Image-making in the Settler State: the "National Emergency" we had to have

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ABSTRACT: Labeled the "national emergency" we had to have, the Northern Territory Emergency Response was a federal action in which Indigenous Australians were cast as heavily in need of "management" by a paternalistic State. Interventionist and racially exclusive, the Emergency Response highlights the ongoing role of State/settler colonial interference in the lives of Indigenous people in Australia. I describe this event as a case study highlighting the self-fashioning of Whiteness through the refashioning of Aboriginality. This fashioning was premised on the language and imagery of deficit and heavily perpetuated a mythology of the noble savage. Employing a range of secondary sources on the matter of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, including media reports along with academic texts, this offers insight into how the history and representations of Indigenous

Australians have resulted in the perpetuation of the noble savage imagery in settler colonial discourse, there is little that is noble about the contradictory turn of phrase "noble savage". This paper argues that the violence conveyed by the term "noble savage" and its utility throughout the Intervention are illustrative of the ongoing attempts by settler society to domesticate Aboriginality.

KEYWORDS: settler colonialism, image-making, Northern Territory Intervention, Aboriginality, Whiteness, structural violence, racial marker.

Labeled the "national emergency" we had to have, the Northern Territory Emergency Response was a federal action in which Indigenous Australians were represented as heavily in need of "management" by a paternalistic State.[2] Interventionist and racially exclusive, the Emergency Response emphasises the ongoing role of State/settler colonial interference in the lives of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory and more broadly in Australia.[3] In this article, I describe this event as a case study highlighting the self-fashioning of Whiteness through the refashioning of Aboriginality.[4] Such fashioning was premised on the language and imagery of deficit and heavily perpetuated mythology of the "noble savage." The images and symbols of noble savagery recalled during the Intervention ranged from child neglect, family abuse, and dysfunction. This together, had the effect of condemning Indigenous men and women "as being generally irresponsible and incapable of managing their own destiny."[5] The moral compass of the white majority pitted Aboriginality against Whiteness, and in turn, constructed the image of Indigenous Australians "as having a propensity to violence."[6]

To explore this case study, this paper examines and employs a range of secondary sources on the matter of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), referred to from now on as the Intervention. These sources, including media reports and academic texts, offer insight into how representations of Indigenous Australians have resulted in the perpetuation of the noble savage imagery in settler colonial discourse, noting that there is little that is noble about the contradictory turn of phrase.[7] The violence conveyed by the term "noble savage," and its utility throughout the Intervention are illustrative of the ongoing attempts by settler society to domesticate Aboriginality and can be connected to

Ghassan Hage's work that references the process by which taming and change are strategies used to domesticate the "savage."[8]

The Intervention is a recent depiction of domestication in action, which saw a range of restrictive measures implemented in an attempt to contain and restrict Aboriginality. Image-making, as the visual and textual discourse of settler colonialism, instated notions of Aboriginality and associated inequity. The myth of noble savagery, as an ideological relic, was a vital part of this process. This relic is steeped in violence and the sentiment of cultural wounding, and became an ideological habit that has been re-created and maintained across generations of white Australians.[9] In order to understand the context in which the Intervention came about it is necessary to take a moment to unpack the lineage of image-making and race relations in Australia.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Image-making played a key role in the framing and perpetuation of constructed identities in settler colonial Australia. According to White, Australia has "long supported a whole industry of image-makers," such as journalists, authors, historians, politicians, and photographers, "to tell us what we are."[10] I am referring to "image making" as the construction of an identity, both visual and textual, that is reinforced and perpetuated over time. European ideologies, which travelled with the spread of settler colonialism, were steeped in perceptions of racial superiority, the alignment of natural selection and cultural evolution, and with an imagined sense of the noble or ignoble savage.[11] Such ideologies and perceptual habits gave European expansionists a heightened sense of ownership over the lands they sought to take and the people they sought to subjugate. They arrived with pre-existing notions of Aboriginality, such as isolation and exoticism. As Attwood states, "the right to the country and to rule its people was based on a historical representation of Aborigines and Aboriginality."[12] With European thought firmly focused on the prism of Indigenous deficit, as framed through a competing discourse of denial and paternalism, so began a history of representation.

The significance of invasion and occupation in settler societies and the impact of invasion as a structure, is summed up by Wolfe, who writes that "when invasion is recognized as a structure rather than an event, its history does not stop – or, more to the point, become relatively trivial."[13] By labeling invasion "a structure," Wolfe draws attention to the fiber of contemporary social and political interactions in Australia. By considering the enduring nature of colonial

violence—mindful that while the era of frontier assaults may have ended—the repercussions are contained in public institutions such as education, media, and politics, and can be found in the elemental structure of settler colonialism. It is these structures of the settler state that continue to portray Aboriginality as inadequate when compared to Whiteness.

The lingering and repeated effects of settler colonialism are conveyed almost daily by politicians and media professionals, who demonstrate the practice of othering Indigenous Australians while normalising Whiteness.[14] Statements made by conservative commentator Andrew Bolt referring to Indigenous Australians with blond hair, pale skin, and of "largely European genealogy" as "professional Aborigines" highlights the historic and divisive nature of racial categorisation in the public.[15] These remarks draw on the history of defining perceptions of authentic Indigenous Australians by breaking identities down to shades of skin colour. Bolt reinforces and perpetuates "categories of pure and impure racial status."[16] His comments, coupled with reports in the *Northern Territory News* on the 10th December 1989 of the "last full-blood Larrakia", are examples of the scrutiny under which Indigeneity is placed, along with the exclusion of Indigenous Australians from the main body of the nation.[17] Such productions of Aboriginality and Whiteness have been reinforced as governing and pervasive by individuals, collectives, and organisations that orchestrate narratives and accounts of Aboriginality in contemporary Australia. By passing comment on the colour of Indigenous Australians' skin or hair, or by referencing the "last full-blood" or the "half-caste"[18] the structural violence of public "monitoring of Aboriginal people" becomes apparent.[19]

DEEP COLONISING

Situated within the discourse of settler colonialism—because it represents the Australian contextualisation of whiteness studies—this article draws on the work of McMullen (2008), Reynolds (1981, 1989, 1999, 2005), Attwood (1992), Langton (2008, 2013), and Povinelli (1998, 1999). Settler colonialism continues to work on a profound level; Veracini states that "settler colonialism routinely operates via deep colonising means."[20] Deep colonising refers to the impacts of policies and State institutions that continue the work of colonisation such as the *Aboriginal Land rights (NT) Act* 1976. Bradley and Seton refer to this legislation as "artifact[s] of a colonial system" since Indigenous people are placed in the location of having to operate from a position of oppositional binaries.[21] To

achieve land rights, individuals must comply with legislation heavily structured around the moment of colonisation. It is these institutions that continue colonisation, described by Rose as an "act of wounding."[22]

Although there have been moments gesturing towards a principle of decolonising, such as the implementation of the Native Title Act, and former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations, these are steeped in the structures of domination.[23] Rudd contained the parameters of the apology by "focusing the gaze of his audience between 1910 and 1970"; the years outside of this range were removed from scrutiny and in the process, he controlled the terms and conditions through which the apology might be viewed.[24] In the case of Native Title, applicants must use legislation and court mechanisms that are "artifacts of a colonial system," and in the process memory and remembering become politicised as applicants attempt to meet the criteria for a successful land rights claim.[25] Progressive steps and reconciliatory policy are frequently negated by structures of violence that are instilled in the foundations of settler colonialism. In essence "the process of conquest … remains embedded within [the] institutions and practices" of settler colonial society.[26]

THE STRUCTURAL RACISM OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

Aboriginality has been shaped, fashioned, and legislated since the beginning of colonial life in Australia. The emergence of scientific racism in the Eighteenth Century coincided with the British occupation of Australia, affecting thoughts and perceptions towards Indigenous Australians, and birthing the category of "Aborigine."[27] The introduction of the very category, "Aboriginal," contradicts the reality that before the category was penned, the "Aborigines" were discrete nations with their own languages, laws, and homelands. The definition was heavily influenced by "the newly developing racial paradigms of Social Darwinism and Social Evolutionism"[28] that portrayed Indigenous people as savages and the "most ugly, degraded and repulsive specimens of the race."[29] Both theoretical paradigms sought to classify human life and culture, instating a hierarchy of human development that aspired to apical states of Whiteness, masculinity, democracy, and capitalism—the legacy of which can still be witnessed today.[30] A 2014 governmental inquiry into the national education curriculum headed by Professor Barry Spurr advised the government to focus less on teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander texts and more on "western Judeo-Christian culture", further representing the role of structural violence and Whiteness in the education system.[31]

The binary that situates Aboriginality and Whiteness has the effect of placing people and communities into "one of two separate but unequal groups."[32] In this case, Aboriginality is fashioned as the other through a fixed and narrow lens. Following the 2007 release of *The Little Children are Sacred* report, a detailed account of findings into child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, the inquiry found high levels of alcohol abuse and widespread—but under-reported—cases of child abuse. The authors also noted, "these are just the symptoms of a breakdown of Aboriginal culture and society."[33] For any meaningful change to take place, the government would need to commit to a "determined, coordinated effort to break the cycle and provide the necessary strength" for the affected communities.[34] Media reports in the *Australian* focused primarily on "collective failure," brandishing headlines such as Aboriginal abuse "should shock all."[35] By focusing on "individual responsibility" rather than "failed social policy" or "mutual obligations" the government further marginalised Indigenous Australians.[36] The imagery of the noble savage is never far away in settler colonial discourse relegating Indigenous Australians to the status of inferior or "secondary to the primary 'self'."[37] In fact, even the use of the phrase noble savage carries a connotation of an underlying sense of inferiority in comparison to white settler society.

WHITENESS AS A RACIAL MARKER

The Australian nation and its citizens have been self-fashioned as "white." In turn, they have come to occupy the position of "Whiteness," a pervasive experience and position of privilege.[38] Sherwood argues that the power of Whiteness as a racial marker is its invisibility "to many who wear it as part of a normative value."[39] This power has, in turn, refashioned Aboriginality as the 'other', and rendered them politically and often socially powerless through structural violence and aggressions of cultural wounding.[40] The genesis of these relations is found in the image-making that began with the noble savage, and occupied the earliest settler imaginations on the frontier. What began as the image of a lone (male) hunter perched on a hill, embedded in the land (akin to flora and fauna), has prevailed and been perpetuated through restrictive government policies of assimilation and segregation.[41]

Structural violence was entrenched at the very beginnings of colonisation in Australia, establishing a racial hierarchy positioning Whiteness at the top.[42] The legal system, and an entrenched lack of adequate economic opportunities, hospitals, and clinics, ensured that structures of discrimination were established

as systems of power and control. Once set in motion, structural violence worked to ensure that the myth of noble savagery continued through the discourse of deficit and representations as outsiders. Kampmark argues that the noble savage myth is alive and well in relation to the Intervention as the settler colonial State attempted to "ameliorate" the condition of Indigenous Australians.[43] Marcia Langton referred to the distinctly "ignoble savage" discourse surrounding Indigenous Australians and their representations in the media.[44] She argues that Indigenous Australians were "rendered base by drugs, pornography and the 'rivers of grog'" running through communities.[45] This imagery has relied on the mutually enforcing relationships of Aboriginality and Whiteness. My concern here is how Aboriginality has been represented and reported from 2006 (the year prior to the Intervention) until 2008, the year after the Coalition government lost public office. I expose the visual and textual discourse surrounding the Intervention, which positioned Aboriginality as the "other," alien, and remote in comparison to the alleged normalcy of the white nuclear family.[46]

The presence of one constructed identity relies on the existence of another, with the two working together from a position of binary opposition.[47] As Indigenous Australians have been studied, legislated for, written about, and objectified as the "other" in a settler colonial nation, White Australia has, in turn, objectified and constructed itself. Russell writes of the self-fulfilling aspect of constructing and portraying notions of the self and the "other": "colonisers wrote of the colonised, yet were themselves written and defined by the process."[48] This discourse returned with the Intervention, highlighting the broad spectrum of white voices in public and political arenas and the dominance of these voices in the discourse on Aboriginality and Indigenous community life. As such, the question begs to be asked, how could the federal government intervene to such an extent in the lives of Indigenous Australians as a distinct racial and ethnic group? One part of the answer to this question lies in the 1967 Referendum that successfully altered the Australian Constitution and gave the federal government the power to legislate on behalf of Indigenous Australians.[49]

Although the Intervention happened some thirty years after the Indigenous citizenship referendum, it did not occur in a vacuum and finds company in several actions directed at Indigenous people and their communities since that time. The Intervention as such is not an isolated event, yet for the purposes of this paper it stands as a powerful example of the violent discourse of settler colonialism. The rhetoric and imagery of ferality was projected onto

Indigenous Australians as evidenced in comments made by Mal Brough, Federal Minister for Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs at the time of the Intervention.[50] Brough referred to "dysfunctional" Indigenous communities flush with "rivers of grog."[51] Setting Indigenous life against a "post-apocalyptic" backdrop instated a discourse of deficit.[52] The language of deficit and dysfunction has its foundations in the pseudoscience of eugenics and notions of survival of the fittest.[53] The context of structural violence has ensured the perpetuation of the constructed identities of Aboriginality and Whiteness. Such positionality is one loaded with assumptions of value, thus the lasting experience of violence and exclusion for Indigenous Australians. The fast-paced events of the Intervention draw our attention to Whiteness as an "ideological force" that has continued to construct identities and society.[54]

INTERVENTIONIST POLICY

In early 2007, by way of the Intervention, the mechanisms of State control reinstated themselves firmly within remote Indigenous communities, which generated a great deal of interest from the media and wider population. Beginning in Mutitjulu, this event involved the mobilisation of military personnel into Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. It was federally endorsed, dramatic, provocative, and caught the attention of the entire nation. It was also presented as a white intervention in the best interests of black Australia. Yet there was little consensus among the Indigenous population as to the need for this intervention, nor widespread support from Indigenous political leadership concerning the militarisation and high-level surveillance of remote community life.[55] The media rushed in with claims of widespread child sexual abuse in remote Indigenous communities, which were described as "hovels besieged by a plague of dogs and car wrecks."[56]

In this saga the government was presented as the crusaders, here at last to help "save Aboriginal kids."[57] Nanette Rogers' graphic statements to the viewing Australian public via the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Lateline* tapped into a frenzied mentality whereby violent and personal accounts of sexual abuse were reported on the national broadcaster. Rogers' use of the words "her mother was away from the house, drunk in a small town" and "the entrenchment of violence in the whole of the community" depicted a narrow lens through which to view Aboriginality.[58] In Rogers' interviews, Indigenous women were scripted as incompetent carers, while Indigenous men were represented as sexually and morally uncontrolled. While this paper does not seek to deny or

diminish the report's findings, nor any acts of sexual and physical abuse, Rogers' line of argument alienated an entire cultural group. By only drawing attention to violence and pedophilia, the former Crown Prosecutor ignored other factors such as unemployment, lack of adequate education and housing, isolation, and boredom facing many remote Indigenous communities, which may have impacted rates of crime and social depression.

Past and present inequitable treatment of Indigenous Australians by the State was also sidestepped as Indigenous Australians were viewed through a prism of deficit. The image created by the feverish reporting and blatant manipulation of public sentiment draws attention to the heavily loaded context of words in a settler colonial context. Why is it that the graphic reporting of violence and sexual abuse in Indigenous communities is acceptable content for media consumption, particularly when compared with the less detailed accounts of sexual abuse under consideration in the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*?[59] Why is it acceptable to pry into similar traumatic events with some people more than others? The answer to these questions can be found in the perpetuation of the noble savage imagery in the settler state.

Following the release of Anderson and Wild's report which claimed that the "sexual abuse of Aboriginal children is common, widespread, and grossly unreported"[60] the federal government announced a "national emergency."[61] Calling non-Indigenous Australians to action highlights the paternalistic undertones of the settler colonial State as Indigenous men and women were condemned as "being generally irresponsible and incapable of managing their own destiny" or in other words in need of external white help.[62] In the build up to the announcement of a "national emergency" media reports of violence and sexual abuse in town camps concentrated around images of communities in despair, as dysfunctional "no-go-zones."[63] The restrictive and racially defining aspects of the Intervention concerned many Indigenous Australians who felt they were being "singled out as alcoholics, pornographers" and abusers while the media and government ignored the same problems "in the rest of the white community."[64] The result of such reporting was that Whiteness became "natural" and "normal" while Aboriginality was "constructed and oppressive."[65]

Despite "repeated calls for action over the span of several decades," governments have failed, through a lack of ongoing and genuine commitment to bipartisan policy development, to bring about meaningful change for Indigenous people.[66] It was against this backdrop that the federal government announced its

military intervention on the 21st of June 2007.[67] In the "name of protecting children" a raft of widespread and restrictive measures were introduced into the governance structure of Indigenous family life. These measures relied on the extinguishment of the Racial Discrimination Act,[68] giving the government the capability to implement racially exclusive legislation. This is a significant moment of deep colonising, polarising Indigenous peoples and white Australia, and consigning Indigenous Territorians to a racialised "state of exception."[69]

Indigenous communities and townships were once again scrutinised for their alleged dysfunctionality with media reports of "this other Australia" and "remote Aboriginal societies" emphasising distance between the self and the "other."[70] Brown and Brown refer to the demonisation of Indigenous Australians who were "exposed to a level of scrutiny unparalleled in recent times,"[71] and judged as incapable of looking after themselves or their families.[72] Babidge draws attention to the long history of the surveillance of Indigenous families.[73] In 1959 the Director for Native Affairs, O'Leary, asserted "we know the name, family history and living conditions of every aboriginal in the state" of Queensland.[74] Even during the official period of assimilation, Indigenous families were subject to scrutiny by policies "implemented through authoritarian means."[75] The same can be said for the Intervention. As Brown et al. state, the Intervention was fashioned as a "failure of self-determination" with some calling for the closure of "unviable remote communities."[76] As I write of pervasive Whiteness, the deep colonising of settler colonial politics continues to present itself by way of former Prime Minister Abbott's calls to close "unviable" remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia.**[77]** Abbott's calls support my argument that the structural violence of settler colonialism works on a deep and continuous level. Wolfe calls this the "logic of elimination."[78] As Indigenous Australians continue to be cast as the nation's deficit, paternalistic image-makers, politicians, and media professionals among them continue to frame Indigeneity as savage and in need of restraint and settler colonial control.

THE DISCOURSE OF DEFICIT IN SETTLER COLONIALISM

Deficit discourse, also found to be prolific in media reports from this period, is a mode of language that repeatedly positions Aboriginality as the "other**.**" It is also closely linked to notions of authenticity that play out in the schema of race relations and constructed identities. The discourse of the settler state involves the representation of identities such as Aboriginality and Whiteness throughout sites such as policy and public expression, including the visual, textual, and oral.

By framing someone or a particular group in a negative fashion, "authenticity" is used as a marker of inclusion and exclusion.[79] These images are played out on a national scale as the marker of the "real Aborigine" (or in other words remote living Indigenous person) and are posited "in deficit comparison" against an inauthentic urban Aborigine.[80] By questioning an individual's "authenticity," discourse is framed around constructed and imposed images and ways of knowing and learning. Foucault refers to this discourse as a system of power, a way of constituting knowledge that reflects on the constructed identities of Aboriginality and Whiteness.[81] Foucault further refers to these systems of power, such as "objects, events, identities, subjects and truths" as "important sites of power relations."[82] These relations are constructed and maintained through the discursive practices of Whiteness. By framing Indigenous Australians negatively, notions of "authenticity" are fabricated, relating to the structure and agency of language and how it is used. Nanette Rogers' account of Indigenous people choosing "not to take responsibility for their own actions" is an example of the agency of language.[83] The end result of representation is the perpetuation of stereotypes and the continued marginalization of Indigenous Australians.[84]

Significant examples of discourse analysis are found in reports of sexual abuse and violent crimes in remote communities before the 2007 Intervention. After conducting a survey of news reports via ProQuest ANZ Newsstand and Factiva from 2006 to 2008, expressions pertaining to "a thin veneer of cultural behaviour" (The Sydney Morning Herald 17th May 2006),[85] "violence and dysfunction" (AAP Online 7th August 2007),[86] and "well-known alcoholics" (The Australian 20th August 2007)[87] were found in media reports relating to Indigenous people, families and communities. "National disgrace" (The Advertiser 25th June 2007),[88] "so deprived and dysfunctional" (The Sydney Morning Herald 18th May 2006)[89] and "virtual war" zones (The Australian 15th April 2006)[90] were terms also used to describe Indigenous communities. While politicians spoke overwhelmingly from a position of Whiteness, Howard claimed in an interview on ABC television that "we're taking control of the situation" (ABC 21st June 2007).[91] The Daily Telegraph (3rd July 2007) dismissed history, with Piers Ackerman attacking so called "stolen generations" and "promoters of Aboriginal industry."[92] A survey of media reports indicates, importantly, that words can be heavily loaded within a settler colonial context and that discourse evolves and alludes to the power of self-fashioned identities. The role that self-fashioning has played in the construction of Whiteness can be seen in how entrenched identity is in the foundations of settler colonialism. Whiteness is

posited as normal and therefore never in need of a definition or explanation. As with other facets of structural and cultural violence, it becomes the default position.

I now turn to the role of visual and textual discourse in the construction of Aboriginality and Whiteness during the period of the Intervention. I situate the discourse of the Intervention under the headings of "the violence of neglect," "the normalcy of Whiteness", and "the fashioning of Aboriginality as the other", emphasising the ongoing discourse of difference and deficit in a paternalistic State.

THE VIOLENCE OF NEGLECT

I have selected a small cross-section of material produced during the period of 2006 until 2009, to draw attention to the impact of image-making in the construction of identities. The images function within the context of structural violence and from the privileged position of Whiteness, to fashion identities and entrench the deeply colonising aspects of settler presence. Throughout the course of the Intervention, images played a key role in the dissemination of government policy and normative ontologies. ABC television reported on the importance of the military in providing "the communications and logistic support" for Intervention support staff, while the description of "stabilising" communities inferred a threat to white interventionists.[93] Meanwhile, an article in *The Advertiser* reiterated the government's national emergency discourse, with a headline reading "The Time for Talk is Over" (The Advertiser 25th June 2007).[94]

As Jennings states, the media does not simply reflect reality, instead, the debate and images are framed "to re[-]present things to us."[95] Stereotypes were perpetuated in the discourse surrounding the Intervention framing Indigenous Australians in a manner that emphasised differences and remoteness.

Angel notes that although many articles written about the Intervention were done so in a positive manner which recognised the importance of addressing serious health and sexual abuse issues, there was a tendency to write about Indigenous Australians as "different, unable to control their own sexuality, and implicit in this: unable to control their destinies."[96] Images in newspapers such as the *Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, The Australian, The Canberra Times*, and *The Daily telegraph* and across television screens, stressed the alleged despair and dysfunction in many remote Indigenous communities. The camera captured images for readers of lonely looking children, who were for the most

part depicted as wandering around deserted communities. Examples of this are shown in Figure One, which featured in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on the 1st of July 2007, accompanied by the article title "States failed children: PM."[97] The disparity between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians in regards to health, education, and employment opportunities highlights the lack of genuine bipartisan commitment to Indigenous Australians and speaks to the structural violence of settler colonialism.

John Howard says states have failed to apply the law.
Photo: *Terry Trewin*

July 1, 2007

THE states were to blame for the problem of sexual abuse of children in indigenous communities, Prime Minister John Howard said yesterday.

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Figure One: A young Indigenous child, of no noted name or language group, is photographed amid rubbish. The image refers to the federal government's belief that the States failed to adhere to the law requiring them to maintain the safety of Indigenous children (Photo: Terry Trewin Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 1st July 2007).

In Figure Two the image is captioned "the shame of our Indigenous towns", which speaks to the paternalism of settler colonialism. The Indigenous children of Wadeye are caught up in the image-making of the Intervention.[98] Rarely are children named or photographed with adult family members, or in school, or doing everyday tasks. The use of the pronoun "our" in relation to Indigenous towns, gives a sense of inclusion and ownership. However, it is against a paternalistic backdrop, while "shame" reinforces the notion of difference, deficit, and corrupt morality. The reader is left to decide to whom the shame is attributable—the State or the Indigenous people of Wadeye? This deficit construction contradicts what is occurring in many Indigenous communities, as Indigenous children are often given a level of independence as a form of role modeling, with the intention of making them responsible community members. Waller notes that within Indigenous communities the relationships between the self, family, and community are of great importance.[99]

Figure Two: Indigenous boys from Wadeye (Photo: Terry Trewin Source: *The Age,* 22nd June 2007).

Figure Three shows an image which resonates with the language of deficit. The house looks abandoned, derelict, and unkempt, while rubbish is strewn all over the ground. With no person pictured in the empty disheveled looking home, Indigeneity is further removed as no one is in the image for the readers to relate to or empathise with. The image works to juxtapose Aboriginality against white, suburban, nuclear families and their "neat" houses. The text used in this article represents the binary position of Aboriginality and Whiteness. At one end of the scale is the description "Third World conditions," posited against the "affluent suburbs" of non-Indigenous Australians on the other end.[100]

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Attack on NT grog 'misses point': academic

The Aboriginal community at One Mile Dam, just 1.6 kilometres from Parliament House in Darwin, lives in Third World conditions, surrounded by affluent suburbs.
Photo: *Terry Trewin*

Figure Three: Images of poverty in remote communities do not operate in isolation. In the case of media reports of the Intervention, poverty was often conveyed by ground shots, photographs of beer cans, and elements of outdoor living not uncommon in the tropical climates of remote northern Australia (Photo: Terry Trewin Source: *The Age,* 22nd June 2007).

Figure Four, published by the *Sydney Morning Herald* with the title *"Remote Areas Face Radical Change"* also uses strong language and imagery to project an identity of deficit and ferality.[101]

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Remote areas face radical change

Community at war ... children play on a burnt-out car in the middle of Wadeye, where a war between two groups turned the streets into battlegrounds.
Photo: *Glenn Campbell*

Stephanie Peatling
June 22, 2007
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ALCOHOL bans, medical checks of children, a take-

Figure Four: Remote areas face radical change (Photo: Glenn Campbell Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 22nd June 2007).

Contained in the image and text is the unspoken assumptions of settler society, that Indigenous communities are characterized by deficit and neglect. Through the use of expressions such as "war," "burnt-out car", and "battlegrounds," Indigeneity is captioned as violent and separate from mainstream white Australia. Structural violence operates in this image by drawing attention to the dysfunctionality of Wadeye rather than emphasising the

historical disadvantage that many Indigenous communities face. Captioned as a "community at war" otherness is represented as the norm. Such language isolates Indigenous Australians from the everyday life experiences of many non-Indigenous Australians. Children are again pictured on their own with no adult in sight playing on a burnt-out car instead of a playground.

Remoteness and otherness are frequently stressed in these images, drawing attention to the appalling conditions that some communities face.[102] The provocative image of the army arriving into these communities added to the binary opposition of Aboriginality, positing it against a paternalistic white Australian power. What was really shown, however, was a constructed identity of the lone and neglected Indigenous child in need of assistance from the wider white population. There are deliberate absences from each of these images, which would have worked against the rhetoric of tragedy and dysfunction, such as the success of locally trained volunteer operated night patrols in Indigenous communities, extensive Indigenous governance programs, and the pervasive strength of kinship and extended family life. Instead, these elements of Indigenous life experience are omitted through a deliberate silencing. As Mitchell states, these images act as a "system of codes that interposes an ideological veil," or in other words a way of viewing them as separate from us formed around the way in which discourse has been textually and visually positioned.[103] Positioning images and text in this way communicates a range of ideas about settler colonialism that has had the effect of narrowing the "definition of Aboriginality" in the process.[104]

THE NORMALCY OF WHITENESS

The role of settler colonialism and the projection of ferality came together "in the declaration of a national emergency in sixty-four Indigenous townships and town camps."[105] As a means of containing and violently disrupting Indigenous community and family life, Mal Brough (Minister for Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) advocated the need for "strong powers so that we are not weighed down by unnecessary red tape and talk-fests."[106] The "dire emergency facing many Indigenous communities," an expression coined by John Howard and Mal Brough, positioned people either with the abusers, or with the government, meaning that anyone who criticised the measures was either "not a parent" or was presented as soulless.[107] The emotive language links Aboriginality with the image of ferality, through notions of amorality, and the abuse and neglect of Indigenous children. By emphasising family values and

continuing to place Aboriginality on the periphery, Howard attempted to draw attention away from settler colonial politics.

Getting to know you: A police officer talks with a child as an official cavalcade descends on Mutitjulu yesterday.
Photo: *Jason South*

Figure Five: A police officer talks with a child (Photo: Jason South Source: *The Age,* 28th June 2007)

Figure Five shows the disciplined figure of a police officer stooped over a young Indigenous boy.[108] The children are pictured lined up with no shoes, suggesting poverty and neglect, while the military language used in the caption references the strength of power and privilege. Words such as "cavalcade" and "descends" set paternalistic and militaristic undertones, stressing the power and privilege Whiteness holds in settler society. The use of "descends" speaks to the position of authority that Whiteness holds above Aboriginality, ready to step in when need be.

Figure Six published by the *Sydney Morning Herald* with the captivating headline "In the eye of the storm" references John Howard's rhetoric of

emergency, labeling sexual abuse in Indigenous communities as "our hurricane Katrina."[109] The image shows a concerned looking Indigenous family in the foreground while a hesitant Brough looks on in the background. Brough is captioned as someone who has spent a lot of time in remote communities, a father figure, someone who cares and offers salvation.

Figure Six: Photo: Glenn Campbell Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 30th June 2007.

The figures featured in this article represent a small selection of dominant themes that emerged through the visual and textual discourse of the Intervention, namely military control and authority, state power, and

paternalism. Notably absent themes were those of empathy, historical circumstance, social and political realities for Indigenous people, and support. The interventionist measures reinforce notions and aspirations of white normality, although what constitutes normal is rarely—if ever—clearly spelt out by the State or media. One could observe that the Intervention was in fact constructed to perpetuate Aboriginality as the other, rather than designed to help support and ameliorate the living conditions of Indigenous Australians.

THE REFASHIONING OF ABORIGINALITY AS OTHER

The use of emotive language in media reports during the Intervention had the effect of polarising public debate and isolating already marginalised communities. Said's reference to the construction of the Orient directly relates to the construction of Aboriginality in this instance.[110] Media reports during the early stages of the Intervention used devices such as narrative, images, and thematic context to deliberately construct Aboriginality through the filter of Whiteness.

Brough's comments highlighted the perpetuation of savagery further, as illustrated by his description of communities as "dysfunctional in their entirety" with Indigenous children at risk of sexual and physical abuse at any moment.[111] Figure Seven is a visual testament to the othering and shaming of Indigenous Australians, as signs were placed outside effected communities. Residents were labeled through a stereotyped prism of deficit that was "harsh, brutal and dehumanizing."[112] These statements fashion Indigenous men as a threat to all in their communities; as Macoun writes, this "construction locates violence as arising from Aboriginality" rather than from a lack of funding or failed government policies while Whiteness is seen as something separate from Aboriginality.[113]

Figure Seven illustrates the remoteness of Indigenous communities facing the Intervention and points to the role stereotypes play in fashioning identities.[114] Langton refers to the fashioning of identities using the metaphor of a reality performance by stating "in the end, 'the native' is not allowed out of the show, forever condemned to perform to attract crowds."[115] The ongoing perpetuation of Indigeneity as savage and in need of white help locks in historical constructions of Aboriginality as "other." By continually referring to the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities the "native" is linked to the past, unable to evolve and adapt. As Macoun notes, linking Aboriginality with abuse results in constructions that "situate

Aboriginality in the past."[116] The role of the savage "native" suits the purposes of the settler State by maintaining the status quo. Media reports of graphic sexual abuse and government interventionist policies only serve to further the perception of Indigenous Australians as primitive, savage, and inferior.
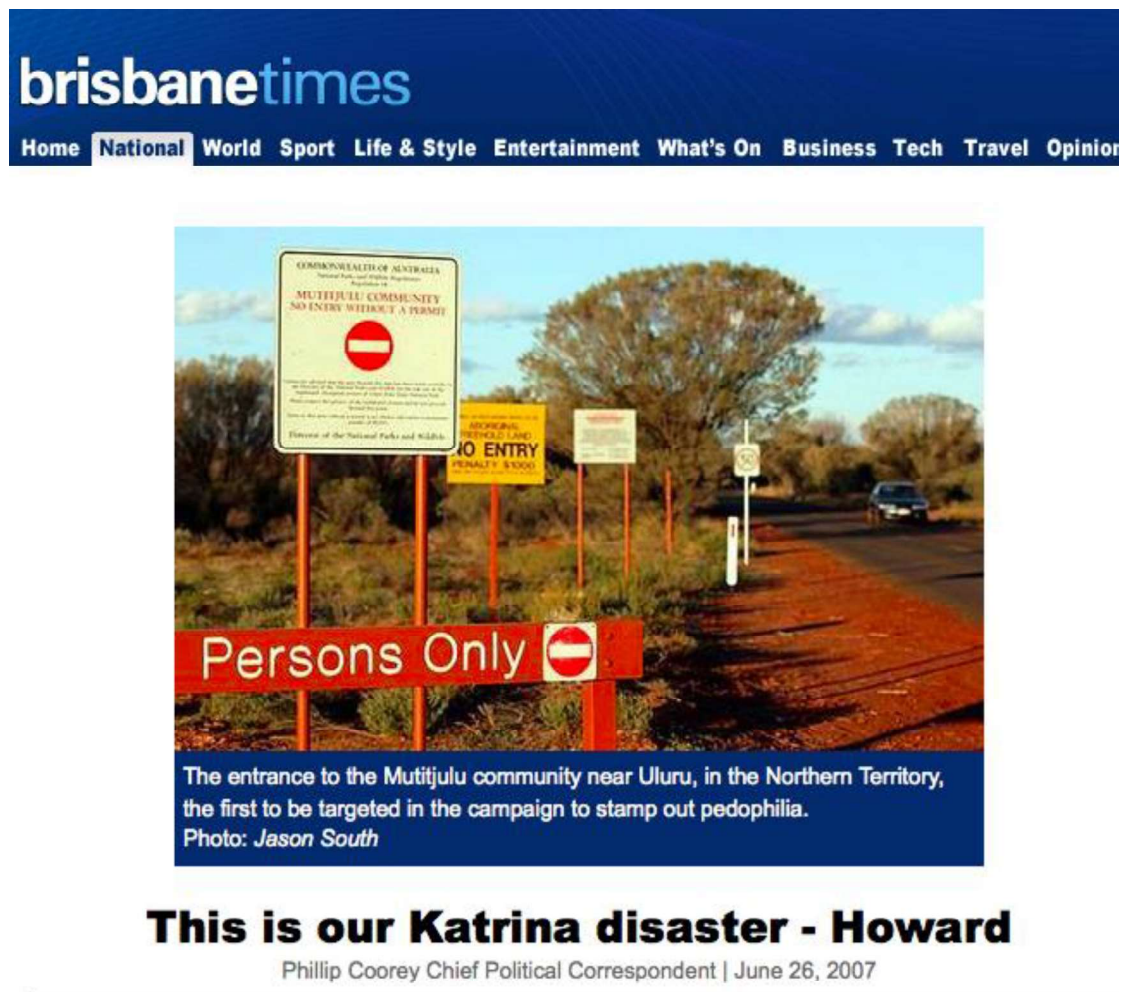

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The entrance to the Mutitjulu community near Uluru, in the Northern Territory, the first to be targeted in the campaign to stamp out pedophilia.
Photo: *Jason South*

This is our Katrina disaster - Howard

Phillip Coorey Chief Political Correspondent | June 26, 2007

Figure Seven: Photo: Jason South Source: *The Brisbane Times*, 26th June 2007.

The language used in the caption speaks to the reader of a disaster on a national scale, a call to arms by Howard. American President Bush was heavily criticised in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a deadly and costly storm that hit America in August 2005, while Prime Minister Howard subsequently lost the

election in 2007. Both events resonated with the governments' failure to address the needs of marginalised and poor communities. In New Orleans, it was largely African American families who were dismissed by government, in Australia, it was the Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory.

Traditional owner Judy Trigger weaves baskets for tourists with Uluru behind her. *Photo: Glenn Campbell*

The barking is incessant, and menacing. Nearly 130 snarling dogs lunge at the sides of flimsy pens. The struggle to feed and water them overwhelms the dogman of Mutitjulu, but others fear coming too close in this dark corner of central Australia.

Figure Eight: Traditional owner Judy Trigger weaving baskets (Photo: Glenn Campbell Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 4th July 2009).

The image of traditional owner Judy Trigger (see Figure Eight) seated with Uluru in the background, is at odds with the text accompanying the image. The textual discourse in this article suggests violence with "130 snarly dogs" and fear of "coming too close in this dark corner of central Australia."[117] The language used is one of difference and savageness, the "dark corner" of Indigenous Australia is reminiscent of Orientalism; different, savage, isolated, and uncivilised, are some examples of the discourse that is conjured up by the image and text.

A sit down ... a meeting of Aboriginal elders in Mutitjulu community.
Photo: *Jason South*

Figure Nine: Photo: Jason South Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 27th June 2007.

The article published by *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 27th of June 2007,[118] emphasises "remoteness and difference."[119] The language used in this piece refers to the children overboard scandal in October 2001 in which the Coalition government alleged asylum seekers had thrown their children overboard. The text plays on the othering of children; Indigenous children are akin to refugee children in this article, in limbo with no legal status. The emphasis on "black" in the title removes Indigenous children from mainstream discourse. The suggestive title is an example of othering, as readers are reminded of asylum seeker parents who were represented as outsiders, unable

to care for their own children and therefore not meeting white standards of parenting. The textual discourse in Figure Ten reflects the marginalisation, in this instance of both asylum seekers and Indigenous Australians.

The visual and textual discourse I have examined in this section draws our attention to the othering of Indigenous Australia. The deep colonising aspects of the Intervention, such as the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act* and the compulsory acquisition of Indigenous land through the extinguishment of the permit system, speak to the binary position of Aboriginality and Whiteness, or those who have rights and those who do not. By constantly reinforcing notions of difference and remoteness through visual and textual clues, Indigeneity is separated from mainstream settler society and positioned as primitive and unchanging. The discourse of deficit is used to relinquish Aboriginality to the past thus continuing the work of settler colonialism.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Throughout this article, I have argued that the structural violence of settler colonialism laid the foundations for the Northern Territory Emergency Response. Media reports had the effect of maintaining the binary position of Aboriginality as the "other" with Whiteness positioned as the platform of privilege from which Indigenous children could be saved from their own perilous Indigeneity.[120] The notion of self-fashioning and refashioning is particularly useful when examining the production of images in regard to Aboriginality and Whiteness. From images of the noble savage, to the language around assimilation—which emphasised blood quantum through the violent assertion of "full bloods," "half bloods", and "quadroons" to the Intervention—there is a pattern of production and reproduction of Aboriginality as the "other."[121]

By simply asking what is it that the images convey, I have argued that such images, and the image-makers behind them, want to ensure the dominance of Whiteness and the marginalisation of Aboriginality. The arrival of federal military personnel into central and northern Australia in 2007 continued this legacy of refashioning Indigenous Australians as the "other." Images and words were used alongside government policy and legislation to ensure that Aboriginality remained clearly separated from mainstream society with Aboriginality depicted as savage and in need of settler control. This article has argued that the violence conveyed by the term "noble savage" and its utility

throughout the Intervention are illustrative of the ongoing attempts by settler society to domesticate Aboriginality.

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