



LUND
UNIVERSITY

Visualising Balance, Balancing Visualites

Race, Epistemology and Equality in Visual Culture

A Master's Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts (120 credits) in Visual Culture

Sarah Samira El-Taki

Division of Art History and Visual Studies

Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences

Lund University

KOVM12, 30 credits

Supervisor(s): Linda Fagerström

Spring semester 2018

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have supported me during the writing of this thesis, my supervisor Linda Fagerström, my colleagues Lena Quelvenec and Eildih Urquhart, my friends Cecilia Aketch, Rahel Weldeab Sebhatu, Mohamed Hussein and Tawonga Chitindingu and my sister May El-taki.

Most importantly I would not have been able to complete my masters studies without the support and guidance of my mother Nadia Guerraoui. I dedicate this work to my maternal grandmother Sâadiya Bashar who passed away during the writing of this thesis.

Abstract

Visualising Balance, Balancing Visualites:
Race, Epistemology and Equality in Visual Culture
Sarah Samira El-Taki

This thesis is based on my interpretation of three particular visual examples that were created in relation to the racial tensions that were occurring at the time of their production. My visual examples are (1) the 2016 campaign advert commissioned by Operation Black vote (2) The music video *I'm not Racist* by the American rapper Joyner Lucas released in 2017 (3) Sir Davey's Proclamation Board to the Aborigines 1816 which circulated around 1850-1888. These images were created with the intention of addressing racial tensions, they can be labelled as didactic images, as they offer the viewer a means of taking responsibility and action regarding the respective event or tension. Using the proclamation board as a historic example I analyse the symbols in all three images and question how a visuality addressing racism uses the same narratives as a colonial image. I question how these symbols work to keep definitions and understanding of race and racism within narrow margins that are defined by a whiteness that is believed to be objective. Using *Black Feminist Thought* as a methodology I also question how can we create a visuality that attempts to represent racism without the epistemology or ontology of a racialised person? How does this reproduce historical representation of racial tensions? How does this visuality work to centre or de-centre the position of a white subjectivity? How does epistemology work for or against the creation of this visuality?

Keywords: Race – Epistemology – Whiteness – Equality – Post Race

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
List of Illustrations	iv
Introduction.....	1
Aim and research question.....	2
Background and relevance.....	2
Theory and method.....	4
Empirical material and delimitation.....	6
Previous research.....	7
Disposition of thesis.....	8
Chapter 1 - Whiteness as invisible, Whiteness as subjectivity	9
1.1 Richard Dyer's White	9
1.2 Whiteness as invisible	11
1.3 Locating whiteness within the myth of post-race	13
Chapter 2 - Empirical material	14
2.1 Overview of Operation Black Vote's "A VOTE IS A VOTE"	14
2.2 Overview of Joyner Lucas' music video <i>I'm not Racist</i>	16
2.3 Focused analysis of Operation Black Vote's "A VOTE IS A VOTE"	21
2.3.1 Particularities of whiteness.....	21
2.3.2 Re/presenting the Other	25
2.3.3 Equalising Object	31
2.4 Focused analysis of Joyner Lucas' music video <i>I'm not Racist</i>	36
2.4.1 Particularities of whiteness.....	38
2.4.2 Equalising Object	39
2.4.3 Re/presenting the Other	41
Chapter 3 - Governor Davey's Proclamation Board to the Aborigines	48
3.1 Overview of Governor Davey's Proclamation Board to the Aborigines	48
3.2 Re/presenting the Other	56
3.3 Particularities of whiteness.....	57
3.4 Equalising Object	58
Chapter 4 - The Master's Tools	60
4.1 Racialised ontology/Racialised epistemology/Racialised visibility.....	62
4.2 Racialised consciousness	64
4.3 Objective objectivity. Equalising equality	66
Conclusion.....	69
Appendix.....	74
Bibliography.....	80

List of Illustrations

Fig 1. Operation Black Vote, A Vote is a Vote, 2016. Created by Saatchi and Saatchi. P. 14.

Fig 2. Screenshot (3m 03sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017. P. 16.

Fig 3. Screenshot (1m 34sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017. P. 18.

Fig 4. Screenshot (3m 49sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017. P. 19.

Fig 5. Screenshot (6m 16sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017. P. 20.

Fig 6. Operation Black Vote, A Vote is a Vote, 2016. Created by Saatchi and Saatchi. P. 21.

Fig 7. Screenshot (3m 03sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017. P. 36.

Fig 8. Govenor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816, ca. 1850-1888. P. 48.

Fig 9. *Frame A*. Cropped section from *Govenor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816*, ca. 1850-1888. P. 49.

Fig 10. *Frame B*. Cropped section from *Govenor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816*, ca. 1850-1888. P. 50.

Fig 11. *Frame C*. Cropped section from *Govenor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816*, ca. 1850-1888. P. 51.

Fig 12. *Frame D*. Cropped section from *Govenor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816*, ca. 1850-1888. P. 51.

Fig 13. 'Coolest Monkey in the Jungle' hoodie advertised on H&M website, 2017. P. 78.

Fig 14. Dove advert depicting a black woman transforming into a white woman, 2017. P. 78

Fig 15. Pepsi advert featuring model Kendall Jenner offering a pepsi to police officers during a protest. 2017. P. 79.

Introduction

*That Justice is a blind goddess
Is a thing to which we black are wise.
Her bandage hides two festering sores
That once perhaps were eyes.
Langston Hughes, Justice.¹*

*So, when a white person holds objectionable views, racist views for instance, we rightly condemn them. But when equally unacceptable views or practices come from someone who isn't white, we've been too cautious frankly - frankly, even fearful - to stand up to them.
David Cameron, speech at Munich Security Conference, 2011.²*

This thesis is based on my interpretation of three particular visual examples that were created in relation to the racial tensions that were occurring at the time of their production. My visual examples are (1) the advert commissioned by Operation Black vote to encourage black and non white minorities in the UK to vote in the 2016 EU referendum. (2) The music video *I'm not Racist* by the American rapper Joyner Lucas, released around the time of the Charlottesville clashes in the summer of 2017, between various groups of the extreme right and those who oppose them. (3) Sir Davey's Proclamation Board to the Aborigines, an image that was created around the time of The Black War, circa 1850-1888, where native population of today's Tasmania fought against the British settlers and colonisation. These images were created with the intention of addressing the very tensions that I outlined above, they can be labelled as didactic images, as they offer the viewer a means of taking responsibility and action regarding the respective event or tension. In analysing these images I became surprised by how the two contemporary images reproduce similarities apparent in the proclamation board from 1829 in their formal qualities. All three images were created by a white hegemony which is obvious in relation to the proclamation board but not so for the two contemporary images. This thesis will explore the relationship between epistemology and the creation of images and a visuality. How does one inform the other and vice versa in a racialised context?

The campaign advert was found whilst searching for visual sources relating to the 'Leave' campaign. Some groups who campaigned for the UK to leave the European Union adopted a racist tone that sought to vilify immigrants, specifically those who were non-European. This image appearing within this Google search is interesting as its intentions were not necessarily rooted in either 'leave' nor 'remain' rather to encourage people of colour to

¹ L. Hughes, 'Justice' in *Scottsboro limited: four poems and a play in verse*, New York, Golden Stair Press, 1932.

² D. Cameron, 'Prime Minister's speech at Munich Security Conference, 5 February 2011, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>, [accessed 17 May 2018].

vote. It places two seemingly oppositional individuals upon a seesaw and suggests that they are politically balanced and their vote weighs exactly the same. This form within the image creates a sense of ambiguity, can we be sure of who the image is intended for? This form then reminded me of the similar political balance found within the music video of Joyner Lucas' *I'm not Racist* and was found in the proclamation board.

I offer my interpretation of all three visual examples and then discuss the forms and symbols in the images. How do these symbols contradict the message that has been created in the images? Within my analysis I explore epistemology, ontology and visuality and most importantly the notion and role of whiteness, as hegemony in creating images and as subjectivity as the central viewer. How do these depictions work to centre or de-centre the position of a white subjectivity? How can epistemology work for or against the creation of this visuality?

Aim and Research Question

This thesis seeks to understand how images are used in addressing racial tensions occurring at the time of their production. From analysing the examples I have extracted three visual tropes and symbols that exist within all three examples, these are; *re/presenting the Other*, *particularities of whiteness and equalising objects*. I will provide analysis and contextualise the ways in which these three symbols appear in the examples. The third image in my analysis will work as a historical reference to discuss why these symbols remain in use in contemporary productions of racial tensions.

I discuss how these symbols work to keep definitions and understanding of race and racism within narrow margins that are defined by a white hegemony. A whiteness that is believed to be and presented as objective. A question that has guided my thesis but not answered given the limitations is; how can we create a visuality that attempts to represent racism without the epistemology or ontology of a racialised person? How does this reproduce historical representation of racial tensions? How does this visuality work to centre or de-centre the position of a white subjectivity? How does epistemology work for or against the creation of this visuality?

Background and Relevance

In the run up to the 2016 European referendum in the UK, Operation Black Vote, a non-partisan and not-for-profit national organisation aimed at encouraging communities of colour,

predominantly Asian and African/Caribbean, to vote produced a galvanising advert. The advert places two people, seemingly oppositional entities in front of each other. One is a person of colour and the other is white. The words “A VOTE IS A VOTE” written above both of them. This striking and bold image attempts to speak to a polarised country, the rising again of an emboldened right wing, racist rhetoric, and the power that people of colour have in a democratic society.

Surprisingly this image was found during a Google search of images related to the ‘leave’ campaign, a campaign that in part was co-opted and driven by a racist rhetoric. What struck me the most is how ambiguous the intended viewer was. Without seeing the logo of Operation Black Vote, which appears small in the frame, and without understanding how they operate, we are faced with an image that does not only speak to people of colour. What's more the images could very easily be used to bolster the very people and position that this image is seeking to dismantle.

It is no longer just a question of what we are looking at but also *who* is looking. Discussions of race are constantly erupting. Discussions of subjectivity are part of this eruption. Therefore in creating images that aim to represent racial tensions it is important to question, who is making the image and from what perspective.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall describes the tensions and realities of being ‘in but not of Europe’ a phrase coined by C.L.R James, a Trinidadian historian and journalist.³ Within visual culture, people of colour, those who are the descendants of the formerly colonised, are bodies that appear rather than look. When we do look, we are labelled as offering “counter-visibility” or a “non-Western” perspective.⁴ On a personal note, these labels have been attached to my work and how I interpret images and texts. As this paper evolves, it will become evident that it is necessary to move away from such binary and oppositional terminology. Who does my reading become counter to? In attempts to to de-centre whiteness just by our perspectives it is inherently a counter position because of who I am. Even though I was born, raised and educated in the West, my perspective has also been labelled as a “non-Western” one. Rather than recognising the shifts and multiple non white, non male subjectivities that exists within the West and the institutions, those who fall outside of this

³ Hall, S & Back, L, ‘At Home And Not At Home: Stuart Hall In Conversation With Les Back’, *Cultural Studies*, vol 23, no 4, 2009, p. 658-687, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09502380902950963?scroll=top&needAccess=true>, [accessed 18 May 2018].

⁴ For more on this please see N. Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look, A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2011.

perceived 'norm' are constantly labelled as counter, something that suggests an opposition. There may be a dominant creator of images and meanings, however one's reading, even if considered oppositional, is not oppositional. To claim one's view as oppositional means that they are themselves oppositional.

The questions I ask with this thesis speak directly to the rejection of binaries, the dominant white subjectivity, and the link between an epistemology and the creation of a visuality. At present there are conversations on inclusion and representation. This generation of non-white, non-European descendants, which I am a part of, are questioning whether or not the visual world of mass media is representing us. Can we see people who look like us? Are the images a fair representation of the society. Often these questions do not go far enough to ask, who are creating the images of us? Who is offering a representation of us? And do these representations exist simply as visual pacifiers, for example the not-so-strategically placed black and brown faces on a university prospectus.⁵ This is one example of how necessary the examination of who is creating the images is as important as what the images do.

Theory and Method

For my interpretation of the visual examples I use cultural theorist, Stuart Hall's, theory on encoding/decoding. I treat each symbol or sign as a 'vehicle sign' that is encoded with meaning that we then as viewers decode.⁶ I use this theory in analysing the examples as a whole and then further when I isolate three symbols, or vehicle signs, that appear in all three examples. This theory allows me to derive my own meaning from the images, as Stuart Hall believes that there are three types of readings; dominant, negotiated or oppositional.⁷ I would instead like to engage with Hall's *preferred* reading as how signs are loaded with an intended meaning by the creators of the message but as viewers we are not passively accepting of the meaning and can offer not a *counter* but a different reading. One that is not described as oppositional According to Hall this is a negotiated reading.⁸

⁵ In his book '*We Gon' be Alright. Notes on Race and Resegregation*' American journalist Jeff Chang describes an incident from early 2000 at University of Wisconsin in which the admissions department were unable to find an image to use for the prospectus that did not include solely white students. Unable to find an appropriate image they cut and pasted an image of the face of black student Diallo Shabbaz into the proposed image. Chang explores the role of images in creating the illusion of diversity and who this is intended for. For more please see C. Chang, *We Gon' Be Alright. Notes on Race and Resegregation*, New York, Picador, 2016.

⁶ S. Hall, '*Encoding/Decoding*', in Hall. S et al (ed), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, London, Hutchinson, 1980, pp. 128-138.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

In analysing three different images which each have varying purposes I am attempting not to locate a phenomenon that exists strictly within one medium, nor one that affects only one racialised group. The aim is to show a theme and a pattern that emerges across these different genres and which present people of colour, whiteness and racism in a similar way. There is a distinction to be made between meaning creation as a viewer of images and image creation that seeks to reproduce structures of dualistic thinking master/slave, oppressor/oppressed by the very structures that are being called into question.

Firstly, the manner in which I handle the visual materials will be in the same way I handle all the materials used for my research. This includes but is not limited to books, articles and discussions among peers. I believe that scholarship should be recognised as not coming from a *nowhere* but a *somewhere*, a *someone*. How I select, read and interpret the materials is informed by my ontological place in society and how that has been shaped through what I experience from this particular position. This is not only limited to myself but also to a history of scholarship that has placed whiteness, males and heterosexuality as an objective position. Therefore my theoretical framework will be rooted in *Black Feminist Thought* from the African American sociologist Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Feminist Thought* intersects race, gender, class and sexual orientation as means of oppression and addresses these intersections in a way that is fruitful for my position as a scholar.⁹ However locating oppression does not remove subjectivity from those who are being oppressed by certain structures and institutions. *Black Feminist Thought* is the positioning of black women and women of colour as being both an outsider within white institutions whilst also bringing knowledge of their own experiences to be able to question those very structures. This is what Collins describes as a ‘distinctive standpoint’. The three key themes within *Black Feminist Thought* are (1) the meaning of self-definition and self valuation, (2) the interlocking nature of oppression and (3) the importance of redefining culture.¹⁰

I do not approach the examples in this thesis with what has been labelled as “counter-visibility” nor with a “non-Western perspective”. So in addition to *Black Feminist Thought* I also utilise professor of African American studies’ Molefi Kete Asante’s Afrocentrism as a methodology that addresses location and positionality. Asante describes Afrocentricity as ‘the quality of viewing phenomena from perspective of the African person as an agent of history, not as an object of European creation.’¹¹ *Location* in Afrocentric terms questions if someone

⁹ It is important to note that black feminism is not the inversion of white feminism, nor a reactionary movement against white feminism.

¹⁰ P. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd edn, New York, Routledge, 2000.

¹¹ M.K. Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance*, Cambridge, Polity, 2007, p. 16.

is centered or marginal with regards to his or her culture. Therefore I am a person of African descent that exists within Western culture. My location and that of other people of colour is not marginalised as something that is *counter*.¹² This too links with the key themes of Black Feminist Thought, self definition and redefining culture.

To locate one position as being counter to the other suggests an opposition which is not what I seek to create. Rather using Afrocentrism as a method of seeing and dealing with materials reminds us to acknowledge that there is no objective viewer, and as visual culture scholar this is the importance of understanding the difference between vision and visibility.

All of the images were created or partly created by white institutions and/or individuals who use ‘objective’ codes or tools while addressing the lives and oppression of people of colour. Therefore I will engage with Audre Lorde’s theory *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*.¹³ In this example I use the term ‘master’ to locate the individuals or the institutions that exist within positions of power. This does not contradict my previous comments on centring the African or the person of colour. I do not position whiteness as a primary source of creating meaning from images, but in these examples they are ‘masters’ in terms of creating definitions of the ‘Other’ that have continuously appeared in cultural productions. This does not remove nor shift the centrality and subjectivity of people of colour.

Empirical Material and Delimitation

This thesis will examine three types of visual examples and use them in two different ways. The examples are (1) a campaign advert from commissioned by Operation Black Vote encouraging people of colour to vote in the 2016 European Union referendum. (2) The music video for the rap song *I'm not a racist* by American rapper Joyner Lucas released in 2017. (3) Governor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816, the visualisation of the British law which used during the height of The Black War in Tasmania between the natives and the British settlers around 1850-1888.

To focus my analysis I have chosen three symbols that appear in all three images, these are; *re/representing the Other, particularities of whiteness and equalising objects*.

¹² Although we locate the person of colour, the non-European as central, the Afrocentric method does not relegate the European perspective to that of a lower or marginal position. Asante makes this clear in his manifesto explaining; ‘Afrocentricity should not be viewed as the oppositional of Eurocentricity. It does not seek to create not impose its consciousness as universal’. M,K, Asante, *An afrocentric manifesto: toward an African Renaissance*, Cambridge, Polity, 2007, p. 16.

¹³ A. Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, New York, Crossing Press, 1984.

I will engage with the campaign advert and the music video as my primary examples of investigation. The proclamation board, which will also be analysed, will work as part of my historical element that shows how these three symbols have appeared to work together since the beginning of colonialism to address inequalities.

Each of these examples come from different eras and although they all address racial tensions they of course vary in context. Whilst I do not wish to equate all experiences as being the same I will highlight how the conversation and images created all work in the same manner.

Previous Research

Given how recent my two contemporary visual examples are there has been no academic research or papers published about them although there are journalistic and op-ed pieces, not to mention blogs and online forums. However I offer some texts that have been published in relation to topics I discuss.

White by film scholar Richard Dyer is a book that intersects the representation of white people in the media and offers an almost anthropological look at white people in general. However this book still centres a white reader and thus I use it to explore the assumed white subjectivity of viewers.

Visual culture scholar W.J.T. Mitchell published a collection of speeches he gave at the WEB Dubois lecture, title *Seeing Through Race* in 2012. In this book Mitchell suggested we understand race as a medium, something that we can use to see through to understand the world. He uses the statement given by the former US president Barack Obama of a ‘teachable moment’ in the ongoing struggles of racism.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall has also published many books and articles on race and representation and identity in multicultural Britain. While I use his theory of *encoding/decoding* I have chosen not to include much on his work regarding race and representation. This is not because I do not agree with him but my focus is more concerned with epistemology and the centring of a non-white viewer.

To look at and interpret visual material with the intersection of black feminist theory is something that black feminist scholar, bell hooks has written three books on *Race and Representation*, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* and *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. African American philosopher George Yancy has written and edited many books on the topic of whiteness and subjectivity, *Black Bodies*, *White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America*, *What a White Looks Like: African-American*

Philosophers on the Whiteness Question and Look, A White!: Philosophical Essays on Whiteness.

Disposition of Thesis

In chapter one, I begin by outlining the limitations of critical whiteness studies. This chapter will consider how through a continued positioning of whiteness as the only subjectivity that there is a belief in the invisibility of whiteness.

In chapter two I initially provide an overall reading of the campaign advert by Operation Black Vote and the music video *I'm not Racist*. This primary reading, will allow me to examine all of the signs and meanings existing in the image. I will then proceed to study the visual examples again, this time focusing on three symbols that I have identified. For each of the three symbols I provide an interpretation of how I believe they function within the narrative.

In chapter three *Sir Davey's Proclamation Board to the Aborigines*, works as the historical link in my thesis. I offer a reading of the image and then similarly work with the three symbols that I believe to be the most pertinent. I rely on texts to explore the myths that are presented in the proclamation board.

In chapter four I link the three symbols that I have extracted from all of my visual examples to the white subjectivity that I believe is inherent in the creation of the images. Using Black Feminist Thought I discuss why the campaign advert and the music video work in the same way as the proclamation board that was in circulation almost 100 years ago.

Chapter 1. Whiteness as invisible, Whiteness as subjectivity

'I see white people' Marlon Wayan, *Scary movie*.¹⁴

In this chapter I examine whiteness and subjectivity. As a scholar dealing with representations of race, subjectivity and what is described as “counter-visibility” it is essential that I also understand the creation and presentation of whiteness. Critical whiteness studies and the de-centring of whiteness is just as if not more important in understanding the dynamics that render whiteness invisible. For my thesis, it is imperative that we understand what these particular representation of whiteness signifies. It is not invisible and yet its hypervisibility within the images offers a hiding place for white viewers who do not recognise their position within white hegemony and power structure. I use the term whiteness to signify a spectrum of people who identify and are identified as white and with European ancestry. This spectrum is the complex structure of whiteness, how it appears, how it is represented and how it is located.

In *An Afrocentric Manifesto* Molefi Kete Asante, a scholar from African American studies, states ‘Discovering centeredness is itself the primary task of the afrocentric researcher.’¹⁵ Asante is solely concerned with the positionality, subjectivity and history of the African, so I wish to apply his theory, method and position whilst I consider my reading of whiteness. Asante himself creating the Afrocentric method as a tool to ‘uncover the masks behind the rhetoric of power, privilege and position in order to establish how principle myths create “place.”’¹⁶ His use of the word ‘place’ focuses on the location and positionality, questioning whether one is central or marginal. With this in mind I locate my ontological and epistemological understanding of whiteness from the central position as a person of African descent and as a racialised body.

Richard Dyer's White

I depart my exploration regarding ideas and connotations of whiteness using references from film studies scholar, Richard Dyer's book *White*.¹⁷ I use this text to begin with as Dyer intersects Whiteness studies with film studies and visual culture, a task similar to my own. Dyer positions himself as one of the first scholars to do so and in his text he explicitly

¹⁴ *Scary Movie*, dir. Keenen Ivory Wayans, Miramax Films, 2000 [DVD].

¹⁵ M.K. Asante, *An afrocentric manifesto*, Cambridge, Polity, 2007, p. 52.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 27.

¹⁷ R. Dyer, *White*, London, Routledge, 1997.

encourages others to look critically at the images of white people. I do not wish to reject the entire book by Dyer, however throughout his book the use of the words “our” and “us” when addressing a generalised reader suggests that this book is written about whiteness for white people or assumes a white subjectivity. I also understand the tone with which he is using, one of reflection and one that is calling out to white people to also begin questioning their understanding of whiteness. Dyer informs the reader that whiteness needs to be made ‘strange’ and that ‘we don’t mention the whiteness of white people’.¹⁸ Who does Dyer refer to with this statement? Within Dyer’s text he assumes not only the neutrality and invisibility of whiteness in images that are created but also in the way people of colour see and understand whiteness.

Whiteness is not invisible. It has never been invisible. As I sit in the university library I can see white bodies around me. Not only am I aware of them but I am aware of how I am seen by them. In the introduction of this chapter I included a quote from the movie *Scary Movie* (2000), a spoof film that mocks references to popular horror/slasher films. The line *I see white people* has been appropriated from the line *I see dead people* in the film *Sixth Sense* (1999). The appropriation of the line and the delivery by Marlon Wayans as someone who is as scared of white people as one would be of dead people is one humorous example of the visibility of whiteness and what it signifies for certain people. It is presented as something strange or to be feared in pop culture.

Racialised bodies have understood and looked critically at whiteness long before the publishing of *White*. For example, African American feminist and scholar, bell hooks recounts the shock among her white students as they learnt that black people ‘watch white people with a critical “ethnographic” gaze’¹⁹. It may then, come as a shock to Dyer and the white people he speaks of, to also to learn that not only do people of colour see whiteness, but that they look critically at whiteness. As a child and even now as an adult I hear “that’s so white” or behaviors and mannerism that are described as being “white”. This would suggest that for people of colour whiteness or showing signs of whiteness is already seen as strange.²⁰ For me the discrepancy lies not in the visibility or invisibility of whiteness, rather the creation and continuous positioning as white subjectivity as norm. Whiteness is only invisible if we consider the one who is looking, understanding and being as white.

¹⁸ Dyer, *White*, p. 2.

¹⁹ B. hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*, New York, H. Holt and Co, 1995, p. 34.

²⁰ Often this remarks is made among friends when someone is well spoken or enjoy activities that are seen as being European.

Dyer does indicate that whiteness and its position as ‘norm’ is one of the conditions that led to invisibility of whiteness.²¹ He writes ‘White people need to learn to see themselves as white, to see their particularity’.²² However I believe that whiteness is only invisible to itself *through* the positioning as the norm. I recognise an ontological difference between being positioned as norm and as becoming invisible to those who are not white. Here I write specifically about the visuality of whiteness rather than white privilege. These ideas are so intrinsically linked that it is with great care I will attempt to unravel and focus on the visuality. Later on I will explore its connections to white privilege. Whiteness is the signifier, the privilege comes with what is signified.

Whiteness as invisible

The claim that whiteness is invisible comes from the same line of thought as colour blindness. Whiteness is not invisible, no one is colour blind. The ‘doll test’ is one example of the visibility of all races, whiteness included.²³ If children of varying races can identify the races of dolls and thus attribute positive characteristics to the white baby and negative characteristics to the black baby the argument that Dryer and many like him make does not hold. To be attributed with positive adjectives and ideas is not neutral nor is it invisible. In fact it is a result of the successful narrative of whiteness that has prevailed.

The problem that arises with statements that define whiteness as invisible is that one is unable to locate and understand the structures of whiteness and furthermore unable to dismantle the privilege and system that exists. How do we approach a phenomena that we are unable to see? Dryer is essentially trying to understand the dynamics of whiteness and I include his text to shift the narrative of whiteness as invisible.

We could argue that the invisibility of whiteness is a myth, which is something that must be maintained and defended by what bell hooks describes as *imperialist, capitalist, white supremacist patriarchy*.²⁴ This term is how hooks, being part of black feminism is able to

²¹ R. Dyer, *White*, p. 2-3.

²² *Ibid*, p. 10.

²³ The ‘doll’ test, originally an experiment designed and conducted by psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark in the 1940s has been used in various times and places to understand how children understand race and are affected by it. Primarily used with African American children, its more recent versions have included children from all races. The test uses two dolls, a black and a white one, and then children are asked to identify which one they think is ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘beautiful’ etc. For more information please visit <http://www.naacpldf.org/brown-at-60-the-doll-test> accessed 12 March 2018].

²⁴ B. hooks, *Ain't I a Woman; Black Women and Feminism*, Boston, South End Press, 1981. bell hooks first uses this intersection of oppression in *Ain't I a Woman*, however it appears in all of her publications and is a key feature in her text.

create a network of power relations and forms of oppression. It is not only from the position that people of colour have been looking at whiteness but that white people themselves see whiteness. A white person, for example, able to see the non-whiteness of an individual in a position where they would usually see someone white.²⁵ The definition of what is and is not white, who does and does not pass, the declaration of post-race is rooted in the continued superiority of white subjectivity. It is whiteness as a structure of power that decides how the definition will evolve.

Robyn Wiegman, herself a white scholar within the field of woman's studies, examines the paradox of Whiteness studies and in her text cites Richard Dyer's work.²⁶ Wiegman takes issue with Dyer's assumption on the invisibility of whiteness and writes

In assigning the power of white racial supremacy to its invisibility and hence its universality, Dyer and others underplay the contradictory formations of white racial power that has enabled its historical elasticity and contemporary transformations.²⁷

Here the discussion has shifted to power dynamics but it is Wiegman's use of the terms 'historical elasticity' and 'contemporary transformations' that pinpoint the paradox of presenting whiteness, and the racial domination that comes with it, as invisible. There is no essentialist idea of whiteness, but as Wiegman continues, there is 'indeed universalised whiteness through the entitlements of the citizen-subject, but they simultaneously mobilized a vast social geometry of white particularity, as the declarative warning "For Whites Only" ominously suggested'.²⁸ It is not my intention to suggest that all white people adhere to ideas of white racial supremacy but as I will examine the image and the presentation of whiteness it will become evident that the images do not address the system of whiteness. By presenting what I describe as a *particularity of whiteness* the images become one example of how the invisibility of white hegemony has allowed to shapeshift.

²⁵ I use the case of the former president Barack Obama as an example, who was subjected to scrutiny regarding his place of birth because he is a black man occupying the position of president of the United States. This is one of example that it indicates that whiteness is very much visible in its ontology of being *non non white*.

²⁶ R. Wiegman, "'My Name is Forrest Gump': Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity', in J. Parker, M. Romero, R. Samantrai (ed) *Interdisciplinarity and Social Justice*, New York, Suny Press, 2010, pp.217 - 243

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 228.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 228.

Locating whiteness within the myth of post-race

Visual culture scholar WJT Mitchell considers using race as a medium, something that we see through, as a solution to the intellectual belief that race is no longer worthy of discussion. Mitchell highlights the necessity to frame the discourse of race in a different way, one that acknowledges the roots in 19th century European pseudoscience and at the same time does not simply dismiss the very real ways in which it affects those who are racialised.²⁹

In his book *Seeing Through Race* Mitchell states that ‘we live in a time when race is widely regarded as a myth and an illusion, when we have finally gotten beyond the clichés of identity politics, racial “essences”, and biological determinism and entered into a “post-racial era”’.³⁰ Again here as with Dyer I am forced to ask, *who* is determining the shifts, to *whom* does race exist as a myth? Mitchell does not answer these questions yet he posits that the shift towards thinking of the post-racial era may have something to do with ‘the time when “Whiteness” was last revealed as a form of racial identity.’³¹ This is an interesting perspective that Mitchell takes, as often it is the election of Barack Obama that is cited as the signalling of a post-race era.

Finally Mitchell refers to *White* by Dyer as being part of a new narrative where everyone, including white people are now racialised. He asks what concept of race can we hold on to when we have entered into mythical thinking regarding race, he believes that ‘it would be in danger of evacuating the whole concept of race and reducing it to the status of anyone who is “minoritised” or simply regarded as an object of prejudice’.³²

²⁹ W.J.T. Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2012.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 11.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 24.

³² *Ibid*, p. 32.

Chapter 2. Empirical Material

I will first examine the two contemporary visual examples that I have selected and complete a brief semiological analysis using the *encoding/decoding* method. This will allow us to examine the various icons and symbols that exist within the images and extract all meaning. This will also ensure that we do not limit our understanding of the images to the three themes I outlined in my introduction. I will analyse the two contemporary images in this chapter. Given that the third visual example will form the basis of my historical reference I have chosen to analyse it separately.

Overview of Operation Black Vote's "A VOTE IS A VOTE"



Figure 1. Operation Black Vote, A Vote is a Vote, 2016. Created by Saatchi and Saatchi.

The image above is a campaign advert. It includes two individuals placed on a child's seesaw in a public park. On the left we have an Asian woman dressed in gold and pink clothing and on the right a White European man in jeans and a t-shirt. Her face, almost stoic yet almost expressionless whereas the white European man is exhibiting angry body language. He is pointing at her with a furrowed brow. Their bodies are visibly of different sizes and weights yet their weight is presented as being equal given that the seesaw has remained level. The bodies themselves create different shapes, the woman on the left appears as a blob like shape, whereas the man on the right has clear defined shapes to his body. His arms and legs

are distinct and give him more prominence in the image. The woman almost blending into the background with the shapes and colours of her presence.

Two very particular individuals are being presented to us. On the left of the seesaw we have a woman of South Asian descent of medium to dark complexion, draped in a pink and orange sari. We could assume that she is Indian and Hindu.³³ Her hair is grey which would suggest that she is an older woman.

Sat opposite to her the younger white man dressed in a polo shirt that is buttoned up, light blue jeans that have rips at the knees and cherry red Doc Martens boots. This clothing is typically worn by *skinheads* in the UK. Originally a subculture of British working class society that also included Mods, Rudeboys and Punks the look became synonymous with extreme right individuals and racist parties like the British National Party. A shaved head, tattoos and an angry stance directed to his opposition he becomes the prototype of racists in the UK. He is pointing at her, his finger directing all the anger he is displaying in his body language. This coupled with the outfit allows us to associate him with the racist right wing in the UK. His bottom jaw is protruding, the image has frozen his speech, I would imagine he is saying “YOU!”.

The location is undisclosed yet the scene appears to be in a children’s park. The grass beneath them is unkept, patches of mud mix with almost ankle length grass. Signs of rust and chipped paint appear on the seesaw. Just behind the characters are small bushes and trees. Beyond the trees are houses and flats. From the background one could assume it is in a suburban area of an undistinguished city. Council flats as well as terraced housing indicate the banality and unexceptional landscape. This could be a suburb anywhere in the UK. However they do indicate working and lower middle class environments which tend to be heavily populated with immigrant communities. The council or high rise flats are synonymous throughout Europe and North America as being the culmination of the ghettoisation of immigrants and descendants of the formerly colonised. Often cited as one of the phenomenons that led to the failure of multiculturalism they indicate closed off communities and the reluctance to integrate and assimilate. The somewhat banal landscape is actually loaded with meaning.³⁴

The weather is not particularly grey nor sunny. Blue skies are partially covered by thick white clouds, possible indication of a typical British summer. The weather however does

³³ The sari is also worn by women of other faiths and from neighbouring countries in the Indian subcontinent, however for this image it is making a general statement that this woman is probably Indian.

³⁴ For more reading please see A. Lentin and G. Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism : Racism in a Neoliberal Age*, London, Zed Books, 2011.

not correlate with the lighting that is falling on the subjects. Harsh shadows appear beneath the Asian woman whilst her face is lit brightly, possibly from beneath as it creates an almost halo effect. Her forearm remains dark with shadows filling the folds of her garment. The white European man is shrouded in obscure lighting. Dark shadows with bright lights create harsh contrasts on his entire body whilst his shadow falls behind him.

Text above their head reads “A Vote is A Vote” and the text below anchoring what the ‘vote’ is related to. The EU referendum will take place on the 23rd of June and to register to vote one must visit the website by the 7th June. A small logo is placed by the letters “OBV” and “Operation Black Vote”.

Overview of Joyner Lucas’ music video I’m not Racist

I will now present my interpretation for the music video for the rap song ‘I’m not racist’. In order to perform my analysis of the music video I have decided to limit myself to 4 frames. As the video itself does not change location, characters or style I do not risk omitting information that would change the essential narrative. The video itself is 6 minutes and 55 seconds long. Two characters act as ventriloquists for Lucas as he raps what he believes each side would say to the other given the opportunity to sit down at a table together. Lucas, not featured in the video, is the only voice we hear. The camera often pans to show who is ‘speaking’ and the reaction of the one who is listening. I have provided lyrics in the appendix to give more context to what is being said. I begin my analysis with figure 2 which is not chronological, however it is my central image so I place it first and then process with the other three figures which are in chronological order.



Figure 2. Screenshot (3m 03sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017.

Two individuals, both male, one black and one white, are sat at a table opposite each other in a derelict building. The location is not specified. Each person sits facing the other, looking directly at the person in front of them. The black man has his head resting on his right arm with the left arm placed on a table. The white man has both hands placed on his lap. Let us now consider the characters that have been placed in the image. The man on the left is an overweight white man, wearing dark blue jeans, a light blue shirt and the iconic red “Make America Great Again” hat worn by impassioned Donald Trump supporters. His beard is quite thick and he sits with his hands on his lap which could be read as a defensive position. He is significantly larger than his opponent and sits back with his feet just touching the floor. Although this man is not presented as a stereotypical racist ‘redneck’ he would be placed within that spectrum of racist, right wing white individuals from the US. Forced into silence by ‘political correctness’ and eight years of Obama, he represents the white backlash that has been emboldened by Trump's election to say exactly what they want. Confidently with his hands placed on his lap he awaits his turn to make his feelings heard.

On the right the younger black man, wearing blue jeans and a blue jumper with a slim gold necklace. He has nothing on his body that would link him to any political ideology. He is black and that is all that is presented. He appears much smaller than the man on the left, his posture suggest that he will be doing more of the listening than the speaking. He leans forward on the table, his head propped up by his arm suggest a schoolboy who is somewhat fed up but will continue to be present.

From this scene our vision is slightly skewed with a pillar in the middle of the screen. The pillar shows signs of decay, paint has peeled off parts of it and works to create a division between the two. The room has two windows on the left side of the frame, although it appears that there is no natural light. Just below the window is a pile of bricks or other building materials. To the right of the frame is a wooden door with an ‘exit’ sign above it. This is something that would be used to guide people out of the building in case of an emergency. On the same wall as the door, there is a fire alarm and square patches of paint. Lights hang from the ceilings, the kinds one would find in an office or industrial space. They do not create a warming light, rather they are often quite harsh lighting. The ceiling itself seems to have fallen or been left to disintegrate. Pipelines are visible and create a lattice on the ceiling, this may have been the original ceiling had the space been used for industrial purposes. The floor is a greenish colour with signs of wear and tear. Faded colour suggests that the room was once in use. Although it is uncertain whether or not this is the original flooring.

Devoid of any anchor the space could be read as a neutral environment. There is nothing to suggest either one would feel more comfortable in this particular surrounding. The bare walls, stripped flooring and lighting give an eerie atmosphere. Similar to mafia style movies where someone may be interrogated or a deal is about to be struck. What has brought these two individuals here?



Figure 3. Screenshot (1m 34sec) from music video *Im not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017.

In this scene we are presented with a different vantage point. From this position we see a much smaller space than the previous image. The black man on the left is sat down looking up at the white man who is stood up. A table is what separates them. On the right the white man stood up has his right arm placed by his side and his left hand is pointing towards something or someone which is not present in the frame. There is a tattoo which is illegible. His facial expression shows signs of anger with a clenched jaw and a strong gaze. The lighting has changed from the first image, there are more windows yet here they emit natural light. Whereas the first image one could gauge the time to be in the evening, the lighting here suggests the meeting has occurred during the day.

We know from the previous image that there is a door and an 'exit' sign where the white man is pointing. We do not need to know what is being said to describe what is happening and what is intended with such an aggressive point. The gesture, similar to the one in the advert, is one that has become synonymous with racist right wing ideology. To leave. To get out. To be shown the exit. These sentiments all exist within the rhetoric that as people

in but not of the West if we do not like what is happening we can leave.³⁵ As racialised people in the West our acceptance into society is on the basis that we do not make too much trouble or complain. The inability to criticise or call out injustice without being shown the door further enforces the position of the Other. Although there is a clear distinction to be made between those who arrived in the West as immigrants from the formerly colonised and those who are the descendants of the formerly enslaved Africans in the US there is still a belief that they can leave and go ‘back home’. Those not of European descent are constantly reminded that the respective Western country that they live in is their home. That being said there is simultaneously a narrative that encourages those who do not ‘like it’ or embody ‘Western values’ can go back home. Only those who are white are able to talk back to systems of power and oppression. The rest should be grateful.³⁶



Figure 4. Screenshot (3m 49sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017.

In this scene we set yet another vantage point as the camera has panned behind the white man who was formerly speaking. The black man is stood up and it is now clear that his top is a sports jersey. He is angry and using his body to allow anger to erupt. His face is contorted and full of emotion. Given that image is a still from the music video the blur of his

³⁵ For more information regarding this narrative see A. Lentin and G. Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age*, London, Zed Books, 2011.

³⁶ Columnist Amanda Platell wrote an article as a reaction to a performance by the Black British grime artist Stormzy who vocalised anger towards the British government’s failures surrounding the fire at Grenfell tower where predominantly people of colour and immigrants were trapped and killed in the apartment block. This is one of the most recent examples where someone who is ‘In but not of Europe’ has their views and frustrations delegitimised because they should be grateful. A. Platell, ‘Platell's People: Can't you show a scintilla of gratitude, Stormzy?’, *The Daily Mail*, 24 February 2018 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-5429041/Platells-People-Stormzy-gratitude.html> [accessed 30th April 2018].

body and movements tell us that his movement is erratic and full of energy. Using his left hand he is knocking the hat off the white man's head.

In the run up to and after the election, the red hat with “Make America Great Again” sewn into the front is seen as part of the uniform of the new right wing of American politics. The statement itself was and remains the campaign slogan of Donald Trump. Similar to the campaign slogan of former President Ronald Reagan in 1980, “Lets Make America Great Again”. It is widely worn among supports and President Trump himself. It symbolises for many the racial hatred embodied within the ideology of the Trump campaign and now the Trump administration. The black man knocks it off his head to symbolise his feelings towards not only the hat but the ideology that is attached to wearing this hat.



Figure 5. Screenshot (6m 16sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017.

Above the image shows the two men place their arms around each other and hug. They use both arms to hold each other, it isn't a half hearted hug. The hug is a sign that they have reached an agreement or no longer see each other as separate entities. Their bodies become joined. Their arms and bodies wrap around each other. They place their faces into the bodies of the other, they are not reluctant to fully embrace each other. The white man's face is not visible to us. The black man's face looks to the wall in front of him, his facial expression is almost a blank stare although half of his face is covered by the shoulder of the white man.

Focused analysis of Operation Black Vote’s “A VOTE IS A VOTE”



Figure 6. Operation Black Vote, A Vote is a Vote, 2016. Created by Saatchi and Saatchi.

I will now return to the images and extract the three symbols which I have labelled, *particularities of whiteness*, *re/representing the Other* and *equalising object*. As the campaign advert is my primary image I will provide detailed theoretical framework for understanding these symbols before exploring their representations in the other two images.

Particularities of whiteness

In the image above we are presented with two individuals and a seesaw. On the left is an Indian woman and on the right there is a white European man. The white man’s body is tense, almost vibrating. His feet are grounded, knees slightly bent to suggest he is about to stand up. The energy in his body and his visible anger have raised him ever so slightly. The arms are muscular and tense, one hand grabs firmly to the handle in front of him which keeps him in place. The other points directly at the woman. As we read the point of his finger our eyes are directed left and we read the statement *A VOTE IS A VOTE*.

The white man has been styled to play a certain role. He is wearing a polo shirt that is buttoned up, a pair of acid washed jeans and cherry red Doc Martens. His head has been shaved, not entirely bald but very short. If we use Stuart Hall’s notion of sign vehicles and symbolic vehicles we can begin to decode what his clothing and style says about this character. This particular style of dress is a direct reference to the skinhead subculture that

began in the 1960s in the UK. Sociologists Daniel Sarabia and Thomas E. Shriver describes the style of the skinhead culture and its roots in the working class;

Style is used to express a particular message within skinhead culture. Skinheads pay homage to the roots of the movement through fashion aimed at expressing a working class appearance. Through direct observation at cultural venues several markers of working class identity emerged. Working class image was expressed through shaved heads, work boots, suspenders, jeans, and plain or striped button down shirts.³⁷

In this particular article the authors are attempting to dislodge the skinhead subculture from being associated with racist right wing, neo nazi movements. The original skinhead movement emerged at the same time as the windrush from the Caribbean and many elements of the skinhead culture is in fact rooted in Jamaican culture. This position thus aligning the original movement away from what has now been co-opted by racists. This does not run counter to my argument rather it portrays quite clearly how anchored this look and the skinhead subculture is in being understood as a racists movement. To confront the negative perception as the title of their article suggests means that there is a widely held perception.

The white man's clothing and hairstyle are coded with cultural signifiers that the target audience can decode and therefore we can place him within the category of *skinhead*. Within that category we can further define him as a *racist skinhead*. As stated elsewhere he is using his body to communicate a very particular message towards the individual sat opposite him. His entire body is tense and the muscles in his arms and neck protrude out, this occurring when the individual is expressing extreme emotion. The jaw is clenched. He grabs the handle with one hand. The back arches towards the way he is gesturing. His entire body is being used to project a message which is leaving his body through the pointing of his hand. What do we know about this gesture and how can it anchor our understanding of the kind of *skinhead* this individual is? This kind of pointed finger is another example of a sign vehicle or symbolic vehicle as Hall describes.³⁸ As viewers we can identify that this point is not one that instructs us to look in the pedagogical manner. For those of us who reside in the UK or are familiar with cultural language of the UK will have seen this gesture before. It is often used by those of the right wing, neo nazis and skinheads who use the pointed finger to identify those who should leave the UK. It identifies those who they believe are a problem in the UK. In this

³⁷ D. Sarabia and T. Shriver, 'Maintaining Collective Identity in a Hostile Environment: Confronting Negative Public Perception and Factional Divisions Within the Skinhead Subculture', *Sociological Spectrum*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2004, p. 278, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02732170390258614>, [Accessed 13 March 2018].

³⁸ S. Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', in Hall. S et al (ed), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, London, Hutchinson, 1980, pp. 128-138.

image it also communicates the same message. The white man points to the racialised body. It is the racialised body that makes him point.

The white man has been coded with cultural signifiers, the gesture, the clothing, all work to anchor this individual into what I believe is a *particularity of whiteness*.

My understanding of the codes in the image has defined the individual on the right as being a racist right wing skinhead. This is a *particularity of whiteness*. It is a clearly defined notion of what the individual represents and believes. So what does this mean for our understanding of the image? Or to push the enquiry even further, what myths are embedded within the image as a relation to this *particularity of whiteness*?

Within the image there is a binary between a racist body and a racialised body. In the coming chapters I will explore the ontology of the woman on the left to represent racialised people but now I pose the question, what does his representation of the phenomena of *racism* mean? How does one begin to define racism, let alone depict it within a single frame? The purpose of this question is not to give a clear definition rather it is to understand how the presentation of racism within this image, coupled with the *particularity of whiteness* keeps the understanding of race, racism and power within very narrow definitions.

It is important to examine his significance in relation to the racialised body. This particular racist body's presence within the image is to signify the racism. It is a racism that the woman is faced with. It is loud, it is overt, and it can be clearly identified. The racism that this woman faces stems from a system of oppression that is held up by white supremacy. In identifying how we represent racism we also identify what constitutes racism. This particularity of whiteness fits into the accepted narrative of what racism is and what a racist looks like.

When we imagine what a racist person looks like what image comes to mind? A neo-nazi? A skinhead? KKK? Possibly a police officer? These visual rhetorics are made hypervisible within cultural productions as the *racist whites* which I would argue keeps the understanding of racism within very narrow definitions. Referring back to Wiegman's text she identifies the role of segregationist and klan-esque ideologies as being 'referential framework for understandings of white supremacy in general' which meant 'white americans could join efforts to undo civil rights reform without recognising their activities or opinions as participation in the contemporary reconfiguration of white power and privilege.'³⁹ This 'referential framework' could also be identified within the images we consume from mass popular culture. As well as identifying what racism looks like this 'referential framework' can

³⁹ Wiegman, *Whiteness Studies*, p. 229.

also make it difficult to expand definitions of racism to include the heterogeneous ways in which racism exists and is enacted out.

If we examine this individual within the stereotypes that exist around his narrative as a racist it would be someone who is uneducated, ignorant and reacting, rightly or wrongly against a system that has left him powerless. For example, he is angry that immigrants are taking away jobs from the native people, in this case of Britain. We can recognise this argument from all across the West, the reasons put forward and the way he is presented to us. We all can identify this kind of rhetoric around racism. It is uneducated. It is ignorant. I would also argue that it doesn't wield that much power. When we isolate the individuals from the system within which they exist, in this case white supremacy, we do not address and then dismantle the power structures. This brings us back to my argument regarding the myth of the invisibility of whiteness. The 'racist whites' are not invisible, but in this image it is made hypervisible thus rendering the racism of whiteness invisible.

Here I make a distinction between the racism of whiteness and racist whites. The racism of whiteness speaks to whiteness as a power structure i.e white supremacy. This is a power structure that white people have access to and all benefit from whether they are aware of it or not. The representation of racist whites is an attempt to isolate those 'bad apples' and create a narrow definitions of what racism is.

This *particularity of whiteness* has been placed here for two reasons. He locates the racist and yet his presence will not disrupt whiteness as a power structure. The entire burden of whiteness and white privileges fall upon his shoulders and comes out through his pointed finger. His presence allows for a white viewer to remain in privileged positions without having to question their position within this image and within society. Let us imagine then if he were replaced with a politician who has been cutting funding for underprivileged areas, these areas are usually racialised, surely given the context of this image being a campaign image in that it encourages one to vote it would make more sense. If the Indian woman votes against said politician she/he would lose their seat and thus lose the power and privileges they once had. As the image exists, if the woman does vote and does win, what has the individual on the right really lost?

In stereotyping the ideas of what white racism looks like he becomes the scapegoat for whiteness, which exists as a white power structure, to hide behind. White liberalism, whiteness as privilege and the many way racism exists are not called out as being inherently part of the same system as the individual in the image. Or to refer back to Wiegman's text '[...] seldom has whiteness been so widely represented as attuned to racial equality and justice

while so aggressively solidifying its advantage.’⁴⁰ I am not suggesting that all white people are inherently and maliciously racist. My argument is directed at the representation of the racism of whiteness in this image. It overlooks the very real and varied ways in which racism and white power structures exist.

The racism of white liberalism and the structures of whiteness are not limited to these vulgar displays. They exist within our state institutions. They exist within our government where policies are drawn up. They exist within our municipalities where decisions are made on how resources are divided up. They exist within our universities where knowledge is dispensed and created. Racism and white supremacy is a system much larger than the man that has been presented to us in the image. I do not sympathise with him yet I do question his presence in the image. If racialised people understand what racism is present why is he there and who is he there for.

Re/presenting the Other

Let us now consider the role of the woman on the left hand side of this image. As stated previously her appearance would suggest that she is a Hindu woman from the Indian subcontinent. Dressed in a pink and orange sari, she is *placed* opposite the ‘angry White man’. I use the word *placed*, as it is exactly how I would describe her positioning. She appears awkward and uncomfortable in the image. As the sari includes a skirt which is overlapped with fabric it does not allow for her to sit in the proper way to use the seesaw. Both her legs fall over the same side and we have the feeling she could fall off. Given the silk or satin fabric that is used for her sari and the metal of the seesaw we can imagine it is not a secure seat. Not only that but her feet are unable to reach the ground. The weight balance is off. She levitates above the ground, using both hands to firmly grip the handlebar.

She is *placed* in opposition to someone who is sat relatively comfortably on the seesaw. His feet reach the ground, he himself is grounded. His comfort is also signified in the way he uses one hand to hold on to the apparatus and the other to gesticulate towards the woman. His grounding and ability to sit comfortably allow for him to use his body to also gesture and thus communicate his feelings and thoughts. Rather than be able to speak back, the woman is rendered mute as she straddles the *placing* of her body. The gesture he makes, an utterance, although essentially not making a sound speaks volumes against the silence of the woman. The Indian woman looks like she has seen this gesture before.

⁴⁰ Wiegman, *Whiteness Studies*, p. 230.

Her awkward placing which suggests discomfort juxtaposed with his comfort and grounding invokes feelings and thoughts on a body out of place. Sara Ahmed, the feminist scholar, explores this theme in *A Phenomenology of Whiteness* through a reading of a text by philosophers Frantz Fanon and Edmund Husserl.⁴¹ Ahmed's analysis regarding bodies that belong and bodies that are out of place highlights my reading of the image above. She writes, 'Colonialism makes the world "white", which is of course a world 'ready' for certain kinds of bodies, as world that puts certain objects within their reach'.⁴² The seesaw in the image above is an object that is available to whiteness. The white man can use the object in its intended way. Ahmed continues, 'whiteness is an orientation that puts certain things within reach'⁴³ thus his whiteness has allowed him to sit with comfort at this particular object rather than have to be placed upon it. He orients, she is placed. He can reach the object, she must hold on. His body is ready for the object, her body and the way it is dressed in her cultural clothing is not.

In this image it is not simply the body, in the corporeal sense, but more so how the body is presented. The white man's clothing allows for comfortable seating. I define the word comfort in relation to one's presence and ease at simply being but also in the potentiality for movement. Comfort in this context does not connote ideas of being relaxed in a nice chair and being comfortable. The jeans he wears means that he can place both legs either side of the seesaw and let his feet rest on the ground. She wears feminine Indian clothing, the fabric is folded over her body and does not allow her to sit on the seesaw in the manner it is meant to be used. What can comfort tell us about the dynamics in the image?

To be orientated, or to be at home in the world, is also to feel a certain comfort: we might only notice comfort as an affect when we lose it, when we become uncomfortable. The word 'comfort' suggests well-being and satisfaction, but it can also suggest ease and easiness...To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins. One fits, and by fitting the surfaces of bodies disappears from view. White bodies are comfortable *as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape*.⁴⁴

Ahmed here relates the concept of being *oriented* with being *at home*, and so my interpretation of the woman being *placed* within the image suggest her body is not at *home*. Here the idea of being *at home* is even more poignant when considering the narrative of the

⁴¹ S. Ahmed, 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness', *Feminist Theory*, vol 8, no 2, 2007, pp. 149-168, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139>, [accessed 15 February 2018].

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 153.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 154.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 158.

image. She is a racialised body and so she will always be seen as out of place. The UK is not her home in that it will always be contested by individuals like the white man on the right. This notion is something I will return to later on in the text. For now my focus is the idea of comfort. His ability to reach the ground, to be grounded, to reiterate Ahmed ‘it is hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins’ demonstrates his positionality not only within the image but in society.⁴⁵

The Indian woman’s discomfort, from her inability to orient her body appropriately towards the object means that she must hold on otherwise she will lose her seat. The losing of one’s seat is a what Ahmed describes as a *disorientation*⁴⁶ and what I have described as *placing*. I use the term *placing* as it alludes to external factors that work and effect the way someone exists. I am *placed* therefore I can be unplaced. I am given a place in this country, a nationality, a seat, but as a racialised person it can be taken away from me.⁴⁷

In her text Ahmed cites Frantz Fanon’s orientations and its relationship to race as he describes a casual scene of wanting to smoke in a public space. For Ahmed, Fanon ‘begins with a body that loses its chair’ this consciousness of the body that feels out of place is what she describes as ‘third person consciousness.’⁴⁸ The discomfort I read in the image of the Indian woman almost falling of her seat is from understanding the phenomenology of being *placed*. The ability to be *placed* means that one can be *unplaced*, removed. ‘The experience is one of nausea and the crisis of losing one’s place in the world, as a loss of something that you have not been given’.⁴⁹ Ahmed here again reflecting upon Fanon’s text, and although the reading of a black man’s body is not the same as the reading of an Indian woman’s body, it is similar when put in relation to whiteness in that it is Other. The racialised body is read as out of place and thus can be put back in its place.

Can the Sub-Altern speak?

Above I located the body of the Indian woman as one that is unable to orient itself within a context of whiteness. Her body is focused on remaining upon the seesaw, she uses both hands

⁴⁵ Ahmed, p. 158.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.160.

⁴⁷ During the writing of this thesis the UK’s conservative government has been embroiled in controversy regarding their immigration policy that led to many individuals of Caribbean descent who have been living in the UK for over 50 years, as part of what is known as the Windrush Generation, to be deported. The government has issued apologies and compensation although many cases are still pending. Sociologist Simone Browne discusses a similar case of a Somali Canadian woman who lost her Canadian nationality and citizenship whilst travelling because authorities did not believe the validity of her documentation. For more on this please see S, Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, London, Duke University Press, p. 131-159, 2015.

⁴⁸ Ahmed, p.161.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.160.

to hold on that she is thus rendered mute and unable to gesticulate. I will now explore the politics of representing, re/presenting and the subaltern that cannot speak. I remind the reader that this is a campaign advert, and if we consider the words of Aristotle and the political animal that can speak, what dynamics are created when the Indian woman cannot communicate?

In her seminal text *Can the subaltern speak?* literary theorist and feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, critiques Western epistemology and knowledge formation from Marx to Foucault. Spivak questions knowledge and how the West creates knowledge about Other using their own language and within the walls of academia. Although the text is from the 1980's it is certainly relevant to the visuals of an Indian woman in Britain, her body placed opposite a white man, and the way in which I have understood her to be lacking a voice. What's more Spivak's text is inasmuch a critique of postcolonial studies and the ways in which they perpetuate neo-colonial tropes of domination and representation. Operation Black Vote although working to engage people of colour to vote have operated in a similar way to how Spivak describes the discourse of postcolonial studies. I will return to this idea later on.

Primarily Spivak makes the distinction between *vertreten* (represent in the first sense) and *darstellen* (re-present in the second sense) in relation to class consciousness and the small peasant proprietors.⁵⁰ Spivak highlights a passage from Marx which I shall also quote for reference purposes;

incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master [...]'⁵¹

The two words and the definition given above although seemingly describe two different acts, *vertreten* and *darstellen*, they essentially work in the same way in silencing the subaltern. To represent (*vetreten*) suggests one as 'filling in', and to re-present (*darstellen*) as speaking on behalf of.⁵² Spivak, using Marxist terms, unpacks the ideology and power structures inherent in the West when re/presenting (both meanings) the other. Spivak continues with, 'the

⁵⁰ S. Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1982), P. Williams and L. Chrisman (ed), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 66–111.

⁵¹ K. Marx and F Engels, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1950, vol I, p303, cited in G. Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1982), P. Williams and L. Chrisman (ed), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 71.

⁵² J. Maggio, "'Can the Subaltern Be Heard?': Political Theory, Translation, Representation, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak', *Alternatives*, vol 3, no 4, 2007, p. 419 - 443, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540703200403>, [accessed 02 February 2018].

banality of leftist intellectuals' list of self-knowing, politically canny subalterns stands revealed: representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent'.⁵³ Thus any attempt to re/represent the other, the subaltern, the proletariat removes all sense of agency and subjectivity.

Secondly, using the Derridean subject, Spivak encourages us to measure the silence.⁵⁴ For Spivak, Derrida is '...the prototypical self aware philosopher, always questioning the boundaries.'⁵⁵ Spivak writes

It is more important to me that, as a European philosopher, he articulates the *European Subject's* tendency to constitute the Other as marginal to ethnocentrism and locates *that* as the problem with all logocentric and therefore also all grammatological endeavours. *Not* a general problem, but a *European* problem.⁵⁶

Thus in locating oneself as a European philosopher and being aware of one's inclination to place the Other on the periphery Derrida does not seek to speak on behalf or for anyone. Instead Derrida suggests one 'appeals' to or 'call' the 'quiet-other'.⁵⁷

Spivak then takes her argument further by applying this form of philosophical deconstruction to the Indian practice of *Sati*. *Sati* is a religious ritual whereby the widow of the deceased man immolates herself on her husband's pyre. The practice was outlawed by the British during the colonial era. The British understood the practice as unnecessary killings of innocent women and an example of barbaric, patriarchal oppression of Indian women by Indian men. The discussion on the practice of *sati* then became one between white British men and brown Indian men, each seeking to make claims on behalf of the brown Indian woman. It is important to note that Spivak is not encouraging the practice, rather she examines the discourse created by the two various forms of patriarchy which silents the subaltern, in this instance the Indian woman. My theoretical framework for the interpretation of the images is to question representation, voice and agency. The Indian woman, the third world woman, the woman of colour, has no agency. She is caught in the intersection between, in this case, race and gender.

Let us now return to the image above once more. How is she *re/represented* and does she speak? Like the woman that Spivak discusses, the woman in the image is also an Indian woman. This is important given the British colonial rule in India and the presence of Indians

⁵³ Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, p. 70.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 66–111

⁵⁵ Maggio, "*Can the Subaltern be Heard?*", p. 424.

⁵⁶ Spivak, p. 89.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 89.

in Britain. One thinks of the phrase *We are here because you were there*. An important line to remember whilst examining these images of individuals from the formerly colonised.

In the previous chapter I spoke on the *particularity of whiteness*, that every aspect of the white body has been presented as a whiteness that can be located. Through the clothing, hairstyle, body language and gesture the white man is communicating to us as a viewer. We can decode these 'sign vehicles', there is a communicability from the way he is presented and how he gestures. The white man communicates to us as a viewer whilst he also communicates to the Indian woman. Previously I linked his ability to communicate because of the body that is at home (read: British, White) and is comfortable in his surroundings. The white man can keep his seat whilst using only one hand to hold on to the seesaw and the other hand to gesture. Being able to communicate, however narrowly we understand it to be, is his ability to be a political animal, in the Aristotelian context. Compared to the Indian woman she has been *placed* in the scene and she has been rendered mute, on two counts.

As explored above, she is unable to physically articulate herself because she has been placed in such a way to make it impossible for her to remain seated whilst also gesturing towards her opposition. Her body is smaller and is placed on an apparatus that is not as accessible to her as it is to the white man. She must therefore use both hands to hold onto her seat. To use an arm to gesture, to communicate would put her position at risk. With only one hand holding on she would become unstable. Therefore her body cannot communicate, her body cannot be political, politically active. So she cannot gesture back to the white man, she is silent.

Secondly, as a viewer we cannot understand what her political views are. She cannot communicate with us. Whereas previously I spoke of the *particularity of whiteness*, how the clothing and the gestures of the white man locate him and his political views, she is presented without any signifiers to a political affiliation nor view. She is presented without a subjectivity, she is presented to us as a token. Is it that she cannot speak or that she does not need to speak?

How are we able to believe that they should even be sat in opposition to one another if we do not know the beliefs and/or thoughts of one them? Not only do we say that she can not speak but we say, *there is no need to speak*. To simply look upon this individual, to place her on the opposite side of the seesaw she becomes a vessel for the campaign, the advertisers and most importantly the viewers to project beliefs into. Her body has been encoded with cultural signifiers which should speak louder than words. The man on the left wears the uniform of right wing neo nazi thugs, he uses the same gestures as we have seen them use on the TV. He

has been encoded in a similar way yet he speaks, he communicates. The same cannot be said for the woman. What does the pink and orange sari signify other than she is from the Indian subcontinent? We can certainly question whether locating her racially/ethnically is of more importance than locating her politically. Her ethnicity is enough to know her politics.

Equalising Object

All humanity stands in devotion to the sun. To claim it as the symbol that guides us upwards from nocturnal depths is the right of the savage and the cultivated person alike.

Aby Warburg⁵⁸

In this section I will examine the use of a seesaw in the campaign advert. Even though I have understood each element in this image to be a form of symbol, no other stands as clearly and as more widely understood as a symbol than the seesaw. The seesaw is the central symbol, it sets the tone for image. Its connotations and symbolic meaning I would argue are widely understood. Balance. Equality. Impartiality. Justice. The use of the seesaw conjures up thoughts of Lady Justice holding up scales. This is also echoed in the message of A VOTE IS A VOTE and the balance of the seesaw. I will explore the history of Lady Justice and use Aby Warburg's text on Pueblo Indians to examine the use of symbols in modern day images.

The object that unites both of the characters in the image is a children's seesaw. It appears in a location where we would expect to see one, a children's playground in a park; although the image does frame it in isolation from any other apparatus that would be found in a children's playground. The lines of the seesaw run horizontal and is completely straight. It runs parallel to the text above it and parallel also to the pointed finger. The main part of the seesaw that connects the two individuals is painted red with clear signs of wear and tear. Brown and copper markings would suggest rust and dirt from years of use. Our individuals both hold onto handles which are blue and the entire structure is held up by a piece of metal that is a dark colour. Possibly dark blue or black.

Even though the Indian woman and the white man clearly do not weigh the same, the seesaw remains balanced. There appears to be absolutely no degree of imbalance. The seesaw is completely straight. Their weight is equal. Let me pose two questions. Why a seesaw and what is it measuring?

⁵⁸ A. M. Warburg, et al., *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*. In Warburg A. & Steinberg M., *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, London, Ithaca, 1995, P. 1-58. Available from JSTOR, (02 March 2018).

A seesaw, or a teeter-totter as referred to in the US, is a large panel that is balanced and pivots on a central column. Sometimes there is a handle to hold on to, and whilst most have a single seat on each end of the large panel, it is possible to place more than one person on either end. If I were to sit on one side of a seesaw, that side would immediately fall to the ground. To use the apparatus correctly it would require someone else to occupy the opposite seat. I would then need to raise myself slightly off the seat to allow my partner to comfortably reach the seat. If my partner was heavier than me I would be elevated whilst they remained closer to the ground and if they were lighter than me the opposite would happen. Ideally we would be the same size thus allowing us both of us to shift the same weight back and forth. Each would be able to reach the ground and push off which would keep both of us bouncing from the ground to the air.

From my brief description and hopefully the reader's own memory we can see that there is something inherently wrong in the physics of the image. One is heavier than the other. One is placed awkwardly. If this were to take place the man would be closer to the ground with his knees bent by his sides and she would have fallen off given that she would have been thrown in the air by his weight. Also coupled with her body language and orientation she is not sat in a secure way.

In the text *Representing Justice: From Renaissance Iconography to Twenty-First-Century Courthouses*, Yale Law professors Judith Resnik and Dennis Curtis question the use Renaissance iconography. In particular they focus on the cover of *The Economist* which depicts Lady Justice draped under a black cloth. It is shown in relation to just and unjust legal practices occurring the US surrounding terror related charges. They ask: 'Why did the editors assume that viewers would connect the image to justice, gone awry, rather than to warrior princesses, the Roman Empire or operas?'⁵⁹ As I have posed similar questions to the other icons within the image it is also important to question the use of the seesaw to represent balance and thus justice. They continue: '[...] *The Economist* is not alone in appropriating the icon of Justice. One can find her everywhere, marking both places and objects as law-related.'⁶⁰ Although the professors are primarily interested in the recognition of Justice in terms of the legal world they also recognise that she has many other uses in mass culture, appearing in cartoons, jewelry and commerce and its connotations of legality and equality.

⁵⁹ J. Resnik and D. E Curtis, '*Representing Justice: From Renaissance Iconography to Twenty-First-Century Courthouses*', Faculty Scholarship Series, 2007, p. 693, http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/693, [accessed 07 February 2018].

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.140.

They understand this as ‘further attesting to her ready recognizability’.⁶¹ It is not simply in the appropriation of Lady Justice but also how it is being recognised and read.

Lady Justice often appears with a pair of scales in her hand, sometimes blindfolded and sometimes with a sword. The scales or symbols that appear in her hands as means of measuring and balance comes from iconography of Ancient Egyptian Gods and Goddesses. The Goddess Maat embodied truth and justice and images of her appear in the ‘Book of the Dead’. In the illustrations Maat appears with the heart of the deceased placed on one side of the scales and an ostrich feather on the other. The ostrich feather which is also a symbol often shown in depictions of Maat itself represented fairness and justice as ostrich feathers are all of equal length. This judgement was referred to as ‘Judgment of Osiris’.⁶² Thus the heart and the feather were measured against each other. If the scales remained level the deceased was allowed into paradise with Osiris. It was said that a heart that had not been tainted with sin would be as weightless as the feather. If the heart was heavier than the feather then the deceased would be sent to Ammit, the soul-eating part lion, hippopotamus and crocodile demoness.

Rather than explore how and why these symbols move geographically from culture to culture I want to understand how it works within the image. Why the use of the seesaw, which I see as an extension of Lady Justice and the Goddess Maat. What is inherent in the understanding of the apparatus. Why a seesaw?

Symbols that guide

I reference the art historian Aby Warburg not in relation to pathosformel but in his idea of the symbol that guides us. Journeying to the Americas he recounts the serpent rituals of the Pueblo Indians writing describing them as follows ‘They stand on the middle ground between magic and logos, and their instrument of orientation is the symbol. Between a culture of touch and a culture of thought is the culture of symbolic connection.’⁶³ Warburg like other Western thinking and scholars at the time would have, and does, describe the peoples and cultures as primitive. They are not logical or rational beings. They rely upon the serpent and serpent rituals to control mother nature. They worship animal gods rather than the Abrahamic god. This narrative would inevitably lead to the civilising missions and colonisation of non-

⁶¹ J. Resnik and D. E Curtis, p.141.

⁶² Encyclopedia Britannica [website], <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maat-Egyptian-goddess>, [accessed 15 February 2018].

⁶³ A. M. Warburg, et al., *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*. In Warburg A. & Steinberg M., *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, London, Ithaca, 1995, p. 17. Available from JSTOR, [accessed 02 March 2018].

European people and culture. Although Warburg does recognise a link between non-European and European epistemology, he locates it two thousands years before his exploration ‘And yet two thousand years ago in the very cradle of our own European culture, in Greece, cultic habits were in vogue in which rudeness and perversity far surpass what we see among the Indians.’⁶⁴ Warburg goes on to state

Our own technological age has no need of the serpent in order to understand and control lightening...The replacement of mythological causation by the technological removes the fears felt by primitive humanity. Whether this liberation from the mythological world views is of genuine help in providing adequate answers to the enigmas of existence is quite another matter.⁶⁵

Here I find interesting the juxtaposition of ‘mythological’ and ‘technological’. Can we really think of them as oppositional? In my re-reading of the text my intention is not to invert the epistemological hierarchy that European thinker and writers at the time felt it necessary to create. In fact I whole-heartedly agree with the quote cited at the beginning of this chapter ‘All humanity stands in devotion to the sun. To claim it as the symbol that guides us upwards from nocturnal depths is the right of the savage and the cultivated person alike.’⁶⁶ If we are all guided, the *all* being the humanity which Warburg identifies, by symbols, why the need to stake a claim to the difference in ‘savage’ and ‘cultivated’ persons? The use of ‘technology’ does not take away the entirety of ‘mythology’. Warburg himself questioned the use of serpent symbols and rituals as ways of controlling mother nature, he did not believe as the Pueblo Indians did in their ability to do so. It went against everything he knew and believed in (read: European, rationalism, science). In the beginning of my thesis I include an excerpt from a poem by the African American poet Langston Hughes. ‘*That Justice is a blind goddess. Is a thing to which we black are wise*’, here he plays with the symbol of justice and the myth of justice in relation to the black population. Just as Warburg was skeptical about the symbols of the serpent to control the weather, Hughes and the black and non white population are also skeptical regarding the symbol of justice and its relation to actual justice.

Referring back to the image above, I describe the seesaw as working as a symbol of justice much like Lady Justice. A symbol of democracy. A symbol that democracy will lead to justice. Therefore by placing these individuals around the seesaw it works as an *equalising object*. Text above their heads reads “A VOTE IS A VOTE”. On the seesaw and in the voting process everyone is equal. What is a vote? What is the correlation between voting and justice?

⁶⁴ Warburg, *Images from the Region*, p.38.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 50.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 52.

A democratic society is one in which its citizens are free to vote. In some countries voting is mandatory, in others optional. I vote to cast my decision not particularly for what I want but I vote to decide what I want out of the choices that are made available to me. My decision counts when I cast my vote. Concurrently one can also lose the right to vote. One may have the right to vote but as voting is a right it is something that one can lose. In a democracy we can lose our rights thus meaning we are unable to make our choices or decisions heard. Who does and does not have the right to vote is decided by those who are in positions of power. A vote is a vote, but only for those who can vote.

A vote is a vote. One vote = one vote. A vote is equalising. The text runs horizontal and parallel to the seesaw. The seesaw here is the apparatus. It is an apparatus that can measure. It is understood as being rational, it appeals to rationalism. The seesaw is balanced and it is equal regardless of the body weight either side of it. Therefore the image communicates that a vote is equal regardless of who is voting. What the seesaw cannot measure is the power structures that exist with this two individuals. The white man on the right has his feet firmly on the ground, he is a body that is more at home on the seesaw, he lifts himself ever so slightly off the seat. He can, if he wanted to, make sure that she is no longer placed on the other side. He as a white, British man, has more rooting in his place in the UK. She as a brown, Indian woman has more to lose. Her seat, her place in the UK. Even when using the analogy of balance and equality whereby each vote has the same weight, it does not call into question what they are voting for. This means that even before approaching the seesaw, or the voting station, that the power behind their position and their vote is not equal. It is not balance.

So my inclusion of texts by Warburg in relation to this image and the symbols used highlights what Molefi Kete Asante describes as *chauvinistic rationalism*. Asante describes this as the way in which the West promotes its ideals and customs as being the most valued.⁶⁷ We all use symbols, that so much is true, but the validity and belief in which symbols is rooted in what is closest to European rationalism. The symbol of scales and balance used to discuss justice as though the structure of racism can be measured is one way we can think of *chauvinistic rationalism*. It is not so much the symbols that are being questioned, but who is using them to justify their means.

⁶⁷ Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto*, 2007, p. 148.

Focused analysis of Joyner Lucas' music video I'm not Racist

We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides, on many sides.

Donald Trump addressing the clashes in Charlottesville, 2017.⁶⁸



Figure 7. Screenshot (3m 03sec) from music video *I'm not Racist*, Joyner Lucas, 2017.

I begin this section with a quote from the press conference given by President Trump after clashes between white-supremacist groups and anti-racists in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017. The Unite the Right protest, which included Klansmen, neo-Nazis and white supremacists were demonstrating against the removal of a confederate statue from the city of Charlottesville. Counter-protesters aimed to silence and oppose the Unite the Right protest when James A. Fields Jr. a supporter of the neo-Nazis drove his car into the crowd of people killing one and injuring 19. The President, whose election has been identified as one of the causes of the new emboldened right spoke of the violence and bigotry on 'many sides'. At a later conference he spoke of there being 'fine people' in each group (the white sumpreacists and the ones protesting against them). I include it here to set the narrative for how the music video has been viewed and celebrated.

This music video became an overnight viral sensation, data from YouTube informs that it has been viewed 53,970,578 times and shared onto other platforms 1,059,514 times.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ D. Trump, 'Donald Trump's speech after Charlottesville protests', 12 August 2017, <https://www.vox.com/2017/8/12/16138906/president-trump-remarks-condemning-violence-on-many-sides-charlottesville-rally>, [accessed 18 May 2018].

⁶⁹ Data accurate as of 27th March 2018. Information is regarding views and shares from the YouTube platform. People will have been able to see it through other platforms.

Of course we cannot know whether the videos were shared with positive or negative views of the content but it was primarily celebrated for its fair and honest discussions on race relations in the US. CNN's digital trending news writer, Doug Criss, wrote *'I'm Not Racist' is the brutal race conversation nobody wants to have*.⁷⁰ Criss described the music video as '[A] really, really, really raw conversation' and 'powerful concept powerfully executed'.⁷¹

As stated before the music video is 6 minutes and 56 seconds long and the rapper Joyner Lucas raps each character's views whilst they mime. Two characters, one white, Trump supporting American and an African American appear sat at a table in an undisclosed but derelict room. Each take it in turn to stand up and speak to the other about their feelings and views on the current race relations in the US. The video begins with the white man, he speaks for 3 minutes, then takes a seat. They sit in silence for a few seconds and at 3:14 the black man begins speaking and finishes speaking at 6:06. The last 30 seconds of the music video shows the white man stand up after listening to the black man and extends a hug. The black man shrugs his shoulders and accepts the hug, they stand and embrace for 9 seconds. After the hug they then communicate with each other however we are unable to hear what is being said, given the gestures, we can read them as "no hard feelings". They touch each other, shake their heads, they look exhausted but glad that they have participated. They remain stood in front of each other and exchange smiles and encouraging facial expressions. The screen then fades to black and the following text appears;

We were all humans until Race disconnected us, Religion separated us, Politics divided us, And wealth classified us.⁷²

Viral content as knowledge production

I would also like to reflect on how I came into contact with this image. As I use *Black Feminist Thought* as my theoretical framework I engage with how we come into contact with knowledge through the communities we build. I have a friend with whom I share political beliefs but differ on how to reach ideals like racial equality. He often sends me content, as I do him, either in the form of articles, podcasts and videos that we feel reflect our respective ideas and belief. This friend sent me the music video in November 2017, when the video was first released. Like the comments I include above, he believed the success of the video was

⁷⁰ D. Criss, *'I'm Not Racist' is the brutal race conversation nobody wants to have*, CNN, 30 November 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/29/entertainment/joyner-lucas-not-racist-video-trnd/index.html>, [accessed 06 April 2018].

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *I'm Not Racist* [video], Joyner Lucas, 28 November 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43gm3CJePn0>, [accessed 27th March 2018].

rooted in the fact that both sides are given the opportunity to speak and express their opinions. However what I found disturbing was the lack of attention given to what was actually being said and argued about within the music. For many, including my friend, the visuals of these individuals being placed at the equalising object, the table, gave them a sense of mutual understanding and respect for each character. I include this small anecdote to place myself within context of this music video, I do not solely approach as a scholar, but someone who is embedded in communities who are affected by these kinds of discussions.

Particularities of whiteness

As I have stated before the white man is given a narrative and a position before he has even said anything because of the way he is styled. He wears a Make America Great Again red trucker cap, light blue shirt and trousers. The white man is slightly overweight and has a beard. These are signifiers for the viewer to decode as a Trump supporter, probably from the South or more rural background. The hat he wears is one that was primarily worn during the presidential campaign by Donald Trump and his supporters. This hat has the potential to and the purpose to make very visible not only one's political beliefs but explicitly to define one's views against racialised people. Susanna Schrobsdorff, explored this in her article 'Red Vs. Pink: The Politics of Fashion and Why a Hat Is No Longer Just a Hat';

In fact, you could tell the entire story of the past year in politics just by looking at what people wore or refused to wear. Nearly every controversial or inspirational moment has its own signature piece in the identity-politics collection. It started with the pantsuits and those red MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN caps [...]⁷³

Donald Trump's presidential campaign was supported by the racist right wing, neo nazis and the KKK and built upon racist, sexist and xenophobic ideology.⁷⁴ If we examine Trump's campaign slogan 'Make America Great Again' coupled with the comments he made against various immigrant and non-white communities, the campaign created a discourse that America was once great, however because of mass immigration, it has fallen into disarray. Looking at the exit polls after the election it is evident that across every demographic the majority of white Americans voted for Donald Trump. Trump's rhetoric spoke to the

⁷³ S. Schrobsdorff, 'Red Vs. Pink: The Politics of Fashion and Why a Hat Is No Longer Just a Hat', Time, 20 February 2017, p. 55. Available from: Business Source Complete, [accessed 29 March 2018].

⁷⁴ Former Grand Wizard of the KKK David Duke expressed support for Donald Trump and the KKK newspaper The Crusader also published articles to support Donald Trump's message of Make America Great Again. Donald Trump described Mexicans as 'rapists' and promised an 'immediate ban on all muslims entering the country'. He also gained popularity because of the birther scandal in which he accused the former President, Barack Obama, of being born outside of the US.

commonality of whiteness, and even if there is a percentage of those who voted for reasons that would not be described as inherently racists or anti immigrant, the commonality of whiteness became something to rally behind.⁷⁵ This commonality of whiteness gave some voters a sense of unity, even for those who were actually voting against their best interest in terms of their socio-economic position.

The wearing of the hat is a way to visualise the white character's political affiliation but also cement the way he sees himself as part of the political movement, he is not the silent Trump supporter, he is presented as a bold supporter;

Not coincidentally, the President's supporters had *the look of a real team* long before his opposition did. Thanks to those ubiquitous campaign caps, Trump rallies were branded early on. And they made for an impressive show of muscular red at all those televised rallies. [emphasis added]⁷⁶

Schrobsdorff makes an interesting comparison between the tactics of the Republican and Democratic presidential nominees, the creation of a team through the use of a uniform, in this case the red *Make America Great Again* hat. In the video the white man's physical appearance also works to narrow down exactly what kind of white man he is. Being an overweight man, with a beard, the light blue shirt and blue jeans would suggest a stereotype of a redneck or someone coming from the southern rural parts of America. These indicators work in the same way as the uniform of the skinhead in the previous image. They create a particularity of whiteness. They locate the racist whites within these narrow and stereotypical visual tropes. Therefore he does not represent the racism of whites but the racist whites. As stated before the white man in the image perpetuates the very visible and overt form of racism, that does exist, but is not the only forms that exist.

Equalising object

In this example, what I have described as an equalising object, is the table that they sit at. We do not know how they approached the table but as we watch the video we become aware that they are sat opposite each other. Much like in the previous image each person occupies one

⁷⁵ For more on this please see; F. Wilkinson, 'Election Analysts Discover Even More White Voters', Bloomberg, 02 February 2018 <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-02-02/election-analysts-discover-even-more-white-voters>, [accessed 21 May 2018]. B. T. Edsall, 'White-on-White Voting', The New York Times, 16 November 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/16/opinion/trump-white-voting.html>, [accessed 21 May 2018].

⁷⁶ Schrobsdorff, '*Red Vs. Pink*', p. 55.

side of the object and the image. Although unlike the previous image the equalising nature of the object is not in its ability to measure justice or weight (both literally and figuratively). Rather the table equalises simply by having those placed around it. To have a seat at the table means that one is an active subject. One can participate in discussion, have their words heard and be part of any decision making process. It is a metaphor to symbolise one's necessity to be included at the table. One whose position is guaranteed would not need to use such an expression. The expression usually signifies that one has recently be included, or something that one strives for. *If I can get a seat at the table. She now has a seat at the table.*

We can think of tables that we gather around as a family, the routine, knowing ones place at the dinner table. Surrounded by those we know the table is what connects us as we eat or talk. A table found within the workplace environment would invoke different feelings. The first image that I thought of when I began exploring the idea of the table as an equalising object is Leonardo DaVinci's painting of the Last Supper. Jesus Christ and the twelve disciples appear equal around this very symbolic table. Everyone is sat on the same side of the table, an artistic decision to portray everyone's face, and the table runs horizontally almost from one side of the frame to the other.

This particular table in *I'm not Racist* works to place distance between the individuals. Not entirely dissimilar to a table found in a workplace. It is an attempt to be devoid of any feelings of comfort and ease. Let us imagine a different table in this scenario, a coffee table with comfortable chairs, a grand dining table, or even no table. The table chosen is a conventional table and bares similarity to tables found in interrogation situations. Although no one is being interrogated, an individual or institution has placed them at this table to discuss something. The characters come to the table that has been placed for them for this kind of event or discussion. The table would then belong to the individual or the institution that has organised this. I suggest an institution that has arranged this because of how formal it is to be sat at a table to discuss, especially such a topic as racial tensions. We can imagine a similar situation occurring at school, two individuals who cannot get along, who resort to physical violence are place in a room to work out their differences. The school itself a state institution decides upon the correct way to settle disputes. Within the narrative of the music video who would benefit from this attempt at a resolution.

As stated before the music video was celebrated for the way each side was given the chance to speak and make comments about the other. To place them opposite one another to allow them to both speak their minds and then find a common ground would suggest that they are arguing on the same moral plane. The table here serving as the moral plane. One is a

Trump supporting racist who believes that black people are violent, lazy and lacking in moral fibre. The other is a black man who wants the same human rights that are granted to other citizens of America. Why do we place them on the same moral plane as each other? To do so would echo the words of President Trump, each side has wrongs and each side has rights.

Therefore I suggest that the table here too represents state apparatus, much like the seesaw in the previous image. Although not placed upon, they are offered a seat at the table. It is an intervention. Like a teacher who has reached their limit with students, the state, in this image, the table, has offered them a chance to talk and listen to both sides. So, what is being said and heard?

Re/Presenting the Other

I have included the lyrics to the entire song in the appendix, what I will attempt to do here is include parts of the song that connect with my theory of the *re/presenting of the Other*. In regards to this image I am hesitant when engaging the work of Spivak from post-colonial theory as the dynamics of colonialism vis-a-vis enslavement and plantation politics that have not disappeared but rather evolved in the case of African Americans. In this example, it is not so much that the subaltern cannot speak, rather that the narrative and identity of the black man, therefore the black community is constantly formed in relation to whiteness and what whiteness deems black identity to be. Similarities do of course exist within the power relation and racism experienced by the subaltern in the colonies and the African Americans. So for this analysis I engage with Spivak in a schematic manner.

Spivak's reflection on Marxist knowledge and ideology in its basic element is the ability for one who is being oppressed to be able to represent themselves. This paradigm is what we can use to connect the colonial subject with the African American subject. So let us ask, can the African American speak? In the music video the black man is being spoken through, but so is the white man. They both exist as tools that the rapper is able to use to speak through, they become *speakers*, not in their ability to speak but in the way they omit noise. As they open their mouths the sound of the rapper comes out. Let us now examine what is being said and how their position is represented.

All the black guys rather be deadbeats than pay your bills

[...]

I see a black man aimin' his gun

But I'd rather see a black man claimin' his son

[...]

And I work my ass off and I pay my taxes for what?
 So you can keep livin' off free government assistance?
 Food stamps for your children, but you're still tryna sell 'em
 For some weed and some liquor or a fuckin' babysitter
 While you party on the road 'cause you ain't got no fuckin' goals?
 [...]

You motherfuckas needa get your damn priorities straight
 [...]

But you lazy as fuck and you'd rather sell drugs
 Than get a job and be straight, and then you turn around and complain
 [...]

But I think there's a disconnect between your culture and mine
 I worship the Einsteins, study the Steve Jobs
 But you ride 2Pac's dick like he was a fuckin' god, oh my god
 [...]

Pants hangin' off your ass, you ain't got no home trainin'?
 Put your fuckin' pants up, nigga! Put that suit back on!
 Take that du-rag off! Take that gold out your mouth!
 Quit the pitiful stuff
 And then maybe police would stop killin' you fucks.⁷⁷

I have taken these particular lyrics out as they directly link to the views held by the white man about the behaviors and attributes surrounding the black community in the US, in particular the black male. I do not place them here out of context, the lyrics to the entire song can, as mentioned, be found in the appendix and any lyrics omitted from my selection do not change the discourse of what is being projected in the overall song.

So what is being projected? The use of the word 'deadbeat' to suggest that black men are lazy, worthless and unable to fulfill some kind of role as an active member of society. The white man claims that a black man is quicker to pick up a gun, suggesting that they are violent and/or part of gangs, rather than be present in the lives of their children. Again as with the stereotype of being gang affiliated, here we are presented with another pertinent stereotype about the black man being violent and a bad father and caregiver. The white man continues by accusing the black community of claiming his tax money for social security, government assisted food stamps, for example, but rather than use them for what he believes is justified, the black community simply sells them in exchange for alcohol and to party. They have no goals and their priorities are not in accordance with white America. Again the white man alludes to drug use and involvement in the selling of drugs instead of finding adequate

⁷⁷ I'm Not Racist [video], Joyner Lucas, 28 November 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43gm3CJePn0>, [accessed 27th March 2018].

employment. The white man speaks of a disconnect between their cultures, the white man citing Apple CEO Steve Jobs and world renowned physicist Albert Einstein as who the white community looks to for inspiration and what to work towards. The black community are only interested in 2pac, a world-famous American rapper who died in 1996. That is the only source of inspiration for the black community and who they admire to become. The white man then makes reference to clothing commonly linked to the African American community and hip hop culture, low hanging trousers, golden grillz (a type of jewelry worn on teeth) and durags (a silk cap worn on one's head to protect the hair.)⁷⁸ these visual tropes and ways of dressing is one of the reasons why he believes the police keep killing them.

I will now pick some of the rebuttals given by the black man;

[...]

I'm sorry you can never feel my life

Tryna have faith, but I never felt alright

It's hard to elevate when this country's ran by whites

Judging me by my skin color and my blackness

Tryna find a job but ain't nobody call me back yet

Now I gotta sell drugs to put food in my cabinet

You crackers ain't slick, this is all a part of your tactics

Don't talk about no motherfucking taxes, when I ain't making no dough

[...]

I can't even drive without the cops tryna start shit

I'm tired of the systematic racism bullshit

[...]

And you don't know shit about my people, that's what bothers you

You don't know about no fried chicken and no barbeque

You don't know about the two-step or no loose change

You don't know about no 2 Chainz or no Kool-Aid, you don't know!

[...]

But I know there's a disconnect between your culture and mine

Yeah, I praise 2Pac like he was a fuckin' god

[...]

You don't know what it's like to be in a frying pot

You don't know what it's like to mind your business

And get stopped by the cops and not know if you 'bout to die or not.⁷⁹

Joyner Lucas giving the black man a narrative here explaining that he has become disenchanted by living in the US and constantly being judged by the colour of his skin so he

⁷⁸ The du or do comes from hair-do, as it is often worn to protect waves or cornrows. It is also worn as a fashion statement within hip hop cultures.

⁷⁹ I'm Not Racist [video], Joyner Lucas, 28 November 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43gm3CJePn0>, [accessed 27th March 2018].

has turned to a life of drug dealing in order to sustain himself. The black man identifies the lack of employment and financial resources is part of the tactics of the country to keep black people from achieving a decent standard of living. The black man makes reference to the police brutality and how it is part of the systematic racism, a phenomena that has been called 'driving while black' because of how widespread the problem is. The black man then makes an interesting remark, that white people know nothing about black culture and that is what really bother them. However he references some of the most obvious and stereotypical elements of African Americans that are frequently referenced in pop culture. Like the white man he also believes that there is a disconnect between their cultures and that for him 2Pac was 'like a god'. The black man then refers back to police violence, and how one is unsure if they will die or not when being stopped by a police officer. He describes this as a frying pot, maybe playing on the melting pot analogy used to describe the many different cultures in the US.

Joyner Lucas has written these rap lyrics to *re/present* the African American man, he himself being part of that community and identity. What can we understand from this *re/presentation*? Both parts of the song focus heavily on the understanding of the black man and defining what he is and what he represents. This is done through the subjectivity of whiteness. Given that the white man has spoken first he has laid these claims that he believes to be true. Thus the black man is having to defend his position and offer a rebuttal. It then falls onto the black man to be the one to change the white man's mind about the entire African American community. This power dynamic in the video references the power structures that exists within the society, whiteness identifies and labels what is Other. It is then up to the Other to attempt to disprove their believes. But surely to engage in this tête-à-tête will always be fundamentally flawed if the conversations begin with the subjectivity of whiteness.

What's more the understanding of blackness is done with extremely narrow definitions of what it means to be black. The white man has describes the black community as being lazy, violent, criminal, drug dealers and dressing in such a way that encourages the police to shoot them. This is not met with any real dispute. The black man does not offer any nuance on what it means to be black in America, he too defines himself through the same prism as what they white man has said. Essentially he subscribes to being what the white man has said about him and speaks of racial injustice as the cause of this. In this example, the Other, the black man is re/presented through the rap lyrics of another black man. He speaks, to some extent, or is spoken through. Yet his identity and his arguments are rooted in what the white man has

decided he is. He then must defend himself rather than state his position and his views of whiteness.

The black man's identity is created from the negative and limiting stereotypes of blackness perpetuated in many varied forms. In 'Racial Battle Fatigue and the MisEducation of Black Men', the sociologist William Smith emphasises how embedded these stereotypes are in our society and its difficulty in pinpointing its sources;

Given the widespread and persistent stereotyping of African Americans as criminal or threatening, explorations of the sources of stereotyping have examined a wide variety of factors. This is understandable given that stereotypes are likely the result of a complex and diverse set of variables, making it difficult, if not naive, to try to isolate a single cause⁸⁰

Concurrently, Professor of Media Studies Mary Beth Oliver claims through results of content analysis of primetime television, African American males are underrepresented as criminal characters in fiction television dramas yet overrepresented in what she calls "realistic" representations (e.g., news, "reality"-based policeshows)⁸¹. She writes;

African American men more likely to be shown as criminal suspects than actual crime statistics suggest, the ways in which African American criminal suspects are depicted imply that they are likely to be particularly violent or threatening.⁸²

I use these two examples to highlight that it is impossible to locate and identify all of the examples of how negative stereotypes not only exist but affect the lives and narratives told about African American males. However I do provide one example that is linked to the stereotype of the black men being criminals and how it is not simply rooted in fictive depictions.

In *We Real Cool: Black men and masculinity* bell hooks turns her black feminist thinking to examine the position of black men in what she describes as the *imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy*;

⁸⁰ A. William Smith et al, 'Racial Battle Fatigue and the MisEducation of Black Men: Racial Microaggressions, Societal Problems, and Environmental Stress.' *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 80, no. 1, 2011, pp. 63–82, www.jstor.org/stable/41341106, [accessed 9 April 2018].

⁸¹ M. B. Oliver, 'African American Men as 'Criminal and Dangerous': Implications of Media Portrayals of Crime on the 'Criminalization' of African American Men.' *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2003, pp. 3–18, www.jstor.org/stable/41819017, [accessed 9 April 2018].

⁸² *Ibid.*

In patriarchal culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines. When race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then black males endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity.⁸³

hooks cites nineteenth century ideas about black males as ‘brutes’, ‘natural born rapists’ and ‘murderers’ that have shaped the way black men are still seen today. This is the belief that is present in the dialogue given to the white man, he echos these sentiments with his references to black men being quick to pick up guns rather than father their children, and being lazy, undetermined and following in the footsteps of rappers. Thus even before the black man has a chance to speak his identity has been created for him. hooks continues by writing that ‘Negative stereotypes about the nature of black masculinity continue to over determine the identities black males are allowed to fashion for themselves’.⁸⁴

So whether the stereotypes come from the widespread culture, located within ‘realistic representations’, nineteenth century ideas or the lyrics of Joyner Lucas the black man is always positioned as one who must constantly defend their identity.

Black males who refuse categorization are rare, for the price of visibility in the contemporary world of white supremacy is that black male identity be defined in relation to the stereotype whether by embodying it or seeking to be other than it. At the center of the way black male selfhood is constructed in white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy is the image of the brute—untamed, uncivilized, unthinking, and unfeeling.⁸⁵

I echo the words of hooks in stating that even the defending of one’s position it is done in relation to the subjectivity of whiteness. To embody or to not embody the stereotypes is informed by the scopic regime of whiteness. Joyner Lucas’ lyrics for the black man speak about blackness are a response rather than a declaration. They offer a counter-position rather than an Afrocentric position.⁸⁶

There is a danger of my argument falling under the category of *respectability politics*. I do not adhere to setting the limitations of how one exhibits their culture and their narrative. However in this context the popular stereotypes of blackness which Lucas suggests are unknown, chicken and kool aid, are used as rebuttals against the insinuation that black people are ‘deadbeats’. The lyrics ‘*And you don't know shit about my people, that's what bothers you*’ followed by even more common stereotypes of blackness is also explored by hooks, she states;

⁸³ b. hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, Oxon, Routledge, 2004, p x.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. x.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. x.

⁸⁶ See previous chapter on Afrocentrism and the centrality of the black/african position.

Yet what makes contemporary demonization of the black male different from that of the past is that many black males, no longer challenge this dehumanizing stereotype, instead they claim it as a mark of distinction, as the edge that they have over white males.⁸⁷

If we take Lucas' lyrics literally and examine them through the quote above we can say that his argument is "Yes I sell drugs but at least I am cool". The black man's knowledge of two-stepping (a form of dance), barbeques and chicken gives him the *edge* over the the white man. Given the context of what this music video was aiming to achieve, to give each side the ability to speak their minds about the current climate in the US, the rebuttals given by Lucas for the black man essentially silence him from participating in a deeper conversation. One that questions the legitimacy of whiteness and its ability to position the Other, the black man, the black community within its own definitions.

At the end of the video they hug each other, yet there has been no resolution. The hug signifies the end of the dispute and the beginning of a more understanding of each other. Why did they hug? The hug is initiated by the white man, does it mean he admits defeat? The black man hugs him back, is all forgiven? The conversation itself does not make sense, they are both talking about very different ideas, the white man talks about the black man, the black man talks about the black man in relation to the white man. The white man speaks on political and cultural issues, the black man speaks only in relation to the cultural stereotypes. If the aim was simply to give each other the chance to speak in front of each other, what does the hug signify if not a shallow attempt to pacify the feelings of each individuals.

⁸⁷ hooks, *We Real Cool*, p. 45.

Chapter 3. Governor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816



Figure 8. Govenor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816, ca. 1850-1888

In the absence of all successful communication with these unfortunate people, with whose language we are totally unacquainted, it has occurred to me that it might be possible through the medium of this newly discovered facility, to impart to them to a certain extent, the real wishes of the government towards them, and I have accordingly sketched a series of groups of figures, in which I have endeavoured to represent in a manner as simple and as well adapted to their supposed ideas as possible, the actual state of things

Surveyor-General George Frankland letter to Sir George Arthur, dated 1829.⁸⁸

To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture.

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.⁸⁹

I will now turn to the image above, *Governor Davey's Proclamation board*.⁹⁰ This proclamation board was in use around 1850-1888 during the British colonisation of Van Diemen's Land, today known as Tasmania. For clarity I have separated each frame A, B, C and D, as the literature surrounding these images has also done. Each frame telling its own narrative yet also part of a meta-narrative which I shall explain after completing a brief analysis. I shall take each from from top to bottom and read the image from left to right.

Overview of Governor Davey's Proclamation Board to the Aborigines

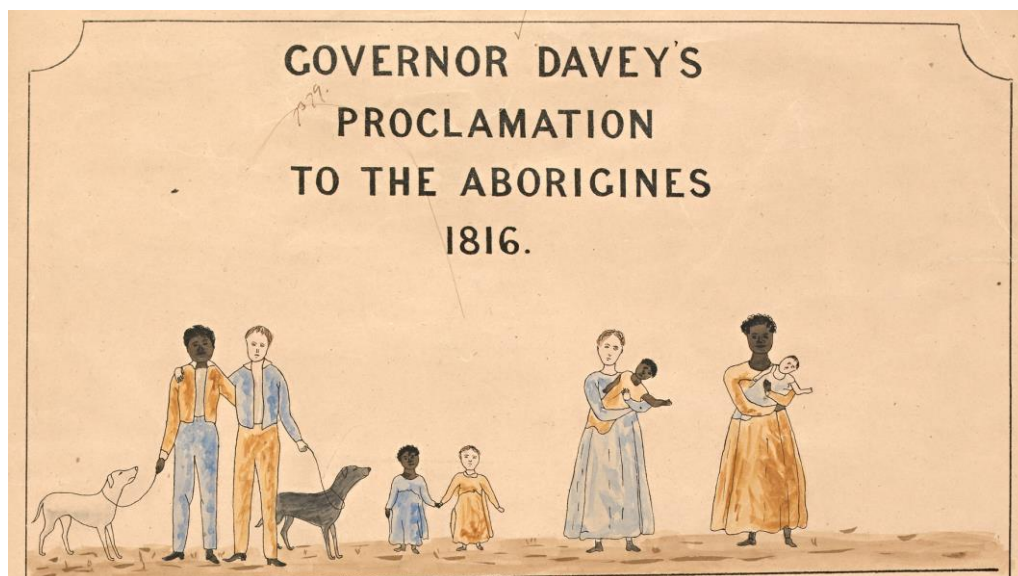


Figure 9. *Frame A*. Cropped section from *Governor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816*, ca. 1850-1888

⁸⁸ P. Edmonds, "Failing in every endeavour to conciliate": Governor Arthur's Proclamation Boards to the Aborigines, *Australian conciliation narratives and their transnational connections*, *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2011, p. 201-218, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14443058.2011.562227>, [accessed 20 March 2018].

⁸⁹ F. Fanon, F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans, C. L Markman London Pluto Press, 1967.

⁹⁰ I would like to thank Linda Fagerstrom for bringing the book *The Age of Empires* to my attention where I found a reproduction of this image.

Text appears at the top which reads 'GOVERNOR DAVEY'S PROCLAMATION TO THE ABORIGINES 1816'. Eight individuals appear along a straight line, four are white and four are black. A black man in a pair of trousers and a jacket stands holding a leash for a white dog. The black man's left arm is wrapped around a white man's waist. The white man has his arm on the black man's shoulder. The white man is wearing the same clothing as the black man but the colours are inverted and he holds a leash of a black dog. Next to the black dog is a black infant in a blue dress holding hands with a white infant that is in a yellow dress. Next a white woman wearing a blue dress holds a black baby that is wearing a yellow dress with an arm outstretched. A black woman in a yellow dress holds a white baby in blue dress with an arm outstretched.



Figure 10. *Frame B*. Cropped section from *Governor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816*, ca. 1850-1888

In this frame there are nine individuals, five black and four white but they occupy separate areas of the frame. On the left there are five black people, three unclothed adults and one infant. They follow in a line behind the chief who wears a headdress and fabric around the body. The chief extends one arm in front of him and the other is engaged in a handshake with the white General. The white General is dressed in British military uniform. His hat is large with red feathers placed above. Behind him are three white men, two are officers also dressed in military uniform but one that identifies them as having a different rank to the one engaged in a handshake. The last white man appears in a top hat and tails, which would indicate that he is a civilian and not part of the army.



Figure 11. *Frame C*. Cropped section from *Governor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816*, ca. 1850-1888

The third frame has a unclothed black man holding up a weapon, probably a spear, next to him is a white man with a spear that has pierced him. The white man dressed in yellow trousers and a blue jacket is falling to the ground from the attack. The white man is then shown to be dead and lies at the foot of a tree. Above him the black man is being hung on a tree by a white officer. Behind the officer stands the General who is pointing at the scene, and next to him is another officer who is armed with a bayonet.

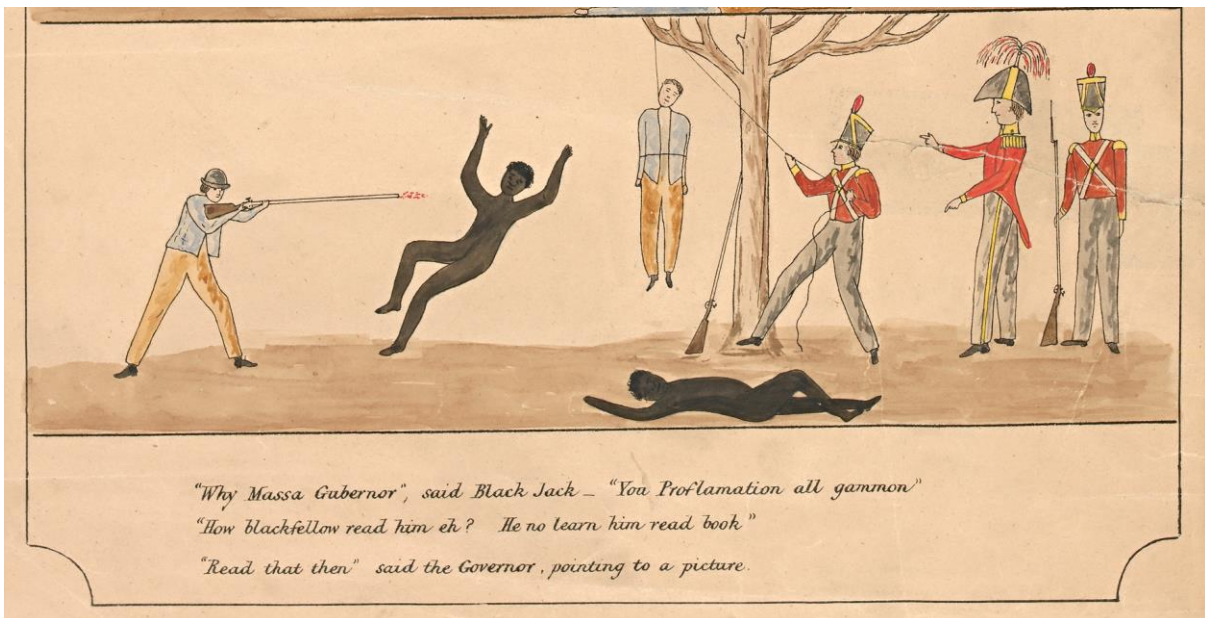


Figure 12. *Frame D*. Cropped section from *Governor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816*, ca. 1850-1888

The final frame shows a similar scene to Frame C but the roles of victim and murderer have been inverted. This time a white man shoots a black man. The black man is then shown to be dead and lying at the foot of a tree. The white man is hung on the tree by a white officer. His gun is placed upright against the tree. Behind them the General points using both hands

this time. One at the white man being hung and one at the dead black man. Behind the General is a white officer armed with a bayonet.

Below the frame appears text that reads;

“Why - Massa Gubernor,’ said Black Jack - ‘You Proflamation all gammon”
“How blackfellow read him eh? He no learn him read book.”
“Read that then,” said the Governor, pointing to a picture.

The proclamation boards therefore are not images of the law but are the law. In his text *The Law of the Image and the Image of the Law: Colonial Representations of the Rule of Law*, legal and humanities scholar Desmond Manderson makes clear that we must understand these images not simply as illustrations;

These images afford a remarkably complex, revealing, and relevant representation of the rule of law. But they should not be understood as merely illustrative of the law, if such a distinction can be maintained. Art and law are here entwined and inseparable.⁹¹

The proclamation boards were made as a result of increasing violent clashes between Aboriginal people and the European settlers on what was then called Van Diemen’s Land during November of 1828.⁹² Because of the resistance and increased attacks against the European settlers Lieutenant-Governor Sir George Arthur declared martial law against “Black or Aboriginal natives”.⁹³ In February 1829 George Frankland, the Surveyor General of the colony wrote to Governor Arthur suggesting they use pictures to communicate with the Aborigines;

I have lately had an opportunity of ascertaining that the Aboriginal natives of van Diemen's Land are in the habit of representing events by drawings on the bark of trees [...]In the absence of all successful communication with these unfortunate people, with whose language we are totally unacquainted, it has occurred to me that it might be possible through the medium of this newly discovered facility, to impart to them to a certain extent, the real wishes of the government towards them, and I have accordingly sketched a series of groups of figures, in which I have endeavoured to represent in a manner as simple and as well adapted to their supposed ideas as possible, the actual state

⁹¹ D. Manderson, ‘The Law of the Image and the Image of the Law: Colonial Representations of the Rule of Law’, *New York Law School Law Review*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2012-2013, p. 154
<http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/nyls57&div=13&id=&page=>, [accessed 20 March 2018].

⁹² P. Edmonds, “Failing in every endeavour to conciliate, p. 201-218.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

of things [...]⁹⁴

General Frankland was therefore inspired by the Aboriginal culture and their drawings on tree barks and used this technique to communicate with the natives. He expresses that what he hopes to represent is the wishes of the British government in the most simple manner and in a way that the natives will understand. ‘Confronted by the clash of two radically different cultures and mutually incomprehensible languages, the Proclamation does so without using words—a picture that is also a law.’⁹⁵ The boards were circulated among the native communities and it is estimated that one hundred boards were tied to trees located in the frontier areas where the violence was occurring. The settlers hoped that the natives would not only see them but that the utopia the British had imagined would be understood by the natives.⁹⁶

Myth of the images

The reader may have noticed that the date at the top of the board reads 1816 yet research has indicated that the boards were actually created around 1829 after the implementation of martial law. The image I have selected was created later, I have chosen to use this particular image for its clarity and high quality imagery. There is at least a 13 year difference between the date on the board and when they were passed out and attached to trees. The reader may also be aware that Governor Davey has not been a part of this decision making yet his name appears as the one who has declared this proclamation. Manderson indicates possible explanations for the date difference and inclusion of Governor Davey.

By using an earlier date on the proclamation boards the British were able to claim that the colony was established primarily through the implementation of law and order. Manderson writes that ‘[L]aw always needs some mythic retrospectivity to shore up its legitimacy[...].’⁹⁷ Thus the belief that the land and the people were colonised within the penal code masks the brutal violence and force used by the British army. Manderson continues

The violence and chaos that mark the birth of any new legal order thus become cloaked in a myth that emphasizes instead its inevitability, its order, and its naturalness. By the 1860s, it surely served the interests of Tasmania's free settlers to inject the rule of law into their narrative of legitimate settlement, as early as possible.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Manderson, ‘The Law of the image’, p. 158.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 157.

⁹⁶ Edmonds, ‘Governor Arthur's Proclamation Boards to the Aborigines’, p. 201-218

⁹⁷ Manderson, ‘The Law of the image’, p. 157.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 157.

Here we must remember that this picture was not intended to be a representation of the law but *the* law, '[A]rt and law are here entwined and inseparable'.⁹⁹ Although as a visual scholar I analyse them as images.

Following the date, Manderson explores the use of Governor Davey's name upon the proclamation board, describing him as 'a more attractive figure' than Governor Arthur.¹⁰⁰ In 1814 Governor Davey had spoken out against the kidnapping of the Aboriginal children, contrary to Governor Arthur who was;

a man who oscillated wildly between expressions of concern for the Aborigines and military campaigns against them; between inciting white settlers to kill Tasmania's first inhabitants and expressing outrage when they did.¹⁰¹

Most notoriously known for the 'Black Line', Governor Arthur having given up on pacifying the relationships between the European settlers and the Aborigines implemented martial law on October 1 1830 calling for an 'active and extended system of military operations against the natives.'¹⁰² The 'Black Line' was a response to the successful resistance by the Aborigines. It was a process of removing any Aboriginal natives from areas occupied by the European settlers. Governor Arthur instructed this six week long 'military style campaign' and enlisted civilian volunteers.¹⁰³ Manderson describes the 'Black Line' as 'the dragnet which attempted to corral like cattle the Aboriginal population of the whole island.'¹⁰⁴

Using scholar of law and humanities Desmond Manderson and scholar of history and heritage studies Penelope Edmonds extensive research I have outlined how the use of an earlier date and a more likeable General creates a tension not only in the images but in the law. I will now briefly re-read the images and law in each frame and unpack some the disparities between what is presented and what was actually occurring.

In Frame A we have natives that have accepted the civilisation process of the British settlers. They dress like them, they have the same pets as they do, they can even raise each other's children. There is no distinction between them, their skin colour is the only thing that separates them but it does not affect their position within society. They hold hands with one another, cradle children, there is no more violence. Manderson describes this panel as

⁹⁹ Manderson, 'The Law of the image', p. 154.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 158.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p.158.

¹⁰² Edmonds, 'Governor Arthur's Proclamation Boards to the Aborigines', p. 214.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Manderson, 'The Law of the image', p. 158.

representing ‘*abstract equality*’, he continues to explain the message of this frame ‘[T]he image [Frame A] is not a statement of what the rule of law requires, nor a statement of what the rule of law will achieve, but instead it is a declaration of underlying principles.’¹⁰⁵

Therefore Frame A works to establish that all are treated equally, once they have accepted the settler culture and its laws. Manderson describes this frame belonging to the Hobbesian definition of the ‘state of nature’, what exists before the law, individuals who live without government or civilization. Yet even in the state of nature, the natural is depicted as being European.¹⁰⁶

Frame B depicts the Europeans and Aboriginal natives as being different, each in their cultural dress. They occupy separate ends of the frame unlike the previous frame whereby they appear integrated. The separation, black to the left and white to the right is one that has appeared in the previous example I examined, Professor Manderson notes; ‘The Aborigines lose their clothes and gain a community. White and Black are no longer depicted as the same; instead, they are representatives of different societies[...]’¹⁰⁷ This essentially depicting the process that must happen for the utopia from Frame A to be realised.

In frame B the highest ranking person from each side meets to shake hands. Why are they shaking hands? A handshake can symbolise or communicate many different things. It can be a greeting or meeting of two individuals, an expression of respect, European diplomacy, or a business gesture to signify a deal has been made.¹⁰⁸ In this case though Manderson explains that the agreement that is being reached here is not made by equals.

Frame B depicts as unproblematic the transfer of sovereignty from native to colonial rulers. A new political authority and hierarchy is acknowledged, reflected in the movement from left to right of the picture—from Aboriginal to British society, from naked to clothed, from subservient to dominant.¹⁰⁹

The last two frames depict the same phenomena with the races of the victim and murder inverted. In frame C an Aborigine has killed a white man with a spear, he is then hung for the murder by the colonial government. Frame D shows a white man shooting and killing an Aborigine. The white man is then hung for the murder by the colonial government. In this

¹⁰⁵ Manderson, ‘The Law of the image’, p. 158.

¹⁰⁶ It is interesting to think about the arguments of post-race being actually about post-culture where one sheds all identifiers of one's culture. In this instance we have pre-race, once again the non europeans are required to shed their cultural identifiers to signify culture before culture. For more on the discourse between Post-Race and Post-Culture please read A, Lentin and G, Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age*, London, Zed Books, 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Manderson, ‘The Law of the image’, p. 159.

¹⁰⁸ Edmonds, ‘Governor Arthur's Proclamation Boards to the Aborigines’, p. 201-218

¹⁰⁹ Manderson, ‘The Law of the image’, p. 159.

new civilization with both Aborigines and Europeans justice and the law is fair regardless of one's race.

There is an implied threat in Frame C, but it is clearly balanced by the implied guarantee of Frame D and by the insistence that in each case the British army stands quite apart from the actors and neutrally enforces the law.¹¹⁰

Manderson makes reference to the space between the army and the individuals involved in each case as a balanced and neutral application of law. However in frame C the General only uses one hand to point. In frame D he uses both hands to point, one toward the hanging white man and one to the dead black body on the ground. In this visual example pointing has a very different meaning than the ones used in previous examples. The point here references to teaching techniques, encouraging students to look. The pointing General coupled with the text below frame D, whereby the General points to the picture and tells Black Jack to 'read that', anchors the image as a didactic image. Each point referenced encourages the Aborigines to look for themselves and to read the law in a language that the British believe they will understand.

Let us consider what the images were to look like if created by the native population? What if the Aborigines were to point, to encourage us to see what they would want us the viewers to understand? There is a discrepancy between the image of law and the reality of colonialism and genocide that is occurring beyond the four frames of this proclamation board. What might the image look like if we were presented with the accounts by those who are being colonised?

Re/presenting the Other

In frame B we are presented with the handing over of sovereignty and the land from the Aborigines to the British. The Aborigines appear on the left hand side of the frame, they are unclothed, apart from the chief who wears a headdress and a long garment. I use the term unclothed rather than undressed or naked as we are unable to make such claims given that nakedness and what that signifies varies from culture to culture. However if read within the context of the proclamation board the nakedness of the community is a signifier of a lack of culture, civility and Christian European values. As we read from left from right and the Aborigines are moving in that direction towards the British, it creates a movement of civilisation. From nakedness to clothing. From barbarity to civility. The Aborigines move towards the civilising mission of the British Army, there is nothing to suggest that they have

¹¹⁰ Manderson, 'The Law of the image', p. 159.

been forced or left with no other choice than to move in this direction. Of course this kind of visibility is created with the belief that everyone who reads, both texts and images, reads in the same way, from left to right.

The black bodies appear to be hunched over, their backs almost curving slightly forward compared to the bodies of the White Europeans who stand upright. This small detail with the movement of the bodies suggests a kind of evolution. Civilisation moves from black to white, nakedness to clothing and from bent backs to standing up right.

Frame A is what the utopian vision of the British rule in Tasmania will look like once what happens in frame B actually happens. Here the Aborigines have embraced the settler culture, they dress like them, behave like them and exist side by side. Given that this is understood the vision of the future it does not show any traces of the native culture that has remained. Therefore the native culture is seen as not benefiting or being part of the future. Even though in the board there is no depiction of any native culture, apart from the chief's appearance, so the Aborigines are more than willing to participate in the European culture—the culture of the future.

The particularity of whiteness

Whiteness in the proclamation board is represented crudely as objective, rational and cultured. They are not inherently located as colonisers who are violently and unjustly claiming a land and thereby enforcing their sovereignty on those who were already living there. They do not exhibit violence against the Aborigines in regards to seizing land and the cultural genocide that they are participating in. Just as the Aborigines are presented as being without culture or civilisation the white British are shown without a larger narrative of what is involved in colonisation.

The three white members of the army appear in three frames. In frame B they are stood with a man in a top hat and coat. They are observing the handover of power, they are not active in the forcing of said handover. They do not act in way that the Aborigines would have experienced them to act in day to day life. They do not harass nor murder their communities.

Frame C and D depict forms of state violence and punishment enforced by the white British army against the settlers and native population. It is the punishment of murder and it used to signify the equality of the law on both black and white citizens in the new state. Equality is depicted by the state's ability to take a black man's life as it would take a white man's life and vice versa.

Whiteness is presented as being naive or so emboldened by their manifest destiny. It is difficult to make such a clear distinction. The application of British law and the myths that are presented in the proclamation board are not biased, from their perspective. It is either naive in the belief that racism is not inherently rooted and informs the application of the law. Or emboldened by their manifest destiny that they cannot understand why a culture like that of the Aborigines would not welcome the new civilising mission.

Equalising object

I include this image in my thesis to trace back the genealogy of what I have described as *equalising objects*. The proclamation board itself works to present a utopian, from the European's perspective, vision of the future. As I view each frame within the board I reflect upon the almost mathematical manner in which each line offers us a certainty. *This plus this* will give us *that*. This could also be due to the fact that images are offered rather than words. The symbols I read within the board can be compared with the symbols we read in equations. The images remind me more specifically of an algebra equation, we have two variables on either side and what is done to one must be done to the other to maintain the equality and thereby solve the problem. Two variables here would be the white and black individuals of Tasmania, the law that is applied to one must be applied to the other. But these are not symbols and what is applied to one is not necessarily applied to the other. Unlike algebra we cannot simply invert the variables along a seemingly equal axis without understanding the people and histories beyond the symbols. Manderson asks, 'what does it mean to treat people "equally" in the colonial context?'¹¹¹

To simply place white and black bodies upon this board in such a manner to invoke the law, equal treatment of its citizens and justice does not reflect the realities of what was occurring. This is an example of how the colonial context is removed. The images conceal the social and economic realities of the Aborigines that have been colonised and now exist under the cultural, political and legal system of another sovereignty. For example frame A shows that the Aboriginal natives and the Europeans can live harmoniously amongst each other, this resting on the native culture being destroyed and replaced with the European culture. The disparity is highly apparent in the right hand side of the frame that depicts a woman raising a baby from a different race. Manderson explains that in fact the black woman is probably nursing the white baby of a rich family and works for them as a servant. Simultaneously the

¹¹¹ Manderson, 'The Law of the image', p. 161.

white woman is possibly a missionary who has taken the baby away from its mother and will raise it according to her cultural and religious beliefs.¹¹²

Equal treatment perpetuates inequality every time it purposely turns a blind eye to social and material difference. By ignoring the complexities of context, and by lying about actual legal practices that were going on at the time, the rule of law rhetoric systematically varnishes the injustices perpetrated by colonial power.¹¹³

Similarly, frame C and D present the equal application of the law for both the white and the black individual which does not represent the reality of how certain narratives are created in relation to who is killing who. When white bodies murder, they do so as a means of self defence or are deemed to be acting lawfully. When black bodies murder it is a sign of how barbaric and uncivilised they are. The board works to equalise by removing any context of how each side has arrived to that particular moment that is being depicted or how their actions will be read by society and the state.

¹¹² Manderson, 'The Law of the image', p. 161.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 161.

Chapter 4. Master's Tools

In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower.

Audre Lorde, *The Master's Tools will not Dismantle the Master's House*.¹¹⁴

In an unbalanced world, balance is unbalanced

Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*.¹¹⁵

In my previous chapters I interpreted three visual examples, this interpretation was approached with *Black Feminist Thought* as a framework. Throughout the analysis of my visual examples I focused on three particular symbols that are loaded with meaning and create a somewhat didactic image. I gave each symbol a name which also suggested a theme to the way in which I have read them; *particularity of whiteness*, *re/representing the Other* and *equalising objects*. I will now show how these three symbols can be read together as a kind of ideology of how some discussions of race and racism are being represented. Using the proclamation board as my historical source, my aim will be to discuss why these contemporary representations fall into the same pattern of an almost 'objective' manner of representing racism.

Racism, racialised violence, institutional racism, systemic racism and white supremacy affect everyone, albeit in very different ways. These images do not speak to everyone in the same way, we do not read images in the same way. Visuality is the cultural construction of vision and it is rooted, among other things, in epistemology and ontology. Although we understand that everyone has the possibility to see these images they were created with the intention to encourage people of colour in ways of addressing how to engage with racism. They offer a representation of how people of colour can be agents in current the political and polarising climate. It is important to keep this in mind as I will now examine the creation of the images and look historically at how questions of representation and self-definition are confronted as important factors in any form of liberation.

Black Feminist Thought as outlined in my introduction, encompasses three main factors (1) the meaning of self-definition and self valuation, (2) the interlocking nature of oppression and (3) the importance of redefining culture. These three factors will inform my discussion on the importance of creating a visuality, a visual language, that is informed by non-white epistemology.

¹¹⁴ A, Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, New York, Crossing Press, 1984, p. 230.

¹¹⁵ S, Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, London, Duke University Press, 2017, p. 177.

Representation. Of whom, by whom?

Historically people of colour are often met with visual representations of them that are created by stereotypical notions of who they are by those outside of their community. Images, stereotypes and myths are presented and created by and in a white hegemony. These representations are perpetuated through mass popular culture. Philosopher and revolutionary Frantz Fanon in 1952 wrote ‘I cannot go to the cinema without seeing myself [...] I wait for me’.¹¹⁶ Subsequently bell hooks in 1992 wrote;

Opening a magazine or book, turning on the television set, watching a film, or looking at photographs in public spaces, we are most likely to see images of black people that reinforce and reinscribe white supremacy. Those images may be constructed by white people who have not divested of racism, or by people of color/black people who may see the world through the lens of white supremacy-internalized racism.¹¹⁷

hooks and Fanon speak of images that are created by white people, white hegemony in mass media and popular culture. African American philosopher George Yancy describes this as part of a process of *returning the body* whereby the black body becomes ‘ontologically pliable, just as a thing to be scripted in the inverse image of whiteness’.¹¹⁸ Thus when we are met with representations of the black or non white body, it is a body that has been given back loaded with meaning that has been created by historically racist white epistemology. Our bodies are returned to us each time representations are made about people of colour that do not center us as subjectivities viewing the representation and when they are created by the white hegemony described by the aforementioned writers.

The campaign advert by Operation Black Vote and the music video (whose director has tried to make it politically engaging) are speaking on narratives that affect primarily and most importantly, people of colour. They are attempting to engage with people of colour in ways to approach racism. However these two visual examples were created by and in a white hegemony that is part of the historically racist white epistemology. The directors for both the campaign advert and the music video are white individuals. I do not necessarily wish to ask nor speculate on why those decisions were made. Yet I want to explore the ideas around subjectivity, visuality and how racism is defined in visual culture.

¹¹⁶ F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans, C. L Markman London Pluto Press, 1967, p. 140.

¹¹⁷ b. hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 2nd edn, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ G. Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*. The Continuing Significance of Race in America, 2nd edn, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2016, p. 61.

The importance of *who* is creating the images and the significance of a white subjectivity as the central viewer can result in a backlash from those whose subjectivity is not considered. In the last year alone three notable brands, H&M, Dove and Pepsi, were forced to retract adverts and issue apologies for racist material.¹¹⁹ We cannot be sure of why certain decisions were made and who was consulted regarding the creation of the content but we can be sure that there is a disconnect between who is creating images and all of those who are seeing them. At best we can claim that these adverts were attempting to communicate to a post-race visuality, a young boy wearing a H&M jumper with the words “Coolest Monkey in the Jungle” is validated by a belief that the stereotype between black people and their proximity to monkeys no longer exists. However even in this speculation the post racial still signifies the centrality of whiteness and the lack of input from people of colour.

It can be argued that most people of colour are aware of the white subjectivity inherently within images that are created by whiteness. Poet and professor of English literature Elizabeth Alexander writes on the art world, which is of course as much a part of visual culture as the adverts (both campaign and commercial) and the music video. Alexander labels the art world as being ‘very white’ even though black people have always made art.¹²⁰ Alexander describes the future where black people can create and imagine a blackness that is outside the definitions of what has been placed upon them by the white hegemony.¹²¹ She describes this as ‘The Black Interior’. This interior is not a space, or position, that becomes impenetrable nor difficult to understand rather it allows individuals to understand their reality and what they produces to exist outside ‘limited expectations and definitions of what black is, isn’t, or should be’.¹²²

In attempting to represent racism from the ontology and epistemology of people of colour, why do these contemporary images centre a white subjectivity and how can we move towards what Alexander describes as ‘The Black Interior’? To set our own definitions, to create our own images and to de-centre a white subjectivity.

Racialised Ontology/ Racialised Epistemology/ Racialised Visuality

In *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins writes that those who are members of the oppressed group, for her case black women, have ‘critical insights into the condition of our

¹¹⁹ Please see Appendix II, figure 13, 14 and 15.

¹²⁰ E. Alexander, *The Black Interior*, Saint Paul, Graywolf Press, 2004, p. 6.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 5.

oppression.’¹²³ Collins believes that ‘the primary responsibility for defining one’s own reality lies with the people who live that reality, who actually have those experiences.’¹²⁴ What’s more it is in self-defining that leads to empowerment, Collins continues by writing that it;

[...]does not mean that others cannot participate. It does mean that the primary responsibility for defining one’s own reality lies with the people who live that reality, who actually have those experiences.¹²⁵

Within *Black Feminist Thought* Collins also raises questions regarding epistemology. She begins by stating that as well as it being an ‘overarching theory of knowledge’¹²⁶ it serves to question and explore ‘the standards used to assess knowledge or why we believe what we believe to be true.’¹²⁷ She continues ‘[f]ar from being the apolitical study of truth, epistemology points to the ways in which power relations shape who is believed and why.’¹²⁸ For Collins, these questions of who to trust and who to believe are central to academic endeavours. So we must understand epistemology to be a tool we can use to dispute and debate knowledge in terms of production and power, but still not take it to be an objective truth. Collins compares *Black Feminist Thought* to the Marxist *standpoint theory* that believes that those who are the most oppressed have the best vision. According to Collins this is a crucial part of a Western Eurocentric binary of quantifying and measuring oppression.¹²⁹ *Black Feminist Thought* serves as my methodology precisely because it does not create a value based judgement. Rather it offers knowledge and perspectives of a particular group by centring it as having the necessary insights.

I will now, building upon Collins’ theoretical framework, work to extend the epistemology as she defines it and stretch it to question its relationship to creating visuality that reflects the epistemology it wants to represent. Is it possible to then create or be part of a visual language from a subjectivity that is not directly rooted or affected by, in this case, racism?

The white hegemony that created these images does not experience racism, the overt and the invisible, and therefore according to Collins do not have ‘critical insights’ that would

¹²³ P. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd edn, New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 39.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 39.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 39.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 270.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 270.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 270.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 289.

translate into a visual language that speaks directly to the people they are trying to engage with who have and do experience racism. In his book *Seeing Through Race*, Mitchell uses African American historian W.E.B DuBois' belief in race as a veil that creates a 'double consciousness' to suggest that we see race as a medium.¹³⁰ Mitchell writes,

race is not merely a content to be mediated, an object to be represented visually or verbally, or a thing to be depicted in a likeness or image, but that race is itself a medium and an iconic form - not simply something to be seen, but itself a medium for seeing through or (as Wittgenstein would put it) seeing as.¹³¹

Ways of seeing, visuality, informs and is informed by epistemology and ontology. DuBois referred to this visuality as a veil, Mitchell uses race as medium to look through. A veil suggests the shrouding or suffocating sensation and a medium allows for possible manipulation. However both allude to an external metaphor of understanding race and how it informs our ways of seeing.

To return to my argument I wish to explore the relationship between a racialised epistemology and creating a visuality. If one has not experienced racism, how does one formulate a language about it to speak directly to those affected by it? I do not suggest that white people cannot and should not be actively engaged in becoming political allies. Yet as I believe these images are being made for people of colour's experiences of racism they should be defined and created by those very individuals or communities. This is how we can work to centre the epistemology of people of colour and have it reflected within the images created.

Racialised Consciousness

Epistemology, from a white western hegemony, would describe the 'critical insights' that Collins refers to, as subjectivity,

Because elite White men control Western structures of knowledge validation, their interests pervade the themes, paradigms, and epistemologies of traditional scholarship. As a result, U.S. Black women's experiences as well as those of women of African descent transnationally have been routinely distorted within or excluded from what counts as knowledge.¹³²

¹³⁰ W.J.T., Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2012. To read more on W.E.B. DuBois theory of double consciousness please read W.E.B., DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chicago, A.C. McClurg & Co, 1903.

¹³¹ W.J.T., Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, p. 13.

¹³² P. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, p. 269.

This is considered to be the opposite of the perceived objectivity of white western epistemology. Philosopher Arnold Farr examines the myth of colour blind philosophy

Any cursory glance at the history of philosophy would seem to indicate that race has no place in philosophy. Indeed, philosophy attempts to transcend physical, empirical boundaries for the purpose of discovering and disclosing some universal Truth that cannot be determined by material conditions such as race, class, gender, and sexuality.¹³³

I agree with Farr in that there is no objectivity in whiteness nor in Western philosophy. As I explored with Richard Dyer's text, it is the white hegemony that positions white subjectivity as invisible and as objective.. Yet there is a myth that to be white is to be objective, to be rational. Whilst to be a person of colour, female, queer is to be subjective. This is also described by Asante as *chauvinistic rationalism*.¹³⁴ I argue that those within the white hegemony that do not have the 'critical insights', that Collins highlights, adopt a seemingly objective approach to represent racialised oppression.

In the images I suggested that the perpetrators of racism were shown as *particularities of whiteness*. It is interesting to question whether or not those who created the images are aware of their position within a white hegemony or a society built upon ideas of white supremacy that allows them the right to speak universally and for everyone. African American philosopher George Yancy describes the process of creating the "bad white, good white" binary.

They saw themselves as "good whites", whites incapable of such acts of racial brutality. Through this process of subterfuge, however, they failed to locate their own centre of power, a centre that enabled them to make such a distinction without any recognition of their own whiteness as a species of white racism, particularly given the historical accruing value of whiteness and the implication of this accrual upon non white people. Again, the apparently invisible centre of whiteness continued to hold.¹³⁵

I believe that the 'good' and 'bad' labels used by Yancy are reductive. However I suggest thinking about the *racist whites* and the *racism of whiteness* to think of a spectrum rather than a binary. Does the white hegemony that created these images see themselves as apart from the racism that they have chosen to depict? By removing themselves from this binary of racists

¹³³ A. Farr, 'Whiteness visible: Enlightenment racism and the structure of racialised consciousness', G. Yancy (ed), *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 145.

¹³⁴ M.K. Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto: toward an African Renaissance*, Cambridge, Polity, 2007.

¹³⁵ G. Yancy, 'Fragments of a Social Ontology of Whiteness', G. Yancy (ed), *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 4.

whites and people of colour they are then able to fall back onto rationalism to address the representation of racism. White liberalism, which is part of the white hegemony yet sees itself as different from the overt racism of the right wing, removes itself from its involvement in perpetuating a white hegemony and thus gives itself a false perception of objectivity.

Objective Objectivity. Equalising Equality

In each image I describe an equalising object. The seesaw, the table, the proclamation board. The objects work as an apparatus, literally and figuratively. There are objects that connote objectivity, scientificity, the correct way of doing things. Within the images individuals are placed on opposite sides of each other along a horizontal plane. To place people, objects in this fashion is to invoke thoughts of measuring apparatuses, from the Judgment of Osiris to the measuring and weighing of goods in a market.

Previously I wrote about the mathematical representation of how to address racial tensions. I likened Governor Davey's Proclamation to an algebraic equation, in the formula that suggests what is done to one individual/s will be done to the other. This can be applied to all three examples. The apparatus within the image work to address racial tensions or inequalities as entities that can be measured. These phenomena can be quantified. References to 'quotas', 'percentages', 'statistics' and the words 'equal opportunities' are often used in discussions or legislations regarding race.¹³⁶ This language and the use of measuring devices quantifies equality rather than explore structures. It represents people as numbers rather than existing within power structures, hence my reference to mathematical equations.

We can think of the apparatus as an institution. The equalising objects as apparatuses are used to symbolise the state, society, law and the democratic voting system. The French philosopher Michel Foucault described *dispositif*, translated into English as apparatus as something heterogeneous;

consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ For more on this please see Sara Ahmed's *On Being Included*.

¹³⁷ M. Foucault 'The Confession of the Flesh' (1977), Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1980, pp. 194-228.

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben in his attempt to further locate the Foucauldian meaning describes an apparatus as '[L]iterally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings.'¹³⁸ In the images the equalising objects unlike actual measuring apparatus are apparatuses that do not shift weight. The equalising object can be said to symbolise the strength of the democratic society. According to the images one cannot benefit more than other. One cannot use their political weight to throw someone off of the apparatus. In this almost utopian representation, democracy does not falter under the varying political weights that would be placed upon it. No one can manipulate the apparatus of democracy regardless of what weight they carry because justice is always fair. The table appears available to everyone, there is no indication to a history that has excluded, and still excludes, those from the table. Again alluding to a utopian vision whereby all have the same means of accessing the table as a political apparatus.

Yet, these kinds of apparatus also create binaries, there are two sides of a seesaw, there are two seats around the table in the music video. The proclamation board places the two races at opposite sides of the frame and to represent equality among the two races they are simply inverted. *Black Feminist Thought* explores how thinking in terms of binaries can work to classify people, ideas and things in relation to their differences.¹³⁹ For Collins the binary, white/black, male/female, reason/emotion, fact/opinion 'gains meaning only in relation to its counterpart'.¹⁴⁰ The images are examples of representing a discourse on racism as working on a binary. The racist and the person of colour. Collins continues her exploration on binaries and how they inform our understanding of human difference, in this case race. She writes 'difference is defined in oppositional terms. One part is not simply different from its counterpart; it is inherently opposed to its "other."' ¹⁴¹ We can think of how these binaries work within the images. Of course we understand human difference, yet we must again ask who is positioned as being oppositional and along the same apparatus. Are people of colour and those with racist views a valid binary? Collins believes all binaries to be flawed 'because oppositional binaries rarely represent different but equal relationships, they are inherently unstable'.¹⁴² However I understand the inequality within the images working on two counts. Primarily we must understand the inequality of power for each individual in society, secondly what they are negotiating is not an equal binary. By placing these two upon this particular

¹³⁸ G. Agamben, *What is an apparatus?: and other essays*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009.

¹³⁹ P. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, p. 77.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 77.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 77.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, p. 78.

apparatus is to suggest that there is a equality with their positions, and that there is a compromise to be reached.

In the images I have chosen, those who exhibit the *particularities of whiteness*, have not come to negotiate, they want their feelings and thoughts to be heard, they want the person of colour to feel that their existence is a precarious one. The person of colour is not present to return views and arguements that maybe considered agaisnt the white individaul, rather they are presented as the noble ones. The proclamation board depicts the Aboroiginal cheif nobably accepting the colonising force of the British Empire. In the campaign advert I interpreted the *placing* of the Indian woman's body, one that is not at home which renders her unable to gesture back. The gesture in this still image, is her way of communicating. The fact that she does not meet his gesture of anger with her own gesture back suggests that she is taking the high ground. Does this suggest for people of colour that they should not react, gesture back instead trust the apparatus, the seesaw, the voting system, the state to work as the equaliser. There is no need to talk, just vote. Maybe it is not so much that her body cannot gesture, rather that she has been told not to gesture.

Similarly in the music video the black man has been sat listening to a white Trump supporter calling him a 'n*gger', someone who is violent, gang affiliated and without goals. The black man is then expected to engage in a hug that is proposed by the white man. To refuse the hug would thus label him as a 'bad sport'. After the meeting, it is right that they leave the situation with no hard feelings.

In both cases the people of colour are expected to take the higher ground whilst nothing has changed from the meeting either at the seesaw or the table. They have bypassed any real resolution and as they leave the apparatus they were engaged with what will happen when they return to society that does not operate with such utopian vision of equality? As viewers, who is satisfied with this outcome that has in effect not reached an agreement. It seems that there is more of an emphasis of nobility and camaradirie than reaching a resolution. As people of colour, what can we do with these images? What does it encourage us to do?

Conclusion

I began by asking if a visuality addressing people of colour about racism could be created without the epistemology or ontology of a non-white person. In my final chapter I alluded to this being part of the myth of a post-race culture occurring in the UK and US. Of course, anyone can create images, but it is the images that exist to engage a people to then take action that are brought to question here. Operation Black Vote exists to encourage people of colour to vote, their very existence is due to the under representation of people of colour at the ballot box. It has been part of this thesis to discuss why the cultural productions of this group does not reflect the aims of their organization as a whole.

This thesis in essence came to be from a reaction from seeing an image that brought up thoughts of other images that I believed to work in a similar fashion. The three images that I have examined all contain the three symbols that I have described as *particularity of whiteness*, *re/representing the Other* and *equalising objects*. Beginning with the campaign advert by Operation Black Vote I found similarities in the music video *I'm not Racist*, these contemporary examples lead me to find the proclamation board from Tasmania to create a genealogy of the three symbols. These symbols, or vehicle sign as Stuart Hall calls them, with the use of *Black Feminist Thought* and *Afrocentrism* have guided my analysis by centring the person of colour in regards to my interpretation. How have *I* as a person of colour read them images, understood the symbols and created a narrative?

There is an argument to be made about the importance of who creates images and whether or not a white subjectivity in reading the images really shifts the message of the images. These arguments are part of the political resistance to racialised violence. It is important to remember that the campaign advert and the music video were created to speak directly to a particular problem for those who are being confronted by the power of white supremacy. I think it is a valid question to ask why they were then directed by white individuals.

Black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde famously wrote *The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. Lorde asks 'What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?'¹⁴³ Lorde believes that to engage with these *tools* will aid us in some ways however they will not bring about any real change. These *tools* for the purpose of my thesis is understanding epistemology through an

¹⁴³ A. Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, New York, Crossing Press, 1984, p. 224.

idea of objectivity, the creation of binaries and the centred white subjectivity. They are present in the Proclamation board and they are present in the contemporary visual examples.

Returning to bell hooks' text on race and representation she indicates the importance of political movements and communities creating their own images as part of the liberatory process;

To face these wounds, to heal them, progressive black people and our allies in struggle must be willing to grant the effort to *critically intervene* and transform the world of image making authority of place in our political movements of liberation and self-determination (be they anti-imperialist, feminist, gay rights, black liberation, or all of the above and more). If this were the case, we would be ever mindful of the need to make radical intervention. We would consider crucial both the kind of images we produce and the way we *critically* write and talk about images. And most important, we would rise to the challenge to speak that which has not been spoken.¹⁴⁴ [emphasis added]

Although hooks writes about the role creating images has within political movements, she also states that we must also remain critical. There is no belief within *Black Feminist Thought* nor other similar texts that a black feminist epistemology, for example, would not be susceptible to critique. Image creation and critically examining visualities is an ongoing process. There is no misconception of the 'perfect image'. Even images that are created by people of colour will also need to be self-critical.

Yet to believe that there is no 'perfect image' and therefore the image creator is benign is as Lorde puts it 'a cop-out'.¹⁴⁵ My argument rather has focused on the importance of racialised epistemology and ontology as being central to creating a visuality that speaks directly to that. To suggest that people of colour may not create a 'perfect image' as a reason not to critique the white hegemony is a form of paternalism. This should not be mistaken for a view rooted in essentialism. To return to Elizabeth Alexander's 'The Black Interior' she explores the 'knowledge and sense of African American group identification that is more expansive than the inevitable biological reductions of "race" and the artificial constraints of "culture"'¹⁴⁶. She pinpoints the Rodney King incident of 1991,¹⁴⁷ and we can certainly think of more recent examples of police brutality, as something that enforces a sense of community

¹⁴⁴ b. hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 2nd edn, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ A. Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, New York, Crossing Press, 1984, p. 230.

¹⁴⁶ E. Alexander, *The Black Interior*, Saint Paul, Graywolf Press, 2004, p. 176.

¹⁴⁷ Rodney King is often cited as the first case of captured footage of police brutality against black people in the US. King was beaten by 8 LAPD officers who believed they were in danger and which is why they continued to beat King down to the ground. The four officers who stood trial were acquitted, this with the racialised violence experienced by the black and latino community in LA is what led to the LA riots.

and allows for self-definition and self knowledge [read: epistemology].¹⁴⁸ Often criticised for what some have considered essentialist thinking, Alexander counters such claims, not by defending essentialist thinking yet describing what occurs when intersections like race, gender and class are understood simply as superficial identity categories. Her focus is placed upon a trend within academia, whereas I use this to build upon my beliefs on the importance of self defining and creating images that speak from an epistemology.

As “race” became a category and much intellectual energy was put into critiquing “essentialism” the focus was lost on actual people of colour, their voices and contributions, as well as, more practically, the importance of increasing their - our- empowered presence of campuses and in other workplaces. The extreme reaches are not unimaginable: a gender studies without women, “race” studies without black people and other people of color; as though the political struggles of those very people who make those classes and books and programs and departments exist were no longer relevant, as though we were now on a *level playing field*.¹⁴⁹ [emphasis added]

I would like to use the phrase *level playing field* as defined by Alexander to bring my argument back to the aim of this thesis. My aim of this thesis is to analyse how these images were created without the de-centring of white subjectivity and whether or not a visuality can be created from an epistemology that is not informed by racialised non-white ontology. I pose this question as a scholar of visual culture and as an individual who is part of the very community that images seek to speak to. To exclude those, or even to not position them as the central subjectivity, is to suggest that there is no difference in racial epistemology or racialised ontology. This is echoed within the images as I have explored in how the people of colour are placed along an equalising, or *level playing field*, as the racist whites.

This *level playing field* is what I have interpreted as the signalling of a post-race era, one that Elizabeth Alexander and Nicholas Mirzoeff speak of. Post-race does not suggest the absence of race, or that an equilibrium has been reached and now race no longer matters. Rather the myth of the post-race becomes an era where people of colour, who have begun to embrace difference, not as an oppositional force, rather engage confidently in the hybridity of their position within Western countries, are being interrogated by a white hegemony that feels itself as the new minority. The myth of the post-race where a white subjectivity, a white norm, can disregard its position within a white power structure and create narratives and definitions

¹⁴⁸ Alexander, *The Black Interior*, p. 176.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 202.

of what racism and racialised violence looks like for people of colour. The myth of the post-race era is equating the overtly racist whites, those like the ones in the visual examples, who are confident to verbalise their racial hatred with having legitimacy. These images shift from a narrative that seeks to work against racism with an ‘equal opportunity’ approach. I do not suggest that these conversations should not happen, however I do not believe it is through the placing people of colour upon the same playing field, or equalising object, as the racist whites.

In *What do pictures want?* W.J.T. Mitchell poses questions regarding our relationship to images.¹⁵⁰ Let me now draw some conclusions on what these images may want. Do they ask us to believe in the apparatus, the equalising object, and its ability to judge fairly? Or rather do we as the viewer become the judge who must decide on which way the balance must fall? And if we make our judgment what implications, if any, will be affected? Maybe it is not so much about what the images want but what we want from our images. People of colour, women, queer and gender non-conforming are becoming vocal once more regarding the importance of image, of a visuality that can offer everyone a representation. In the beginning of this chapter I included a quote by Lorde, ‘In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower’.¹⁵¹ Self-definition is part of the liberatory movement that does not call for a separatist visuality rather one that allows members of a particular group to be active and critical regarding images created about them and their struggle.

White subjectivity or the false sense of white objectivity is losing its grip. A white hegemony that speaks for all of us and represents all of us better than we can represent ourselves is constantly being questioned within all visual mediums. Visual pacifiers that exhibit bodies of colour, queer bodies and disabled bodies yet are created by those outside of these communities are coming under fire. We have seen this in the case of the H&M and Dove advert (figure 13 and 14) where advertising campaigns have been removed from circulation because of racist themes. In this thesis I have located a gap that exists between epistemology, visuality and the non-white subjectivity. In order for us to fully comprehend the scope of visual culture the discipline must encompass how images are understood by the individuals who are being depicted and the importance of who is creating those images. Topics of race and visuality should not be limited to stereotypical analyses of the black body in the white gaze, although important, it is now necessary to move beyond these singular narratives. If we understand visuality to be relative to epistemology and ontology this must be

¹⁵⁰ W.J.T. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005.

¹⁵¹ A. Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, New York, Crossing Press, 1984.

reflected in the questions we ask images. In a way we now move beyond the images and question those who have the power to create and those who believe they are the only ones looking.

Appendix

Appendix I: Lyrics to I'm Not Racist by Joyner Lucas¹⁵²

With all due respect
 I don't have pity for you black niggas, that's the way I feel
 Screamin' "Black Lives Matter"
 All the black guys rather be deadbeats than pay your bills
 Yellin' "nigga this" and "nigga that"
 Call everybody "nigga" and get a nigga mad
 As soon as I say "nigga" then everyone react
 And wanna swing at me and call me racist 'cause I ain't black
 Well pound that then
 Talkin' about slavery like you was around back then
 Like you was pickin' cotton off the fuckin' ground back then
 Like you was on the plantation gettin' down back then
 Aight, look
 I see a black man aimin' his gun
 But I'd rather see a black man claimin' his son
 And I don't mean just for one day and you done
 I mean, you still trapped in a rut
 And I work my ass off and I pay my taxes for what?
 So you can keep livin' off free government assistance?
 Food stamps for your children, but you're still tryna sell 'em
 For some weed and some liquor or a fuckin' babysitter
 While you party on the road 'cause you ain't got no fuckin' goals?
 You already late
 You motherfuckas needa get your damn priorities straight
 Wait, it's like you're proud to be fake
 But you lazy as fuck and you'd rather sell drugs
 Than get a job and be straight, and then you turn around and complain
 About the poverty rate? Fuck outta my face!
 You can't escape problems
 You can pray for some change but can't break a dollar
 Got nobody else to blame, so you blame Donald
 "They fuck the world with a Make America Great condom"
 My voice been back
 I'm not racist, my sister's boyfriend's black
 I'm not racist, my sister-in-law's baby cousin Tracy
 Got a brother and his girlfriend's black
 My head's in the cloud
 Heard there's not enough jobs for all the men in your house

¹⁵² L, Joyner, *I'm Not Racist*, Atlantic Records, 2017, <https://genius.com/Joyner-lucas-im-not-racist-lyrics> [accessed 16 May 2018].

Maybe we should build a wall to keep the Mexicans out
Or maybe we should send 'em all to the ghetto for now
I'm not racist and I never lie
But I think there's a disconnect between your culture and mine
I worship the Einsteins, study the Steve Jobs
But you ride 2Pac's dick like he was a fuckin' god, oh my god
And all you care about is rappin'
And stuntin' and bein' ratchet, and that's the nigga within you
Music rotting your brain and slowly start to convince you
Then you let your kids listen and then the cycle continues
Blame it all on the menu, blame it on those drinks
Blame it on everybody except for your own race
Blame it on white privileges, blame it on white kids
And just blame it on white citizens, same with the vice president
Bunch of class clowns
Niggas kneelin' on the field, that's a flag down
How dare you try to make demands for this money?
You gon' show us some respect, you gon' stand for this country, nigger!
I'm not racist
I'm just prepared for this type of war
I heard Eminem's rap at the awards, who's he fightin' for?
Y'all can take that motherfucker, too, he ain't white no more
It's like you wanna be so famous
You'll do anything for attention and a little payment
I can't take you nowhere without people pointin' fingers
Pants hangin' off your ass, you ain't got no home trainin'?
Put your fuckin' pants up, nigga! Put that suit back on!
Take that du-rag off! Take that gold out your mouth!
Quit the pitiful stuff
And then maybe police would stop killin' you fucks
Yo, what the fuck? I'm not racist
It's like we livin' in the same buildin' but split into two floors
I'm not racist
But there's two sides to every story, I wish that I knew yours
I wish that I knew yours
I'm not racist, I swear
With all disrespect
I don't really like you white motherfuckers, that's just where I'm at
Screaming "All Lives Matter"
Is a protest to my protest, what kind of shit is that?
And that's one war you'll never win
The power in the word "nigga" is a different sin
We shouldn't say it but we do, and that just what it is
But that don't mean that you can say it just 'cause you got nigga friends
Nigga, that word was originated for you to keep us under

And when we use it, we know that's just how we greet each other
And when you use it, we know there's a double meaning under
And even if I wasn't picking cotton physically
That don't mean I'm not affected by the history
My grandmama was a slave, that shit gets to me
And you ain't got no motherfucking sympathy, you pussy nigga!
I'm sorry you can never feel my life
Tryna have faith, but I never felt alright
It's hard to elevate when this country's ran by whites
Judging me by my skin color and my blackness
Tryna find a job but ain't nobody call me back yet
Now I gotta sell drugs to put food in my cabinet
You crackers ain't slick, this is all a part of your tactics
Don't talk about no motherfucking taxes, when I ain't making no dough
You think you know everything but you don't
You wanna copy our slang and everything that we know
Try to steal black culture and then make it your own, whoa
Fuck, I'm exhausted
I can't even drive without the cops tryna start shit
I'm tired of the systematic racism bullshit
All you do is false shit, this the shit that I'm force fed
And you don't know shit about my people, that's what bothers you
You don't know about no fried chicken and no barbeque
You don't know about the two-step or no loose change
You don't know about no 2 Chainz or no Kool-Aid, you don't know!
And even though Barack was half as black
You hated president Obama, I know that's a fact
You couldn't wait to get him out and put a cracker back
And then you gave us Donald Trump and now it's payback for that
I'm not racist, I never lied
But I know there's a disconnect between your culture and mine
Yeah, I praise 2Pac like he was a fuckin' god
He was fighting for his life way before he fuckin' died, nigga, die nigga!
And all you care about is money and power
And being ugly and that's the cracker within you
Hatred all in your brain, it slowly start to convince you
And then you teach it to your children until the cycle continue
Blame it on Puerto Rico, blame it on OJ
Blame it on everybody, except for your own race
Blame it on black niggas and blame it on black citizens
Aim at the black businesses, I ain't saying I'm innocent
But, I might be any day now
Treatin' everybody how you want and any way how
I swear North Korea 'bout to bomb us any day now
And now I'm duckin' everytime I hear a fuckin' plane now, shit

You know I make a lot of sense but you just can't admit it
When Eminem went against Trump, that was the illest
'Cause even though he's white, he let us know he standin' with us
I'm not racist, but I cry a lot
You don't know what it's like to be in a frying pot
You don't know what it's like to mind your business
And get stopped by the cops and not know if you 'bout to die or not
You worry 'bout your life, so you take mine
I love you but I fuckin' hate you at the same time
I wish we could trade shoes or we could change lives
So we could understand each other more but that'd take time
I'm not racist
It's like we livin' in the same buildin' but splittin' the both sides
I'm not racist
But there's two sides to every story and now you know mine
Can't erase the scars with a bandage
I'm hopin' maybe we can come to an understandin'
Agree to disagree, we could have an understandin'
I'm not racist.

Appendix II: Supplementary images.

Figure 13. 'Coolest Monkey in the Jungle' hoodie, H&M, [digital image], 2017, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/hm-race-row-family-of-coolest-monkey-in-the-jungle-model-forced-to-move-house-in-sweden-for-security-a3742366.html>, [accessed 22 May 2018].



Figure 14. Dove advert, [digital image], 2017, <http://www.afr.com/business/media-and-marketing/advertising/black-woman-turned-white-in-facebook-ad-misjudgement-20171009-gyx5ac>, [accessed 22 May 2018].



Figure 15. Pepsi advert featuring model Kendall Jenner offering a Pepsi during a protest, [digital image], 2017, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/pepsis-idiotic-kendall-jenner-ad-highlights-pop-musics-protest-problem-w475174>, [accessed 22 May 2018].

Bibliography

Primary Material: Visual examples

Operation Black Vote, 'A Vote is A Vote', [online image], 2016, <http://saatchi.com/pl-PL/news/operation-black-vote-and-saatchi-saatchi-launch-campaign-to-encourage-bame-community-voters-to-si/>, [accessed 13 February 2018].

Joyner Lucas, 'I'm not Racist', Proulx, B & Lucas, J (dir.), [online video], 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43gm3CJePn0>, [accessed 13 February 2018]. Copyright 2017 Atlantic Recording Corporation.

Unknown, *Governor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1816* [etching and watercolour on buff paper; 40.8 x 24.8 cm], 1850-1888, <http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/image/daveys-proclamation-aborigines-1816>, [accessed 1 March, 2018].

Secondary Material: Books

Agamben, G., *What is an Apparatus?: and other essays*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009.

Ahmed, S., *Living a Feminist Life*, London, Duke University Press, 2017.

Alexander, E., *The Black Interior*, Saint Paul, Graywolf Press, 2004.

Asante, M. K., *An Afrocentric Manifesto: toward an African Renaissance*, Cambridge, Polity, 2007.

Browne, S., *Dark Matters. On the Surveillance of Blackness*, London, Duke University Press, 2015.

Chang, C., *We Gon' Be Alright. Notes on Race and Resegregation*, New York, Picador, 2016.

Gayatri Chakravorty, S., 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1982), P. Williams and L. Chrisman (ed), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 66–111.

Hall, S., 'Encoding/Decoding', Hall, S et al (ed), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, London, Hutchinson, 1980, pp. 128-138.

Hill Collins, P., *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd edn, New York, Routledge, 2000.

Dyer, R., *White*, London, Routledge, 1997.

Dubois, WEB., *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chicago, A. C. McClurg & Co, 1903

- Farr, A., 'Whiteness Visible: Enlightenment racism and the structure of racialised consciousness', G, Yancy (ed), *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 143-159.
- Fanon, F., *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans, C. L Markmann, London, Pluto Press, 1967.
- Foucault, M., 'The Confession of the Flesh' (1977), Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1980, pp. 194-228.
- Hooks, B., *Ain't I a Woman; Black Women and Feminism*, Boston, South End Press, 1981.
- Hooks, B., *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*, New York, H. Holt and Co, 1995.
- Hooks, B., *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, Oxon, Routledge, 2004.
- Hooks, B., *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 2nd edn, New York, Routledge, 2015.
- Hughes, L., 'Justice' in *Scottsboro limited: four poems and a play in verse*, New York, Golden Stair Press, 1932.
- Lentin, A. and G, Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism : Racism in a Neoliberal Age*, London, Zed Books, 2011.
- Lorde, A., *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, New York, Crossing Press, 1984.
- Mirzoeff, N., *The Right to Look, A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2011.
- Mitchell, W.J.T., *What do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Mitchell, W.J.T., *Seeing Through Race*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Yancy, G., 'Fragments of a Social Ontology of Whiteness', G, Yancy (ed), *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 1-25.
- Yancy, G., *Black Bodies, White Gazes. The Continuing Significance of Race in America*, 2nd edn, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.
- Warburg, A M., et al., *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*. In Warburg A. & Steinberg M., *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, London, Ithaca, 1995. Available from JSTOR, (02 March 2018).
- Wiegman, R., "'My Name is Forrest Gump": Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity', J. Parker, M. Romero, R. Samantrai (ed) *Interdisciplinarity and Social Justice*, New York, Suny Press, 2010, pp.217 - 243.

Articles

Ahmed, S., 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness', *Feminist Theory*, vol 8, no 2, 2007, p. 149-168, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139>, [accessed 15 February 2018].

S. Hall, & L. Back, 'At Home And Not At Home: Stuart Hall In Conversation With Les Back', *Cultural Studies*, vol 23, no 4, 2009, p. 658-687, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09502380902950963?scroll=top&needAccess=true>, [accessed 18 May 2018].

Maggio, J., "'Can the Subaltern Be Heard?": Political Theory, Translation, Representation, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak', *Alternatives*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2007, p. 419 - 443, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540703200403>, [accessed 02 February 2018].

Manderson, D., 'The Law of the Image and the Image of the Law: Colonial Representations of the Rule of Law,' *New York Law School Law Review*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2012-2013, p. 153-170, <http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/nyls57&div=13&id=&page=>, [accessed 20 March 2018].

Oliver, B Mary., 'African American Men as 'Criminal and Dangerous': Implications of Media Portrayals of Crime on the 'Criminalization' of African American Men.' *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2003, pp. 3-18, www.jstor.org/stable/41819017, [accessed 9 April 2018].

Resnik, J and E Curtis, D., 'Representing Justice: From Renaissance Iconography to Twenty-First-Century Courthouses', *Faculty Scholarship Series*, 693, 2007, http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/693, [accessed 07 February 2018].

Sarabia, D and Shriver, T., 'Maintaining Collective Identity in a Hostile Environment: Confronting Negative Public Perception and Factional Divisions Within the Skinhead Subculture', *Sociological Spectrum*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2004, p. 267-294. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02732170390258614>, [accessed 13 March 2018].

Smith, William A, et al., 'Racial Battle Fatigue and the MisEducation of Black Men: Racial Microaggressions, Societal Problems, and Environmental Stress.' *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 80, no. 1, 2011, pp. 63-82, www.jstor.org/stable/41341106, [accessed 9 April 2018].

Website

Criss, D., '*I'm Not Racist*' is the brutal race conversation nobody wants to have', CNN, 30 November 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/29/entertainment/joyner-lucas-not-racist-video-trnd/index.html>, [accessed 6th April 2018].

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, The Significance of the "Doll Test" in *Brown v. Board of Education*, [website], <http://www.naacpldf.org/brown-at-60-the-doll-test>, [accessed 12 March 2018].

Encyclopedia Britannica [website], <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maat-Egyptian-goddess>, [accessed 15 February 2018].

Magazine article

Schrobsdorff, S., 'Red Vs. Pink: The Politics of Fashion and Why a Hat Is No Longer Just a Hat', *Time*, 20 February 2017, p55. Available from: Business Source Complete, [accessed 29 March 2018].

Online Newspaper

Criss, D., 'I'm Not Racist' is the brutal race conversation nobody wants to have', CNN, 30 November 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/29/entertainment/joyner-lucas-not-racist-video-trnd/index.html>, [accessed 6th April 2018].

Edsall, B. T., 'White-on-White Voting', *The New York Times*, 16 November 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/16/opinion/trump-white-voting.html>, [accessed 21 May 2018].

Platell, A., "Platell's People: Can't you show a scintilla of gratitude, Stormzy?", *The Daily Mail*, 24 February 2018 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-5429041/Platells-People-Stormzy-gratitude.html> [accessed 30th April 2018].

Wilkinson, F., 'Election Analysts Discover Even More White Voters', Bloomberg, 02 February 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-02-02/election-analysts-discover-even-more-white-voters>, [accessed 21 May 2018].

Speech

Cameron, D., 'Prime Minister's speech at Munich Security Conference, 5 February 2011, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>, [accessed 17 May 2018].

Trump, D., 'Donald Trump's speech after Charlottesville protests', 12 August 2017, <https://www.vox.com/2017/8/12/16138906/president-trump-remarks-condemning-violence-on-many-sides-charlottesville-rally>, [accessed 18 May 2018].

Film

Scary Movie, dir. Keenen Ivory Wayans, Miramax Films, 2000 [DVD].

Images

Dove advert, [digital image], 2017, <http://www.afr.com/business/media-and-marketing/advertising/black-woman-turned-white-in-facebook-ad-misjudgement-20171009-gyx5ac>, [accessed 22 May 2018].

'Coolest Monkey in the Jungle', H&M, [digital image], 2017, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/hm-race-row-family-of-coolest-monkey-in-the-jungle-model-forced-to-move-house-in-sweden-for-security-a3742366.html>, [accessed 22 May 2018].

Pepsi advert, [digital image], 2017, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/pepsis-idiotic-kendall-jenner-ad-highlights-pop-musics-protest-problem-w475174>, [accessed 22 May 2018].