existence is preconditioned by her own commodification, as a product styled by the ‘aura’ produced by pre-existing media narratives.

Here ‘aura’ must also include Hepburn’s face, the darkness of her hair and eyes, and the shape of her physique. None exist in physical form today, but together make up the basis for her identification by a Japanese audience. ‘Aura’ must also include her ‘feminine’ qualities with a hard working morality, a good mother elegantly fashioned in styles from the 1950s. These qualities will be maintained, and perfected, to suit the current trend, through aspiration and idolisation. The relationship will not be disrupted by uncontrollable public appearances and unexpected public relation disasters—all of which are common hazards of the analogue form of stardom today, and which the fans know only too well. Hepburn’s pristine image may even be further refined with future technological developments, together with the creative flair of her future modifiers. This may be done directly, by computer graphics (CG) artists, and indirectly, by the marketers and the market. Indeed, the death of her virtual incarnation can be achieved only by the abandonment of the market—an unlikely scenario, considering how perfect and adaptable she has already become.

The current technology will allow production of future generations of Hepburn. In fact, after the initial success of using a virtual Hepburn, Kirin Beverages used her image again to sell their *Gogo no kōcha*, or Afternoon Tea, in 1998. The commercial must have been popular and economical, as Kirin continued making advertisements featuring Audrey Hepburn, in one form or another. By 2002, Kirin made at least four Audrey Hepburn commercials for Afternoon Tea. (See Figures 5-7: Kirin Afternoon Tea commercials.)

Hepburn, however, is by no means the only Virtual Idol—Dick Tracy, Tom Raider and an array of newly ‘rendered’
3D Virtual Idols are becoming permanent residents of the virtual worlds. With the technology behind the creatures becoming increasingly sophisticated, the ‘realness’ of the Idols is also being perfected by the day. A famous example of such virtual existence is Date Kyoko, the world’s first virtual idol created entirely from imagination and pixels.

Date Kyoko (also known as DK96) was launched in 1996 by HoriPro Inc, not a graphic design firm, but a ‘talent (tarento)’ agency. On 21 November 1996, a CD titled ‘Love Communication’ was released in her name. Apart from audio tracks, the CD also included video clips of her in motion, walking on the streets of Tokyo and New York (Wolff 1997). Although entirely virtual without a physical form, Date Kyoko has a profile, a younger sister, a birthday, a personality and even a career. She was purportedly born to a Japanese couple who ran a sushi bar in Fusso, Tokyo on October 26, 1979. She has a young sister and likes to hang out in a Chinese restaurant called Seiryūmon. She is a spokesmodel for Oz Interactive, a (physically existing) San Francisco firm that creates virtual worlds for computers.

Date Kyoko eventually faded as a market product. However, she symbolises an important development in the world of idol worshipping. Her worldwide fandom at the time shows that not only is physical form no longer required of idols but, more importantly, that virtual narratives and emotional admiration for a virtually embodied imagination are entirely possible.

Iida on the same subject (and the same Virtual Idol) summed it up well:
... the fact that the object of one’s affection lacked a historical referent does not matter; rather, the pleasure of the products stems from the consumption of images one knows full well are virtual. This marketing of virtuality, however, goes beyond the realm of possessing images of desired objects to the repossessions of the self.38

In the case of Audrey Hepburn in Japan, the virtualisation does have a ‘historical referent’ except that the referent itself is also the subject of virtualisation. Both in Japan and elsewhere, the memories of Audrey Hepburn are first of all from a series of performances which are already highly mediated, relative to which her ‘real’ life story plays a supporting role. The virtualisation goes even further in Japan. As I will elaborate later in this work, she was first replaced by a double, a model who is also her fan, in a television commercial. Then in addition, the ‘idea’ of Audrey Hepburn has been incorporated in a costume drama, set in Japan’s post-war era in a quintessential Japanese locale, broadcasted on the government-funded national television network.

A more commercially successful example is Fei Fei 飛飛, one of the more recent digital creations from a company called e-frontier Inc/Blue Moon Studio.59 According to her ‘Official Homepage’, Fei Fei was born in 1999 in Cyber City Layer 7 Chungking area. She likes the Cyber City layer 23 area where she can see the spring times of Jupiter and Mars. (See Figure 8: Fei Fei.)

Like Date Kyoko, Fei Fei is created with highly sophisticated computer software (Shade) with even more painstaking attention to detail.40 And like her predecessor Date Kyoko, she has a career

Figure 8: the virtual idol—Fei Fei
in the commercial world, only more successful and current. Fei Fei is the star in Samsung commercials for its LCD televisions, on both TV and billboards.\(^1\) (See Figure 9: Samsung commercial.)

Coupled with ever more powerful computer processing and storage capacities, CG programs can now handle complex tasks such as rendering three-dimensional image and movement. The film *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (2001)\(^2\) for example, was created entirely on computers, with the help of an extremely sophisticated 3D rendering software called LightWave. In other words, the film was ‘built’ and ‘rendered’ with powerful processing chips rather than ‘filmed’ with cameras. And thanks to the power of technology and human imagination, the images and the movements of its digital actors are so realistic they are comparable, if not better in some ways to the results of a movie camera.

Here is how the film was reviewed on a popular film site Hollywood.com

... now there’s a whole new way of looking at CGI technology-‘hyperReal’ human characters. That’s right. Computer-generated people that look just as real as any Tom Cruise or Julia Roberts.\(^3\)

Indeed, not only do they ‘look’ comparable to stars of the physical world, they are capable of inducing similar kinds of emotional admiration in some, in the same manner as Tom Cruise or Julia Roberts. According to the film’s producer, Christopher Lee, the main character Dr. Aki Ross was voted one of the 50 sexiest people in *Maxim* magazine.\(^4\)

Iida draws a connection between the Virtual Idols and the Japanese Purikura (a Japanese word derived from the English ‘print club’). Purikura was extremely popular in age groups spanning from

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Figure 9: Fei Fei presenting Samsung, on billboard at Shibuya Crossing, Tokyo

Figure 10: Dr. Aki, both the role and the performer.
It can be argued that it is a form of self-admiration and virtualisation, as the prints not only are portraits of the self, but the mechanics (its instantaneousness, low cost, various forms) and popularity, shorten the process of a personal narrative. Purikura also allows the player/the self to stage and perform an otherwise forgettable moment—or rather, the medium allows the participants to perform for the sake of performance just because the medium is there. The fun of this game is not derived from any difficult techniques—there are none—but from the fantasy in which the self is the star. As Iida puts it:

... the core pleasure of this form of play ... is acting in the context of the framed narrative and possessing a purely imaginary sequence of the story of oneself that has little to do with the outside world.45

Further, it

... Suggest[s] ... an enclosure of the pleasure loop, the emergence of a form of pleasure induced by artificially created images; although specific commodities are chosen to be admired, the true object of this self-referential pleasure economy is one’s own consciousness and its ascription of value to particular objects as worthy of admiration.46

Thus in the same light, neither the current fast-developing imaging technology nor the market appetite will limit the possibility of Audrey Hepburn becoming an infinite number of digital bytes, re-represented, re-reproduced, re-cultivated as pin-ups and as a media star, immortalised in the post-real world.

This is also why the idolisation of Audrey Hepburn in Japan is vastly different from that of, for example, Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan or Brad Pitt. First, these current American pop stars are still physically alive. Their parallel existence cannot be either modified or reconstructed easily. Because their analogue existences leave traces in the media, their personal lives produce or induce materials in the gossip columns and paparazzi photos. This provides documentary-like evidence; creating continuing history and narratives, which in turn ‘authenticate’ them. Therefore it is difficult to construct parallel versions of the living idols completely in media.47

Audrey Hepburn in Japan is not a simple ‘simulation’ of the ‘real’. The virtualised Audrey Hepburn is a reproduced image of the Hollywood actress, which also existed mostly in mediated forms. Both are first of all media products—neither are simulations of the ‘originals’.

Figure 11: A still from the movie Final Fantasy, a movie produced entirely on computers.
THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF AUDREY HEPBURN

Audrey Hepburn started appearing in commercials in Japan as early as May 1971, for Japan Exlan Co., Ltd. ecutekusuran Gakuka (株), selling a wig, a booming fad at the time.\textsuperscript{48} The shooting of the commercial originally planned to be filmed in Japan, reportedly had to move to Rome, because Hepburn did not want to leave her one-year-old child behind. It was eventually filmed around the old city in Rome, showing Hepburn strolling in front of a classic Italian backdrop, with the seasons morphing in the background. During the commercial, Hepburn utters only one word: Varie (Varié), the name of the wig. The commercial reportedly cost ¥50,000,000 (US$139,895).\textsuperscript{49}

The original plan to shoot the television commercial in Japan was not without significance. Hepburn was to sell a Japanese local fad, in an ‘authentic’ Japanese milieu with clearly defined seasons as the backdrop—a quintessential Japanese motif—morphing through in less than 30 seconds.\textsuperscript{50} She was to be seen strolling in old quarters of Kyoto (instead of Rome), alongside kimono-clad maiko and geishas in Gion and Pontochō through the picturesque four seasons, from falling cherry blossoms to the stone garden covered with snow—just as the American cellist Yoyama would do for Suntory whisky later in 1990s. (See Figure 12: Suntory whisky with Yoyama.) The commercial would have given Hepburn a Japanese ‘aura’ from the very beginning of her commercial career in Japan.

During the entire 1970s, Hepburn starred in only two feature films—Robin and Marian (1976) and Bloodline (1979). After that, she appeared in one documentary-style film, They All Laughed (1981), and in a made-for-television movie Love Among Thieves (1987), a sequel to her famous 1966 film How to Steal a Million. None of these later films are as memorable as the ones she starred in the 1950s and 60s. Hepburn’s last movie was the not-so-well-known film Always (1989), directed by Steven Spielberg in 1989, at which time her current fans under thirty today would have been less than 15 years old. The contemporary Hepburn fans have seen her far more often on Japanese television commercials, billboards and magazine covers than in Hollywood films. Thus, it can be argued that the Audrey Hepburn in the Japanese marketplace is more of a transformed television idol than a Hollywood film star.

Ten years after her 1971 commercial, the then 52-year-old Hepburn appeared in another commercial for Ginza Liza—a trendy fashion boutique during the heyday of the Bubble period. Josei Jishin, a magazine with a readership predominantly in their mid-20s and over, reported: ‘Hardly looking 52, she

Figure 12: Suntory Whisky with Yoyoma
exhales an elegant mood, and shows off eight costumes’ (Josei Jishin 1982). In 1987, she appeared in a commercial for House Foods Co. This was probably the end of Hepburn’s appearances in Japanese commercials by her own (living) consent. However, her death in 1993 in no sense brought an end to her career as an advertising star in Japan—in fact it continued, with her popularity going through spurts of revival throughout the years that followed.

In 1994, hardly a year after her death, Audrey Hepburn was reincarnated, younger and more active in the Japanese marketplace. Her image was used in commercials targeted at young females, such as the one for VO5 hair care products. The pragmatic decision to recycle her from old Hollywood films and wake her from the dead was a result of market research. According to a survey conducted by WOWOW (a subscription-based satellite TV station), her popularity did not even fade, much less disappear, after she died. She continues to rank first as ‘the most remembered actress’ and her most famous screen appearance—Roman Holiday, as the most memorable by far.

Based on these survey results, it is not difficult to see why advertising agencies would decide to (re)use, and reconstruct her as their eternal heroine.

The periods of revival of Hepburn in the media are sometimes called mini-booms ‘chotto shita boom’. These mini-booms have inspired magazines such as Anan, Non.no, More, Crea, Josei jishin, Shitikan Josei, Josei Seven—all geared toward female readers. Even men’s magazines like Playboy Weekly ran articles on her. To supplement men’s comparatively limited knowledge of Hepburn, the Japanese version of Playboy even published a manual on ‘basic knowledge for Hepburn Mourning’. If a manual was not enough, people could take a guided tour to Europe and the US for a living experience of mourning a dead idol.

Hepburn’s commercial value in Japan seemed to increase once her physical existence vanished. An entire industry arose after her death. Magazines have published innumerable articles on her life, commentaries on her films, analyses of her lifestyle, manuals on how to mourn her, and many more on how to be her. In women’s weekly magazines, one can regularly find manuals and analysis on how to dress, make up, and have hairdos to look like her. There have even been detailed A-Zs of almost every aspect of her life, including such items as ‘Diet’, ‘Flower’, ‘Hotel life’, ‘Intelligence’, even ‘Neurosis(shinkeishitsu)’. The entry under ‘J’ was, of course, ‘Japan’, said to be ‘a country which Audrey favoured, where the film Roman Holiday was especially successful, and where Audrey Hepburn also starred in a television commercial for a Japanese fashion maker’.

Apart from the demand for knowledge about her, and the knowledge needed to be like her, the knowledge industry (predominantly the English language teaching industry) also recognised the commercial value of Hepburn’s image. Berlitz, one of the longest running English schools in Japan, employed one of her most famous screen appearances in the media sometimes called mini-booms ‘chotto shita boom’. These mini-booms have inspired magazines such as Anan, Non.no, More, Crea, Josei jishin, Shitikan Josei, Josei Seven—all geared toward female readers. Even men’s magazines like Playboy Weekly ran articles on her. To supplement men’s comparatively limited knowledge of Hepburn, the Japanese version of Playboy even published a manual on ‘basic knowledge for Hepburn Mourning’. If a manual was not enough, people could take a guided tour to Europe and the US for a living experience of mourning a dead idol.

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Hepburn’s commercial value in Japan seemed to increase once her physical existence vanished. An entire industry arose after her death. Magazines have published innumerable articles on her life, commentaries on her films, analyses of her lifestyle, manuals on how to mourn her, and many more on how to be her. In women’s weekly magazines, one can regularly find manuals and analysis on how to dress, make up, and have hairdos to look like her. There have even been detailed A-Zs of almost every aspect of her life, including such items as ‘Diet’, ‘Flower’, ‘Hotel life’, ‘Intelligence’, even ‘Neurosis(shinkeishitsu)’. The entry under ‘J’ was, of course, ‘Japan’, said to be ‘a country which Audrey favoured, where the film Roman Holiday was especially successful, and where Audrey Hepburn also starred in a television commercial for a Japanese fashion maker’.

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winning film *Roman Holiday*. The commercial was an industry first, not only because it used very complex computer graphics, but also because it was the first commercial to re-employ a digitised ‘Hepburn’, to re-enact a scene from an old film for the purpose of selling a product. The commercial was again not made in Japan, nor in the surroundings of European high cultures, but was composed and fabricated in Australia by a CG company called Ambience from Sydney’s North Shore (Kirin Co. 2001). Hepburn did not attain another Oscar for her performance in the tea commercial, but the implication of her virtualised appearance in the consumption of media content is perhaps even more significant.

Kirin Beverages clearly has recognised the potential market value of the digital version of Audrey Hepburn, and has since then made more advertisements using her image for this particular tea. In 2000, with another scene cut from *Roman Holiday*, and the same technique and apparatus, Kirin made another TV commercial (Kirin Co. 2001-b). The success was highly visible, especially in Tokyo’s fashionable city centres, such as Ginza, Harajuku and Shibuya. At the end of each year Tokyo is imbued with a ‘Christmas atmosphere’ that has no relation to Christ or the Virgin Mary, but everything to do with the latest fashion trends and romance. At the end of 2000, on the exterior surface of the entire Tōkyū department store building/Shibuya JR (Japan Rail) station, hung a massive billboard poster showing Hepburn drinking the canned tea — Gogo no kōcha.

**Figure 13: Berlitz’s Audrey**

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Having gone through various transformations, Shibuya’s status as a fashion centre continues today. The fashion lingo ‘Shibuya Kei’ describes the young people who principally shop, play and wander in Shibuya. In the early 1990s this area was dominated by ‘Ga-rii’ culture. Written in katakana, Ga-rii is a ‘loan word’ from the English ‘girly’ or ‘girlie’. For the most part, it just meant ‘feminine’, or onna no ko rashii. For the Girly girls, in addition to the usual kawaii or cuteness, and purity (junsui), it was also important at same time to be stylish, fashionable, and to look intelligent (Chiseiteki). The young women of the late 1980s and 90s consumed not only big European brand-names, but also more knowledge. As a marketing strategy, department stores such as Seibu offered a variety of courses to inculcate in young women knowledge of western habits and customs, and opened in-house art museums to attract the increasingly cultured consumers. Although ‘Shibuya-Kei’ has now
morphed into new styles and trends, Girly culture was its main component in early 1990s. For some, Girly fashion would be typically ‘postmodern’—it mixed and borrowed heavily from fashions of the 1950s and 60s. Amongst the phenomena of Girly culture there was a zealous consumption of the so-called Hepburn styles. An example of this was the band named Pizzicato Five which only went out of fashion in early 2001. The Pizzicatos were a group of ardent impersonators of Hepburn, and just like Girly fashion, their style of music was a collage of rearranged nostalgia. One of their songs was even entitled ‘Audrey Hepburn Complex’. Girly girls liked both the Pizzicatos and Hepburn, for they complemented each other, helping to turn each other into something conservatively contemporary; more than just a style dug out of their mothers’ old closet.

Thus this ‘overwhelming boom’ in the revival of Audrey Hepburn is not just because of the continuing nation-wide female admiration for her image. It is also closely linked to the revival of nostalgic fashions around the early 1990s. Moreover, this more current generation of Japanese consumers of the ‘Hepburn styles’ is also influenced by their own mothers and women of earlier generations. This ‘nostalgia’ is not merely for the exotic, but rather for a version already domesticated by the previous generation. Thanks to the marketers, the later construction of Hepburn’s image is now linked to locally manufactured styles, and products. Therefore Hepburn, with her perceived exotics from either her European background or her Hollywood film career, is not really the motif of the contemporary Hepburn style. Rather, her reappearance and reconstructed image signifies, in Jameson’s words, ‘nostalgia for the present’, used as a sales pitch for ‘now-ness’. In other words, the Japanese Hepburn has been localised and detached a couple of generations away from the Hollywood one. Today’s Hepburn in Japan is a contemporary construction of a Japanese image of her, in the same way that ‘armchair nostalgia’ is produced for advertising targeted at young people. (See Figure 13: Asahi’s remake of a soft drink from early Showa (1926–1989).)

THE QUESTION OF COMPATIBILITY

In many women’s magazines Hepburn has been repeatedly enshrined as yōsei or ‘fairy’, implying the perpetuation of her popularity and reverence for her beauty. In one of the very first Japanese articles about her, published in April 1954 by All Yomimono, Hepburn was already idolised as a fairy. Her film Roman Holiday was an unexpected hit for the Hibiya Movie Theatre, where the film was released and where it had a five-week long run. What followed was a nation-wide trend to imitate Hepburn’s fashion from Roman Holiday, including her hairstyle, her clothes, and even the kind of bicycle she rode. A couple of months later, a contemporary popular culture critic, Hanamori Yasuharu, wrote an article criticising the trend of imitating Hepburn, and gave detailed analysis of why it was impossible for Japanese women to achieve Hepburn’s style by imitation. The article, entitled ‘Dissecting Hepburn’, gave both cultural and anatomic analysis of what Hanamori saw as a fatal marriage of style and substance—how slacks (the ones Hepburn wore in Roman Holiday) do not suit Japanese women whose physiques would make the outfit ‘unbalanced’, and how tatami rooms
would kill the ‘Hepburn beauty’. Hanamori asked readers to imagine sitting Hepburn in a Japanese room where, the cultural critic concluded, the ‘Hepburn beauty will just die!’

It seems that Hanamori’s early criticism missed the point of the ‘postmodern’ phenomenon half a century later. Developments over the following decades prove that neither cultural nor anatomic differences would prevent Hepburn from becoming part of the Japanese female psyche, and those ‘imbalanced’ slacks and tatami rooms fit both the Japanese girls and their Hepburn imaginations just fine. In fact, the popular cultures developed in the half a century that followed *Roman Holiday*, indicate that Japanese women have acquired a taste for things with European flavours. The ‘Hepburn-style’ has evolved into something that suits the local women. Hepburn, after all, is a ‘fairy’, who proved capable of metamorphosing according to the aura around her. For the image of her in Japan, perpetuation is an essentiality, history is irrelevant, and locale a matter of indifference.

THE TRUE REBIRTH OF AUDREY HEPBURN (IN A CANNED TEA)

In 2001 Kirin made yet another commercial featuring Hepburn, this time in colour. Further, Hepburn had a co-star, an actress of hybrid descent (Japanese and American, or *nichibeha-fu*) Takahashi Mariko, an archetypal model of Ga-ri fashion. (See Figure 15: Takahashi Mariko.) The commercial claims to be ‘an encouragement for hardworking women’, and is another acrobatic compu-
ter-generated collage. It cut and pasted another scene from *Roman Holiday*, this time combined with real time shooting and living people. Audrey Hepburn’s alter ego this time is not just the Hepburn from the archives. It is combined with a look-alike (Kirin Co. 2001-b). To make it, the scene was first shot with the look-alike and then, with the help of digital technology Audrey Hepburn’s face was inserted in place of that of her double. The commercial was shot in Japan but with European-esque surroundings. The filming site was Oka kōen in Yokohama, a park opened in 1962 on the ruins of an old English military post. The flower shop in the commercial is a working florist. The first shot in the commercial, showing ‘Hepburn’ racing down the hill, was filmed in the vicinity of an old cemetery for past expatriates, which all fit terribly well, without irony, with the theme of Hepburn as ‘the fairy watching over’ a hardworking girl — that is her fan, Takahashi Mariko. It is hard to pick out which part of this commercial is fiction and which is ‘real’.

This commercial has a number of significant implications. It is the first ‘Audrey Hepburn’ commercial set in Japan, finally putting her in the Japanese milieu, giving a newly acquired pedigree of local-ness to Hepburn’s image. Second, it is shot in colour, in a current and known location. This replaces the previous visual rhetoric of nostalgia, signifying a departure from the historical and the European/American background, while giving it contemporary Japanese-ness. Thirdly, not only did she become a contemporary in this television commercial, but she also acquired a Japanese co-star, thus putting Hepburn on a par with a Japanese idol. Fourthly, her reputation as a ‘fairy’ is finally materialised and commodified, signifying a departure from her old black and white, nostalgic archival identity. It marks a point in time where history becomes irrelevant. ‘Hepburn’ and imaginations based on her from this point on becomes accessible and modifiable. ‘Audrey Hepburn’ can now be entirely locally produced according to market requirements at the time, locally presented and selling a local commodity. The image of Audrey Hepburn will continue to be interwoven into the local cultural tapestry and contribute commercial value to the local economy by being the fairy of female aspiration, representing beauty, talent and the forever intriguing combination of nostalgia and now-ness. (See Figure 16: Sharan and Pasona advertisements, 2003.)

Regarding the visual presentation of pseudo patina in mass merchandising, Appadurai describes how the idea of ‘nostalgia for the present’ is being used as a technique in advertisements
targeted at young consumers. It is used as a ‘stylised presentation of the present as if it has already slipped away’, which underlines ‘the inherent ephemerality of the present’. This technique is taken one step further in the Afternoon Tea commercials, which repeatedly re-employed Hepburn’s images, and effectively created separate narratives for her. Not only are these commercials representations of ‘nostalgia for the present’ that ‘underlines’ the ephemerality, but they undermine the idea of time altogether. The reconstructed narratives give the current trend for ‘present nostalgia’ instant patinas and at the same time make (re)rendition of history immediately applicable to any given era and locale. This not only signifies that culture is indeed an object which can be constructed, exchanged, and then bought and sold, but also that identities can be effectively digitised. The consequence is that it makes redundant any idea of a hierarchical realness, not only in terms of original/copy but also in terms of history and now. It repudiates the traditional inaccessibility of a historical idol and essentially updates and democratises it, by making the reconstructed image impervious to the idea of authenticity, to historical narrative, and topographical settings.

Audrey Hepburn and the images of her are now subject to future modifications at the will of the marketplace. Since the first Kirin commercial using a digitalised Hepburn, it has acquired new narratives. History, or in Hepburn’s case, *Roman Holiday* and *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*—already novelties themselves, became part of the mediated aura, reusable for new narratives constructed to lend sense of drama to the purchase of everyday consumer goods.

HEPBURN NATIONALISED

Just to make history and topography more irrelevant to the idea of Audrey Hepburn than they already are, NHK, the government-founded conservative television network, produced a serialised TV drama called ‘Audrey’ or ‘Ōdorii’ in Japanese. Aired between October 2000 and March 2001, it achieved a rating of 20.5% in the Kantō area (East Japan). The scheduling clearly indicates that the drama was targeting mostly housewives. It was shown first for 15 minutes in the morning from 8:15 to 8:30 each day of the week from Monday to Saturday. Then the entire week’s drama would be compiled and re-shown on Saturday mornings.
from 9:30 to 11:00 am on NHK’s Satellite 2. (See Figure 18: NHK’s Ōdorii.)

The story of this Audrey started in 1953, the year Audrey Hepburn starred in Roman Holiday. A translator named Haruo lived in Kyoto, which used to be called the Japanese Hollywood. His wife Aiko gave birth to a baby girl, later named ‘Audrey’, or in Japanese Ōdorii. Little Ōdorii was being brought up speaking English with Haruo in Kyoto. Two years later in 1955 Audrey Hepburn’s Roman Holiday won critical acclaim in Japan.73

The TV drama was a typical jidaikei (costume drama), a genre consisting mostly of history soaps. These costume dramas often narrate history in more ways than textbooks can perfect and reach wider audiences through television. The show Ōdorii is not about Audrey Hepburn, but about the dramas of Haruo’s family in Kyoto. The setting is quintessentially or perhaps ‘exotically Japanese’74 with most of its costume being the traditional kimono. The show tells the story of post-war Japan and the growing up of the Ōdorii generation. Here, Audrey Hepburn’s name is treated as a symbol, localised with a Japanese historical background, then inserted with a Japanese face, not so different to what Kirin has done in their commercials. Ōdorii would have grown up and by the time the show went off air in 2001, she would have been 48 years old. If she married around 25 and gave birth in the following couple of years, her daughter would have been one of the Girly girls and a Hepburn fan. The Ōdorii show tells a post war history in a most iconic Japanese Kyoto, with three generations of devotion to a Hollywood fairy. It might not be the most entertaining, but it gives a pseudo-historical background to what is in vogue. Importantly it makes Audrey nostalgically Japanese, in an environment ‘exotically’ Japanese, renewing a reconstructed ‘experience’ for the current Audrey fan – an ‘experience’ not only they did not have, but an experience itself that never existed. If Kirin’s new commercial signifies a materialisation of Audrey Hepburn’s virtuality (and her ‘fairy’ status), then Ōdorii provides the instant patina for this virtuality.

CONCLUSION

More than a decade after her death, the idolisation of Hepburn is well and alive in 2004. The sold-out exhibition aptly titled ‘Timeless Audrey’75 in Tokyo, which is
now touring the nation until 2005, seems to signifying further the irrelevance of time to the ‘fairy’, and confuses further the order of history. It is no longer meaningful to argue for a ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ Audrey Hepburn. The best we now see is the ‘real’ Hepburn in an exhibition about the ‘timelessness’ of her idolisation reflected in the various visual representations of a beautiful fairy in different roles.

In a fascinating essay written on Postmodernity and Tokyo Disneyland, Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro argues:

Disneyland cannot be parodied because as it is a simulated fatal space, it is also already a parody of what it simulates … Consequently the Tokyo Disneyland cannot be either an imitation or a reproduction of Disneyland in Los Angeles: it is a ‘real’—that is, simulated Disneyland.\(^{76}\)

And:

… Tokyo Disneyland epitomizes the cultural logic of postmodern Japan which has nothing to do with the logic of Americanization. On the contrary, the Tokyo Disneyland, superficially the epitome of Americanization, completely repudiates the notion of Americanization as the dead remnant of modernization theory.\(^{77}\)

Nor is the Japanese Audrey a ‘Hollywood-isation’—both Disney and the current reconstruction of Hepburn—they are mediated imaginations and commercialisation of cultural icons. As I have shown above, the Japanese marketplace has reconditioned the Hollywood Hepburn into one that has most effective commercial value and has given her image an appeal that fits the local and current Japanese female consumers. It is not as simple as another example of Americanisation and/or westernisation of Japanese culture. Hepburn’s initial popularity in Japan may be because of a certain amount of admiration for western consumer cultures in the early days of the 1950s when her films started to win popularity worldwide. But her more recent iconic status in Japan is very much a local commercial and cultural product. Scholars such as Brannen,\(^{78}\) Yoshimi\(^{79}\) and Yoshimoto\(^{80}\) argue that Tokyo Disneyland is a Japanese Disneyland, which makes Mickey Mouse in Japan a Japanese Mickey Mouse, both culturally and economically.\(^{81}\) By the same token Ōdorii, indeed can only be a Japanese Audrey.

The Japanese Audrey presents us with an interesting case of cultural reproduction in a seemingly incompatible and improbable cultural environment. It is a successful example of how, with the collaboration of willing consumers, marketers are able to regenerate interest in old narratives, and reproduce these with contemporary relevance. In the case of Audrey Hepburn, Japanese marketers have localised or ‘domesticated’ what might have been a foreign cultural product into something intrinsically local. They have given it a new lease of life, in a new era, in a new environment. Thus the ‘Hepburn of the day’ acquires renewed commercial value and continues to inspire consumers.

Moreover, the marketplace has effectively made it possible for identities to be part of cultural production, virtual or otherwise. The Japanese Hepburn means that an identity, body and soul, can be digitised and modified without losing ‘integrity’, by nature of the progression of digital media. In fact, as I have demonstrated here, the traditional concepts of cultural integrity and authenticity are deemed to be irrelevant in the case
of digital reproduction. The postmodern ideas of simulation, of simulacra, and of the hyper-real, problematise recent social and cultural phenomena such as the reproduction and localisation of Audrey Hepburn. However, these different versions of ‘Audrey’ (in different commercials and in different dramatic uses) are incomparable. From the point where her image is digitised, the concept of hierarchical realness effectively becomes redundant. For in digital media, no one copy can be more real than any other.

Thus ‘Audrey Hepburn’, by definition, is ‘virtual’, in more ways than one — she existed mostly in the media when she was alive; and was further mediated to the point of reconstruction when she was dead. ‘Audrey Hepburn’ is from the first a name created for the media. Her ‘real’ name Edda van Heemstra Hepburn-Ruston is virtually unknown.

Virtual identities are possible not only as aliases. At the cultural level and in terms of consumption, they help the market and the consumer to adjust to current trends. The possibilities of reproducing identities not only give marketers the ability to constantly reposition their products, but also enable the consumers to switch at appropriate life stages between products and brands, and hence identities.

In an era in which consumer products have come to resemble each other in functionality, in quality and even in appearance, the only thing setting them apart is ‘branding’, a process which arguably started with advertising of various kinds. With poignant examples, Twitchell demonstrates that the only thing advertising sets out to do (and is doing well) is creating ‘stories’ and ‘meaning’ for the products it tries to sell.\(^82\) That is why an Audrey Hepburn from the 1950s is being used for commercials to sell a tea she did not know existed. Kirin Beverages Co. has successfully borrowed, and in the process re-authored Hepburn’s aura, the associations she has with European good taste, romance in old films and her perpetual youth.

As the protagonists of styles and role models of consumption, media stars sit comfortably with advertising at the tip of the ‘story’ and ‘meaning’ creation. Klapp recognised during 1960s that styles ‘are a set of props for casting oneself in a character, rather than a means of expressing one’s true self’, while ‘idols provide a shared temporal journey of identity-seeking for the fans’.\(^83\) Hepburn is a good example of this process. The Japanese adaptation and resuscitation of her screen life is a pivotal story of everyday consumption. Amongst vast varieties of goods, only brand association or the stories and meaning created by media can tell the tale of difference – not in what they do (their function) but in what they imply; in the consumer’s taste and their everyday ‘dramas’ of consumption in such things as drinking a canned tea.

Japan’s Audrey Hepburn is just another example of how mass aspiration either generated or induced by popular media is closely linked to consumption. In the same way, the royal wedding in April 1959 between crown prince Akihito and his commoner princess Shōda Michiko was accompanied by a media event which in many ways induced, and indicated the beginning of a taishū ten-nosei, or ‘Mass Emperor System’, giving the audience the chance to imagine being ‘in her white satin shoes’ themselves.\(^84\) This story of aspiration will continue to be created by public demand in a broad spectrum of media, with or without the idols to star in them. In fact the trends in media long ago suggested that one day the audience would not only want to be
in the shoes of their idols; their aspiration would eventually take them to the stage (and screen) masquerading as stars. As Featherstone puts it, the ‘new petit bourgeois is a pretender’, one whose ‘search for expression and self expression, the fascination with identity and appearance, makes … a natural consumer’.85

The image of idols will eventually be democratised to the point that they become one of their own fans, and the fans will be elevated to the positions previously only occupied by stars. ‘Audrey Hepburn’, is thus merely an ‘alias’ in the rapidly virtualising media and physical landscape. ‘The face of Audrey Hepburn’ therefore inevitably will have many versions of embodiment. (See Figure 19: the face of Ōdorii.) Today, the stories in the media are designed for nothing but their own consumption—where the protagonists and the audience have become the same people. This, we call ‘Reality Television’.

**ENDNOTES**


6 W. Benjamin, 221.

7 W. Benjamin, 1973, 221.

8 W. Benjamin, 1973, 221.

9 Urry, 1990, 85.


11 Baudrillard, 66.


15. Stacey, 133–141.


27. See Gaines 1991.


In fact Hollywood has recently explored the impossible death of a popular virtual idol in a film titled S1MøNE (read ‘Simone’; Dir. Andrew Niccol, 2002). The film has concluded that it is not easy to kill a computer image by simple erasure of data. The tired creator of Simone, played by Al Pacino, decides to ‘kill’ the virtual idol by a computer virus and dumping all ‘her’ computer data in the sea, only to face massive protests by her fans after announcing her death. In the end, not untypical of a Hollywood film, the data is saved by the creator’s daughter, the virtual idol revives and this time lives happily ever after. Hollywood, of course, is not the inventor of this idea of the virtual idol. William Gibson has, in his novel Idoru (1996), written a technological prophecy-like story, describing the realness of a virtual idol with both entertaining novelty and profound understanding of the ‘soul’ in the digital form.

Of course the idol used for Kirin’s Afternoon Tea changes according the most current trend. A couple of idols have been on the Afternoon Tea commercials since they discontinued the Audrey Hepburn series.

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The use of the word ‘talent’ (tarento) in Japanese has little in common with the English term – it refers to entertainers (of no particular specialisation) in showbiz. The term is all-inclusive – a sportsman-turned-variety show guest is a ‘talent’; a model-turned-drama actress occasionally giving opinions on a cooking show is also a ‘talent’.

See his homepage: http://www.wdirewolff.com/jkyoko.htm

As a market phenomenon, Date Kyoko faded quickly after her 1996 debut, but seven years later in 2004, she continues to live in websites recounting her story in considerable detail. See for example: http://members.tripod.com/~chinyankeat/dk96.htm


For detail of Fei Fei and e-frontier’s other ‘digital beauties’ see their homepage: http://www.e-frontier.co.jp/digitalbeauty/feifei/index.html


Directed by Hironobu Sakaguchi and Moto Sakakibara.


Iida 2000, 428.

Iida 2000, 429.

Difficult, but not impossible – there are many computer games starring the digital version of their analogue counterparts in the physical world. The Taiwanese Japanese actor Kaneshiro Takeshi 金城武, for example, has an alias starring in the computer game called Oni musha 鬼武者. Today, the practice of making computer games paralleling blockbuster movies is common; the 007 computer game and more recently the game released with the Matrix are examples. The reverse can also be true – Final Fantasy, the
movie, was based on the long running computer game of the same title.

48 Shūkan Heibon 週刊平凡, Hepburn ga Nihon no CM nanto, hitokoe dake de ¥50,000,000 ヘッパーン が日本のCMなんと、ひと声だけで 5000万円, 22 April, 1971, 160.

49 The 1971 May conversion rate from Yen into US$ was 357.41 (Exchange Rate Service, Sauder School of Business, University of British Columbia).


53 Hayamizu Yukiko 早見優子, 1994, Jojū no keizai kōka: business no sekai de mo Hepburn ninki 女優の経済効果：ビジネスの世界でもヘッパーン人気, Aera, 7 November, 38.


59 Non.No, Audrey Hepburn ima nai "aisareru riıyū" オーデリー・ヘッパーン 今なお「愛される理由」, 5 December, 1990, 111, 117.

60 Roman Holiday had some 10 Oscar nominations. Audrey Hepburn won Best Actress for her performance in the film. www.oscar.org/events/roman_holiday/index.html


62 The consumption of European brand-name shoes, for example, is nothing short of extraordinary. According to a detailed survey done on consumption of brand-name shoes by Ide Yukie (1998), on average, working women in their
20s, have about 6 brand-name shoes, buy about 2 pairs a year, and more than 40% of those surveyed spent between ¥40,000 – 70,000 (US$1 = ¥110 roughly) on each pair. This means that on average each Japanese working woman in their 20s would own between ¥120,000 and ¥210,000 worth of shoes at any one time, and spend around ¥80,000 to ¥140,000 a year on shoes. The most sought-after brands are respectively Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Prada, Ferragamo, and Fendi. All of them are European.


64 The song is a confession by a woman who falls in love with a man just a day before getting married to another. She felt the ‘Audrey Hepburn Complex’, apparently describing a sentiment or/and paranoia of being watched, and felt ‘head aches and dizziness, etc.’ rain.org (2001). http://www.rain.org/~mills/pizzlyrics/pizzicatomania.html


66 Appadurai 1996


69 Hanamori 1954.

70 The original text was: といっても、オードリーを日本の部屋にきちんと座らせたら、あの美しさは死んでしょう, 69.


72 Kirin is not the first to play with the idea of history; nor is Hepburn the first ghost to come alive. Films such as Blade Runner, and the anime Ghost in the Shell, and more recently the film Matrix all used nostalgic and exotic visual presentations to render the future. The contemporary use of the ‘past’ to express the idea of the ‘future’ deserves a thorough analysis in terms of the meaning of history in the digital era on a different occasion.


74 M. Ivy, 1995.

75 The exhibition started in Tokyo’s fashion centre Shibuya (22 May – 4 July 2004) causing long queues of her fans waiting outside ‘The Museum’ in Bunkamura. ‘Timeless Audrey’ tours the nation until 11 February 2005 and ends in Takashimaya department store in Namba, Osaka.


77 Yoshimoto 1989, 13.


80 1989.

81 In the case of Mickey Mouse, it is a matter of its licensing agreement that came with Tokyo Disneyland (TDL). Financially Mickey Mouse is no more ‘American’ than TDL itself and no less Japanese than the approximately 90 percent of all its sales and profits owned by the Japanese Oriental Land Ltd. See J. Findlay, Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940 (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1992, and J. Wasko, Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy (Cambridge: Polity Press), 2001.


84 S. Partner, Assembled in Japan: Electrical Goods and the Making of the Japanese Consumer (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1999, 173–75. According to Partner, the extensive media coverage on the commoner princess, Michiko (as she is familiarly known by the Japanese) also included detailed description of the so called Michi-style fashion: clothing sported by Shōda Michiko, with instructions on where to buy them, and how much they cost.

T he term ‘icon’ implies an image captured, a static visual reference, a material artifact whose surface represents or symbolizes a fluid depth of social relationships, ideas (eidos), and ways of being-in-the-world. As a cultural text, the icon implicitly relies on a dialogic relationship between the visual and the social, where objects are endowed with significance, brought to life, through practices of exchange and circulation in shared environments of meaning. Largely inspired by the Foucauldian knowledge/gaze dialectics, recent studies of gendered, ethnic and sexualized iconographies in the EuroWest have focused on the way in which acts of looking are informed by discursive fields which both constitute and express the power relations inherent within social process. This position has stemmed from and contributed to a core concern over practices of visualism in EuroWestern theory, a ‘scopic regime’ which separates the spectator from the object of the gaze, and where ‘other’ objects, peoples and places are bestowed meaning from the privileged position of the authoritative observer.

This paper will focus on how the ‘animal’ icon has been constituted in this nexus of power/knowledge in the West, focusing in particular on how the non-human primate has been discursively constructed as both origin and antithesis of a broad category ‘humanness’. Yet the aim of this paper is to suggest that while practices of visualism underscore complex politics of identity construction in the West, vision itself is never static, and that the meaning of the animal object is multi-layered, ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. Further, I argue that practices of looking exist in tandem with an embodied apprehension of objects being-seen; through examining audience responses to the spectacle of gorillas in cages in a city zoo. I suggest that while animal bodies are inscribed by a politics of vision, the apprehension of animals and animality is sensory as well as visually symbolic, affective as well as an effect of discursive fields, and that iconographies may be intercorporeal as well as indexical.

GOOD TO THINK WITH: THE ANIMAL AS REPRESENTATION

The ‘animal’ has recently become the subject of an interdisciplinary investigation which has examined the way in which animal bodies have served as key sites in processes of human self-definition. Key works by historians such as Thomas, Midgley, Willis, and Ritvo, have drawn attention to the way in which representations of animals have shifted according to changing social, moral and political landscapes. Haraway’s important work
on the scientific stories that endow the nonhuman primate body with meaning has drawn critical attention to the complex material-discursive practices that surround the nonhuman entity. Studies of popular and political representations of animals have focused on the way in which animals have served as icons of otherness; Elder, Wolch and Emel for example, have explored the way in which ‘animals and their bodies appear to be one site of struggle over the protection of national identity and the production of cultural difference’. Through examining the use of animal images in political propaganda and mass media Baker has suggested that ‘our visually oriented culture objectifies the animal and keeps the animal at a distance’; Ham and Senior have discussed representations of ‘animal acts’ in circuses and zoos and how these sites ‘provided spaces in the city where…continuities between man and animal could be dramatized’ and a recent collection by Rothfels has explored a broad field of human/animal relationships, from fox hunting to animal cloning.

Some scholars have explored the way in which the nature/culture divide that has underscored the human/animal split is not universal, but a product of situated Western epistemology. In a cognate field of research, scholars have explored the postcolonial dynamics inherent in the capture and display of animal bodies in the zoological garden. In his study of Western literatures that have focused on the theme of the zoo, Malamud for example, has argued that practices of animal containment ‘convince people that we are the imperial species—that we are entitled to trap animals, remove them from their worlds and imprison them within ours’. In her compelling history of Victorian relationships with animals, Ritvo suggests that ‘what zoogoers see in cages actually represent a kind of human contrivance immeasurably distant from the real animal life…[a] ‘colonialist text’.

In a similar vein, Mullin and Marvin assert that ‘the zoo constitutes a gallery of images constructed by man. The fact that he is able to arrange around him living creatures from all parts of the world, to make decisions with regard to the quality and condition of their lives…is, in the end, an expression of power’. French historians Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier agree:

Every aspect of humanity’s relationship with nature can be perceived through the bars of the zoological garden: repulsion and fascination; the impulse to appropriate, master and understand…linked to vast parallel histories of colonization, ethnocentrism and the discovery of the Other…To tour the cages of the zoo is to understand the society that erected them.

In Australia, Anderson has examined how practices of animal containment and display at the Adelaide Zoo reflect broader global shifts in patterns of imperial appropriation and animal husbandry, arguing that ‘the public has been initiated into a way of seeing that—in manifestly variable ways over time—parades humans’ capacity for order and command’.

The caged animal might indeed be seen as representative of a broader postcolonial politics of appropriation and domination, yet this interpretation of the contemporary zoo belies the multi-layered meanings that surround the non-human body. While this paper will build upon previous studies of zoos as sites for the imperial containment and exhibition of exotica, and animal bodies
as ‘mirrors’ upon which cultural values are inscribed, my aim here is to introduce the ways in which animal bodies are actively apprehended not simply through visual ‘readings’ of the animal as an representative object, but through a blending of sensory and bodily as well as visual modalities. ‘Semiosis is politics by other means’ as Haraway has suggested, yet the meaning ascribed to animals in the modern West is multi-layered, ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. On one hand, the animal body has historically been used as object/signifier in a multitude of discourses which examine and negotiate the moral parameters of being-human, from the ancient fables of Aesop to contemporary morality tales in Disney films such as Bambi and The Lion King. On the other hand, animal-ity has been historically constructed as a condition of being, as a subaltern quality, as a corporeal manifestation, as an essence of deviance and pathology. As Tapper writes ‘certain animals are idealized and used as models of order and morality’ while animals may also ‘sometimes be represented as the Other, the Beast, the Brute, the model of disorder’. Throughout the history of Western knowledge practices and in contemporary relations between humans and non-humans, these two interweaving poles form the grounds of and give meaning to the modern spectacle of the animal body. Yet, as I argue below, while the animal may serve as an iconic re-presentation of broader practices of power and identity formation, spectatorship itself is not a process of monolithic vision, where meaning is homogenous and singularly bestowed. Spectatorship is filled with multiple frames of reference, multiple means of making sense of the object on display; it produces multi-layered interpretations which continuously unfold.

Figure 1: Taronga Zoo Enclosure
This investigation is based on six months fieldwork at Taronga Zoo in Sydney, Australia. To make sense of humans making sense of gorillas in cages, I will outline a history of zoo practices and explore how historical constructions of the animal icon infiltrate the simulation and replication of ‘nature’ in the zoo. Secondly, I pay attention to the minute codings, gestures, comments and bodily choreographies that occur among audiences at the gorilla enclosure, heed- ing Devereaux’s claim that these everyday aspects of human experience can be understood as symbolically rich indicators of meaning. She writes that:

All that is encoded in public spectacle, and much more, is already inscribed in the actions and interactions of everyday life. Public spectacle may reinforce the hierarchies of value by expressing the relations of hegemony and by coding them as desirable and natural in the language of dominant discourse, but it never creates them. This creativity lies in the ten thousand interactions and significations of daily living, through which people witness, experience, discover and express their existences, in this particular place, this language, this group.

It is in the ten thousand interactions and significations that take place among audiences at the zoological garden, the smell, the sound and the vision of caged animal bodies, the movement of bodies through space, as well as through the discursive constructions of ‘animal’ and ‘animality’ that infiltrate these experien- tial modes, that practices of looking at animals, and animal alterity itself, can be apprehended. How does the historical dialectic of animal as object and animal-ity as a state of being infiltrate and impact upon the contemporary experience of viewing animals in zoos? How are these experiences of looking informed by complex discursive histories? And, perhaps a question that has been markedly absent from studies of animal representations and captivity – how might we frame and describe the lived, sensory experience of looking at, being near, and wandering through, the zoo of animal iconogra-phies?

THE ARTIFICIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ANIMAL SPACE

Exotic animals have been kept in captivity throughout Western history and the caging and display of animals has consistently been linked with practices of sociopolitical power and status. Ancient Romans used wild cats and elephants in displays of military might, where, often after being paraded, the animals were subject to bloody massacre in public arenas. The early Middle Ages saw a notable decline in the practice of keep- ing and parading wild animals, and a revival of exotic animal containment occurred during the Renaissance, when wild and ferocious animals were held in the menageries of royalty and aristocracy and large animals such as elephants and lions were often paraded or pitted against domestic animals in combat. These ani- mals often served as ‘living trophies’ of political power, used as diplomatic gifts between sovereigns, and as symb-ols of the imperial conquest of foreign lands, souvenirs of colonial adventures in the wilderness. Traveling showmen paraded wild animals to a paying public throughout this period, often displayed alongside human ‘freaks’ and ‘savages’.

Reforms in practices of public edu- cation and an increasing opposition to elitist princely menageries under the French Revolution led to the creation of
Europe’s first modern zoological garden, the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris in 1794. The garden established a system of structured exhibition space which would be implemented in zoos throughout Europe, with monkey and bird houses, a bear pit, and a building for ferocious animals, surrounded by green foliage and lawns and winding pathways. In London, animals held at the Tower of London menagerie were gifted to the newly established Zoological Society of London, and were the foundation for the establishment of the Regents Park Zoo, which opened in 1828.

While menagerie animals had been utilized in scientific research during the seventeenth century, the *Jardin des Plantes* and Regents Park Zoos signalled a new era of scientific involvement in the capture and collection of animal bodies. Throughout the early to mid-nineteenth century the *Jardin* served the dual purpose of entertaining the public and providing a site for the scientific observation and dissection of animals. The arrangement of the cages themselves reflected the empirical ethos of the developing sciences of zoology and anatomy, arranged in an orderly succession of cages which allowed optimum viewing space for observers, a ‘living display cabinet with a number of well laid-out and correctly classified species...allowing naturalists and artists to examine often immobile animals closely as if they were models’. At the Regents Park Zoo, the Zoological Society of London aimed to provide a similar venue for the advancement of zoological classification and description, as well as the domestication of new animals, and similarly placed its animals in ordered houses and cages. Rapid urbanization and an increase in leisure time from the 18th to 19th centuries led to an increasing public desire to be entertained by curious spectacles and, in the case of the zoo, to find ‘natural’ spaces where one could relax and be healed of the modern ills that industrial society bestowed on its working populations. As Rothfels suggests, the zoological garden was in turn linked to the ‘power and ambitions of the new bourgeois elite’, the possession of a zoological garden a key marker of status and municipal wealth in the nineteenth century urban landscape.

A key shift in practices of displaying animals at zoological gardens occurred in 1907, when renowned animal trader and collector Carl Hagenbeck established a ‘zoo without bars’. Partly in response to a growing public criticism over the caging of animals and partly as a result of needing a place to store his considerable stock of wild creatures, Hagenbeck decided to establish an ‘animal paradise’ in Stelligen, Germany, where animals were placed in enclosures which attempted to replicate indigenous habitats and were separated by natural landscape features rather than cages and rails. The zoo signalled a radical departure in animal display practices and implemented a critical new rhetoric of ‘freedom in captivity’.

In addition to the rapid spread of zoo-without-bars policies, the twentieth century saw key changes in moral discourses on the treatment and containment of animals, spurred on in part by shifts in media and scientific representations of animals. The development of Disney biotopes and nature films brought wild animals increasingly under the public gaze, field ethology presented the public with accounts of animals in their natural habitats while animal psychology and cognition studies provided accounts of the animal mind; further, the mid-twentieth-century saw the implementation of widespread animal protection laws. Each of these developments contributed to
and reflected a twentieth century public ethos increasingly uncomfortable with the spectacle of animals behind bars and to practices of what Rothfels has referred to as ‘managing eloquence’, 30 or creating an illusion of ‘freedom’ and naturalness in animal enclosures, where zoo audiences are made to ‘suspend disbelief long enough to accept what they saw before them’ was a natural setting. 31 Thus, in today’s zoos, one typically finds animals enclosed in ‘natural’ habitats featuring foliages, rocks, water features and landscape designs reminiscent of the animal’s indigenous settings, often separated by a moat or physical distance from the zoo audience; cages and bars are becoming inconspicuously present, hidden behind trees and landscape objects to produce a spectacle of naturalness.

And yet, as I discuss below, the spectacle of naturalness in the contemporary zoo remains a ‘compelling illusion’. 32 The imperial practices inherent in the foundation of early zoological gardens remain prevalent today, yet there have been several striking shifts in the practices and discourses that surround contemporary practices of animal containment. Colonial enterprises such as Hagenbeck’s have given way to transglobal networks of animal preservation conglomerates and corporate financing. The 18th–19th century focus on cataloguing and containing nonhuman bodies has been replaced by a project of replicating and simulating an ‘authentic’ natural world. This construction of ‘real’ copies of animal worlds is surrounded by a rhetoric of salvage and preservation of animal species, a project of ‘rescuing’ animals from their indigenous environments on foreign shores. Within these twin themes of preservation and simulation, animals themselves are made to perform daily rituals of eating, resting, moving inside and outside enclosures in a replication of what they would do ‘naturally’ in the wild; the corporate logos, electronic fences, wires and faux landscapes a downplayed feature in the conservation and preservation of animal bodies: a reproduction of ‘nature’ in both the biology and technology.

TARONGA ZOO AND THE MASTERPLAN: A NEW AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

Taronga Zoo in Sydney, Australia, was established in the nineteenth century, reflecting a broad proliferation of zoos in European cities and colonies throughout this period. The Zoological Society of New South Wales was founded in 1879, with the aims of promoting and advancing the science of zoology and conserving indigenous species; it officially opened its first public zoo in 1884. After a visit to one of the Hagenbeck-inspired ‘zoos without bars’ in Germany, the secretary of the zoo sought a larger site for the creation of a similar display in Sydney, and land for the new zoo was granted by the New South Wales government. Like many zoological societies across Europe, the Zoological Society of NSW gradually became less involved in the administration of the zoo, focusing instead on the production and dissemination of scientific papers. In 1913, management of the zoo was passed to the New Zoological Gardens Trust, and Taronga Zoo was officially opened on October 7, 1916. Exhibits were gradually completed over time, with the construction of a giraffe house in 1923, an aquarium in 1927 and tiger pits in 1939. From the 1960s, echoing changes in zoos across the West, the philosophy of the zoo shifted to a new emphasis on conservation, education and research, and attractions such as the monkey circus and elephant rides gave
way to a Rainforest Aviary and waterfowl ponds. Today, the zoo houses 380 species and over 2200 individual animals in a variety of open enclosures, aviaries, tanks and themed ‘forests’, and is visited by over 1.5 million humans a year.33

The policies and aims of Taronga Zoo are made clear on their website, where it states that through ‘our commitment to conservation, research, education and recreation, Taronga and Western Plains Zoos aim to inspire Australians and our visitors to discover, explore, delight in and protect our natural world’. The zoo summarizes its activities under the broad banner ‘Zootopia: in search of the perfect zoo’, where it states that:

Zootopia is a quest and a commitment. It is a pledge towards excellence in the conservation and preservation of wildlife and our natural environment. It is also our endeavour to teach and inspire, and to preserve our natural heritage for future generations.34

The quest for the ‘perfect zoo’ is outlined in what the Zoo refers to as a ‘Masterplan’, a program of zoo construction which will take place over the next twelve years. The masterplan, the site suggest, signals an ‘historic new era’ of animal conservation, which will ‘increase our ability to achieve our aim to be leaders in the conservation, presentation and care of wildlife’.35

According to the website, this plan to be a world leader in wildlife conservation and presentation will involve a program of new exhibits which will take zoo visitors on a ‘journey’ through authentic replications of indigenous spaces, which may include the reconstruction of ‘local villages’.

In a description of the zoo’s plans to construct an ‘Asian Elephant Rainforest’, nineteenth century practices of displaying ‘primitives’ in zoos and fairs echo with colonial tales of journey and discovery in colonized territories:

Figure 2: Taronga Zoo spectator
On entering the Asian Elephant Rainforest, Taronga visitors will initially take a unique journey through a busy Asian village on the edge of the forest, to an elephant activity area showcasing their traditional role in village life ... Following the trail of the elephants, the path takes visitors into the lush surrounds of the dense Asian rainforest. Wildlife throughout the rainforest will be ‘discovered’ just as it would in a real Asian rainforest ....

A description of plans to re-create a ‘real African safari’ follow a similar theme:

Visitors will be taken through the safari on guided tours and will experience the delight of discovering large free-ranging animals and African game species... The new African village will provide an opportunity for guests to relax and share this unique experience at the end of the journey.

What is interesting here is a juxtaposition of a concern with the replication of the ‘real’ with historical discourses of ‘discovery’ and ‘journey’, ‘following a trail’ through ‘lush’ and ‘dense’ tropical forests. This speaks at once to Benjamin’s assertion that mass mechanical reproductions of objects and images produce a desire to bring real objects ‘closer’, both ‘spatially’ and ‘humanly’, yet it also speaks to a new desire for the simulation of a lost ‘authenticity’ within the global imaginary; a number of scholars have pointed to the way in which mass global tourism has been intertwined with an emerging ‘invention of tradition’, in which colonial imaginings of a lost, primitive paradise are re-created and marketed to Western audiences.

In the context of the zoo, these practices suggest a reinvention of a pristine ‘nature’, in which visitors can retrace the steps of colonial explorers, discovering for themselves an unsullied wilderness and then at the end of this journey, compare their experiences of ‘discovery’ with other travellers at a local village; the zoo invites an iconic spatio-temporal shift into wilderness while replicating both the narratives and practices of nineteen century colonial conquest.

Mitman has argued that the desire for a ‘real’ zoo experience stems from an emerging aesthetic in early twentieth century natural history, where ‘value was placed on sensation ... through an immersion in nature’s language—the language of the senses—that empathy, that truth of feeling, a knowing of the individual animal’. In their program of zoo ‘education’, Taronga lists three forms of ‘experience’ at the zoo which at once build on an historical legacy of zoos as sites for animal classification and this desire for an ‘immersive’ and sensory experience of animal bodies; the site suggests that visitors can ‘See It’, ‘Sense It’ and ‘Save It’ ('[w]hether studying the characteristics of a particular animal to describe its classification or focusing on an animal for life drawing, Taronga Zoo has something for everyone'), ‘Save It’ (‘Learning about animals and plants in their environments increases our awareness, develops understanding and builds positive attitudes towards wildlife’).

What is crucial to note here is that ‘it’ is not an a priori nature which is replicated in zoological space, but a nature actively re-created in acts of replication and simulation; both the meaning of ‘nature’ and the meanings ascribed to animal bodies are, to use Butler’s terminology, ‘elaborate performative fictions’. Consider Butler’s assertion that gender itself is built on a
‘tacit agreement to perform, produce and sustain’ gendered identities, where the ‘authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one’s belief in its necessity and naturalness’ and gender itself is a ‘putatively regulated cultural fiction’. So too, ‘wildness’ and ‘nature’ might be seen as performative spaces which are both historically constructed and em-bodied in an iconographic ‘experience’.

Just as zoos and menageries throughout European history have embodied the weave of the cultural imaginary and the mechanics of colonial political economy, today’s zoos re-present the complex relationship between imagined spaces of nature and the construction and performance of consumable otherness. The transition from the historical display of animals in ordered and successive houses and cages to simulations of the ‘real’, reveals the way in which the presentation of animal bodies indeed mirrors existent politico-moral landscapes and knowledge practices: the animal is no longer an object to be placed in a cage and gazed upon, but is an object which invites a certain kind of experience, a ‘being there’, a participation or re-enactment of journeys into the jungle. The vast economic networks behind the manufacture of ‘natural space’ are kept largely from sight in the contemporary rhetoric of salvage and conservation. The tension between manufacture and authenticity is captured at the entrance to Taronga’s gorilla enclosure, which boldly bears the title ‘McDonalds Gorilla Forest’, where the corporate giant takes on the face of benevolent host to animals threatened by Third World destruction. Yet how do audiences themselves apprehend the animal bodies before them? How is it possible to understand the dialectic between the discursive construction and technological replication of nature and the lived experience of ‘natural’ animal bodies in the zoo?

TALKING ABOUT ANIMALS: POPULAR DISCOURSE IN THE GORILLA ENCLOSURE

The gorilla exhibit at Taronga Zoo is half way down the zoological park, separated by foliage and walkways from its neighbours, the ‘Asian African Rainforest’, the seal sanctuary and a food kiosk. Rounding a bend in a pathway that leads down from the kiosk, the long enclosure comes into sight; a grassy bank with scattered trees, a waterfall cascades down on a faux-rock ledge, tree stumps reach over a trickling stream, connected by hanging wires for the gorillas to swing from. In the far right corner, another clump of trees sits before a small stone and dirt plateau which slopes down in front of the rear rock face. Next to the outdoor enclosure is the indoor gorilla den, with brightly coloured jungle gym and viewing windows, and to its right, a small outdoor setting closed to the public. The audience is separated from the gorillas by a moat, and follow a pathway parallel to the enclosure to arrive at a covered viewing platform with a small amount of seating at its rear; they enter the enclosure from the right, follow the pathway to the platform and exit to the left.

Rounding the bend to find the gorilla display, audience members frequently gasp with pleasure and interest at the sight before them, eager to seek out the gorillas dotted around the enclosure. The choruses of exclamation mingle with the sound of the trickle of the waterfall, the occasional pok-pok of a juvenile male gorilla beating his chest, the call of birds, the low murmur of the rest of the crowd,
and the shouts and laughter of children, who often race back and forth along the pathway against the enclosure. Most of the audience congregate at the viewing platform, where they rest their hands against the rails of the enclosure and peer in. Kibabu, the large male silverback is without doubt the primary object of audience interest, and people commonly express their frustration at not being able to see his face, or to make out his body as he rests behind trees and bush; they form tight groups at the corner of the enclosure where Kibabu often hides behind a clump of foliage. When Kibabu makes a public appearance, he is greeted with exclamations of wonder at his size; a child exclaimed I didn’t know he was that big!; an adult male noted, Look at the size of that thing! When the silverback is out of view, audiences frequently say Where is he? I want to see the big one!, or, as a disappointed child stated, Why is it hiding from us, I want to see it!.

The juvenile gorillas are another source of public amusement, and often interact or play with each other. The audience commonly laughs in delight at these spectacles, pointing their fingers at the animals and sighing in disappointment when these moments of activity pass. When the animals are still, audience members will spend a few minutes at the enclosure, waiting for activity, and then move on down the pathway. They’re not doing anything for us, stated one child, They are just sitting around, it’s boring, they are ignoring the people, to which his mother replied, Let’s come back later when something is happening. A visitor made the disappointed comment, They’re not looking too magnificent, they’re looking a bit … reclining. When the animals are active, cameras are produced from pockets and bags in a flurry of shutter-clicks; when three juvenile gorillas chose to sit in a
row, arms around each others shoulders, audience members happily exclaimed *It’s the three wise monkeys ha ha! and gotta get a picture of that!* Such moments suggest that humans primarily seek out entertainment from the spectacle of animal bodies before them; inactivity produces dissatisfaction which commonly results in people leaving the enclosure. As Mullan and Marvin note, there is ‘usually a sense of disappointment in the visitor when the sleepy and lethargic beasts visible in front of him are not easily imagined as the accomplished hunters of the African plain…’.

Particularly ‘animal’ activities such as urinating, defecating or touching genitals evoke amusement and repugnance among the audience. Comments like *Ooh that’s disgusting! Gross!* are frequent. *Oh yuk! He’s not human!* exclaimed a small child, to which his mother replied *I hope he’s going to wash his hands!* Occasionally, mythologies of gorilla ferocity and brute strength, made popular in tales such as *King Kong*, enter the zoo arena, where, for example, a young girl exclaimed, *Don’t put your hands over the edge, they’ll rip your arms off!* Yet at the same time, there are underlying moral concerns in the comments of zoo-going audiences regarding the appropriateness of utilizing animals as amusement, particularly as the gorillas are deemed ‘almost human’. Audiences will frequently comment *Look at their eyes, they are so human, They are just like us, I wonder what they are thinking or they’re like humans, they do the same things humans do.* Audiences will often note with some discomfort, *these gorillas come from Africa and animals shouldn’t really be kept in cages, they belong in the wild.*

This oscillation between the ‘humanness’ of the gorillas and their animal behaviour and activities reflects broader historical Euro-Western dialectics of the ape as both antithesis and origin of being-human. Throughout the history of the Euro-West, ‘animality’ has represented a multitude of behavioural and bodily transgressions associated with the instinctual, the carnal, the sexual and the earthly, all of which have shifted ambiguously between notions of the nature of a human nature and the animal nature which lurks quietly inside the human. The ape has historically embodied these twin poles of humanness and animality, from medieval visions of wild men on foreign shores to Enlightenment speculations on humanity’s origins. At the same time, the ape has served as a parodic and grotesque figure, a state expressed in the dictum *simian quam similes turpissma bestia nobis,* ‘How like us is that ugly brute, the ape’. The continued role of the ape as carnivalesque figure is made clear in the delight and repugnance that contemporary audiences express towards gorilla bodily functions; these ‘human-like’ figures transgress and turn ‘upside-down’ standards of civilized bodily conduct with defecation, genital touching, (and more common among the chimpanzees, masturbation) and audiences respond with happy revelry and mock horror at this spectacle of the ‘unfinished and open body….which is blended with the world, with animals’.

Yet, for the zoo-goers, the perceived ‘humanness’ of the gorilla adds an element of unease to the grotesque spectacle. The eyes of the gorilla frequently evoke their sentience for zoo audiences; as one audience member commented, *You can see right into their souls.* Indeed, Bakhtin points out that the ‘eyes have no part’ in grotesque images, for ‘they express an individual, so to speak, self-sufficient human life’. Thus, while on one hand, audiences enjoy their delighted repugnance at the spectacle of the open, leak-
ing animal body, the perceived presence of a ‘subjectivity’ behind the eyes of the animal disturbs this comic vision; there occurs an uncomfortable fit between ‘they are just like us’ and ‘let’s watch the gorillas do things for us’. This phenomenon evokes what Peter Berger sees as a certain ontological emptiness in the zoo-going experience, where animals are reduced to tragic and non-comprehensible objects, where the animal’s ‘silence guarantees its distance, its distinctiveness, its exclusion from and of man’. He writes that the ‘look’ that humans and animals once shared has been extinguished and in its place, an anxiety marks the visual relationship between human and nonhuman:

They proceed from cage to cage, not unlike visitors in an art gallery who stop in front of one painting, and then move on to the next or the one after the next. Yet in the zoo the view is always wrong. Like an image out of focus. One is so accustomed to this that one scarcely notices it anymore, or rather, the apology habitually anticipates the disappointment, so that the latter is not felt … However you look at these animals, even if the animal is up against the bars, less than a foot from you, looking outwards in the public direction, you are looking at something that has been rendered absolutely marginal.

Among audiences watching apes, the perceived subjectivity of the gorillas produces a multi-layered anxiety; I argue that among audiences there is an ontological recognition of the fine line between being ‘human’ and one’s own animal origins, between being-self and being-other. The spectacle of beings with ‘human’ eyes and sentient capacities enclosed in captivity, invites a translation of ‘their’ experience into one’s own experience, where subject and object, human and animal temporarily merge. At the same time, I suggest that when audiences believe they see their own humanness reflected in the visage of the gorilla, this occasionally produces an apprehension over the potential threat of their own containment. I wouldn’t like to be stuck in a cage like that. The illusion of ‘freedom’ in animals without bars produces an affirmation of audience members own spatial and ontological ‘unboundedness’: a privileged freedom to move.

What is striking in this context is the way the ‘human’ and the ‘animal’ are multi-layered and ambiguous categories which are produced both in discourse and in dynamics of intercorporeal engagement. Perceived ‘gorilla sentience’ must be seen as an outcome of a shift in knowledge practices which have encouraged a belief in primate cognition and emotionality; several decades of field ethology and animal language/awareness experiments have re-created the meanings ascribed to the primate body, producing notions of nonhuman primates as capable of ‘feeling’, of having tool-making capacities and family/tribal organizations, of being ‘proto-human’. This pedagogy infiltrates practices of looking-at primates, and combines with a lived sense that there is a subject behind the visage of the animal other, where, as the ancients suggested, animi sedem esse in oculus, the seat of the soul is in the eyes. In this experiential semiotics of animal otherness, the ‘gorilla’ is endowed with an historically constructed set of meanings which infiltrate the lived experience of spectatorship, at the same time that the nonverbal, intercorporeal practices which with humans make sense of one another infiltrate that knowledge-of otherness; gorilla bodies, like human bodies are read intersubjectively, their eyes and
facial expressions taken as signifiers of the subject within.\textsuperscript{51}

MOVING ANIMALS: EMBODIED SPECTATORSHIP

As Jackson writes, meaning cannot be reduced to a sign which ‘lies on a separate plane outside the immediate domain of the act’;\textsuperscript{52} practices of looking are accompanied by sensory modalities of the body which inform and infiltrate visual experience. The verbal responses of audiences to enclosed animals are woven into an embodied, visceral and sensory choreography: a ‘making sense’ of the animal spectacle.\textsuperscript{53} Travelling to Sydney’s Taronga Zoo one exits the busy metropolitan Circular Quay on board a ferry, slowly leaving behind the hum of traffic, bodies and buildings as it makes its way across Sydney Harbour towards Manly. On the fifteen minute journey, a dense network of buildings gives way to a magnificent waterway, surrounded by lush, green foliage and dotted remnants of Sydney’s colonial history. As the scent of Sydney’s pollution gives way to the odour of the sea, one arrives at the ferry platform, which winds its way upwards to the zoo entrance and the animals that wait within. The series of spatial movements and sensory shifts invites all manner of metaphoric and tropic analyses of imperial space, of times and others;\textsuperscript{54} a movement from the urban to the wild space of exotica, a journey across the water into the forest, a gradually de-temporalizing from post-industria, past the crumbling ruins of convict shelters and imperial estates, to the original pristine state of jungle-ness, trees and animals and ocean. The spatial organization of the zoo itself is ripe with signification: upon arrival, one enters a cable car to be taken slowly up, past the animals below, to the top of the zoo; the ultimate view from above. From one’s position as the surveyor of animal bodies below, a gradual descent of (hu)man is invited, with map in hand, one walks down through meandering pathways and trails, following a cartography of iconographic signs to find living examples of animal bodies, until one reaches the bottom of the zoo, crosses the road and waits for the ferry that returns to urbanity.

Inside the zoo, the movement of human bodies follows a series of repeated patterns. The mimesis of animals is a recurring activity, and points to the embodied grounds with which humans make sense of animal objects. Among the gorilla audience, historical conceptions of the ape as parodic mimesis undergo a curious twist: often, audiences will imitate the ape. Frequently children and sometimes adults, beat their chests like male gorillas, they will jump up and down or walk in the long-armed gait of a non-human primate. When a gorilla scratches its head or grooms its body, the children may motion to each other and repeat the acts themselves in parody. Children will make the ‘hoo-hoo’ noises associated with the hoot-pant of the chimpanzee, or roar mightily like a ferocious gorilla. These occurrences lunge ‘us into the plane where the object world and the visual copy merge’.\textsuperscript{55} These acts of imitation highlight the bodily, synaesthetic elements of acts of looking, where ‘being-animal’ is momentarily apprehended as a movement in space, a set of repeated actions through which one can ‘yield into and become Other’.\textsuperscript{56} Through these acts of mimesis, there occurs a lived experience of the animal object, a visuality accompanied a brief em-bodying of the animal body.

Yet, as Taussig suggests, acts of imitation cannot be conceived outside the
historical production and negotiation of alterity. While the mimetic movement of human bodies at animal enclosures can be seen in part as an imaginative means of apprehending animal-others, the choreography of the gorilla audience itself reveals the way in which politico-cosmological distinctions and boundaries can be embodied in particular corporeal activities. Moving into an enclosure to witness a spectacle, leaning against the rails, and following the pathway out of the enclosure is a series of bodily movements so common in the contemporary milieu that it has become a taken-for-granted aspect of exotic animal-viewing. Human relationships with wild animals in the modern zoological garden, the theme park, the wildlife sanctuary, the aquarium are each marked in various ways by a movement into a display space, a separation of human and non-human with rails, glass, moats, or ditches, a watching of the animal on display, and a movement onwards to the next object. Bourdieu’s (1977) analysis of body movement in the context of symbolic ritual is useful in the context of the modern animal spectacle:

All symbolic manipulations of bodily experience, starting with displacements within mythically structured space, eg, the movements of going in and coming out, tend to impose the integration of the body space with the cosmic space by grasping in terms of the same concepts... the relation between man and the natural world. \(^{57}\)

Imperial practices of display and containment, and historical representations of the ape as liminal entity both feed into and are affirmed by this experiential semiotics of animals and animality. Leaning against the railings of the gorilla enclosure, humans express a desire for contact with the animals (I wish I could pat one), yet these railings provide both a certainty of security from the wild animals (They’ll rip your arms off); there thus occurs in space what might be seen as the essence of contemporary relationships with non-human beings: a desire to share common ground with the animals and a recognition of the fundamental differences between the world of humans and the world of beasts. This gap is mirrored in the act of looking at animals, who remained confined, open to inspection, while human bodies progress onwards past them; or, as Malamud writes, deciding ‘when to come, look and depart, while the subject must stay’. \(^{58}\)

CONCLUSION

The commentaries and bodily movements of audiences at the gorilla enclosure evoke comments by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz on the Balinese cockfight, where in a single structured space of human/animal activity one can find broader social patterns of ‘assorting human beings into fixed hierarchical ranks and then organizing the major part of collective existence around that assortment’; where one learns a cultural ethos and ‘what it looks like “spelled out” externally in a collective text’. Certainly, the animal spectacle re-presents a broader politics of containing and displaying the bodies of those ‘others’ which have long constituted a semiotic chain with the animal: the freak and the ‘savage’. The spatial organization of the zoo, from the nineteenth century caging and staging of organized bodies, to the twentieth century replication of ‘natural’ space reflects a broader relationship between political economy and practices of display, a movement from containment and classification to
salvage and simulation, from a civilizing mission to a repatriation of endangered others, from wildness to wilderness. For zoo audiences, the gorilla enclosure is, to use Geertz’s words, ‘a story they tell themselves about themselves’.59

Yet it is a story with an ‘unfinished’ body and one which reveals the way in which meaning is produced in a dynamic experiential semiotics which blends knowledge practices with a lived, sensory, and corporeal engagement. The meanings attributed to the animal body are the product of a weaving of multi-layered discourses which both stem from and impact upon a lived experience of bodiliness; the gorilla body is a body without culture, it masturbates, it defecates, it does not recognize a civilizing process;60 at the same time, it reflects back, it gazes, it suggests a presence of sentience; the ontological recognition of ‘subjectivity’ in the eyes of the ape itself speaks to a Western metaphysics which places the eye as the mirror of the soul and a cosmology which situates the non-human primate as a wild man or pre-human who dwells in a liminal space. The efficacy of the symbol of the ape as a grotesque spectacle or parody resides in the attribution of qualities of an embodied ‘humanness’ to the ape, its animal actions make sense as comic visions precisely because those eyes stare out with a gaze that is recognized, at least momentarily, as self.

Like the ‘noble savage’ of the enlightened imaginary, the gorilla in its ‘natural’ zoological space re-presents a lost idyll which must be ‘rescued’ from the ravages of third world ecological destruction; colonial imaginings of dense African forests ready for discovery are translated into immersive, sensual environments where one can momentarily become-other while maintaining the privileged position of ‘human’ unboundedness. Both the zoological garden and the gorilla itself are not simply representations of animal otherness, but sites in which the parameters of human and animal, are played out in bodies and in space: an embodied iconography.

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ENDNOTES


5 G. Elder, J Wolch and J Emel, ‘La Pratique Sauvage: Race, Place and the Human–Animal Divide’ in J Wolch and J Emel, eds. Animal Geographies: Place, Politics and Identity in the

7 Baker, Picturing the Beast, 116.


10 See also a special edition of Society and Animals, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2001, which examines how human understandings of animals are mediated by visual representation.


13 Ritvo, The Animal Estate, 43.


17 Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs and Women, 21.

18 Haraway, Primate Visions, 111.


21 Historians of animal-keeping are yet to formulate reasons for this decline. Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier, Zoo, 19, note for example that ‘this question has not been resolved’ while Rothfels Savages and Beasts, 18–19, points to this period as ‘murky’ in historical explorations of zoos. This will surely prove an interesting and fruitful enquiry in future researches.


23 Zoological Gardens opened across Europe after the Jardin des Plantes and Regents Park Zoo: including Dublin (1831), Amsterdam (1838), Antwerp (1843), Berlin (1844), Copenhagen (1859), Moscow (1863), Basel (1874). For a full


25 Batten, Living Trophies.

26 Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier Zoo, 137.


29 See Rothfels Representing Animals for a history of Hagenbeck’s zoos.

30 Rothfels, Representing Animals, 197.

31 Rothfels 201.


33 For a broader history of Taronga Zoo see R. Strahan, Beauty and the Beasts: A History of Taronga Zoo, Western Plains Zoo and Their Antecedents (Chipping Norton, Surrey: Beatty and Sons), 1991. See also A.R. Osborn, Almost Human: Reminiscences from the Melbourne Zoo (Melbourne: Whitcombe), 1918, for a discussion of historical developments at Melbourne Zoological Park Trust.


43 The current gorilla group of 10 (7 females, 3 males) largely arrived in 1996 from Apenhaul Primate Park in the Netherlands; Kibabu (1977), the lone male silverback, has fathered eight of the gorillas in the enclosure; Mouila (1972), the oldest female and the only gorilla in the group born in the wild, is the mother of the female Kriba (1979), male juveniles Haoko (1993) and Shabani (1996), while Kriba is mother to the females Kjivu (1993) and Safiri (1996) as well as another female Joas (1989), who was taken to Basle Zoo on a breeding loan. Frala (1981), half-sister to Kriba is mother to the two females Shinda


I refer here also to works in popular socio-biology such as those by Desmond Morris, who has produced a large body of popular works dealing with the issue of the human–animal and the biological grounds for contemporary urban human behaviour. See for example D. Morris, *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist’s Study of the Human Animal* (London: Jonathon Cape), 1967.

I use the term intersubjectivity in Schultz’s sense of an intersubjective ‘s ignitive experience of the world’, where in ‘my point of view as observer, your body is presented to me as a field of expression on which I can “watch” the flow of your lived experience’. A. Schultz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. George Walsh and Frederik Lehnert (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 1967, 117.


R. Malamud, *Reading Zoos*, 86. One area of future investigation is that of cross-cultural differences in audience responses to zoo animals. My own research indicates that while broad patterns of behaviour recur among all members of the audience, there are some cultural variations in the amount of time spent photographing or engaging with animals. Birdwhistell’s film *Microcultural Incidents in Ten Zoos* (1969) which examined the nonverbal family interactions in zoos in England,
France, Italy, Hong Kong, India, Japan and the US highlights these variations and will prove a useful antecedent in future research into the topic. It may also be fruitful to explore the way in which zoo-keeping staff negotiate the marketing strategies of zoo administration which construct an artificial nature for consumption and the everyday demands of animal care in a zoo environment (I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this insight).
