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● SPECIAL ISSUE:
AUSTRALIAN FEMINISMS

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Special Issue: Australian Feminisms

**Edited by
RITA FELSKI
and
ZOË SOFIA**

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

In the ten years since this journal was founded, the field of cultural studies has expanded and flourished. It has at once become broader and more focused, facing as it does the challenges of global economic, cultural and political reconfiguration on the one hand, and of new attacks on the university and intellectual work on the other. As we look forward to the next decade, we expect *Cultural Studies* to continue to contribute to both the expansion and the integration of cultural studies.

With this expectation in mind, the journal seeks work that explores the relation between everyday life, cultural practices, and material, economic, political, geographical and historical contexts; that understands cultural studies as an analytic of social change; that addresses a widening range of topic areas, including post- and neo-colonial relations, the politics of popular culture, issues in nationality, transnationality and globalization, the performance of gendered, sexual and queer identities, and the organization of power around differences in race, class, ethnicity, etc.; that reflects on the changing status of cultural studies; and that pursues the theoretical implications and underpinnings of practical inquiry and critique.

Cultural Studies welcomes work from a variety of theoretical, political and disciplinary perspectives. It assumes that the knowledge formations that make up cultural studies are as historically and geographically contingent as any other cultural practice or configuration and that the work produced within or at its permeable boundaries will therefore be diverse. We hope not only to represent this diversity but to enhance it.

We want to encourage significant intellectual and political experimentation, intervention and dialogue. Some issues will focus on special topics, often not traditionally associated with cultural studies. Occasionally, we will make space to present a body of work representing a specific national, ethnic or disciplinary tradition. Whenever possible, we intend to represent the truly international nature of contemporary work, without ignoring the significant differences that are the result of speaking from and to specific contexts, but we also hope to avoid defining any context as normative. We invite articles, reviews, critiques, photographs and other forms of 'artistic' production, and suggestions for special issues. And we invite readers to comment on the strengths and weaknesses, not only of the project and progress of cultural studies, but of the project and progress of *Cultural Studies* as well.

Lawrence Grossberg
Della Pollock

Contributions should be sent to Professors Lawrence Grossberg and Della Pollock, Dept. of Communication Studies, CB #3285, 113 Bingham Hall, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599– 3285, USA. They should be in triplicate and should conform to the reference system set out in the Notes for Contributors. An abstract of up to 300 words (including 6 keywords) should be included for purposes of review. Submissions undergo blind peer review. Therefore, the author's name, address and e-mail should appear *only* on a detachable cover page and not anywhere else on the manuscript. Every effort will be made to complete the review process within six months of submission. A disk version of the manuscript must be provided in the appropriate software format upon acceptance for publication.

Reviews, and books for review, should be sent to Tim O'Sullivan, School of Arts, de Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BH; or to John Frow, Dept. of English, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Queensland 4072, Australia; or to Jennifer Daryl Slack, Dept. of Humanities, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI 49931, USA.

CONTENTS

AUSTRALIAN FEMINISMS

Introduction	383
Rita Felski and Zoë Sofia	

ARTICLES

Claiming Truganini: Australian national narratives in the year of indigenous peoples	393
Suvendrini Perera	
The anorexic body: reading disorders	411
Abigail Bray	
Body shopping: maternity and alterity in <i>Mamatoto</i>	427
Michele Grossman and Denise Cuthbert	
‘As housewives we are worms’: women, modernity and the home question	444
Lesley Johnson	
Cooking up: intestinal economies and the aesthetics of specular orality	457
Maria Angel and Zoë Sofia	
Transvestophilia and gynemimesis: performative strategies and feminist theory	474
Rachel Fensham	

REVIEW ARTICLE

Modern girls	488
Rita Felski	

COMMENTARY

Response to Stuart Hall	495
Saba Mahmood	

BOOK REVIEWS

‘There’s a raft of norms at stake in the media’, Jason Philip Bell	498
Boundary riders of the new literary studies	502
K.K.Ruthven	

‘White, male and middle class’ Ann Curthoys	506
Re-viewing the gaze Barry Howell	510
Look and listen, see and hear: books that show and tell in the age of interactive multimedia David Leviatin	515
Re-visioning the classroom: agency and possibility in Giroux’s ‘Living Dangerously’ Julie Drew	527
Playing the game of culture Tony Bennett	530
Chucky’s children Steve Chibnall	538
How ads work (they don’t) John O.Thompson	543
Stop the show! Joel Woller	548
Understanding the contemporary museum: implications for Cultural Studies? Andrea Witcomb	553
We might get fooled again Jason Toynbee	556
Notes on contributors	561
Call for papers	563

INTRODUCTION

RITA FELSKI AND ZOE SOFIA

To begin an article by acknowledging the problematic and provisional status of one's terms of reference has become a routine gesture in recent years, yet such rhetorical banality seems unavoidable in the case of a journal issue on the topic of 'Australian feminism'. In recent years this term has come to acquire a certain intellectual cachet; as the work of such scholars as Moira Gatens, Liz Grosz, Sneja Gunew and Meaghan Morris has become more widely known overseas, so 'new Australian feminism' is increasingly hailed as an innovative presence in critical theory (Barrett, 1988: xxix). After beer and cinema, is feminism poised to emerge as the next successful Australian export? If so, what are the implications of this example of 'travelling theory'? Does it point to the co-option and commodification of a local product by increasingly rapacious multinational knowledge industries? Or should we view this dissemination of ideas in a more optimistic light, as enabling productive forms of dialogue between feminist scholars and cultural theorists within a transnational context? And how local a product is 'Australian feminism' anyway?

The contributors to this volume embody, both in their diverse biographies and their various methodologies, a sustained challenge to any notion of a singular, self-identical standpoint derived from their putative 'Australianness'. From a standpoint sensitive to both gender and postcolonial politics, any such invocations of national identity must inevitably provoke ambivalent and contradictory, though not necessarily negative, responses (the once common perception of nation as nothing more than a category of false consciousness seems to have been finally put to rest in recent years). In assembling this collection we did not demand of contributors that their writing conform to or exemplify some imaginary ideal of what constitutes Australian feminism. Rather, we simply invited articles from scholars with expertise in the domain of feminism and cultural studies who also have an extended biographical connection to Australia. Some of our contributors were born in Australia, others are recent migrants, others currently live elsewhere. A number of factors, including race, class, country of origin and intellectual affiliations, shape their specific relationship to questions of nation in numerous, not always predictable ways. Some of our writers explicitly offer a feminist analysis of aspects of Australian culture and self-consciously investigate the implications of their own geopolitical positioning. Others are not primarily interested in addressing the 'Australianness' of their feminism at all,

and remain suspicious of the assumption that theory from the periphery only becomes acceptable for international consumption insofar as it flaunts its antipodean exoticism.

Furthermore, if hybridity and *métissage* have become the buzz-words of postcolonial feminism, this experience of transculturation indelibly marks the biographies of the editors. One of us was born in Australia of Greek parentage and partly educated in the United States, the other grew up in England with Polish/Czech parents, spent fourteen years in Australia and is a current aspirant for an American green card. Coincidentally, we share the same birthday (yes, we're Aries!), but this happy astrological synchrony is not necessarily matched by a common array of theoretical or political concerns.

This collection, then, does not aim to offer a comprehensive overview of the current condition of Australian feminism. It originated in a seminar series held at Murdoch University in Western Australia and expanded through personal and institutional networks to include the work of various other writers. We are pleased to include material from younger, up-and-coming feminist scholars as well as those more established in the field. As is the case with any such collection, its content was partially shaped by random factors: who was willing to contribute to such a volume, who was already committed elsewhere, who could get material to the editors by the specified time (we regret the late withdrawal of articles by Kay Schaffer and Vicky Kirby due to unforeseen delays in the publication of this issue). Inevitably, many important aspects of Australian feminist cultural studies are not covered in this collection (for further material, see Sheridan, 1988; Gunew and Yeatman, 1993; Langton, 1993; Caine and Pringle, 1995; Grieve and Burns, 1995). Nevertheless, there are a number of interconnections among the different articles (one might speak of family resemblances rather than a shared essence), which feed directly into the critical field known as 'Australian feminism'.

Before exploring these resemblances in more detail, it may be helpful to situate them within a broader theoretical and social framework. The question of what constitutes Australian cultural studies is too vast to be dealt with here, and has in any case been extensively addressed in recent publications (Turner, 1993; Frow and Morris, 1993; Craven, 1994). We will briefly note, however, some significant divergences from the analytical framework first established by the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies. Admittedly, the traditional British focus on working-class culture and (male) subcultures was partially carried over into the Australian context, such that a concern with investigating the lived practices of 'Australianness' seemed at times to translate into an uncritical endorsement of the traditionally white male culture of the pub and 'footy' (Australian rules football). Some influential works of Australian cultural studies such as *Myths of Oz* (Fiske *et al.*, 1987) were thus subject to criticism for paying insufficient attention to the race and gender inflections of popular culture.

Nevertheless, much cultural studies work in Australia has attempted to free itself from the hegemonic grip of British cultural studies. There has been strong interest in analysing distinctive Australian sites of suburban life (the barbecue, the beach, the shopping mall), and in developing critical readings of the texts and myths of nation as articulated through culturally specific signifiers of nature (landscape, the bush), or history (monuments, museums). More generally, the cultural studies that emerged in Australia have often been shaped by distinctive research agendas, ideological conditions and theoretical investments. These have included a less sustained commitment to strict Marxist tenets and a keen interest in contemporary French theory and philosophy. Such writers as Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, Irigaray, Foucault

and Lyotard, for example, were being read and discussed by sections of the Australian intelligentsia before becoming widely known in Britain and the US. Thus in the 1970s a number of Australian theorists became involved in translating new material coming out of France and publishing it under the aegis of small presses (e.g. *The Working Papers in Sex, Culture and Society*).

Among these figures was Meaghan Morris, a prominent international presence in cultural studies who first became known as a proponent of French theory and a translator of Foucault. A glance at the contents page of *The Pirate's Fiancée* (1988) reveals the diversity of influences and currents of thought which have fed into both Australian cultural studies and Australian feminism. The book includes essays on feminist theory and philosophy, on styles of film criticism, readings of various photographic works, discussions of Lyotard and Baudrillard, and an exploration of the high/popular culture question in relation to the Australian export *Croco dile Dundee*. Morris's work has insistently and acerbically questioned both the male biases of cultural studies and the traditional Euro-American focus of much feminist scholarship. Her readings of shopping centres, motels, the *'I Love Lucy' Show* and other texts and artefacts of Australian everyday life have profoundly altered our understanding of the gendering of popular culture and its intersection with the politics of space and locality.

Thus the traditional taxonomies which have often been used to distinguish between American gynocriticism, French feminism and English socialist feminism are largely inappropriate to Australian feminism, which has been characterized from its origins by a heady *mélange* of theoretical and political concerns. Furthermore, the relatively small academic scene in Australia has encouraged a significant degree of contact and intellectual exchange between feminists in different fields. The phenomenon all too frequent in the United States, whereby feminist scholars in history, English or philosophy attend their own conferences, read discipline-specific journals and have minimal interpersonal contact is much less common in Australia. This is partly a question of the size of the feminist academic community, and partly the result of lesser anxiety about disciplinary accreditation and the need for professionalization at graduate level. As a result, the distinctions between intellectual disciplines are often blurred, and much significant work occurs in the boundaries between these fields.

While history and sociology have been mainstays of Australian women's studies and are firmly established in publishers' lists, Australian feminists have also been highly active in the field of critical theory and French philosophy. A key moment here was the splitting of Sydney University's philosophy department in 1973 to create a separate branch called 'General Philosophy', a split directly associated with agitation by feminist teachers and students for the inclusion of courses on women and philosophy. Those involved in this dispute include Elizabeth Grosz and Moira Gatens, scholars who have inspired colleagues and several cohorts of feminist students to pursue philosophical studies around questions of subjectivity, political citizenship, ethics and most especially corporeality. Indeed, questions of sexuality and textuality first raised in the work of French feminists have been extensively elaborated, but also creatively reconfigured in much of this recent scholarship. Commentators are increasingly referring to an identifiable Australian 'school' of corporeal feminism, characterized by a concern with theorizing bodily morphologies as simultaneously material and semiotic phenomena (Gatens, 1983, 1991; Grosz, 1989, 1990, 1994; Diprose and Ferrell, 1992; Diprose, 1994).

The impact of this work on Australian feminism more generally manifests itself in often leaky boundaries between such distinct subject areas as philosophy, psychoanalysis and cultural studies. This disciplinary hybridity is evident in several

texts in this collection, for example, the article by Maria Angel and Zoe Sofia, which may not be instantly recognizable as 'cultural studies' to some US readers. The authors draw on film theory, psycho-analysis and the Freudo-Marxist tradition to read two films concerned with food as elaborations of the erotic (especially oral) logics associated with late-twentieth-century cultures of visual consumption. This work understands 'erotic formations' as cultural formations that can be usefully charted in attempting to grasp the symbolic logic of late capitalist consumer culture as it shapes the production of texts in England and the United States.

Angel and Sofia read Peter Greenaway alongside Adrian Lynne and juxtapose 'art' cinema against soft pornography. Like a number of other contributors to this collection, the authors refuse to limit the scope of feminist cultural studies to the analysis of texts that attract mass audiences. Cultural studies, especially in the British framework, has often sought to invert and reinscribe a pre-existing dichotomy, such that the high is brought low while the previously degraded is elevated to the realm of the authentic. Popular culture is thereby celebrated as a redemptive site of carnivalesque desires and resistive bodily pleasures, while high culture is peremptorily dismissed as an elitist tool of bourgeois hegemony. Given the remarkably diverse institutional sites, knowledge complexes and artistic activities subsumed within this exceedingly vague term, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to delineating the actual practices of high culture and their various and contradictory political implications.

Yet in Australia, while sport often grabs the limelight as a nationally prized activity, 'high art' is at least an equally popular pursuit, with more Australians said to attend arts events than sporting functions annually. A broad range of government-sponsored grants and subsidies for arts organizations, special festival events and diverse arts activities, coupled with sustained attention to local, regional and international arts on national public radio and television stations, help to ensure that the supposedly high arts are potentially accessible throughout various communities. The traditional conceptualization of the high/popular distinction in terms of an antithesis between bourgeois and working-class culture seems to be increasingly implausible in this context, and has inspired some Australian theorists to challenge the theoretical and sociological legitimacy of such essentialist oppositions (Frow, 1995).

Such factors in turn invite a reconsideration of the politics of high culture in relation to feminist concerns. It is often far easier, for example, for women to gain access to small gallery spaces, than to exercise direct influence on the production and dissemination of mass media texts. To rule the analysis of such texts out of bounds because they do not reach a mass audience seems an unfortunate loss for feminist cultural studies, in evading the key question of the possibilities and limitations of this kind of cultural intervention. While the analysis of more experimental forms of women's art cannot ignore questions of audience and needs to avoid fetishizing the political effects of avant-gardism, it is equally reductive to assume that any such art is simply buying into a pre-existing structure of patriarchal elitism. Thus some of the most interesting recent work in feminist cultural studies has moved beyond the high/low opposition by examining the interrelations and connections between constructions of femininity across different cultural spaces and discursive fields (Nead, 1992).

This collection is thus symptomatic of an increasing feminist interest in analysing popular and high cultural texts in conjunction. Rachel Fensham's article 'Transvestophilia and Gynemimesis', for example, suggestively juxtaposes readings of cross-dressing and drag across a variety of cultural fields, from the avant-garde dance of Pina Bausch to the recent Australian hit movie *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

Similarly, Suvendrini Perera tracks contemporary Australian representations of female Aboriginality, as encoded in the polyvalent figure of Truganini, across diverse cultural genres and contexts, from rock music to popular history to museum art. Rather than depicting high art as irrevocably opposed to the realm of the popular, the author exposes suggestive parallels and interconnections as well as differences between various Australian texts when viewed from a post-colonial feminist perspective.

Other articles in this issue critically address feminism's own continuing reliance upon many of the traditional values and assumptions underpinning the high/popular culture dichotomy. Thus Abigail Bray's article 'The Anorexic Body' offers a provocative critique of recent feminist discussions of eating disorders, arguing that such appropriations of the anorexic subject as an allegory of oppressed femininity reproduce many of the traditional paternalistic stereotypes of women in positing them as uncritical and irrational consumers of mass culture images. This vision of victimized women passively imbibing toxic media messages about ideal female embodiment should give way, Bray suggests, to a more historically nuanced and less reductive account of modern weight-loss regimens, as practices of female self-formation and self-surveillance shaped by new biomedical discourses of the body.

In a related challenge to feminist *idées reçues*, Lesley Johnson questions those discourses and narratives that have routinely equated women's freedom with the process of leaving home, whether symbolically or literally. According to Johnson, such discourses merely reiterate and reinforce the conventional—and gendered—association of modernity with mobility, independence and public space, and of the home with tradition, stasis and dependence. Through an analysis of postwar representations of Australian femininity, home ownership and the role of the housewife, Johnson sketches the outline of an alternative feminist sociology of modernity, which would seek to understand the realm of the home as an active and always historical 'practising of place'.

Besides this interdisciplinary eclecticism and a questioning of conventional high/popular oppositions, a key feature of much Australian feminist cultural studies has been a growing engagement with questions of national identity, postcolonialism and multiculturalism. The increased stress on 'Australianness' in popular culture, academic discourse and government legislation in recent years does not simply herald the final flowering of an already given identity, but helps to bring that identity into being through a repertoire of representations that are in turn shaped by perceptions of Australia overseas. As Tim Rowse notes, 'We become ourselves when recognized as different by the other' (Rowse, 1985:77). From this perspective, the question of what constitutes Australia is inseparable from a relatively peripheral positioning in the world global and cultural economy.

Moreover, in contrast to the United States, whose media representations routinely equate the interests of that nation with 'the world' ('we are the world...'), people in Australia do not perceive themselves as occupying the centre of global culture, and are more likely to seek an internationalist view of overseas cultures and events, both via the media and through travel and tourism. In recent years, official efforts have been made to foster political, economic and cultural links with various nations in the Asian region. And where, not long ago, critics referred to Australia's 'cultural cringe'—a sycophantic fawning upon any cultural import as automatically superior to local products—this cultural anxiety has given way to a greater confidence in the intellectual and cultural creativity made possible in a context at once internationally

oriented and locally founded. Thus, instead of being embarrassed by the limited horizons of Australian culture, Australians are now far more likely to criticize, for example, United States imports, as being excessively parochial and moralistic.

Whereas postcolonial theory often addresses the *exterior* determination of claims to national or ethnic identity and their necessarily complex relationship with the colonizing ideologies they simultaneously contest, multiculturalism, by contrast, signals a concern with heterogeneity and diversity *within* the confines of the nation-state. In Australia the impact of multiculturalism has not been confined to the realm of identity politics and critical theory. Rather, it has emerged as a key term of government policy and legislation, as a once powerful rhetoric of assimilation has given way to official recognition of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Australia's numerous migrant populations from both Europe and Asia. The term is not, however, an uncontested one, insofar as some critics perceive the new ideology of multiculturalism as encouraging a tokenistic tolerance of cultural differences rather than helping to rectify structural inequalities between different ethnic groups (Hage, 1994; see also Gunew, 1990).

In this context, Ien Ang (1995) has developed a suggestive comparison between multiculturalist ideology and the 'new' feminist politics of difference. Increasingly, she argues, mainstream feminism is professing an openness to racial and cultural diversity; like the Australian nation, it no longer subscribes to assimilationist goals but fervently proclaims an ethos of enlightened multiculturalism. For Ang, however, any such vision of diversity-within-community remains a highly questionable one in glossing over systematic inequalities between women of different races, while often subsuming racial difference by reading it as a mere analogue of sexual difference. As a result, white Western women are implicated in 'a symbolic annihilation of otherness which is all the more pernicious precisely because it occurs in the context of a claimed solidarity with the other' (Ang, 1995: 61). Instead, Ang argues, mainstream feminism needs to surrender the fantasy that it can provide a 'home' for all women, and accept the necessary limits and partiality of its own politics.

Ang's argument carries particular resonances for Australian readers, bringing to mind a widely publicized recent dispute about the possibilities and limits of cross-cultural feminist work. The article at the heart of this controversy, 'Speaking about rape is everyone's business' (Bell and Nelson, 1989), took as its topic the incidence of intraracial rape within the Aboriginal community. It provoked an angry response from a number of Aboriginal women, who saw the article as an imperialistic appropriation of Aboriginal social problems by white anthropologist Diane Bell to serve a white radical feminist agenda (Huggins *et al.*, 1991). This dispute, which received extensive coverage in Australian journals, conferences and the media, pointed up the stark incommensurabilities between Aboriginal women who often experience white women as colonizers and oppressors rather than allies, and white radical feminists who are insistent that 'systemic male violence against women...knows neither class, race nor cultural boundaries' (Klein, 1991; for an overview of the debate and Bell's response, see Bell, 1990; Larbalestier, 1990). In the meantime, Aboriginal women are gradually gaining access to public fora such as journals, and as a result are beginning to present their own differing accounts of their histories and identities (Huggins, 1992; Holt, 1993).

One might further note that the usual association of multiculturalism with what used to be called 'New Australians' has obscured the distinctive positioning and problems of Aboriginal peoples. Similarly, the effects of Australia's colonialist and potentially genocidal practices are still too traumatically close for postcolonialism to mean much

in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders peoples, many of whom are still seeking reunification with families from whom they were separated by official agencies until as late as the 1960s. However, moves towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and white Australia have been made in recent years. These include an official apology to Aboriginal people from Prime Minister Paul Keating; ongoing efforts towards greater cross-cultural understanding, prompted in part by the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991 to 1994); and most significantly, the Australian High Court's Mabo decision in 1992, which upheld the claims of traditional ownership of land by Eddie Mabo on behalf of the Meriam people in the Torres Strait, a decision that has paved the way for Aboriginal land claims across the country. In 1995 the distinctive black, red and yellow Aboriginal Land Rights flag was recognized as an official flag of Australia, and while not all Aboriginal groups are happy about the appropriation of this symbol of resistance, it is symptomatic of an official desire to acknowledge indigenous peoples' interests as part of Australia's national interests.

Questions of postcolonialism and the process of reconciliation form the background for Perera's analysis of competing representations of Truganini, often depicted as 'the last Tasmanian' and hence a tragic symbol of Aboriginal extinction. For Perera, such representations of the female indigene remain complex and indeterminate; while helping to inspire struggles against colonization, they may also serve to 'objectify, marginalize and entomb, affixing Aboriginal cultures within mausoleums of authenticity and primitivism'. A related argument is taken up by Denise Cuthbert and Michele Grossman in their detailed reading of images of indigenous maternity disseminated in the promotional texts of the Body Shop. The alliance of New Age ideology with Western feminism's cult of the body has encouraged a pervasive romanticized vision of motherhood as an authentic transcultural experience unifying all women. This motif is both adopted and extended in the Body Shop's troping of the Third World woman-as-mother, whose body comes to symbolize both a universal experience of maternity and an exoticized symbol of ahistorical otherness.

In conclusion, we would like to note that geopolitical questions of positioning were by no means absent from the production of this issue. We would acknowledge genuine problems in the dissemination of ideas and information in a global context. Work first published in the United States, for example, can sometimes take months or even years to reach Australia (the reverse is also true, though a US feminist is unlikely to be chastised for her lack of familiarity with Australian theory). Nevertheless, it also seemed to us that Australian feminism, hailed in one context as the cutting-edge, can in another context be too easily dismissed as *passé*. For example, Grossman and Cuthbert's article seemed to us an original and compelling analysis of the Western fascination with the trope of indigenous maternity. We were thus surprised when the general editors of *Cultural Studies* called for major revisions on the grounds that the Body Shop had already been exhaustively discussed in England and the US. We were even more surprised when we were subsequently directed to a single article on Anita Roddick's trading and hiring practices published in the Chicago-based magazine *In these Times*. Left-wing social reportage versus a postcolonial feminist analysis of the semiotics of maternity; we were amazed that what seemed to us such radically different intellectual enterprises, both methodologically and politically, could so easily be translated into instances of sameness. Coincidentally, as this collection was going to press, a postcolonial feminist discussion of the Body Shop appeared in the US journal *Social Text*. We wonder whether its author was also subject to criticism for her

intellectual belatedness (we think it unlikely), or whether Australian feminism lends itself more easily to such a perception.

We would like, finally, to express our gratitude to various friends and colleagues who have helped in the publication of this issue. Special thanks go to John Hartley for his support of the original feminist seminar series (through Murdoch University's Centre for Research in Culture and Communication), for his help in facilitating publication of this collection and for his encouragement throughout. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of those who refereed articles or otherwise helped in production of the issue, including Ien Ang, Moira Gatens, Larry Grossberg, Alison Lewis, Alan Mansfield, Mudrooroo, Della Pollock, Jan Radway and Cathy Waldby. And most importantly, we wish to thank our contributors for the patience, good humour and fortitude through what seemed at times to be an interminable process. Meanwhile, we hope readers of *Cultural Studies* will enjoy this sampling of feminist works from a Southern periphery.

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ARTICLES

CLAIMING TRUGANINI: AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL NARRATIVES IN THE YEAR OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES*

SUVENDRINI PERERA

ABSTRACT

In this article I consider some representations of the figure of the indigene in contemporary Australia, and their implications for a range of issues and debates in cultural theory. In particular, I examine the positioning of the indigenous body within two related discourses that I term 'multiculturalism' and 'hybridity', or the discourses of happy hyphenation and happy hybridization, respectively. These discourses, I want to suggest, raise specific problems in an Australian historical context, where the effects of scientific racism are being confronted by indigenous peoples in relation to land rights claims and, more generally, the dominant culture's demands for an 'authentic', visible and unproblematic Aboriginality that can be both clearly marked and contained. The figure of Truganini has particular significance in these debates, precisely because her body has figured as the site of geneticist practices and discourses. Simultaneously I locate these representations in the context(s) of the monument year of 1993, contexts that encompass a mesh of interrelated cultural concerns sometimes simplified under the heading of 'Australian national identity'.

KEYWORDS

Aboriginality; hybridity; Truganini; indigene; Australia; gender and imperialism

I, Burnam Burnam, being an aristocratic nobleman of ancient Australia do hereby take possession of England on behalf of the Aboriginal crown.

In claiming this colonial outpost, we wish no harm to you natives....

At the end of two hundred years, we will make a treaty to validate occupation by peaceful means....

We do not intend to souvenir, pickle and preserve the heads of 2000 of your people, nor to publicly display the skeletal remains of your Royal Highness, as was done to our Queen Truganninni for 50 years.

(Extract from *The Burnam Burnam Declaration* of 26 January 1988)

In Australia 1993 marks, in multiple ways, a year of returns. The past, exhumed, incarnate, confronts and unsettles us, resolutely contemporary, inescapably political. It returns, through compulsive interrogations and incantations, as forms and phrases