

**Advance Australia *Fear*: Performing Feminised Asia in Simone Lazaroo and
Hsu-Ming Teo's Work**
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'existence always precedes essence.' (Jean-Paul Sartre)

'I'm a fucking Asian faggot.' (Justin, in *Behind the Moon*)

[1] SIMONE Lazaroo and Hsu-Ming Teo belong to a corpus of Asian Australian authors whose writings have contributed to changing how Australia perceives its Asian neighbours. One of its representatives, Brian Castro, summed up the Asian Australian literary project as follows.

Australia, it seems to me, has written off Asia for almost 200 years; written off the countries of Asia, with various cultural traditions of thousands of years. Perhaps it is time to write Asia; to write *within* and *of* it, rather than just about it. The word *Asia* is found, after all, in the word *Australia*.

[2] Not only did Australia 'write off' Asia but most damaging is how Asia was badly written, more than often limited to Orientalist imageries by the ill-famed White Australia policy and the exclusion of Asians in particular. Australia's recent engagement with Asia did not exactly set up a new deal, chiefly motivated as it was and still is by economic (not cultural) imperatives. Racism isn't therefore some relic of the past either, something Teo and Lazaroo explore in their work.

[3] This paper argues first that the enduring essence or prevailing stereotype in the Western imaginary (from the Greek stereos 'solid') is a certain idea of Asia as the sign of femininity. The (hyper)feminisation of Asia needs to be understood in the light of Asia's historic and ongoing threat to the West, as for instance the recent economic rise of China and India. Inscribing and fixing Asia as the feminine works to diffuse such phobic threats while reinforcing hegemonic Western discourses of race, sexuality and gender that posit non-white/male/heterosexual identifications as inferior or 'abject.' Australia's association with the West and promiscuity with Asia mean that racist/sexist discourses of Asia and/as the feminine have been exacerbated when by contrast, (white, heterosexual) hyper-masculinity still prevails today as the dominant sign in this country.¹

[4] Secondly, I will explore how Lazaroo and Teo's work subverts essentialist, dominant (re)presentations of 'Asia' and 'Asians' from a minority perspective and through strategic essentialism, a theory of performativity first coined by Gayatri Spivak and defined as a 'strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest.'(214) Strategic essentialism summons and displaces the political signifier of Asianness onto the margins of representational power with a view to reclaiming it. In Australia's mid-90s, the rise of Pauline Hanson led Asian ethnic communities to rally behind the racist and derogatory term 'Asian' as a strategic essentialist means of political mobilization and resistance against growing anti-Asian sentiment. As authors and individuals belonging to the Asian diaspora, their work must be therefore partly understood as a reflection of, and a reaction to, this particular historical context.

Quintessential 'Other': Asia and the Feminine

[5] Historically, East and West, Orient and Occident have always operated as antithetical terms, this despite growing diasporic movements of population from Asia into the West from the second part of the 20th century onwards, and despite over two-hundred years of Western (post) colonial enmeshment with Asia. Asian Australians who lived through the Hanson years understand this divide very well. Hanson is only the latest in Australia's troubled history with Asia. After all, the Australian nation was founded on race and the need to keep Australia white and pure.² This racial component of Australian nationalism persists today in the form of refugee bashing, anti-Muslim vilifying and more generally-speaking through a paranoid concern over border and population control. Such histories mean that Asians in Australia have remained Aliens or so-called permanent 'guests'. Australian historian Geoffrey Blainley's tapping into a 'shock of civilization' or 'culture wars' rhetoric back in the 80s tells more about Australia's Western roots than it does about Blainley's anthropological expertise on the question of East-West relationships. Due to what has been presented as a quintessential historical divide, Western stereotypes about Asians may be re-interpreted in the light of two other historically oppressed minorities: Black and Jewish people. The racist truth behind the assumed physicality/bestiality of Blacks and the intelligence/shrewdness of Jews was exposed in Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre's work, respectively *Black Skin, White Masks* and *Portrait of the Anti-Semite*.

[6] Representations of Asian-ness in the West oscillate between the 'Flower Lady' and 'Dragon Lady' narratives, as Sheridan Prasso remarked. The first stresses the physicality of the Asian body as seductress/temptress while the latter draws on fears of the 'Yellow Peril' and the paradoxical cunningness and superior intelligence of allegedly inferior Asian races/cultures. The rallying cry

uniting these contradictions is the feminine. Mythological figures like the mermaid or Pontianak in Lazaroo's work act as allegories of Asian-ness, both alluring and dangerous. As Prasso argues: 'The true Asia, I found, was largely misrepresented by the dominant images we have in the West, where the "Orient" is often depicted with fantasy-fueled feminine adjectives.' On the front covers of Asian Australian women's novels, an image of a 'sexotic' Asian woman combining exoticism with eroticism often features. Her eyes are generally cut off, hidden or looking away, hence unable to look back and reduced instead to a voyeuristic object for a predominantly white/male/heterosexual outlook. Teo and Lazaroo's work also develops the strategic use of essentialised Asian male characters whose homosexuality is not only a reflection of their own sexuality but of racist attitudes and the naturalization of Asian males in the West as 'female faggots'.

[7] Strategic essentialism in itself is an oxymoronic phrase composed of two contradictory elements, for what's strategic is necessarily situational and provisional contra the fixity of essence. It is closely linked to deconstruction, its exposure of the 'Manichean delirium' at the heart of Western metaphysics whereby one term is always already privileged at the expense and exclusion of another. Spivak however reminds how 'deconstruction is not exposure of error, it is a vigilance about the fact that we are always obliged to produce truth.'⁽⁵⁶⁾ Spivak suggests that while essence/identification is inevitable, the contingencies/positionalities of existence open up the possibility for the articulation of other truths ultimately leading to challenging the naturalized monolithic system as a whole. Racism as a system (systemic and systematic) posits itself as the established 'Law', something inherently engrained in culture whereas in Teo and Lazaroo's work we find instead *competing* ideologies of place and Self (both minoritarian and dominant) positing themselves as essence.

[8] Their writing first unfolds through a sharp critique of the reality of racist prejudice in Australia. In Teo's *Behind the Moon*, Justin suffers from being or assuming he is his white male partners' 'Rice Queen' and sex toy. The term 'Rice Queen' applies within the context of Asian gay people seeking white males, suggesting a 'sexotic' dynamic and the racialisation of gender behind the foreclosure of homosexual gay subjectivities as *feminine* by the dominant (white/heterosexual/masculinist) discourse. In Lazaroo's *World*, Eddie who is also gay and Asian (albeit born in Australia) ultimately dies of AIDS and the threat of his masculinity not only queered but annihilated. AIDS can thus be read as a 'social disease' as Eddie falls prey to a xeno/homophobic society that domesticates fears towards the 'Asian Other' by rewriting it under the signs of death and the feminine. Similar (hyper)feminization for Lazaroo's Asian female narrator means

that she, too, is reduced to a 'castrate' posing no external threat to the phallogocentric order and its exclusion of female agency. In *The Travel Writer*, Lazaroo describes her character Ghislaine as she 'imagined the colour of her flesh, the shape of her body and the sound of her voice perfectly conveyed by the [phallic] pen of Walter Humphries,' (102) the kind of man described as a *connoisseur of women* and Asian cultures. Of the Christao, Ghislaine's Eurasian, Portuguese-Malay peoples from Malacca, he sees men and women who have remained 'both servile to their colonisers and lacking in the courage needed to better their status in modern Malaya.' (104)

[9] The 'taming' of Asia as the feminine is symptomatic of deeply embedded fears in the West towards the Orient harking back to colonisation and the imposition of Western imperialism over various regions of the world. It should be clear that I regard a term like 'feminine' as gender socio-historical construct/constrict so that it is by no means fixed in time. Feminism itself can be seen as a strategic essentialist attempt at reworking the 'feminine' from a female, minoritarian perspective, imbuing it with transformative meanings and leading further down the line to the abolition of the category of gender altogether. In this light, I see Slavoj Žižek's notion that (master-) signifiers are *empty* as being of particular relevance to questions of subjectivity. Signifiers such as 'Asian', 'feminine' or 'homosexual' do not correspond to any actual qualities or empirical reality insofar as they are historically determined and exist only in their relation to hegemonic discourses of race, gender and sexuality, as deviancies from the so-called norm.³ If for instance, to be homosexual has been historically someone who is *not* heterosexual, the question (addressed in part two) nevertheless remains: what does it mean – or rather, is it possible – to be homosexual *in itself/for itself*?⁴

[10] Subsequently, current racist scapegoating and fear-mongering in Australia towards Asian refugees from Sri Lanka or Afghanistan is empty, albeit parading itself as a mask/cover up for Australia's economic slowdown in the same way that Jews were blamed for Germany's Great Depression. In a racist economy, the notion that all Asians/Jews are thieves and liars (epithets often heard about refugees) leads to conclude that all thieves/liars must be Asians/Jews, and therefore exterminated for the latter while locked up in detention centres and rebranded as 'illegal' immigrants for the former. The real culprits, ruling class ideologues whose ideas ought to appeal to the working class as a *disguise* for their empty rhetoric remain conveniently unmarked. In the working class suburb where her family lives and racial segregation is a daily reality, the narrator of *World* compares herself to Mata Hari, famous in the West for her career as an Oriental dancer and her work as a spy for France during WWI. She was ultimately charged for treason and executed.

As I limped across the front yard, I saw neighbours looking at me from behind slightly parted curtains. I imagined my father at his window behind me. Did he see me through the same eyes as our neighbours? I was filled with the same misgivings about myself as I imagined he and all the rest of my executioners held: did my mixed blood and vacillation from one disguise to another prove I was a double-agent who didn't discriminate between the enemy and kin when put to the test? Would I cross over to sleep in the enemy's bed? (120)

[11] Unlike Africa, devoid of civilisation and history in Europe's eyes at colonisation time, and unlike Jews, a people of European 'stock', Asia and particularly China was seen from the start as the West's antithesis and a potential threat to be contained and disarmed (castrated). Today's fear of Asia takes the form of anti-Muslim sentiment and terrorism. Lazaroo's new novel *Sustenance* set in a five-star hotel in Bali for wealthy Westerners materializes these fears as the hotel is held hostage by so-called 'Asian thieves and terrorists' (40), another strategic essentialist device allowing her to expose what 'terrorism' means. Instead of Islamic fundamentalists, the 'terrorists' happen to be poor and hungry villagers from rural Indonesia whose wives and children are sold off to Thailand to fuel its booming sex tourism industry with which the hotel manager is believed to have dubious connections. Tourism for Lazaroo is another form of colonisation, dispossession and exploitation where 'East meets West' on unequal terms: 'Many of the locals believed the terrorists chose to bomb Bali because they were jealous of its profit from tourism.' (98) While profit making should be the obvious culprit in the widening gap between rich and poor and the rise of fundamentalism in Third World countries like Indonesia, racism and the demonization of the Muslim world in the West serves instead as an empty signifier, a bulletproof for the contradictions inherent within capitalism for which racism is a permanent yet immaterial feature.

Spooks and Specks: Performativity as Subversion

[12] A historical materialist reading of alienation sees racist culture and its byproduct, alienation, as infecting the very texture of human nature and nature per se directly instead of a purely intellectual phenomenon as it directly affects the subjects within it. In Lazaroo's *The Australian Fiancé* set in the 1950s' Australia, whiteness literally impregnate bodies and landscapes. In Broome, the Eurasian female protagonist is faced with racial prejudice and the whiteness of the land, 'more bleached than everything she's ever seen.' (82) She soon herself becomes a 'spook'

through being 'Othered', her body 'stiffed and starched, so enamoured of white,' (74) having lost touch with 'corpo-reality'.

[13] In other words, to expose the spectre of racism and whiteness as a social construct and 'empty spook' is obviously not enough. 'Race' consciousness – as when the narrator of *World* realises how 'their [White Australians]' apparent knowledge was just racism' (39) – must in turn pave the way for strategies of subversion to the status quo. Thus the *spectre* of racism – i.e. its concrete latency even in today's so-called liberalist discourses as well as its immaterial, 'scientific' irrelevance that has nevertheless served to justify the exercise of power and colonialism in particular – must not only be made visible but embodied, performed and travestied, traversed and transformed. Bashed and forced by his aggressors to re-iterate his abject identity, is Justin's declarative at the end of Teo's *Behind the Moon* that he is 'a fucking Asian faggot' subversion or subservience? How do we differentiate the strategic from the purely essentialist moment? It is hard to conceive how such 'parotty' constitutes a native clearing, for if 'clearing' there is, it is an extremely violent one that may have cost his life altogether.

[Justin] read his fate in the knobbled knuckles of clenched fists and the angry orange burn of lip-clamped cigarettes. 'Fucking Asian faggot.' [...] He heard the snarl, 'What are you?' Through crackled bleeding lips he said, 'I am me.' And at last, for the first time in his life, he knew that this was true. He no longer needed the external markers of identity, the first thing people saw or learned about him and judged him by. He was not reducible to his ethnicity or his sexuality or his occupation or geographical location or even his family. *Somewhere between the surface of his skin and the creases of his soul, in the interstices of mind and matter, there was a void in which he simply was.* 'I am me,' he said. He accepted it. Pain was a starburst on his flesh. They said, 'What are you?' [...] At last he gave in and croaked, 'I'm a fucking Asian faggot.' (italics mine) (333-4)

[14] As a disquieting echo, *right but not quite*, Justin's 'croaking' however creates a 'crease' in the authority of his aggressors, so that a Third Space arises where Justin is able to reclaim his existence beyond identity markers and declare: 'I am me.' The existential 'void' Justin now occupies results in/is the result of that other void or spectral Self not only characterising the excluded 'Other' but the racist system as a whole. Indeed, if being an 'Asian faggot' is an empty signifier, then by extension/reflection both the enunciator and its *énoncé* are empty. By filling the interstitial gaps of positionality, the 'nothingness-of-being' (to use Sartre's terminology) and the contingent, situational, performative (the 'doing-of-being') character of identification are thus

paradoxically revealed. Justin is then allowed to be anyone as he becomes no one in particular. Sartre's famous quote, 'existence always precedes essence', is however initially reversed for Justin; essence or what posits itself as such always precedes, becomes and *precludes* existence. Thus the 'Mirror Stage' marking the establishment of the Ego, of an 'I/Eye', is suppressed in the racist situation, as Lazaroo's unnamed narrator in *World* soon finds out. She is unable to identify with, and instead identifies *against*, the image of herself reflected back in the mirror.

I stayed home on the evening of the social and stood for a long time in front of the bathroom mirror. There, I measured myself against what I was not: not blonde, not blue-eyed, not clear-skinned, not full-bosomed. Instead, tall and bony, dark-haired, green-eyed, a scattering of tiny pimples like coarse-grade sandpaper across my olive-complexioned face. Every feature adding up to *invisibility* in the eyes of the school kids. (85) (Italics mine)

[15] Unlike some early feminists like Beauvoir who saw the female as the negation of the male body, the above example suggests what 'negation' eventually means. Her identity has been erased, suppressed, and thus made invisible, lying outside the realm of the Symbolic and into the Lacanian Real, beyond signification. I must therefore turn to Luce Irigaray who contends that 'woman neither is nor has an essence.'(86) Judith Butler writes

This is the case for her precisely because 'woman' is what is excluded from the discourse of metaphysics. If she takes on a proper name, even the proper name of 'woman' in the singular, that can only be a kind of radical *mime* that seeks to jar the term from its ontological presuppositions. (38) (italics mine)

[16] Irigaray's feminist argument is as applicable to female (non)agency as it is to the racist situation, for I have shown in part one how, in particular in the case of Western representations of Asia, race, gender and sexuality as categories intersect and overlap to create the idea of an a-/homo-sexual, feminine Asia. To posit Asian minorities in the de-essentialised Real however reverses the naturalising claims that what's tangible lies within the Symbolic. As a 'mime' or a simulacra, not a mere reflection of, reality, the Symbolic necessarily loses touch with humanity, as Richard Dyer in *White* suggests by describing the deadly ghostliness of whiteness and its lack of anchorage in the bodily Real. Racialised minorities instead are the ones whose body is on the line by having to live with their 'Other' shadow/disguise. Thus says one of Teo's characters crudely: 'I just want to live without ghosts, sleep without dreams. I want to blur the boundaries of my body in a mechanical and mindless fuck.'(3) Similarly, Justin's embodiment of his image reflected in the

mirror of his aggressors' eyes is no more than a 'spook' materialising itself as soon as it is voiced out: 'I am me/ I'm a fucking Asian faggot.' Is Justin's performance, however, just that? Mirrors do not reflect but rather distort, so that Justin does not so much 'give in' as give *back*, signaling the possibility of agency, however seemingly mimetic. Judith Butler sees performativity (which she differentiates from performance, i.e. the restaging of otherness as mere 'entertainment') as a strategic site of subversion having both political implications/repercussions as well as being inevitable for oppressed minorities whose existence is not only repressed but suppressed.

A signifier is political to the extent that it implicitly cites the prior instances of itself, drawing the phantasmatic promise of those prior signifiers, reworking them into the production and promise of "the new," a "new" that is itself only established through recourse to those embedded conventions, past conventions, that have conventionally been invested with the political power to signify the future. (220)

[17] The spooky nature of the master-signifier 'Asian' is both a weakness *and* strength for Justin; a weakness, since beyond abjection lies a refreshing yet frightening vacuum, so that Justin's narcissistic declaration, 'I am me', may seem like a dead end; a strength, for such vacuum also leaves the possibility of a 're-marking', a 'speck'. As Irigaray's radical feminism highlights, master-signifiers function as cover-ups for the erasure of the feminine within a masculinist discourse but they can be inhabited and reclaimed precisely because they appear to be phantasmatic. This 're-marking' does not so much re-enter the Symbolic as exposes its mythology of naturalisation, leaving an indelible stain and in turn revealing the paradoxical void upon which the whole structure lies. Performativity may thus be defined as the means by which this master-signifier ought to be displaced onto the margins of representational power and 're-covered', or covered over. As butler argues,

A performative "works" to the extent that it *draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized. In this sense, no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating history of force. (227) (italics mine)

[18] Lazaroo's *The Travel Writer* starts and ends with Ghislaine's thesaurus, a legacy of colonisation and the two English men in her life: 'My mother found herself in the thesaurus, Eurasian, wedged between half-breed, mongrel and hybrid.' (1) Her daughter Isabelle wants to throw the thesaurus away but Ghislaine refuses. These English men are now long gone, so is the

English colonisation of Malaysia. Only the postcolonial trace of her past and present erasure remains that must be 'crossed back' (*retraversé*) and re-appropriated for Ghislaine to rewrite 'herstory.' I thus do not see performativity in its most superficial postmodernist framework to mean play-for-play's-sake but as a liberating force that can fight dominant ideologies biopolitically, at the level of the body itself. Every bruise, every mark on Justin's body is what pushes him, in a violent outburst of pain, to come back full circle to his own body and assume rather than deny his position in marginalia by spitting the fricatives of his abjection/objection at his opponents' face: 'I'm a fucking Asian faggot' (i.e. deal with that!).

[19] Interestingly, Butler locates the perfor(m)ative (re)iteration – the way it 'draws on and covers over' past iterations – in hiatus and catachresis. (220) I thus further reinterpret Justin's mimesis as performativity under erasure (Derrida's *sous-rature*). The abject signifiers of Asianness and homosexuality when reiterated are not only displaced (hiatus) but also misplaced (catachresis: the disquieting echo, right but not quite) as Justin becomes the agent of his own existence and purveyor of new meanings. We can therefore argue that what may pass for insults are eventually subverted and miss their target to be lost within what Butler calls the citational chain. The existentialist and strategic essentialist moment for Justin is to re-establish a void between existence and essence, made possible only insofar as Justin temporarily assumes a 'Je/Jeu' (i.e. 'I'/'play' in French). Such conscious strategy of masking is different from internalised racism or plain-short essentialism and ultimately leads to *unmasking*. Justin's abject identity is like an empty shell, broken and creased, now lying at his feet waiting to be remolded (erasure-as-suture). Similarly, unmasking for Lazaroo's narrator in *World* signals a point of departure and the externalization of her racial stigmatization, when her 'face to wear cracked [under the] Fantasia filament Light' (169) of her white Australian and Asianophile boyfriend Max. As he undresses her, 'Max became silent, unusual for him' (169); yet the *disclothing* of her identity beyond Orientalist fantasy cannot be expressed in words. Max's speechlessness before the void of her 'Real' identity means that the mask is now hers to be reworked and voiced out. Again, I thus agree here with Luce Irigaray's belief that the truly 'Other' or 'abject' – the feminine, racialized subject, Queer, etc– lies outside the Symbolic and within the Real, its representation in language being but a masquerade by the dominant.

Beauvoir contends that the female body is marked within masculinist discourse, whereby the masculine body, in its conflation with the universal, remains unmarked. Irigaray clearly suggests that both marker and marked are maintained within a masculinist mode of signification in which the female body is "marked off", as it were, from the domain of the

signifiable. [...]Thus for Irigaray woman is 'the masculine sex *encore* (and *en corps*) parading in the mode of otherness. (18)

Conclusion

[20] While arguing how the 'abject Other' is an '*encore*' or supplement rather than the negation of orthodoxy may seem desponding for minorities, it is also comforting. Indeed, we can safely conclude how racist stereotypes are fictions created by the dominant bearing no material reality. This does not mean that racism can be ignored altogether, quite the opposite. Its embedded 'epidermalisation' as Frantz Fanon powerfully puts it encrusts ('*en corps*' or in/within the body) every pore of ourselves. Racist stereotyping must be (dis)embodied and ultimately subverted when it is performative instead of acquiesced, which leads Butler to ask.

What are the possibilities of politicizing disidentification, this experience of misrecognition, this uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does not belong? And how are we to interpret this disidentification produced by and through the very signifier that holds out the promise of solidarity? Laurent Berlant writes that "feminists must embrace a policy of female disidentification at the level of female essence." [...] That failure of identification is itself a point of departure for a more democratizing affirmation of internal difference. (219)

[21] Tien in Teo's *Behind the Moon* who migrated from Vietnam as a baby is for example constrained in Australia to adopt 'a culture that wasn't even her.' (282)

She didn't even speak their language. Only in a Western country could a half- Vietnamese, half-black American girl take one look at the dizzying permutations of intermingling Chinese, Koreans, Indonesians, Singaporeans, Malaysians, Indians, Sri Lankans, Filipinos and Japanese around her and define herself as generically, if not genetically, Asian. (283)

Asians are often described as a 'Model Minority' in the West. What the term really speaks of, however, is the extent of their lack of representational power and invisibility. By rallying around the fraudulent sign of 'Asianness' as a protest against Hanson's rise in the mid-90s, Asian Australian communities helped 'make "visible", by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover up of a possible operation of the feminine in language.' (76) Butler's call for 'internal difference' cannot however be fully articulated for Asian Australians

until Australia moves beyond being what David Walker describes as an 'anxious'⁵ nation that is perhaps not so much racist as xenophobic towards Asia and afraid of its own place *in* Asia. Until then, Asian Australian literature will partly remain confined by the necessity to address and rework the external signs of these fears, while Australians may continue singing the national anthem without realising, as one of Teo's narrator does, that the meaning of fair (just) also signifies 'white' in cover.

But most disturbing of all, to be 'fair' was to be white-skinned, even though E.M. Forster might have remarked that 'the so-called white races are really pinko-grey.' 'Advance Australia Fair' was pregnant with all sorts of uneasy implications. Was it only white Australians who were supposed to advance? Or did 'Australia Fair' mean that only white people were Australians? Like the Patriarch, I wanted desperately to assimilate. I wanted to wash myself into clean whiteness; bleach myself into Advance Australian Fairness. Instead, I pissed my pants and was considered a dirty little Chinese girl. (183)

About the Author

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¹ My argument is not new. There is an extensive body of work from which I draw in this paper that has similarly noted feminising processes in Western representation of Asia and Asian female/male subjectivity (see for instance: Praso 2005; Eng 2001; Broinoswski 1996; Coad 2002). What often goes unmentioned, however, I believe, is the role played by the feminisation of Asia in facilitating Western imperialist/colonising enterprises in the East as well as serving to defuse past and present threats of an Asian/Oriental rise situated as the quintessential antithesis of Western 'civilization.'

² For a useful introduction to Australia's conflicting relationship with Asia and the persisting role of the category of 'race' and whiteness as a site of privilege in contemporary Australia's nation-building, see for instance: Walker 1999; Hage 1998.

³ I refer the reader to Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*, in which the latter argues how a certain discourse of a negative Orient as a creation of the West has helped the West define and construct itself.

⁴ Zizek's concept, developed in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) does not exclusively apply to oppressed minorities. Zizek for instance talks at length about the empty meaning of so-called 'democracy' in Western liberal bourgeois societies.

⁵ Walker, David. *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999.