The Colour Lines of Settler Colonialism

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Colour has been important to the thinking and practice of Western settler colonialism since the mid-sixteenth century. Since the emerging dominance of modernity, and within the expanding perimeter of the colonial enterprise, human communities in European and overseas territories have been portrayed geometrically, chronologically and visibly through colour. Colour has been the cipher of colonial diversity. Whether or not a correspondence exists with real phenotypic characteristics, colour has signified a set of characteristics that has codified diversity, including un-humaness and inferiority, within a broader system of knowledge that assigned full human standing and superiority solely to the colonizers.

Assigning colour to biological (historical, cultural) diversity was consistent with the particular cultural backgrounds, religious traditions and historical legacies of given colonial power relations. The resulting colour lines have been historically drawn and redrawn and, although they possess a situated structure, they have never been firmly established once and for all. Nevertheless, time and again, their relational nature has delimited the space of sameness and otherness. It has thereby defined the borders of citizenship and belonging. In particular, as post-colonial theory and critical studies of race have revealed, where colours have distin-
guished between homeland and discovered lands elsewhere, they have also delimited and defined the racialized space of both the colonial dominion and the national body politic in Europe.

Generally, a set of cross-cutting racial lines has separated the space of the dominant group from that of the dominated. Within those lines of the dominant and the dominated groups, it has visually separated a number of subgroups of a different gender, class, culture and religion. By contrast with contexts where the relation between the dominant and dominated group presupposes a single bipolar power relation (namely, exploitation colonialism), under conditions of settler colonialism the dominated group is sharply divided into two radically distanced groups: prior inhabitants (indigenes) and outsiders (migrants).

The condition of the first group, the indigenes, is defined by the fact that the land on which they have resided has been expropriated by the settler through a formula that legally or practically denies any previous forms of sovereignty. For the second group, migrants, their condition is one of out-sidedness, which defines them as the ‘unfamiliar other’. Migrants are not immediately absorbable within the new sovereign body and are confined to a subaltern position. In this triangular relation, the settler group is not an outsourced colonial power. Settlers are structured into the settled space as ‘native’ sovereign subjects. The sovereign charge that the settler group carries is enclosed and realized in the territorial entity of the national body politic. This body politic is a necessary ‘culmination’ of the settler-colonial enterprise. It structures the sovereign spatial and ontological dimensions of in-sidedness and sameness. That is, it structures a self-reflexive identity that incorporates a sovereign and homological relation with its own (conquered) territory. To achieve this geometrical and ontological dimension, it must delegitimize the meaning of prior-ness and subtract its own land from all relations connecting it to surrounding territories, people and cultures (outsidedness). This has frequently been achieved via a colour assignment that is employed to distinguish the white settler society from black and any other-than-white prior inhabitants and outsiders.

Assuming, indeed, that there is no casual connection between colour taxonomies, their topographical inscriptions, and a particular idea of the body politic, my question is — is a peculiar politics of colour at play in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British settler colonialism? Assuming there is, how does this economy work to underpin the particular structure of the settler
body politic? How does it help the sovereign settler subject to neutralize what is before and fix a precise visual boundary that distinguishes the new political entity (the inside) from the outside? In this article I set out to grasp the particular practical and theoretical articulation of whiteness with other colours in settler colonialism, and to explore whether it accords with the foundational statements of the settler body politic. These statements tend to claim: 1. the absolute originality of the settler state as a political formation; 2. the internally homogenous nature of its biological community, and its homologous relation to the settled land; and 3. the complete separation of settler identity from the surrounding populations.

In reference to the first and second tendencies, I will investigate the specific function and peculiar articulation of the other-colour-centred paradigm in the process of settlers’ self-racialization. This is in accord with Colette Guillaumin’s categories of auto-referential racialization.1 In reference to the third tendency, I examine the very peculiar articulation of a white-centred paradigm in the process of altero-racialization. There, the operation of extracting ‘the pure white’ from a racially undetermined chaos functions as a frame for the settler political space and its whiteness.2 My analysis therefore focuses on the settler group’s self-assignment of colour and its separation from other colours. It does not take account of either the self-assumption of that colour by racialized subaltern or colonized subjects or the mutual reproduction of the related stereotypes by differently racialized subaltern or colonized subjects. Nor is it concerned with the different forms of whitening operated by racialized groups in order to escape social stigma and marginality. It concentrates solely on the discursive structuring of settler political anthropology through colour and, paraphrasing Ghassan Hage,3 its power to position those whom it has defined as non-white people within its space.

In this survey, the two paradigms, other-colour-centred and white-centred, are reformulated to express two distinct schemas. The first refers to the binary opposition between two groups (colonizer and colonized) to which are attributed opposing colours (white–black, white–black,
white–red) according to an interpretative schema that admits no other intermediate colour apart from these two and their possible encroachments. The second expresses a geometry of colours that results from the separation of whitest white, separating the archetypical sovereign settler subject in a given settler locale from the less-white and non-white groups — migrants, indentured labourers, slaves.

In both cases, I argue, whiteness as a bio-political identity forms a foundational component in the definition of the settler. This seems to contradict the assumption that in white-centred racism the white becomes neutral, unmarked and invisible. At the very least, it confirms the centrality of whiteness and the white norm in their being both openly visible (against indigenes), yet tending to be invisible (against migrants). Moreover, in settler-colonial experiences, whiteness appears as a mix of white supremacist and white autarchic structures. White supremacy corresponds to a multi-dimensional system of domination that in settler-colonial situations finds its constitutive moment in the negation of prior-ness. Here, it is taken also as having a particular focus on allowing black and non-white migrants to enter the national borders and maintain a subaltern status as exploited labour. White autarchy is distinct but internal to a broad white supremacist model. It refers to a model that excludes the presence of any black or non-white component.

Within this schema, the experience of black slavery assumes a particular place, connecting a condition of absolute diversity to an experience of exploitation (typical of racialized migrants) rather than to a colonizing–colonized relation. Afro-American slavery appears thus as an exception that constitutes a paradigm in itself. But it appears also as evidence that both paradigms, other-colour-centred and white-centred, along with practices of exploitation and the logic of elimination of the other, are always co-present and intertwined in a given social structure. More than that, it openly declares the evocative power of the US discourse on blackness that replaces the oppositional binarism of colonizer vs. colonized with

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that of white freeman vs. black slave, as argued by Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Windrop Jordan and, more recently, bell hooks.7

In the analysis of the situatedness of these intersections, this article corresponds to a ‘colour-matching’ investigation. It aims to explore the intersection of colour assignment practices with the two logics operating in racist phenomena, the ‘logic of elimination’ (settler colonialism) and the ‘logic of exploitation’ (exploitation colonialism). What is important here is that they produce and reproduce a set of situated correspondences between social statuses and colour taxonomies assigned by settlers to themselves, natives and migrants. In line with Pierre-André Taguieff’s formulation,8 the ‘logic of exploitation’ refers to a paradigm that assigns a colour-other-than-white as a diversity mark to a set of subjects whose subalternity and exploitation as labour are thereby legitimized. The ‘logic of elimination’ refers to a paradigm that assigns to absolute otherness (indigeneity in settler-colonial contexts) a colour that defines it as incommensurably different — as carrying a non-absorbable, ‘dispensable’ and thus extinguishable diversity, in Patrick Wolfe’s phrasing.9

The importance and originality of using Guillaumin and Taguieff’s categories in this field of study lie in their potential to capture and describe settler-colonial topicality. These categories were theorized and mostly used in the European debate on race during the 1970s and 1980s. They have consequently been applied almost exclusively to the European (mainly continental) context to distinguish and describe radically different forms of racism, such as Nazi anti-Semitism, historical colonial and contemporary anti-migrant racisms. To deploy Guillaumin’s logics in a survey on the current settler-colonial situation requires displacing and, consequently, transforming those same categories, adapting them to a particular anthropological situation in order to understand its corresponding function of colour.

To elaborate on the discussion above, in line with Stuart Hall and Guillaumin, colour assignment refers here to a process that

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visualizes social status through colour. This process functions strictly in terms of the definition of the superior characteristics of the dominant subject. Colour is thus a constructed term, which together with gender, culture, class and religion objectifies the difference in a power relation and requires a hierarchy to be effective and legitimate. In the discursive economy of bio-power, colour may be either the determining mark of diversity or be peripheral and substituted by one or more of the other terms when suitable. In the historical period considered here, colour, as attached to phenotype and therefore considered as self-evident inferiority, becomes the overriding factor.

As such, the topicality of the original colour matching in settler-colonial political anthropology has not been fully unfolded by either critical race theory and whiteness studies or post-colonial theory. Moreover, as Kay Anderson has argued, the inclusion of Australian racialized political anthropology in an analysis of transnational colour assignment during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries calls out for a revision of its colour mapping. In this first attempt, the analysis is stretched across the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, and focuses on Australian settler colonialism in the age of social Darwinism and eugenics. It is therefore caught in a broader outlook that aligns it with the US experience in particular. The choice of these case studies depends, as we will see, on the close relationship between them in the matter of common racial theories and similar policies of elimination/displacement of natives and restrictions on immigration.

**Sameness, Homology and Superiority: The Colour of the Settler Collective**

As Lorenzo Veracini has outlined, the concept of a colony has two different connotations: it is both a political body that is dominated by an exogenous agency and an entity that reproduces itself in an exogenous environment. As this compounded designation suggests, settler colonialism is fundamentally ambiguous in that it is characterized by both traits. Therefore, as it involves the permanent movement of communities and the dominance of an exogenous agency over an indigenous one, settler-colonial phenomena are related to both colonialism and migration. Both migrants and settlers

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move across space and often end up permanently residing in a new locale. Settlers, however, are unique migrants and, as Mahmood Mamdani has noted, settlers 'are made by conquest, not just by immigration'. On the one hand, settlers are *founders* of political orders and carry their sovereignty with them. Migrants, on the other hand, are *appellants* facing a political order that is already constituted.

In settler colonialism there is a locale of conquest that is built upon by a political community whose sovereignty is conceived as original in itself. At the same time, settler identity is seen as coming forth from the same historical-cultural/genetic matter as its metropolitan progenitor. Whether this parthenogenesis is conceived as being in opposition to or in continuity with the mother country, the settler diaspora is read as an entity that, in settling on a space conceived as non-political (pre-historical, empty), declares itself as a polity bearer. Indeed, the ultimate project of the settler diaspora is the settlement of its own body politic. This 'settlement' does not depend upon whether this body politic is conceived as dependent on Britain or as an autonomous political entity. The form of the settler body politic, as David Pearson has outlined, is that of the modern nation-state: the setter community is immediately also a nation. This inaugurates the settler political institution as a 'mythic site of invention' for the settler national narrative, where the symbolic and genetic 'sameness' and the connected settler collective's sovereign charge are rearticulated and superseded in the settler nation-statehood.

Settler nation-statehood is formalized through the discursive organization of a series of foundational narratives, including the original idea of its own *incommensurable superiority* over what was before. This idea produces, as Patrick Wolfe argues, 'the practical nullification of certain human groups that finds expression in the US [as well as the Australian] Constitution’s arrogation of universality'. This nullification, which is symbolic and material, involving both bare lives and forms of life, is foundational as well.

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as constitutional. As he goes on, referring to Australia and the United States, the ‘extra-constitutionalism’ of the space of prior-ness, is the product of the definition of the sovereign settler subject;\(^{15}\) but it is also the element that reproduces that definition, without which settler individuals, settler society and the self-representation of the body politic cannot exist.

The idea of the settlers’ ontological superiority is reinforced, particularly from the mid-eighteenth century on, by a conception of progress that innerves both British exploitation colonialism and settler colonialism. Nevertheless, the idea of superiority that informs settler colonialism and its foundational myth is strikingly different from that expressed and embodied by colonial governments in colonies established for the purposes of trade in Asia, and particularly in India. In these cases, the colonial power is required to reorganize and reorient, according to colonial interests the pre-existing powers and institutions, maintaining a sort of continuity with the socio-political settings of the indigenous society.\(^{16}\) In contrast, the idea of superiority in British settler-colonial formations derives from settler colonialism as a ‘structure’ and not an ‘event’.\(^ {17}\) It derives precisely from the structuring of the colonial experience as a national body politic, as discussed above, that is, as a polity that is considered as temporally unprecedented, bio-culturally unique in the area, and potentially enduring (a piece of Europe in Africa, America and the Pacific). It is not a matter of a relational definition of superiority vs. inferiority aiming to legitimize hegemony and exploitation. It is rather the case of a statement of uniqueness, political superiority and race-belonging (or auto-referential racialization). Within the eighteenth- to nineteenth-century British settler-colonial politics of colour, this corresponds to whiteness.

Here, whiteness, in tension with the construction of Britishness in the imperial peripheries, conjoins at once the colour of the heirs of a great civilization and the colour of the founders of a new one.\(^ {18}\) It

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represents a particular type of sovereign subject — white, male, proprietor and middle class. 19 This is rearticulated in settler locales according to a situated idea of ethnic or racial sovereignty and citizenry. 20

Expressed in these terms, settler self-claimed whiteness appears as coextensive with humanness — intended as absolute superiority — and the result of an operation that classifies it as settling on the indigenous nothing. 21 The universal allocation of humanness within the settler collective is based on the idea that prior to the settler polity there is no time. What was before was simply nature. This is the ideological territorialization and indigenization of the settler polity that Jon Stratton refers to, in the case of Australia, as a ‘mythic geography’, that necessitates the settler colony being thought of and continuously practised as an island of humanness amid savagery–nature. 22 Even if settler colonial native jurisdiction in North America and Australia appear as deeply different in the settler classification of the level of polity in indigenous societies, the two mythologies of foundation and spatial order that followed have many points in common. As Lisa Ford has argued for nineteenth-century Georgia and New South Wales, ‘though one was a colony, [they] began to adhere to a modern notion of statehood that required the displacement or extinction of indigenous jurisdiction’. 23

Consistent with an idea of the state (in the Westphalian political imaginary) as separated and protected from surrounding chaos and destruction, the literature of colonialism in the seventeenth-century first British Empire and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Australian colonialism used the topos of an island utopia to describe overseas settler colonies. 24 Utopia was conceived of as a geobody politic whose settler community sat on a territory that was

21 Anderson, Race and the Crisis of Humanism, p. 29.
considered, together with what was on it, as devoid of humanness, or empty, and located in a temporal dimension that was out-of-time, whether the time was that of the Christian communitas (fifteenth to sixteenth century) or, later, that of human improvisability (seventeenth to eighteenth century) and evolutionism (nineteenth century). Only through the disembodiment of indigeneity and its reallocation within the settler community could dangerous religious dissidents, British ‘white trash’ and meant-to-die convicts, whose death penalty had been commuted to permanent confinement, be dramatically and problematically transformed through a Lockean proprietary idea of sovereignty into self-racialized citizens. The fact that they injected productive labour into unproductive land, transforming ‘nature’ into an appropriable entity bound to the time and space coordinates of a liberal, ‘proprietary’ political economy, functioned to reinforce and substantiate the original idea that they were the unique human-political subjects in the settled territory.

Notwithstanding the effectiveness of its foundation mythology in grounding settler nation-statehood, the fiction of utopia is all but stable and secure. Despite its denial, the persistence of prior temporalities and spatialities unsettles such fundamental claims. To smooth the settler collective’s endless sense of vulnerability, two different strategies are needed: an immediate elimination of gaps and discontinuities within the geography of the new political formation, and the consolidation of borders. In other words, it requires a further social structuring based on racial reinforcement, as well as a territorial framing of the settler geobody’s sameness and homology with the territory. What is needed is control over the space, which is, in Carlo Galli’s words, ‘one of the stakes in the game of power (along with the control of time, the symbolic, and production)’. Modern nation–state based politics needs that control to concretely politicize, produce and structure space in reality. The form of this structuring relates to the settler’s seminal desire for an immediate and unmediated embodiment of the

colonial will in that space, and its peculiarity depends, from the settler-colonial point of view, on specifically where that space is located, which foundation mythology is articulated, and who are the subjects involved.

In relation to the first strategy, British jurisdiction over indigenes as subjects of the Crown becomes settler necropolitics. In this biopolitics these people ‘die’, presented as unable to struggle against colonization and progress, and are thus doomed to natural extinction through a system of segregation and dislocation that deprives them of their living conditions. Clearly, as Henry Reynolds has highlighted in the Australian case and David Roediger in the North American, this does not mean that settler contact with the indigene has not produced anything but slaughter and violence. Nevertheless, it is the case that, in general, the living evidence of the fiction of the continent’s emptiness needed to be symbolically wiped out. This was the case in Queensland where, as Warwick Anderson argues, natives were treated as internal disease-carriers and confined to camps and lazarettos. It was the case in colonial and then independent North America where, as Patrick Wolfe states, Indian ‘exceptionism’ corresponded to a sort of juridical outsidedness. Native Americans were deprived of physical and symbolic space by virtue of an idea of property that starts ‘where Indianness stops’.

In an economy of colour that is founded on an unconditional separation between the two poles of a binary racial construction, the colour assigned to indigenous difference symbolizes the absence of an encounter between prior life and settler life. Between the two polarities of the colonial power relation there is no exchange or mutual contamination. There is no space for recognition, as Frantz Fanon outlined for Algeria. Mimicry, in the sense defined by Homi Bhabha in colonial India, is impossible.

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34 Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks; H. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, London, Routledge, 2004, p. 122.
possession of the land finds a correspondence in a possessive conception of whiteness that refuses to permit any account of prior-ness and its challenging force. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Australia, this absolute difference was identified as black.

The colour black has generally been associated with essential inferiority, especially since African slavery. Earlier, blackness/darkness — the colour of evil, as Katherine Biber reminds us — was associated with barbarism and faithlessness in order to demonize religious, political, military or economic competitors. This was the case in Ireland within the European borders, whose inhabitants were defined by Henry VIII as black unfaithful, ‘godles[s], lawles[s], and desordered’. But it functioned also to visually identify lower classes. Alleged darker complexion, due sometimes to sun exposure, was considered a mark of ancestral rudeness that was translated into social inferiority, as theorists like Frenchman Henry de Boulainvillier (1658–1722) maintained. After the African slave trade commenced, the colour black corresponded to what was considered inferior and, as such, commodifiable. ‘Negro’ became a synonym for slave, and this correspondence continued to function in common language and the imaginary long after the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Since the end of the eighteenth century, blackness has been internally differentiated according to the role played by blacks in the global division of labour and their level of absorbability in Western societies. This is confirmed by the racial classification in which Polynesians have a lighter complexion and were less likely to be employed as indentured labour in Australia, France and the United States than the ‘darker’ Melanesians in Queensland and Fiji. This was confirmed by the Mozambican over-exploited gastarbeiter of the ‘migrant system of employment’ and in gold rush Rand and Transvaal (1885–1910). They were considered darker than black South Africans (as confirmed by contemporary anti-Mozambican, anti-

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Zimbabwean and anti-Malawian xenophobia). In general, blackness either reinforces an attribute that naturalizes a condition of exploitation or provides the condition for elimination.40

Elimination is especially likely when it is not the ‘African’ variety of blackness that is assigned but a more tainted variety (blackest black) that refers to both a supposed incommensurability to whiteness and unsuitability for labour. Accordingly, among the Pacific ‘blacks’, dispossessed and decimated Aboriginal Australians and Tasmanians were defined as differently black.41 They were described as blacker than African blacks and Pacific Islanders because of their supposed unavailability as a labour force, and blacker than Maori, by virtue of their alleged inability for self-defence.42 Consequently, they were said to have a lower level of polity. They could be neither settled nor Christianized. Sometimes described as living fossils, they were considered doomed to extinction.43 Their stage in non-evolution was lower than that of Khoi-Khoi, believed to be the missing link between ‘Man’ and the Simians in the Great Chain of Being.

Here, the colour black signified an obstacle to be eliminated, and the logic of elimination that underpins the settler state’s indigenous affairs functioned as a means to fully appropriate the land. There was no evil agency or agency tout court in killing black creatures: the killings instead were understood as reducing the suffering caused to them by the encounter with the overwhelming force of the colonizer.44 Here, in the case of colonial power relations, the Hegelian circularity of recognition is suspended, as defined by Fanon, or, as described by Du Bois, the actuality of the veil (the obstructed subjectivity of the black) is pushed to its own extreme consequences. Failing to be exploitable black labour, the status of ‘servant’ cannot eventuate, and the result is a state of un-humanness without appeal. This reinforces the argument of the black Aborigines’ dominant character: they are indigenes before being black, and like Indians, if not eliminated, they need to be assimilated.45

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43 See Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, p. 23; Anderson, Race and the Crisis of Humanism, pp. 121, 133, 159


This is why, as Wolfe argues, ‘whereas, in Australia, black women were to become conduits to whiteness, in the United States, black women come to augment white men’s property by incubating the additional slaves whom they fathered’.46 Seemingly, the images attached to the ‘Negro fear’ and ‘race suicide’, which related to the black male physical presence among US and South African white communities (1900s–1910s), have no appeal in Australia. Instead, the first is translated into ‘brown fear’ (referring to uncontrolled sexuality and dangerous miscegenation), while ‘race suicide’ comes to substantiate the idea that the penetration of not-white migrants into the continent must be stopped to prevent replicating the failed multi-racial democracy of the United States.47

The obstacle to be eliminated, whether tainted with black or red, therefore signifies a condition of dispensable bio-diversity whose disembodiment functions as the assumption of nativeness by the settler. This disembodiment is practised through a number of material and symbolic devices; biological whitening, segregation in camps, killings and the removal of mix-blood children are all aspects of the same strategy. It involves reducing the evidence of a life before settlement and subsuming — neutralizing — that evidence within the bio-capital of the settler social body.48 Here we have a phenomenon of racialization that could be described, through Colette Guillaumin’s categories, as auto-referential racialization. The settler, in claiming his or her whiteness in the sense described above, must be in a polarized relation with an ‘absolute other’, a racialized object ‘that is not there’. Following this, it is the negation of the ‘internal other’ that here is a ‘prior-ness made otherness by conquest’ that substantiates that self-representation. In this case, whiteness is not a silent structure that informs internal social relations, but rather is outspoken, presumes indigenous un-humaness, and signifies settler sovereignty.

48 Wolfe, Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology, pp. 168–90.
Settler Homology and its Frontier: The Colour of Out-sidedness

Drawing upon Michel Foucault’s conception of savagery-barbarity-citizenship’, we could say that together with the strategy of erasing prior ‘savagery’, the settler body politic reinforces its narrative of ‘sameness and homology’ by establishing a space within which the homological relation between settled land and settler society is supposed as a given. This turns upon the isolation of that space. Oceans and contiguous lands become spaces of separation. The imperial construction of waters as isolating Australia, in Suvendrini Perera’s analysis, and the separation between North America and the ‘barbarous’ others inhabiting the lands over the Ocean, the West and the southern Americas in the US experience, transforms seas and lands into frontier spaces. Notwithstanding their being an inherent part of the geophysical, as well as cultural and economic system within which the settler colony resides, seas and lands are pushed outside. All that is ‘out there’ embodies the external frontier of the settler body politic, while this same frontier creates a tension between the two spheres (in and out), which produces the space where settler collective identity is forged. Ellen C. Semple, going even further than Fredrick Turner’s famous reflection on the American experience of the frontier, confirms this, arguing that ‘the story of United States is that of a series of frontiers which the hand of man has reclaimed from nature and savagery’.51

The resulting external frontier, having been made through this tension and implied in conquest, is irremediably mobile and unstable. This instability produces what Perera has called settler society’s ‘perennial anxiety’. It evokes a disgorged out-sidedness as dangerous, while the settler political space is defined as needing to be permanently protected from all prophecies of social chaos, cultural barbarism, biological contagion and racial decadence engendered by this instability.

In this geopolitical economy, the only ones allowed to rightfully trespass the border are ‘family’ — that is ‘the same’ or ‘out-sided sameness’ of an Anglo descent in the United States, Anglo-Celtic in

50 Perera, Australia and the Insular Imagination, p. 22.
Australia, or of a very familiar stock, such as those claimed, for instance, by federal Australian immigration policies from 1901 to 1930. Unlike this group, unfamiliar out-sidedness or the ‘potentially the same’ enter differentially depending on colour and cultural proximity. In a white supremacist system, colour and culture are the factors that locate the two groups within the space of settler polity and structure the governmental power of which they will be the objects. The ‘relative difference’ of migrants that permits them to dwell in the settler space distinguishes them from the indigene. They are ‘barbarous’, meaning they are ‘human beings’ with the potential eventually to be included in the body politic. Nevertheless, this inclusion implies that they are definitively un-absorbable into the founders’ bio-community. They may enter the domain of in-sidedness but not that of immediate contemporariness (in the sense described by Johannes Fabian) with the settler collective — to which they can never belong.

Non-contemporariness means a perennial will-be-citizenship that is, in Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vasilacopoulos’ words, a condition of ‘foreigners within’. This is the case, for instance, of Arab Australians, as explored by Ghassan Hage, whereby they are included in the settler society as ‘second-class’ citizens. It is the case for Mexicans in California, and Chinese in the south-west of the United States, differentially included in the receiving society according to class, gender and colour, but never considered as possessing whiteness.

The domain of ‘will-be contemporary’ or ‘will-be familiar’ out-sidedness implies a spatial coexistence and distinction with the settler state. As such, it does not challenge the settler state’s foundations. In fact, it does not pretend to deny the narrative of the rightful conquest of an empty or unproductive space, nor that of the settler creating time. But it is nevertheless constitutional in the

53 Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’, p. 129.
56 Nicolacopoulos and Vasilacopoulos, ‘Racism, Foreigner Communities and the Onto-pathology of White Australian Subjectivity’, p. 32.
structuring of the settler space: it guarantees the persistence of a racialized external border that reflects ethnicized internal social divisions, reinforcing the mythology of isolatedness and the sameness of a settler collective. This racializing procedure corresponds to what Colette Guillaumin calls altero-referential racialization: it establishes a hierarchy among spaces/bodies in a global perspective.

In nineteenth-century United States and Australia, racialization–inferiorization confirmed settler society’s sense of superiority through a relational classification of out-sidedness as chaotic and backward. Via this opposition, settler self-claimed civilization, superior mores and socioeconomic achievements are naturalized. The opposition reinforces the time–space utopia. Since its original formulation by Thomas More, settler utopias have been imagined as the result of a successful endeavour aimed at overcoming the mother country’s feudal privileges. In North America this was to realize the settler’s ‘manifest destiny’; in Australia it was to prevail over a classist social structure and give rise to a muscular middle-class sovereignty. In this narrative, the cross-border ethnicization–inferiorization of the outsiders consolidates the idea of the right of the settler subject to strive for his or her own ‘happiness’, realized through a privileged position that the colony guarantees within and across its own borders.

In the Australian and American settler geometry of colour, racialization–inferiorization has been expressed through the colours brown and yellow. This is the case of brown Mexicans, who embody the southern border — the permanent contact zone between Mexico and the United States. Fixed by the Guadalupe-Hidalgo treaty (1848), the border produced a separation between ethnicized Mexican Americans and left-out Mexican nationals, and their opposing identities. The first of these identities, liminal and trapped between non-enough-Americanness and non-enough-Mexicanness is strongly separated from the second, depicted in the American and Mexican American narrative as true poor, dangerous, lazy, irresponsible, liars, treacherous, patriarchal and violent. This opposition, and the resulting third space between ‘incompleteness’

and ‘otherness’, contributed, as Pablo Vila and Evelyn N. Glenn maintain, to the definition of American identity and civilization described by Gerald D. Nash. Following this, racialization–inferiorization also helped to define the boundaries of legitimate exploitation, downsizing the value of the ethnicized labour force.

In Australia, the Immigration Restriction Act or White Australia Policy (1901) was the culmination of decades of anti-Chinese riots and a series of domestic policies concerned with rejection at the frontier and internal segregation of brown and yellow people. Notwithstanding the lively cultural and economic connections existing between the many shores of the Pacific and Indian Oceans in pre-colonial times, the explicit exclusion of migrants embodying Australia’s border corresponded to the will of the Australian newborn Federation to separate the ‘island-continent’, as Perera names it, from yellow and brown Asia and Indonesia. This operation aimed also to connect Australia to Europe, through a call for a British/white diaspora to the island continent, which corresponded to the search for a reinforced homology and sameness. Nevertheless, in this bridging of Australia and Europe, Federation established a further border. Brown Mediterraneans (southern Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, Maltese) were differentially included as a cheap labour force and excluded from the ‘peopling’ project, embodying the racial frontier within the old continent.

As it emerges, the role played by out-sidedness is double: as described by Mary Douglas and Randika Mohanram, it delimits through the other’s bodies the boundaries of the settler body politic, and, at the same time, legitimizes a conception of what is outside as a medium for the achievement of settler collective ‘happiness’. In this case, it provided a highly exploitable and racially segregated workforce for a successful and competitive settler economy. These two conceptions are not naturally consequential, or interdependent. On the contrary, the role of ‘indispensable threat’, and that of ‘indispensable medium of happiness’, have been alternately privileged

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63 Nash, Creating the West, p. 3.
67 See S. Perera (ed.), Our Patch, pp. 29–32.
according to the two different models of white supremacy: the white autarchic and the more exploitation-based model of white supremacy described above. As the Australian and North American history of trade unionism confirms, these two visions tended to be class-based. In general, the most influential trade unions in both countries, representing white workers and their families, fought for a more restrictive white autarchic society, while plantation and factory owners were the main supporters of a more liberal politics of migration. Nonetheless, in both cases liberal attitudes towards immigration did not question racial hierarchies. Even those with the most progressive position in terms of mass migration feared a reduction of social status through the admission of backward populations, while the most optimistic always saw the result of immigration in egalitarian terms as the factor restructuring American democracy, or federal Australia, in vertical terms. What distinguished the two contexts was the number of workers (racialized workers, including African Americans, in the United States were far more numerous), the respective ideas of democracy founding the two body politics (with Australia seen as a utopia for working-class men), the national credentials of unionist anti-non-white immigrant sentiments (in Australia), and the consequent force of Australian unionism and the Labor Party.

The double feature of out-sidedness as both indispensable threat and indispensable medium of happiness, and the tension between the two models of white privilege-based settler society is best exemplified by the above-mentioned case of Pacific Island indentured labourers in Australia (1860s–1900s). Pacific Islanders, kidnapped and forced into semi-slave conditions in a practice called blackbirding, were carefully introduced into the country and then forcefully deported back to the Pacific islands after the Pacific Islands Labourers Act. This was evidently a response to the white

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supremacist argument, as publicly expressed by governors and officials, that Australia needed to avoid replicating the American ‘mistake’ of creating a black-and-white country. Against this model, the protest of trade unionists and more restrictive positions rose to the point of instituting the White Australia Policy that ended blackbirding in Australia. The model was embraced nationally: Australia needed to become a white autarchy. The tension between the two models of white supremacism can also be seen in the US project of repatriating freed slaves to Liberia and north-west Africa generally, in the political debate around the temporary coercive labour of Chinese and Mexican contractors in the west and southwest of the United States, and in South Africa’s regime of temporary Chinese indentured labour.

Nevertheless, as noted in reference to the assignment of blackness to lower class groups, the colour line dividing homology and outsiders has never been static or straight. It appears, rather, to be more often mobile and blurred, including as ethnicized exploitable labour force and not-so-white will-be insiders, classified as such by virtue of an intra-racial distinction based on regional, class and gender belonging. This phenomenon is famously testified to by the situations described by Theodore Allen and Matt Wray in the United States, where a number of different shades of whiteness are distinguished from what has been defined as ‘hegemonic whiteness’ (an expression used by Amanda Lewis). This was the case for white and non-white women and poor people in the United States, where women were traditionally and constitutionally considered unable to be political. Often without being assigned a specific colour (complicated by a self-claim of white-
ness), white women in particular have been racialized in a way that confirmed their supposed dependency. The phenomenon of the much understated and little studied ‘shanghaiing’ is an example in the case of poor, unemployed, working-class male citizens. The term refers to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century practice of drugging and kidnapping white sailors from Portland, San Francisco, Astoria, Seattle and Townsend and taking them to China. Declassed as temporary ‘unfree-labour’ (that is non-full-citizens in the US constitutional opposition between free and unfree labour), they were used as indentured labour to avoid Chinese being employed and imported to the United States, consistent with the federal Chinese Exclusion Act that operated from 1882 to 1943. This internal insufficiency of whiteness, experienced when class and gender lines within national borders and the settler citizenry were seen in terms of colour or assigned as a set of racial stereotypes, was the product of a selective self-representation of the sovereign subject that excluded certain groups. Internal social hierarchy and control had to be discursively limited when the narrative of ‘one people for one land’ that founded the national sense of belonging was seen to be threatened.

**Conclusion**

The only way to stop the disruptive effects of internal social divisions on the self-representation of the settler group as a nation is, as Stratton has shown for Australia, the reinforcement and limited enlargement of the bio-community’s racial identity in terms of whiteness. Whiteness, in the sense described above, appears in settler-colonial contexts as an attribute assigned to a collective of individuals. These are a more or less restricted group of people whose ‘coherent’ identity is obtained through a process of negation when confronted with prior-ness, and ‘reversed projection’ and ‘subtraction’ when confronted with out-sidedness. Both cases of self-proclaimed foundational whiteness and the resulting constitutional whiteness are located in the tension existing between multiple polarities: blackness, yellowness, brownness and non-whiteness.

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82 See J. Stratton, ‘Borderline Anxieties’.
In the case of nineteenth-century settler colonialism, the process of negation can be synthesized in the statement that where the indigene (black or red) stops, there is white — according to a paradigm that focuses on the distinction between humanness and un-humanness. According to an other-centred or indigene-centred paradigm, where the colour assigned to indigenes might be red or black, this process presumes a univocal projection. The racialized settler body is produced through a self-claim of humanness founded on the assumption of the indigene’s lack of humanness. This claim is foundational in establishing the sovereign subject’s sameness, unicity and homology. As we have seen, this oppositional binarism does not produce any form of acknowledgement, as it does not allow the imagining of any proximity between the dominating and the dominated.

The process of ‘inverted reflection’ implies a set of negative projections onto outsiders (othering or ethnicization) and a reflection of those characteristics back onto the white as positive features. This process is constitutional and defines the sovereign subject’s characteristics historically, over time: if negation founds the body politic, the inverted reflection fixes the meaning of liberty, liberalism and right. Eventually, the white’s image and identity as positive become reinforced by the relational inverted assignment, but also modified and reshaped. This mechanics is very similar to that described by Homi Bhabha when speaking about the ‘diachrony’ created by the British colonial power to identify the ‘almost the same’ in the Indian context of exploitative colonialism.

The process of ‘subtraction’ refers to the process that identifies what is ‘other’ in order to obtain whiteness by subtracting everything considered brown, yellow or non-white from the mass of people who inhabit a particular area or who migrated into the settler locale. This prism, resulting out of the opposition of in-sidedness and out-sidedness, or between homology and external bio-diversities, creates an intersection of proximities that aggregates the non-indigene and then disaggregates the not-indigene spectrum into 1. the biologically homologous or ‘familiar’ (the member of the bio-community); 2. the homolog-able not-so-white immigrant who can be considered as racially absorbable into the larger privileged white community when familiarized with the settler model of life; and 3. the potentially ‘includable’ into the

84 H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 175–98.
political community through a cultural and social familiarization, but racially discontinuous or even absolutely distant.

The second (the homolog-able) is labelled as not-enough-white or will-be white by virtue of one’s alleged darker (but still compatible) skin colour or one’s low class and gender position. The person may be absorbed into the sovereign subject when the bio-community’s boundaries seem less inaccessible to proximities. This, for instance, is the case for southern Mediterranean migrants, the Irish and Jews in Australia and the United States. Notwithstanding their quite different story of exclusion/inclusion within the settler society, they were all eventually included in an ‘expanded white race’, occupying a position of ‘whites of a different colour’.

The third is labelled brown or yellow, where one’s visual mark of out-sidedness exceeds one’s potentially includable proximity, as confirmed by the immigration Acts of 1901 and 1924, in Australia and the United States, respectively. As we have seen, this third condition can be fixed, in political terms, through one’s eventual inclusion in a sort of Habermasian multicultural citizenship that establishes the person’s condition as perennial ‘foreign-within’. In this case, indeed, equality and citizenship may be realized in a juridico-political dimension, but find no necessary correspondence in other spheres such as the cultural or socioeconomic. This experience includes also the very particular case of Mexican Americans forcibly included after 1848, or who later migrated voluntarily, whose indigeneity has been transformed as border-ness or out-sidedness.

Although Afro-American slavery can be seen to be included in this third category, it belongs instead to its own paradigm in which the association between blackness and animality helped to legitimise the objectivation/commodification of black human beings (from the object-hood of their blackness to the objectivation of their bodies) and a social structure founded on their supposed absolute difference, that is, slavery and then legalized segregation. Constitutive of the

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88 Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, ch. 5.
US body politic, their commodification, exclusion and lack of recognition depends on a condition of internal out-sidenedness that is unique. This emerges strikingly when blackness in US slavery is confronted with any other ‘otherness as out-sidenedness’. Contrasted with Aboriginal Australians’ blackness, any apparent similarity of colour assignment may be seen rather as an absolute difference, the result of the specific meaning assigned the colour black. Black, in other words, can describe two distinct conditions: in the first case blackness reinforces the idea of the naturalness of slavery; in the second, it reinforces the idea of natives’ un-humanness.89

Although in Australia and the United States the process of extracting the archetypical settler sovereign subject has only referred openly to colours in the period from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s, it still operates in so-called post-racial migration policies,90 operating in both settler and non-settler receiving states. Here, a white-centred paradigm works by selecting migrants through a set of criteria that, abandoning the immediate reference to skin colour as the main marker of absorbability/un-absorbability, translates it into associated meanings — principally class belonging (praised in terms of skills) and cultural proximity. This selection/construction of the ‘other’ — or post-colonial othering — that comes together with a fixation on the social content of the signifier ‘citizen’, aims, implicitly or explicitly, at the maintenance of a white supremacist balance of power. This balance assigns the dominant group a series of privileges and creates for the other a condition of subalternity. The difference between settler and non-settler so-called multicultural or post-racial nation-states derives in the first case from the presence of the third pole: the only way for prior-ness to be included in social and legal citizenship is through its symbolic or physical absorption (whitening) or its representation as outsider, or ‘browning’, which reduces the subject’s condition to that of migrant. As such the subjectivity of the nation’s indigenous or first inhabitants cannot be included without challenging the same foundations of the settler body politic.90

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89 See Guillaumin, ‘Race and Nature’.